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THE ROMÉO  
DALLAIRE



CHILD  
SOLDIERS  
INITIATIVE



DALHOUSIE  
UNIVERSITY

# The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative: Working Paper | Understanding the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers as an Early Warning Indicator

# Acknowledgments

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## **The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative**

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# About the Dallaire Initiative



Retired Lt. Gen. Roméo Dallaire, former force commander of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), established the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative in 2007. Its mission is to develop new strategies and tactics for eradicating the recruitment and use of child soldiers worldwide.

To achieve this important objective, the Dallaire Initiative conducts programming on three fronts:

1. It pursues rigorous, innovative research at a world-class university;
2. It engages in high-level advocacy to promote universal adherence to all international conventions that prohibit the use of children in war;
3. It delivers scenario-based, prevention-oriented training to security sector actors.

In every aspect of its programming, the Dallaire Initiative seeks to collaborate with concerned governments, security sector actors, academics, humanitarians and communities. In particular, its unique approach to working with military, police, prison personnel and private security operators – many of whom are the first point of contact for child soldiers outside of their armed force or group – is both groundbreaking and critical to the interruption of children's recruitment.

In 2012, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) appointed the Dallaire Initiative as its subject matter expert for all issues pertaining to child soldiers. It is also an associate member of Watchlist, a supporting entity of the 100 Series Rules on the Use of Force (RUF) and an integral part of the newly inaugurated Institute for Children and Youth in Challenging Contexts (CYCC) at Dalhousie University.

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## Introduction

We are living in an era in which the level of human suffering as a result of intra-state conflict seems to be escalating exponentially. The essential challenge remains, how to create the political impetus for timely, non-selective responses to human suffering (MacFarlane and Weiss, 2000). In 2014, the international community struggled to react and respond to many violent conflicts from Syria, to Israel, to South Sudan, to Central African Republic and the Ukraine. Attempts at peace treaties, ceasefires, military and humanitarian interventions have all fallen desperately short in addressing the immense human rights violations and overall human suffering taking place. Rhetoric, international laws, sanctions, diplomacy and United Nations Security Council Resolutions have done very little to change this reality. As a result we are left with a world in which the spiraling cyclical dynamics of violent conflict will continue to be felt for generations to come.

At the very heart of the human suffering we are witnessing the plight

of vulnerable populations, and most notably children. In humanitarian settings around the world today, children are often half of the population affected by conflicts and disasters, including the deliberate targeting of children as victims and as perpetrators of violence. Of all the threats that define contemporary conflict, the use of child soldiers presents one of the farthest-reaching and most disturbing trends. The 2014 Annual Report of the United Nations Special Representative for the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict lists 7 state armies and 50 non-state armed groups that currently recruit and use children in 14 countries around the world (United Nations, 2014). If in the past children were made to fight in spite of their youth, they are now being made to fight because of their youth.

Conflict prevention is a concept that seems so inherently basic to the very human condition yet so difficult to achieve. Gandhi's major focus was always on preventative measures that we must take in order to transform

and remove the violent conditions and causes before they reach the point of exploding into terror or armed conflict. However, conflict prevention requires action by a multitude of stakeholders, who do not always understand how to communicate or act effectively across their mandates. It is therefore imperative that we explore new approaches to preventing deadly conflict, mass atrocities and genocide.

These new approaches must include how we prioritize the protection of children on the peace and security agenda. As Graça Machel stated: "Our collective failure to protect children must be transformed into an opportunity to confront the problems that cause their suffering" (Machel, 2001). It is possible that our failure to prevent and react to conflicts is directly correlated to our failure to protect children and prevent their deliberate use and abuse in armed conflict. How can we find solutions to prevent deadly conflict and mass atrocities through improvement of our approaches to prevent the use of children as soldiers?





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## Early Warning

In 1996, Clingendael defined early warning as “an instrument of conflict prevention strategies that should help to ascertain whether and when violent conflict can be expected to occur with the object to prevent this from happening by way of so called ‘early response’” (Clingendael, 1996). Despite attempts to define early warning, a precise and comprehensive definition of what constitutes early warning is still elusive.

The lack of clarity surrounding early warning often cripples the operational capacity of global efforts to prevent conflict and mass atrocities. “The consequences of failing to heed the warning signs of mass atrocities and genocide are monumentally horrifying. Repeating the phrase “never again” is in and of itself a continued failure” (Jan Eliason, 2014).

Jay Ulfelder, a conflict forecaster with the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C., refers to early warning as an imperfect science reacting to conflict underway (Ulfelder, 2013). Mass atrocities require a degree of organization that is aimed at preparing and strengthening a particular group and weakening, excluding or targeting victim groups. Typically mobilization to commit mass atrocities involves establishing, arming and training of militias while at the same time committing an escalation of unpunished human rights violations against targeted groups (Bellamy, 2011). If we can understand and recognize when this mobilization occurs at its earliest stages, we could therefore use this critical opportunity to create more effective responses. Unfortunately, we often fail to heed the signs and wait until the situation has exploded and the media displays horrific images in which the public response is one of disbelief.

