



# Are These Our Neighbours?

## Child Soldiers

*“My children have gone from me, and are no more”*

*Jeremiah 10:20*

*“Let the little children come to me.” Luke 18:16*

### Reasons for using child soldiers

#### *In Third World countries*

- Separated from parents because of war
- Parents already dead through war, famine or AIDS
- Forced abduction (Sudanese Liberation Army)
- Offer of food and employment.
- More obedient than adults.
- Guns and ammunition are cheap (an AK 47 and a chicken cost the same) and easy for children to carry and operate.

#### *Methods*

- Indoctrination. The brain washing methods associated with cults are used.
- Food deprivation, especially of nutrients.
- Denied sleep while being subject to persuasive talk. Kept busy.
- Initiation through a first killing.

### Who is a child?

- Someone under 18 years of age. Age range of child soldiers 10 years and up.
- Estimated number of child soldiers in the world 250,000 to 300,000.

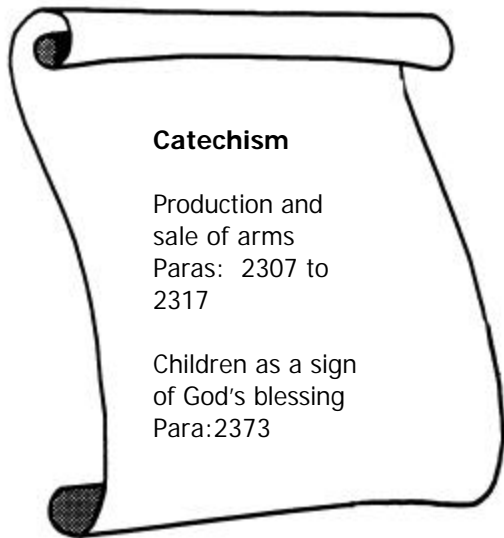
#### *In First World countries: no reasons and not widely practiced but:*

- Canada, Great Britain and United States have cadet forces whose members may be attached to war units.
- All three countries refused to sign the September, 1999 Maputo declaration not to use child soldiers.



### In which countries?

- Mainly in Africa: Liberia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Angola among others.
- In Asia Sri Lanka, Cambodia.
- Central American conflict areas Guatemala, Colombia, Nicaragua, Salvador.
- In European conflict areas such as Kosovo, Kurdistan.



### **Catechism**

Production and  
sale of arms  
Paras: 2307 to  
2317

Children as a sign  
of God's blessing  
Para:2373

***“They forced me to learn to fight the enemy in a war I didn’t understand. We were constantly beaten, just to keep us in a state of terror.”***

***Emilio aged 14, Guatemala***

***“In Sri Lanka, of 180 Tamil Tiger guerrillas killed in one government attack, more than half were still in their teens, and 128 were girls.”***

***Source, The Monitor,  
Project Ploughshares***

## **Reference Sources**

1. Project Ploughshares especially The Monitor December 1996 issue (local representative Linda Murphy 374-6023)
2. Amnesty International reports. Stop the use of Child Soldiers (local office - volunteers 653-2212)
3. Human Rights Watch see the Web Site.
4. Child Soldier: Role of Children in Armed Conflict. Guy S. Godwin Oxford University Press.

## **Speaker Resource**

Overseas workers returning from countries such as Liberia, Eritrea, Angola, Mozambique.

Refugees from such countries now settled here.

Mennonite Central Committee (665-2555)

## **Discussion**

1. Is this a matter of human rights?
2. Is this a new issue? What do we know about the Children’s Crusade?
3. What use is made of children in the selling of drugs in our North American Society? Are their lives in danger?
4. To what extent are guns, violence and killing a part of our culture?
5. What is the availability of guns in our society?
6. What is the role of The School of the Americas? (U.S.)

## **Action Suggestions**

1. Become involved in organizations mentioned. Subscribe to their publication.
2. Watch for news-items. Become informed.
3. Correspond with political, military leaders.