

## Protecting “urban child soldiers”

In the past two decades, a substantial framework has emerged to protect war-affected children and child soldiers. The international community has increasingly recognized the need for special attention to the rights of vulnerable children, resulting in the development and strengthening of international norms, bodies, and laws:

- The Convention on the Rights of the Child, with its Optional Protocol established in 2000, raises the age of conscription and involvement in conflict from 15 to 18 years and establishes a ban on compulsory recruitment below 18 years.
- Six UN Security Council resolutions have explicitly recognized the need to put an end to egregious violations of children's rights and the recruitment and use of child soldiers,<sup>47</sup> and each year the Security Council holds a debate on the issue based on an annual report of the Secretary-General.
- The International Criminal Court, established in 1998, defines the conscription, enlistment, or use in hostilities of children under the age of 15 as a war crime.

Children living in cities and child soldiers face comparable threats to their human security. Since many of the differences between them are a matter of semantics (gangs vs. rebel groups, slums vs. internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, police vs. armies, etc.) these “urban child soldiers” warrant special protection.

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<sup>47</sup> Security Council Resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003), 1539 (2004), and 1612 (2005).