Over the past decade, global efforts have been making strides towards an effective early warning mechanism. However, there is still no internationally agreed upon methodology behind early warning. Highlighted below are three contemporary examples of early warning mechanisms: The Early Warning Project based out of the United States Holocaust Museum, the Fragile States Index created by the Fund for Peace, and R2P Countries at Risk developed by the UN Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.

## 1. The Early Warning Project

“The Early Warning Project produces risk assessments of the potential for mass atrocities around the world by combining state-of-the-art quantitative and qualitative analysis. The project aims to give governments, advocacy groups, and at-risk societies earlier and more reliable warning, and thus more opportunity to take action, before killings occur” (Earlywarningproject.com, 2015).

The Early Warning Project’s risk assessments are based on an average of three statistical models. These models were chosen based on their diverse approaches to the origins of mass atrocities. The three models are as follows:

- I. Barbara Harff and the Political Instability Task force look into the probability of genocide and violence perpetrated by a country’s government. This model places emphasis on key risk factors “authoritarian rule, the political salience of elite ethnicity, evidence of an exclusionary elite ideology, and international isolation as measure by trade openness” (Earlywarningproject.com, 2015);
- II. The second model looks at mass killing differently by using “statistical forecasts of future coup attempts and civil wars as proxy measures of factors that could either spur incumbent rulers to lash out against threat to their power or usher in an insecure new regime that might do the same” (Earlywarningproject.com, 2015)
- III. The third method uses a machine called Theme Forecasts, creating an algorithm that is “an amalgamation of theory and induction that takes experts’ beliefs about the origins of mass killing as its jumping off point but also leaves more room for inductive discovery of contingent effect” (Earlywarningproject.com, 2015).

In 2015, the Early Warning Project identified Myanmar, Sudan and the Central African Republic as countries with the highest statistical risk of state-led mass killing (Earlywarningproject.com, 2015).

## 2. Fragile States Index

The Fragile States Index (FSI) focuses on risk indicators and its aim is to be used as a tool to promote strategies for sustainable security worldwide. The FSI uses “an interdisciplinary combination of qualitative research and quantitative methodologies which are needed to establish patterns and acquire predictive value. Without the right data, it is impossible to identify problems that may be festering ‘below the radar’” (Messner, 2014). The FSI utilizes a Conflict Assessment System Tool (CAST) software based on social science methodology. The CAST analyzes data based on “highly specialized search parameters [...] based on twelve key political, social and economic indicators (which in turn include over 100 sub-indicators)” (Messner, 2014) to obtain final scores for every country. In an effort to have an effective early warning system “assessments must go beyond specialized area knowledge, narrative case studies and anecdotal evidence to identify and grasp broad social trends” (Messner, 2014).

The 2014 Fragile States Index placed South Sudan, Somalia, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sudan respectively, on very high alert of degenerating into conflict (Messner, 2014).

## 3. The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect

In an effort to spur action to halt mass atrocities, “the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect applies an R2P lens to situations where populations are experiencing, or at risk of, genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity or ethnic cleansing” (Globalr2p.org, 2015). The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P) uses qualitative research methods and issues a bimonthly “R2P Monitor” taking into account a broad spectrum of stimuli for mass atrocity crimes. The GCR2P identifies Syria, Sudan, Nigeria, Iraq, and Central African Republic as being in current crisis; and identifies the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan as countries at risk of falling into crisis (Globalr2p.org, n.d.).

Although all three models use an array of qualitative and quantitative data to establish which countries are at most risk of experiencing mass atrocities or violent conflict, they are not in agreement. The inability to find agreement on early warning leaves the international community powerless to take preventive action. Needless to say early warning has been a work in progress for the past several decades.



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# The Responsibility to Protect

As a direct result of the conflicts that were witnessed after 1989, most notably the Rwandan genocide and the civil war in the Former Yugoslavia, the world was left scratching its head as to how to deal with the new world order. In 1999 the Independent Inquiry on the United Nations Action in Rwanda and the United Nations Secretariat's Review of the Fall of Srebrenica sparked much debate and calls for action. As a result in September 2005, UN Member States endorsed the concept of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). State sovereignty is not only a right: it also implies responsibility according to the concept of the R2P doctrine. This concept holds that individual states have the primary responsibility to protect their population from mass atrocities like genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. However, R2P requires the international community to encourage and help states to exercise this responsibility and to take action through the UN Security Council if states fail to protect (Gessner and Colter, 2012).

