



It takes a world
to end violence against children

World Vision 



Child Soldiers:

A global recruitment index

OVERVIEW

Every year, almost unbelievably, **violence steals the childhoods of 1.7 billion children around the world.** It happens in every country, city and community. **They are forced to fight in adult wars, make decisions and witness things no child should see.**

Ending violence against children is an urgent issue, and through World Vision's global campaign, It takes a world to end violence against children, we relentlessly advocate for another way.

We work to shift people's understanding and attitudes towards violence against children, challenging the way we look at these issues. That is why we have produced and published this global index of government recruitment policies. We have a clear message to governments and those in power: make laws that make clear children should not fight in adult wars; focus on stopping this problem before it starts; invest in education, peacebuilding, and opportunities for children. Show them another way is possible.

For tens, maybe hundreds, of thousands of children, there is no real choice when it comes to joining armed groups. It's kill or be killed. They are promised education, protection, a future. Once they are involved, escaping is difficult and fraught with danger. These children grow up invisible and ignored. But, it doesn't need to be this way. An end to the use of child soldiers is possible, but it will take all of us to make it happen.

Acknowledgements

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Design: Fernando Otarola



Country			Age they recruit
1 Afghanistan		●	18 in law Listed by UN Watchlist for recruitment and use of children by state armed forces, as well as other grave violations against children in armed conflict.
2 Albania	●		18 (legal minimum age in case of compulsory mobilisation) 19 (legal minimum age for voluntary enlistment)
3 Algeria		●	17 (minimum voluntary enlistment age) 19 (minimum conscription age)
4 Andorra	●		No national army
5 Angola	●		18 (mandatory registration for all males) 20 - 45 compulsory male military service 18 - 45 for voluntary male military service 20 - 45 for voluntary female service
6 Antigua and Barbuda	●		18 (voluntary military service)
7 Argentina	●		18 - 24 (voluntary military service) 18 - 21 requires parental consent
8 Armenia		●	17 year olds are eligible to become cadets, and as such are classified as military personnel 18 - 27 (voluntary or compulsory military service with a two-year conscript obligation)
9 Australia		●	16.5 years for selection process 17 years to serve (with parental consent) 18 years to deploy on operations
10 Austria		●	Registration requirement at 17 17 (minimum voluntary enlistment age) 18 (minimum conscription age)
11 Azerbaijan		●	17 (voluntary service) 17 (eligible for cadet training, considered active military service) 18 - 35 for compulsory military service (12-18 mnths)
12 Bahamas	●		18 (voluntary male and female service)
13 Bahrain		●	15 (NCOs, technicians and cadets) 18 (voluntary military service)
14 Bangladesh		●	16 - 21 (voluntary military service)

 Recruiting U18s (law and practice)

Country	 	Age they recruit
15 Barbados	●	Below 18 with parental consent 18 (voluntary military service)
16 Belarus	●	17 (eligible for cadet force, classified as military personnel) 18 - 27 (compulsory military training/ alternative service)
17 Belgium	●	18 (male and female voluntary military service)
18 Belize	●	18 (voluntary military service)
19 Benin	●	18 - 35 (selective compulsory and voluntary military service for males and females)
20 Bhutan	●	18 (voluntary military service)
21 Bolivia	●	14 (conscription of boys when voluntary quota is too low) 15 - 19 (voluntary premilitary service) 16 - 49 (voluntary male and female military service) 18 (min age of combat)
Bosnia and Herzegovina	●	18 (voluntary military service)
23 Botswana	●	18 (voluntary military service)
24 Brazil	●	16 (enlistment to military schools) 17 - 45 (voluntary service) 18 (compulsory military service 10-12 month)
25 Brunei Darussalam	●	17 (voluntary military service)
26 Bulgaria	●	18 - 27 (voluntary military service) Conscription ended
27 Burkina Faso	●	18 (voluntary military service)
28 Burundi	●	16 (voluntary recruitment age) 18 (govt claim for voluntary military service)
29 Cabo Verde	●	17 (voluntary service with parental consent) 18 - 35 (selective compulsory military service for males and females)
30 Cambodia	●	18 (voluntary and compulsory military service)
31 Cameroon	●	18 - 23 (male and female voluntary military service)
32 Canada	●	16 (primary reserves with parental consent and only if enrolled as a full-time student) 17 (voluntary service with parental consent)

