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Photo: Syrian refugee in Lebanon. (D. Khamissy / UNHCR)

Justice for Children in Armed Conflict

MONITORING AND INVESTIGATING CONFLICT-RELATED VIOLATIONS INVOLVING CHILDREN

A Life Disrupted

War turns children's lives upside down. A sudden rise in instability can interrupt education, tear families and communities apart, and force children to witness horrific acts of violence. When conflict escalates, young girls and boys are especially vulnerable: they can be forced to take active roles within conflicts as porters, spies, guards, human shields, suicide bombers, active combatants, and sex slaves.

The international community has made great strides to expose and prosecute crimes of mass atrocity, including those involving children. The complexity of investigating children's involvement, however, presents unique challenges: when conflicts end, those who were recruited into armed groups as children may now be adults. Identities can be shattered and trust eroded. Regardless of whether children are victims, perpetrators, or both, traumatic experiences from the past may continue to be felt on a daily basis.

The Need for Expertise

Exposing patterns of conflict-related crimes involving children can help to hold perpetrators accountable. To do so, however, requires proper training in order to accurately capture information, document evidence, and - most importantly - minimize harm and re-traumatization of children. It is critical that individuals and investigatory bodies receive comprehensive training that equips them for this work.

Recognizing the need for training in this area, Justice Rapid Response, the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative and the Institute for International Criminal Investigations have forged a new partnership. It aims to ensure that international crimes involving children are addressed appropriately and systematically in the context of monitoring, fact-finding and investigative mechanisms. Our partnership strengthens the capacity of the international community to address crimes and serious human rights violations involving children, while always prioritizing their safety and well-being.



The **Justice Rapid Response**, the **Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative** the **Institute for International Criminal Investigations** joint initiative on Monitoring and Investigating Conflict-related Violations Involving Children (MICVIC) provides the right expertise to be rapidly deployed, when and where children need it most.

Photo: Zam Zam IDP camp, North Darfur, Sudan (Albert Gonzalez Farran / UNAMID)

Our Training Approach

The **Monitoring and Investigating Conflict-related Violations Involving Children (MICVIC)** courses are intensive trainings designed for criminal investigators, human rights monitors, child protection officers, psychosocial experts, DDR specialists, and military experts having dealt with child-soldiers. They teach these experts to work under international norms and conditions, and to be productive and safe members of diverse monitoring and investigative teams. Those certified by the MICVIC training course are added to JRR's roster of experts and be made available to UN entities, countries, regional organizations, and other bodies involved in investigations, inquiries, fact-finding and human rights monitoring. The first course, held in August 2016, focused on the conflicts in Syria and Iraq, and paid special attention to conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against children. It covered:

- ❖ International legal frameworks
- ❖ Laws, policies, principles and conventions
- ❖ Investigation strategy and planning
- ❖ Sexual exploitation and abuse of children
- ❖ Interview techniques
- ❖ Psychosocial considerations
- ❖ Witness management and protection
- ❖ Safety and security in conflict settings

About the Partners

Justice Rapid Response is a multi-stakeholder mechanism that manages the rapid deployment of human rights and criminal justice professionals from a standby roster. We deploy our experts upon the request of the international community to investigate, analyze and report on situations where serious human rights violations and international crimes have been reported.

The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative is the only organization in the world that is taking a prevention-oriented, security sector focused approach to the crime against humanity that is child soldiering. Recognized by the United Nations as a subject matter expert, the Dallaire Initiative conducts research and training and advances advocacy efforts to progressively eradicate the use of children as weapons of war.

The Institute for International Criminal Investigations is an independent, not-for-profit, international organization that provides criminal justice and human rights professionals with training to impartially investigate and adjudicate egregious human rights violations, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.

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