The Responsibility to Protect is built on 3 pillars

1. Every state has the responsibility to protect its populations from four mass atrocity crimes: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing;
2. The wider international community has the responsibility to encourage and assist individual states in meeting that responsibility;
3. If a state is manifestly failing to protect its populations, the international community must be prepared to take appropriate collective action, in timely and decisive manner in accordance with the UN Charter. (Globalr2p.org)

Since the introduction of the R2P doctrine into United Nations rhetoric in 2005, it has attempted to promote prevention over reaction. Using the idea of early warning indicators, R2P aims to compel the global community to take action early to prevent mass atrocities. As part of the UN World Summit Agreement, the UN aimed to establish “an early warning capability to inform timely and decisive action” (Guéhenno, Ramcharan and Mortimer, 2010).

One of the key difficulties with early warning analysis is that it “must pay due attention to the circumstances that give rise to peacetime atrocities and not fixate on armed conflict” (Bellamy, 2011). The point here being that if we only look at early warning once conflict has emerged then we will fail to properly heed the multiple entry points and signs that can lead to more effective preventative mechanisms.

“There is an apparent failure within the United Nations system to fully appreciate that the character and urgency of situations leading to genocide requires a unique analysis and approach, justifying a mandate narrowly tailored for this purpose” (Akhavan, 2011). R2P is specifically designed to prevent mass atrocity crimes and genocide by engaging a “narrow but deep”

approach as outlined by UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon,

Our conception of [R2P], then, is narrow but deep. Its scope is narrow, focused solely on the four crimes and violations agreed by the world leaders in 2008. Extending the principle to cover other calamities, such as HIV/AIDS ... would undermine the consensus. At the same time our response should be deep, utilizing the whole prevention and protection tool kit available to the United Nations system, to its regional, sub region and civil society partners and, not least, member states themselves. (United Nations, 2008)

In spite of the inclusion of R2P language in 32 UN resolutions (Globalr2p.org, 2013), concrete examples of the doctrine's successes have been hard to come by—this is partly due to the lack of consensus over when to operationalize R2P and what operationalizing R2P looks like. The issue lies in the misunderstanding of what R2P is and how it is to be used. As the Stanley Foundation highlights,

We need to know more about how and by whom the tools might be used. What is more, while we know

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what general tools we ought to see in the kit, we do not know how full the kit is, or whether all the tools are in working order. Finally, we need a clear idea of the jobs that need doing—not only the immediate work identified by early warning and assessment but also the longer-term, pre-crisis structural work. (Bellamy, 2011)

“It would be illogical to propose that the principle [R2P] only applies once killings have already begun, perversely waiting for a death toll to mount before a situation could be considered a legitimate concern to the international community” (Gessner and Colter, 2012). Yet, what we have seen in practice is that reaction is often too slow and too little too late.

Critics of R2P rest on the imperfection of humanitarian intervention and use of military force to criticize the use of the principle. Roland Paris (2014), with respect to the military intervention into Libya in 2011, questions: “How, exactly, was the use of military force expected to prevent mass atrocities and to uphold the principles of R2P? This question has not been answered in depth; indeed, it has rarely been posed” (Paris, 2014). Paris further argues,

At the core of the doctrine is a policy instrument of critical significance whose practical applications and operational assumptions are still poorly understood...[The third] pillar looms over the others: armed intervention is the last-resort emergency option to prevent mass atrocities if all non-military measures fail. (Paris, 2014)

The R2P response needs to be proportional and appropriate to the situation in order to avoid undesirable consequences. In the past the UN has been forced to make ill-advised, hasty decisions, for example, “more civilians were killed after peacekeepers were deployed to Bosnia, Rwanda and the DRC, than before” (Bellamy, 2011). Action needs to be taken to ensure that prevention has a fighting chance.

To successfully prevent genocide and mass atrocity crimes R2P requires a holistic approach—an array of methods need to be employed. There is a need to develop consensus over the definition of early warning so that R2P can be effectively put into motion. At the same time, the principles and foundations for R2P have elicited debate and new approaches to be studied and this in and of itself should be viewed as a positive movement.

“[P]revention is the single most important dimension of the Responsibility to Protect: prevention options should always be exhausted before intervention is contemplated, and more commitment and resources must be devoted to it” (Akhavan, 2011). In order for preventative action to take place the bell of early warning needs to be rung. “R2P rejects the ‘false choice’ between doing nothing and ‘sending in the marines,’ and instead prioritizes prevention” (Gessner and Colter, 2012).