Country			Age they recruit
33 Central African Republic	●		18 (voluntary military service) Listed by UN Watchlist for non-state armed groups recruitment and use of children, as well as other grave violations against children in armed conflict.
34 Chad		●	No minimum age for volunteers with parental consent 18 (voluntary military service) 20 (voluntary military service)
35 Chile		●	17 on request 18 (minimum conscription age)
36 China		●	17 (eligible to enlist if high school graduate) 18 (eligible for recruitment)
37 Colombia	●		18 - 24 (compulsory and voluntary military service) Listed by UN Watchlist for grave violations against children in armed conflict including recruitment and use by non-state armed forces.
38 Comoros	●		18 (voluntary male and female service)
39 Congo	●		18 (voluntary male and female service)
40 Costa Rica	●		No national army
41 Cote D'Ivoire	●		Voluntary recruitment of former rebels is restricted to those aged 22-29
42 Croatia	●		18 - 27 (voluntary military service)
43 Cuba		●	17 - 28 (compulsory military service) Optional for females
44 Cyprus		●	17 (voluntary service) 18 - 50 (compulsory military service for all Greek Cypriot males for 14-month service obligation)
45 Czech Republic	●		18 - 28 (voluntary service, males and females)
46 Democratic People's Republic of Korea		●	15 (Young Red Guard) 17 (minimum voluntary enlistment age and minimum conscription age)
47 DRC		●	18 - 45 (voluntary and compulsory military service) (Government under UN Watchlist recommendations for reducing recruitment and use of children.) Listed by UN Watchlist for the commitment of grave violations against children in armed conflict (sexual violence including rape) by government armed forces.

Country	 	Age they recruit
48 Denmark	●	18 (compulsory and voluntary military service)
49 Djibouti	●	16 - 25 (voluntary military training) 18 (voluntary military service)
50 Dominica	●	No national army
51 Dominican Republic	●	16 (eligibility and conditions unclear) 17 - 21 (voluntary military service)
52 Ecuador	●	18 (selective and voluntary military service)
53 Egypt	●	15 (voluntary enlistment) 16 (minimum voluntary age) 18 - 30 (male conscription military service)
54 El Salvador	●	16 - 22 (voluntary male or female service) 18 (selective compulsory military service)
55 Equatorial Guinea	●	18 (selective compulsory military service)
56 Eritrea	●	18 - 40 (voluntary and compulsory military service for males and females)
57 Estonia	●	18 - 27 (compulsory military or govt service)
58 Eswatini (Swaziland)	●	18 - 30 (voluntary military service for males and females)
59 Ethiopia	●	18 (voluntary military service)
60 Fiji	●	18 (voluntary military service)
61 Finland	●	18 (compulsory military service for all men) Obligation to remain in military reserve until 60)
62 France	●	17.5 18 - 25 (voluntary military service)
63 Gabon	●	20 (voluntary military service)
64 Gambia	●	18 (voluntary male and female service)
65 Georgia	●	18 - 27 (voluntary or compulsory military service with a 1 year conscript obligation) 17 year olds are eligible to become cadets, and as such are classified as military personnel
66 Germany	●	17 with parental consent
67 Ghana	●	18 - 26 (voluntary military service)
68 Greece	●	18 (voluntary military service) 19 - 45 (compulsory military service)

Country			Age they recruit
69 Grenada	●		No national army
70 Guatemala		●	17 - 21 (eligible for conscription, rarely used) 18 - 50 (eligible for military service)
71 Guinea	●		No compulsory military service
72 Guinea Bissau		●	16 (voluntary military service with parental consent) 18 - 25 (compulsory military service)
73 Guyana		●	16
74 Haiti	●		No national army
75 Honduras	●		18 (voluntary military service)
76 Hungary	●		18 - 25 (voluntary military service)
77 Iceland	●		No national army
78 India		●	16 - 18 (Voluntary military service, including: 16.5 - Navy 17 - Airforce 17.5 - Army
79 Indonesia	●		18 - 45 (voluntary military service)
80 Iran		●	15 (Popular Mobilisation Army) 16 (Volunteers) 17 (Law Enforcement Forces) 18 (Compulsory military service - 18 months)
81 Iraq	●		18 - 40 (voluntary military service)
82 Ireland	●		18 - 25 (voluntary military service)
83 Israel		●	17 (voluntary military service) 18 (compulsory military service for both sexes)
84 Italy	●		18 - 25 (voluntary military service)
85 Jamaica		●	17.5 (voluntary military service)
86 Japan	●		18 (voluntary military service)
87 Jordan		●	18 (voluntary male military service) Women can volunteer in non-combat roles
88 Kazakhstan		●	15 - 17 (intermediate cadets - military personnel) 17 - 21 (higher cadets - military personnel) 18 (compulsory military service, but conscription being phased out)

