



Geneva Call

Project Proposal

Seminar on Children and Armed Conflict: The Sri Lanka Case

Centre for just peace and Democracy

In collaboration with:

Geneva Call and IMADR

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“We cannot waste our precious children. [...] The impact of conflict on children is everyone’s responsibility and it must be everyone’s concern.” - Graça Machel

1. Background of the Organisations:

The **Centre for Just Peace and Democracy (CJPD)** is an action oriented research centre working towards a peaceful resolution to the armed conflict in Sri Lanka.

CJPD was founded in 2004 to provide an operational umbrella for already existing networks of activists and academics in the Tamil Diaspora and beyond who have worked to bring about a just peace in Sri Lanka. CJPD works with all communities in this endeavour.

CJPD seeks to provide opportunities to engage diverse opinions and facilitate the formulation of policy objectives amongst all those who have an interest in the conflict. Our primary research, reports, and analyses, as well as our conferences, workshops and seminars, are intended to contribute to the just resolution of the conflict in Sri Lanka.

Geneva Call is an international humanitarian organisation dedicated to engaging armed non-State actors (NSAs) to respect and to adhere to humanitarian norms. Geneva Call is committed to the universal application of the principles of international humanitarian law and conducts its activities based on the principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence.

Through the creation of an innovative mechanism for NSAs, called the Deed of Commitment, Geneva Call has advocated for an anti-personnel mine ban since March 2000. More recently, Geneva Call has widened its field of engagement to issues of children and armed conflict as well as gender.

The **International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR)** is an international non-profit, non-governmental human rights organization devoted to eliminating discrimination and racism, forging international solidarity among discriminated minorities and advancing the international human rights system.

Founded in 1988 by one of Japan's largest minorities, the Buraku people, IMADR has grown to be a global network of concerned individuals and minority groups with regional committees and partners in Asia, Europe, North America and Latin America. IMADR's International Secretariat is based in Japan and maintains a UN liaison office in Geneva. IMADR is in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

2. Introduction

Children in all societies represent their society's hopes and future: when children are emotionally and physically destroyed, so are their societies. The protection of children is not just a rights issue; it is also a human security issue.

Children are victims in armed conflicts. They suffer in many ways both during the conflict and in its aftermath. They are killed and maimed, orphaned, recruited to fight, are deprived of education and health care. Many children uprooted during the war become particularly vulnerable. Girls, especially, are subject to additional risks of sexual exploitation and gender based violence, including rape. As a consequence many children are deeply traumatised. Those left with deep emotional scars and trauma carry these into their adult lives, having a long lasting effect on society.

Measures to safeguard children in armed conflict include mechanisms to monitor the participation of children in the conflict and the military operations that target or affect them, as well as formulating effective measures to prevent such violations. Abuses committed against children require concerted action both during the armed conflict and in the post-conflict period.

In February 2005, Olara Otunnu, the then-Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, drew attention to six areas that required monitoring as they constituted "especially egregious abuses against children" and because they were "monitorable":

1. Killing or maiming of children
2. Recruiting or using child soldiers
3. Attacks against schools or hospitals
4. Rape and other grave sexual violence against children
5. Abduction of children
6. Denial of humanitarian access for children

Having considered Mr. Otunnu's recommendations and the report of the Secretary-General of February 2005 on this issue, the United Nations Security Council, in its Resolution 1612 of July 2005, set out all six areas as the major focus of its action regarding children in armed conflict. The resolution creates a monitoring and reporting mechanism where recruitment and use of children is taking place in conflict situations. In addition, it provides for targeted measures against persistent violators, and calls for dialogue with all parties to conflicts. Parties who are deemed violators are listed in annexes to the Secretary-General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict.

In regards to Sri Lanka:

- Violations have been committed against children during the armed conflict;
- The process under UNSC 1612 has been triggered;
- The armed conflict is still taking place and the identified abuses against children continue;
- Violations are taking place both in areas under the control of the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) and in territories administered by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE); and
- Both the GoSL and the LTTE have recognised the abuses being committed against children in the course of the armed conflict and have established bodies (child protection authorities) to address the issues.

Abuses committed against children in the course of the armed conflict between the GoSL and the LTTE are of such magnitude as to require the international community to act.

In our view, the situation in Sri Lanka can serve as a useful case study to analyse international and national efforts to address the effects of armed conflicts on children in the global context. This case study will serve to define strategies for future action in order to ameliorate the catastrophic effect of this armed conflict as well as others.

3. Aim

To bring together experts on children and armed conflict in order to evaluate the effectiveness of children and armed conflict (CAAC) mechanisms in place in Sri Lanka, and to identify areas of concern and suggestions for future action.

4. Objectives

CJPD, Geneva Call and IMADR (the convenors) seek:

- To map out CAAC protection interventions in Sri Lanka and identify gaps;
- To gain a better understanding of the perspectives of the parties to the conflict vis-à-vis barriers to compliance with international CAAC obligations;
- To identify measures that may be taken to improve protection of children by the parties to the conflict; and
- To produce lessons learned from the Sri Lanka context for global application.

5. Methodology

The convenors will hold an interactive seminar where participants are able to address CAAC issues and actions as related to the Sri Lanka conflict, including the process established by the UN Security Council. The country specific findings will lead to discussions of CAAC issues in the global context.

Participants:

The convenors plan a balanced selection of participants to ensure multiple perspectives and to contribute to one or more of the following:

- The capacity to address one or more of the six key areas identified;
- Sound knowledge of the legal aspects of armed conflict (humanitarian law) and children's rights;
- An understanding of the background to the armed conflict in Sri Lanka;
- Experience in monitoring violations/breaches of human rights and humanitarian law;
- Experience in engagement of/negotiations with all parties to armed-conflict;
- Involvement in providing humanitarian aid to victims of armed conflict; or
- Expertise in children, human rights and human security.

Representatives of the following UN bodies and other organisations have been identified as meeting the above criteria:

- UNICEF
- SRSG
- ICRC
- Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict
- National Child Protection Authority (GoSL)
- Child Protection Authority attached to the LTTE's Peace Secretariat
- Save the Children Fund

- Amnesty International
- International Educational Development / Humanitarian Law Project
- Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation
- Human Rights Watch
- Médecins Sans Frontières
- World Vision International
- Other organisations

Observers:

Representatives of interested governments, CJPD, Geneva Call, IMADR and other NGOs, academics and other persons concerned with this topic.

Partnership/Collaboration:

The convenors seek to involve other partners/collaborators.

Seminar Format:

An interactive seminar conducted over two days will comprise working sessions composed of small group discussions and plenary sessions. The presenters will provide a written paper or outline to all participants and observers prior to the start of the seminar. Each session will be followed by a discussion during which participants may seek clarification, raise concerns and suggest measures to address major issues identified by the presenters.

The seminar will be held in Geneva, Switzerland.

6. Output

The proceedings of the interactive seminar, including papers submitted, will be published and disseminated. An Executive Summary will also be published, and translated into other relevant languages.

7. Estimated Costs (Budget)

The project is estimated to cost (tbc)

8. Implementation & Time table

Expected to be completed by early 2009