In spite of prevention being a large part of R2P rhetoric, the global community has regarded R2P as being reactionary and only responded once conflict has already started. If there is evidence of mass atrocities being committed than we are already too late. “The key to a more targeted approach, therefore, lies in using the tools in an appropriate and context sensitive fashion” (Bellamy, 2012). There needs to be a comprehensive list of early warning indicators that the global community can draw on in order to justify action. The recruitment and use of child soldiers, as a crime against humanity, falls under the mandate of R2P but has yet to be used as an early warning indicator, yet it has the potential to galvanize global support while at the same time achieving Ban Ki Moon’s call for a “narrow but deep approach”.



## Rights Upfront

In recent years we have taken steps to strengthen genocide prevention, conflict resolution, protection of civilians, the rule of law and human rights mechanisms (Jan Eliason, 2014). The theory should therefore be that such efforts have resulted in the United Nations and the international system in being better prepared to anticipate, prevent and respond to crises (Jan Eliason, 2014).

Jan Eliason argues that many individuals, including UN field staff, are providing early warning and supporting local efforts to protect human rights and attempting to stop conflict. However, since the tragedy of Rwanda, hundreds of thousands of people have died in mass atrocities and tens of millions have been displaced (Jan Eliason, 2014). As we have witnessed in Syria, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Mali, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, this principle has not been consistently and adequately implemented. From this somber perspective, strengthening action to prevent human rights violations and abuses must be one of the most important issues that Member states and the UN must deal with in today's troubled world (Jan Eliason 2014).

In April 2012, the UN Secretary General established an Internal Review Panel to examine the actions in Sri Lanka during the final stages of that conflict. The Panel's report concluded that there had been a "systemic failure" of United Nations action. It also stated that some of the failings were close to those that had occurred 15 years earlier in Rwanda.

As a result of this Panel's recommendations to the UN, the Deputy Secretary General led work to design a plan to carry out the recommendations—referred to as the "Rights Up Front" Action Plan. It now must be translated into action. The Rights Up Front Action Plan seeks to prevent large-scale violations of human rights. The plan is framed by the following guiding concepts:

- The United Nations must respond early to the risk of mass atrocities so as to prevent their occurrence;
- Prevention is a common responsibility of the entire UN system;
- We can best meet this responsibility when we in the UN system realize the potential of our combined mandates and when we operate as one;
- Sharing information with Member States and national actors about human rights violations and civilians in need of protection is a crucial means to gather political momentum for prevention.

In 2014, The UN Security Council took further steps towards engraining a culture of prevention by adopting resolution 2171 (2014). With the adoption of resolution 2171, the Security Council "committed itself to better utilizing all tools of the United Nations system to ensure that warning signs of impending bloodshed translated into 'concrete preventative action'" (United Nations, 2014). Such concrete, preventive action may be illustrated in prioritizing the protection of children on the peace and security agenda, which could warn us of possible genocide. In particular, how can we prioritize the prevention of the use of children as soldiers as integral to the peace and security agenda?



## Children as a Priority on the Peace and Security Agenda

The affect that armed conflict has on children has been widely recognized as a human rights and child protection concern (Whitman, Zayed and Conradi, 2014). However, the responsibility of protecting and upholding those rights has largely fallen onto the shoulders of civil society organizations. Finding a solution to the eradication of the use of child soldiers requires a comprehensive approach. The shortcomings of the current efforts to address the use of child soldiers is evidenced by the lack of attention paid to child protection and prevention of the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict within peace agreements and treaties: “since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, 180 peace agreements have been signed between warring parties. Of these, only ten contained specific provisions for child combatants” (Whitman, Zayed and Conradi, 2014). Prioritizing the prevention and protection of children from their use as child soldiers, versus overall child protection, is critical to understand in this context because of the connection of child soldiers as an early warning indicator.

The prevention of the use of child soldiers has been relatively low on the overall peace and security agenda when addressing armed conflict—however child soldiers are a security concern and need—and deserve—to be placed at the top of the security agenda. Too often the global community stands idly by as children’s rights are horrifically violated in conflict zones. The global community’s inability to act is most evident in cases like the abduction of over 200 girls in Chibok, Nigeria by the extremist group Boko Haram. The Nigerian armed forces were warned hours before the attack took place—but were unable to react in time (Amnesty.org, 2014). Nearly a year later the Nigerian Government and Armed Forces are still trying to make a dent in stemming the advance of Boko Haram. In this case, Nigeria chose to react rather than adopt a preventive strategy, and now is struggling to keep the country whole.

Over the past several decades the focus of the global community has been largely devoted to reacting to situations once they have escalated to violent conflict and children have been used as soldiers—larger focus needs to be placed on the prevention of the recruitment and use of child soldiers. In fixating solely upon disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and not upon the complete eradication of the use of child soldiers as a phenomenon, the international community has merely attempted to fix the broken, rather than to protect the whole. Until this issue is elevated within the security agenda, the international community will continue to squander excellent opportunities to prevent the recruitment of children as soldiers (Whitman, Zayed and Conradi, 2014).