Country			Age they recruit
89 Kenya		●	U18 with parental consent 18 - 26 (voluntary military service for males and females) Same conditions for women
90 Kiribati	●		No national army
91 Kuwait		●	17 - 21 (voluntary military service) (2012)
92 Kyrgyzstan		●	16 - 17 (military cadets, can't take part in military operations) 18 - 27 (compulsory or voluntary military service for males)
93 Lao PDR	●		18 (compulsory and voluntary military service)
94 Latvia	●		18 (voluntary male and female service)
95 Lebanon		●	17 - 30 (voluntary military service) 18 - 24 (age for officer eligibility)
96 Lesotho		●	17 - 30 (voluntary military service) 18 - 24 (age for officer eligibility)
97 Liberia	●		18 (voluntary military service)
98 Libya	●		18 (compulsory and voluntary military service)
99 Liechtenstein	●		No national army
100 Lithuania	●		18 (military service, with 9 month obligation)
101 Luxembourg	●		18 - 24 (voluntary military service for males and females)
102 Madagascar	●		18 - 25 (voluntary military service for males)
103 Malawi	●		18 (voluntary military service)
104 Malaysia		●	Under 17 with parental consent and proof of age 17.5 (voluntary military service)
105 Maldives	●		18 - 28 (voluntary service)
106 Mali		●	18 (selective compulsory and voluntary military service) Listed by UN Watchlist for recruitment and use of children by armed groups linked to ruling coalition parties.

Country			Age they recruit
107 Malta	●		18 (voluntary military service)
108 Marshall Islands	●		No national army
109 Mauritania		●	16 (with parental consent and at Minister's discretion) 18 (voluntary military service)
110 Mauritius	●		18 (condition of recruitment unclear)
111 Mexico		●	15 (cadets enrolled, considered members of armed forces) 16 (voluntary, with parental consent) 18 (compulsory)
112 Micronesia	●		No national army
113 Monaco	●		21 (Prince's Guard and Fire Brigade) No national army
114 Mongolia	●		18 - 27 (compulsory and voluntary military service)
115 Montenegro	●		18 (voluntary military service)
116 Morocco	●		20 (voluntary military service)
117 Mozambique	●		18 (mandatory registration for all males and females) 18 - 35 (selective compulsory military service)
118 Myanmar		●	18 in law Listed by UN Watchlist for state recruitment and use of children
119 Namibia	●		18 (voluntary military service)
120 Nauru	●		No national army
121 Nepal	●		18 (voluntary military service)
122 Netherlands		●	17 (parental consent needed)
123 New Zealand		●	17 (minimum voluntary enlistment age, with parental consent unless married)
124 Nicaragua	●		18 - 30 (voluntary military service)
125 Niger	●		Legal age unclear, not specified in law Cited as 18 (compulsory or voluntary military service)

Country	 	Age they recruit
126 Nigeria	●	18 (voluntary military service) Listed on UN Watchlist for non-state armed group recruitment and use of children as well as state-sanctioned imprisonment of child recruits
127 Norway	●	16 (during wartime) 17 (male volunteers) 18 (female volunteers)
128 Oman	●	18 - 30 (voluntary military service)
129 Pakistan	●	16 - 23 (voluntary service)
130 Palau	●	No national army
131 Panama	●	No national army
132 Papua New Guinea	●	16 (minimum voluntary age with parental consent)
133 Paraguay	●	14 (eligible for military training school) 18 (compulsory and voluntary military service)
134 Peru	●	18 - 50 (voluntary service for males) 18 - 45 (voluntary service for females)
135 Philippines	●	17 - 23 (voluntary military service) 20 - 24 (eligibility for officer role)
136 Poland	●	18 - 28 (voluntary service for males and females)
137 Portugal	●	18 - 30 (voluntary military service)
138 Qatar	●	18 - 35 (conscription for males with three-four month obligation)
139 Republic of Korea	●	18 - 35 (compulsory military service) 18 - 26 (voluntary military service)
Republic of Moldova	●	18 (compulsory and voluntary military service)
141 Romania	●	18 (voluntary male and female service)
142 Russian Federation	●	16 (enrolment in military schools, cadets classified as armed personnel) 17 (males registered for draft)
143 Rwanda	●	18 (voluntary military service)
144 Saint Kitts and Nevis	●	18 (voluntary military service)