UN Photo | Albert González Farran

## Child Soldiers

Of all the characteristics that have come to define contemporary armed conflicts, none are more troubling than the recruitment and use of child soldiers by state and non-state armed groups alike. In spite of the presence of child soldiers in conflicts throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century the global community did not start to address the issue until the last two decades.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) came into effect in 1990 and is now one of the most widely ratified conventions in the world—only Somalia and the United States have not signed. Article 38 of the CRC defines a child as any individual under the age of 18. In 2002, the CRC introduced the Optional Protocol expanding the protection of children, setting 18 as the minimum age for participation in hostilities, recruitment into armed groups and for compulsory recruitment by governments (Whitman, Zayed and Conradi, 2014). The CRC and its Optional Protocol are two prominent examples of how the international community has committed to the protection of children in armed conflict, however there many other international and regional conventions and treaties that reference the need for special attention to be given to children.<sup>1</sup> Special attention has also been afforded to the plight of children in armed conflict in special courts and international tribunals.<sup>2</sup>

The protection of children in armed conflict was further strengthened in 2007 when the international community amended the Cape Town Principles (1997) to create the Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups, commonly referred to as the Paris Principles. The Paris Principles defines a child soldier or “a child associated with an armed force or armed group” as,

Any person below 18 years of age who is or who has been recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys and girls, used as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies or for sexual purposes. It does not only refer to a child who is taking or has taken a direct part in hostilities. (UNICEF, 2007)

1 The additional protocols to the 4 Geneva Conventions of 1949; the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 182; the Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially woman and children

2 International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY); Special Court of Sierra Leone (SCSL)

“The Paris Principles is a detailed document, which sets forth a broad doctrine relating to the protection of children from recruitment and use in armed conflict as well as the release of existing child soldiers and their successful reintegration into civilian life” (Whitman, Zayed and Conradi, 2014).

Nevertheless, in spite of the many international treaties, agreements and conventions safeguarding children, the global use of child soldiers is extensive. The International community views “the abuse of children as a tragedy but it fails to actively recognize how their use as child soldiers is linked to the severity of conflict” (Whitman, 2013). The inability to see the causal link leads to misguided policy, resources and effort being placed on addressing and preventing the use of child soldiers.

The abuse, recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups is a deliberate tactic and strategy that needs to be addressed. Armed groups use specific tactics to ensure that child soldiers are alienated from their communities, such as forcing them to commit acts of violence, making it next to impossible to return back to their community once conflict has ended—once one child is used all children become suspect. Armed groups use children because of their perceived tactical advantage—children are used as a weapons system. Children are strategically recruited and used by armed groups because they are easily manipulated; they are a cheap and expendable resource; they require very limited training (Whitman, Zayed and Conradi, 2014).

In 2014, The UN Security Council made considerable steps towards instilling prevention within its peacekeeping culture by adopting resolution 2143 (2014) and resolution 2151 (2014), aimed at ensuring that troops deployed on missions are prepared to address the threat of child soldiers. The adoption of these two resolutions is evidence that the Security Council recognizes that the recruitment and use of child soldiers as a security concern that deserves attention.

Children can be a rallying point for collaboration and action that may lead to key lessons that can be transferred to other problems that emerge on the peace and security agenda. Instead of relegating children to the bottom of the agenda or as an “add on” item, we need to convince policy makers, international organisations, and governments that the protection of children in armed conflict is critical to the overall success of any peace and security efforts. (Whitman, 2012)

## Case Study: The Central African Republic

All too often the global community fails to take action to prevent conflict and mass atrocities in spite of the early warning indicators. Nearly a decade ago grave human rights abuses, including the recruitment of the use of children, were endemic in Central African Republic (CAR). In 2007, the UN reported that children were openly recruited by the People's Army for the Restoration of Democracy (APRD) in the northwest of the country, and the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR) used young boys and girls as porters, sex slaves, and frontline combatants (UNICEF, 2010). The use of child soldiers "not only increases risks of more wars and state failures, but also affects how long these wars last" (Singer, 2005).

In a perilous effort to remedy the child soldier issue in the Central African Republic, the UN decided to treat the symptoms rather than the central problems that create an environment where children are used as weapons of war. Throughout the 2007-2008 reporting period, the UN and partner NGOs hailed the release of some 1,091 children, however scores of children still remained associated with armed groups (UNICEF, 2010).

Due to the lack of adequate attention paid to the prevention of the use of children as soldiers in the Central African Republic, the progress documented by the United Nations from 2007 to 2008 was futile. In 2010 the UN reported that the UFDR, Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (CPJP) and local self-defence militias continued to recruit and use children in their ranks (UN Security Council, 2011). Efforts to have armed groups join the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process had fallen short upon reports of the continued use of children by the Democratic Front of the Central African People (FDPC) and the Movement for the Liberation of the Central African People (MLPC) (UN Security Council, 2011).

In a concerted effort to stem the prevalence of grave violations perpetrated against children,

On 1 January 2010, the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA) was established, with a mandate to, inter alia, ensure that child protection is properly addressed in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, including by supporting the monitoring and reporting mechanism established according to resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005). (UN Security Council, 2011)

By September 2010, the Central African Republic signed the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on Children and Armed Conflict strengthening its commitment to ending the recruitment and use of child soldiers, at least on paper.

However, despite the presence of a monitoring and reporting mechanism related to UN Security Council Resolution 1612's six grave violations, headed by UNICEF and BINUCA, the Central African Republic degenerated into civil war characterized by not only divisions along ethnic and religious lines, but also the use of child soldiers. Muslim Séléka rebels seized power in March 2013 and established their rule through brutal human rights violations, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers (UN Security Council, 2013). Both Séléka forces and government forces recruited and used children to man roadblocks, act as spies and take up arms. The use of child soldiers "enhances an ability to help conflict groups rapidly return



to the field and makes promises of disarmament and demobilization less tenable” (Singer, 2005).

The security situation then took a grave turn in September 2013 when the Christian Anti-balaka rebels took up arms and began scores of reprisal killings effectively kick starting a horrific chapter in the history of the Central African Republic (Human Rights Watch, 2013). Children were re-recruited, and in some cases “children previously separated by the United Nations from different armed groups, including 19 children formerly associated with CPJP” (UN Security Council, 2013). The global community did not prioritize the prevention of the recruitment and use of child soldiers in 2007 and was therefore unable to prevent conflict and the re-recruitment of children nearly a decade later—“children make wars easier to start and harder to end” (Singer, 2005).

As a result of the continued use of children, the deployment of security sector personnel to Central African Republic in response to the surge of violence in 2013 had detrimental results. During a battle for Bangui against Séléka rebels, 13 South African soldiers were killed—the largest military loss since the end of apartheid (Mail & Guardian, 2013).

Some of the survivors who have returned home recounted to local newspapers that they only discovered after the battle that they had been fighting against some teenage rebel soldiers. “It was only after the firing had stopped that we saw we had killed kids. We did not come here for this... to kill kids. It makes you sick. They were crying calling for help... calling for (their) moms,” a paratrooper told the *Sunday Times*. (Mail & Guardian, 2013)

In 2007 Human Rights Watch reported that “hundreds of civilians have



UN Photo | Catianne Tjerina

been killed, more than 10 thousand houses burned, and approximately 212,000 persons have fled their homes in terror” (Human Rights Watch, 2007) in the Central African Republic. When conflict broke out again in 2012, the extent of killings and population displaced dwarfs the 2007 numbers. The UN (2014) reported, “thousands of people in CAR are estimated to have been killed, nearly 1 million driven from their homes, and 2.2 million, about half the population, need humanitarian aid” (UN News Centre, 2014). It is undeniable the brutality of conflict greatly increased in scale from 2007 to 2014 along with the reporting of the use of child soldiers—“more than 6,000 child soldiers” (UN News Centre, 2014) were estimated to be involved in the hostilities in 2014 further evidencing that “as conflicts drag on, more and more children are recruited” (Singer, 2005).

Continuing to disregard children as a security priority will result in an ill-equipped security sector powerless to halt the vicious cycle of human rights abuses and violent conflict further perpetuating the use of children as soldiers for generations to come.

## Operationalizing Early Warning Through Child Soldier Prevention

All three early warning mechanisms presented earlier in the chapter use sound arguments and data in their early warning assessments, but their conclusions are not in agreement. However, a common factor amongst all countries listed below by the Global Centre for R2P as either being high risk, at high alert or in current crisis is that they are all listed by the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict for the present recruitment and use of child soldiers within their borders.

Table 1 – R2P Highlighted Conflicts and Child Soldiers

Identified R2P Populations at Risk	SRSB Children And Armed Conflict List	Countries that have perpetrators before the ICC
Syria	X	
Sudan		X*
South Sudan	X	
Central African Republic	X	X*
Democratic Republic of Congo	X	X
Myanmar	X	
Nigeria		
Iraq	X	
Pakistan	X	
Somalia	X	
Cote D'Ivoire	X	X*
Central Africa (LRA)	X	X
Republic of Kenya		
Libya	X	X
Kyrgyzstan		
Guinea		
Sri Lanka		
Mali	X	X*
Egypt		

\*Countries with perpetrators who are not being charged with war crimes related to child soldier recruitment or use.

As evidenced in table 1, there is an inescapable relationship between R2P identified populations at risk and countries that have child soldiers.