Country			Age they recruit
145 Saint Lucia	●		18 (voluntary security service) No national army
146 Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	●		No national army
147 Samoa	●		No national army
148 San Marino		●	16 (Government authority to call up all citizens from 16-60) 18 (voluntary military service)
149 Sao Tome and Principe		●	17 (voluntary military service) 18 (min age for compulsory military service)
150 Saudia Arabia		●	17 (voluntary military enlistment)
151 Senegal	●		18 (voluntary male and female service) 20 (selective conscript service, two-year obligation)
152 Serbia	●		18 (voluntary military service)
153 Seychelles		●	Under 18 with parental consent 18 (voluntary military services)
154 Sierra Leone		●	Under 18 with parental consent 18 (voluntary military services)
155 Singapore		●	16.5 (volunteers) 18-21 (compulsory male military service with two-year obligation)
156 Slovakia	●		18 - 30 (voluntary military service for males and females)
157 Slovenia	●		18 - 25 (voluntary military service)
158 Solomon Islands	●		No national army
159 Somalia		●	18 (compulsory and voluntary service) Listed on UN Watchlist for recruitment and use of children, other grave violations against children in armed conflict, as well as state-sanctioned imprisonment of alleged child recruits
160 South Africa	●		18 (voluntary male and female service)
161 South Sudan		●	18 in law Listed on UN Watchlist for recruitment and use of children, including other grave violations against children in armed conflict, by the State armed forces.
162 Spain	●		18 - 26 (voluntary military service)

Country	 	Age they recruit
163 Sri Lanka	●	18 - 22 (voluntary military service)
164 Sudan	●	18 (compulsory and voluntary male and female service) Listed on Un Watchlist for grave violations against children in armed conflict, including non-state actors recruitment and use of children. State armed forces were recently delisted for child recruitment and use (2017/18).
165 Suriname	●	18 (voluntary military service)
166 Sweden	●	18 - 47 (voluntary male and female service)
167 Switzerland	●	18 (voluntary male and female service) 19 - 26 (compulsory male military service with 260-day obligation)
168 Syria	●	18 (compulsory and voluntary military service) Listed on UN Watchlist for recruitment and use of children, and other grave violations against children affected by armed conflict, by government forces
169 Tajikistan	●	15 (military school enrolment for males) 16 - 55 (compulsory military training)
170 Thailand	●	18 (voluntary military service) 21 (compulsory military service)
171 The Former Yugoslac Rep. of Macedonia	●	18 (voluntary military service)
172 Timor-Leste	●	18 (voluntary military service)
173 Togo	●	18 (voluntary military service)
174 Tonga	●	16 (voluntary service with parental consent)
175 Trinidad and Tobago	●	18 - 25 (compulsory military service)
176 Tunisia	●	18 - 23 (voluntary military service) 20 - 23 (compulsory military service)
177 Turkey	●	18 (voluntary military service) 21 - 41 (compulsory military service for males)
178 Turkmenistan	●	15 (male enrollment in military school) 18 - 27 (compulsory male military service)
179 Tuvalu	●	No national army
180 Uganda	●	18 - 26 (voluntary military duty) 18 - 30 (military professionals)

Country	 	Age they recruit
181 United Arab Emirates	●	17 (voluntary for males, with parental consent) 18 (compulsory service for males)
182 UK	●	16 (voluntary service with parental consent) 17 - 28 (eligible for officers) 17.5 (voluntary service by Nepalese citizens in the Gurkhas) 16 - 34 (voluntary military service by Papua New Guinean citizens)
184 Ukraine	●	18 (compulsory recruitment age)
185 United Republic of Tanzania	●	No minimum age in law, 18 in practice
186 USA	●	17 (voluntary service with parental consent, unless married) 18 (male and female voluntary service)
186 Uruguay	●	18 - 30 (voluntary service for males and females) 18 - 22 (voluntary service for Navy) Govt authority to conscript in emergencies
187 Uzbekistan	●	18 (compulsory military service with one-month minimum obligation for males)
188 Vanuatu	●	No national army
189 Venezuela	●	18 - 60 (all citizens required to register for military service, although no compulsory recruitment)
190 Viet Nam	●	17 (eligible to enrol in military schools) 18 - 25 (male voluntary and compulsory service)
191 Yemen	●	18 (voluntary military service) Listed on UN Watchlist for recruitment and use of children, and other grave violations against children affected by armed conflict, by government forces and coalition forces
192 Zambia	●	16 (national registration required) 16 (voluntary service with parental consent) 18 - 25 (male and female voluntary service)
193 Zimbabwe	●	18 - 24 (voluntary military service)

Sources with hyperlinks for sources

CIA Factbook

Child Soldiers International 2012

Child Soldiers International 2018

CRIN Conflict Updates

UN CRC OPAC List of Issues

UN Watchlist

CRIN policy position on voluntary or compulsory recruitment of children.

CIA Factbook

Louder than words: An agenda for action to end state use of child soldiers, 2012

Why 18 Matters: A Rights-based Analysis of Child Recruitment, 2018

Country Conflict Updates, with a focus on the impact of conflict on children's rights

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