The Responsibility to Protect explicitly outlines our responsibility to prevent mass atrocities, but it also applies to the prevention of child soldiers. In Central African Republic, the abuse of children and their use as soldiers are signs that point to the potential genocide. It is time we understood this as the early warning it is—in CAR and Rwanda we failed to do so. (Whitman, 2013)

“The use of R2P as a tool for mobilizing action can complement other atrocity prevention initiatives” (Gessner and Colter, 2012), such as the efforts of the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative to prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

A member of the Dallaire Initiative’s facilitation team in Zimbabwe “encompassed the value of the Dallaire Initiative’s training with this statement, ‘one cannot eat an elephant all on their own, everyone has to take their bite’” (Whitman et al., 2014). It is important to “mainstream’ atrocity prevention considerations into other UN programs and activities, including human rights, humanitarian affairs, peacekeeping, peace-building, political affairs, and development” (Gessner and Colter, 2012). The Stanley Foundation (2011) argues, “given that, like Swiss cheese, human systems always have holes, the most effective way of reducing risk is to introduce additional layers of protection” (Bellamy, 2011). Early warning indicators need to be extensive rather than confined. The Stanley Foundation (2011) further illustrates the extensive nature of early warning in *Table 2*.

Despite the list including many factors and key elements, there is no mention of the recruitment and use of child soldiers as a precondition of genocide and mass atrocities. By using the “swiss cheese” argument we can see the importance of framing the recruitment and use of child soldiers as an early warning for mass atrocities.

Understanding child soldiers as a precondition for mass atrocities also allows more room to address the issues through structural measures. In weak and fragile states, children are more easily swayed into participating in criminal activity. The factors that render them vulnerable to such work are extremely similar to those faced by child soldiers: they are plentiful and readily available, financially desperate, under or uneducated, have little expectation of finding gainful employment and are continuously exposed to the violence and degradation that is endemic to failing and failed states. Children who are used for illegal child labour, criminal activity or trafficking purposes are therefore easy prey for those who wish to use or mobilize those same children and networks for the purpose of creating armed conflict. Recognizing this link is critical in the overall prevention of the use of children as soldiers but also to the overall efforts to prevent mass atrocities.

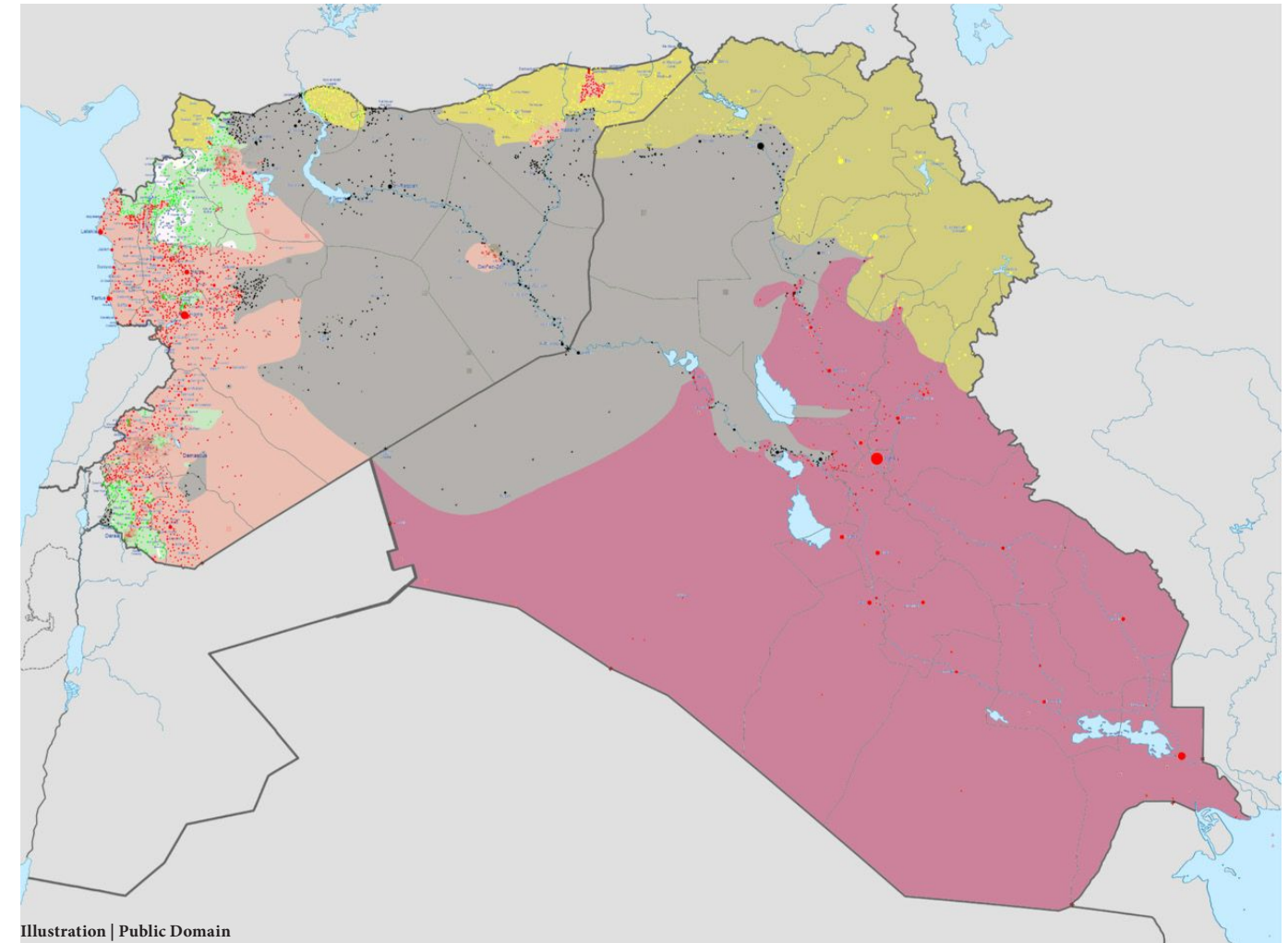


UN Photo | Eskinder Debebe

Table 2 - Preconditions of Genocide and Mass Atrocities:

Factors	Key Elements
Social Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Politicization of religious or ethnic divisions</li> <li>• Social economic or political discrimination</li> <li>• History of genocide or mass atrocity</li> </ul>
Regime Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human rights violations</li> <li>• Absence of rule of law</li> <li>• Absence of democracy</li> </ul>
Economic Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low GDP per capita</li> <li>• Low economic interdependence</li> <li>• Horizontal inequalities</li> </ul>
Armed Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence of multiple armed groups/ illicit arms flows</li> <li>• Establishment of militia (government or nongovernment)</li> <li>• Group-based recruitment practices</li> <li>• Presence of armed conflict</li> </ul>

(Bellamy, 2011)



## Case Study: ISIS in Iraq

To further illustrate the points highlighted in this paper, it is important to recognize how this is impacting one of the largest challenges to international peace and security that currently exists—the threat of ISIS. ISIS, also known as the Islamic State or ISIL, has been on a rampage of destruction and terror through Syria and Iraq since the beginning of 2014. News reports have widely documented the growth of the terror organization, highlighting the group’s influence over social media and attraction of foreign fighters. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has documented reports of horrific abuses of human rights in the Iraq, including the deliberate recruitment and use of child soldiers as fighters on the front lines, sexual servitude and even for blood transfusions for injured adult fighters (OHCHR, 2014).

However, documentation on the systematic and methodical violations and abuses of human rights within Iraq has recently come to light. On request of the Iraqi government, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights sent a team with the mandate to investigate alleged war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide perpetrated by ISIS (OHCHR, 2015). Among the violations documented in the report include ethnically and religiously motivated killings of the Yezidis, Christians and Shi’a; politically motivated attacks, sexual and gender based violence, and notably the recruitment and use of children (OHCHR, 2015). The use and recruitment of child soldiers is not a phenomenon of one continent, one region, or one conflict situation—the recruitment and use of child soldiers is a global issue that demands a measured global response.

## Conclusion

The use of children as soldiers and the evidence of children participating in mass atrocities and genocide has occurred from the Hitler Youth of the Second World War, to the killing fields of Cambodia, and to the genocide in Rwanda. It is not a new phenomenon in and of itself, however understanding the connection between child soldier use and recruitment and the potential for more effective early warning mechanisms has yet to be put into action. A range of early warning mechanisms needs to be established in the effort to ensure that the preventative response is “carefully tailored to the unique objectives and context of mass atrocity scenarios” (Bellamy, 2011). However, the early warning mechanisms identified to date have been so broad in scope that achieving success from a predictive perspective has been limited. It has been highlighted (Bellamy, 2009) that it is difficult to clearly define and identify structural factors that directly contribute to conflict and mass atrocities. However, identifying areas and situations where children are vulnerable for use and recruitment by armed groups is far more tangible.

This approach can lead to actions that place emphasis on the protective mechanisms being strengthened for children – from the education processes, to community sensitization, to security sector reforms, and re-thinking about the most cost-effective investments for communities and nations at risk. In our hyper-connected, globalized world, people, technologies and ideas move more fluidly than ever before, generating unprecedented opportunities for collaboration to create large-scale change (UNICEF, 2015). But large scale change can begin with smaller tangible successes that target key areas and populations, expanding the list of early warning mechanisms to recognize, prioritize, and preventing the use of children as soldiers may be that tangible which has eluded the global community and yet has the power to create long-term systemic change.



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