



It takes a world
to end violence against children

World Vision

Child Soldiers:

A global recruitment index

OVERVIEW

The recruitment of children into armed forces, whether by state or non-state actors, is an affront to their rights and must end. World Vision believes that all forms of recruitment of children is wrong, and that every state and non-state actor should be held accountable to ensure that no children are recruited.

The sad reality is that tens, or even hundreds of thousands of girls and boys are part of armed groups in situations of violent conflict. They play various roles, from front line fighters, to sex slaves, spies, and cooks. Their childhoods are being stolen.

The Child Soldiers Recruitment Index looks at which countries have laws that allow the recruitment of children. The Index also highlights those countries that are the Worst Offenders, based on the report of the Special Representative to the UN Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict, where children are being actively recruited as combatants.

 No legislation or legislation not being implemented in practice, and/or, credible and verified reports of recruitment by state and/or non state actors











 Legislation prohibits recruitment of children and no credible reports of recruitment



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Country	 	Age they recruit	Worst offenders
1 Afghanistan		18 in law	Reported and verified incidents by state and non-state actors.
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)	





















Country	 	Age they recruit	Worst offenders
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 enroled as a full-time student) 17 (voluntary service with parental consent)	






















Country			Age they recruit	Worst offenders
33 Central African Republic		●	18 (voluntary military service)	Reported and verified incidents by state and non-state actors.
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)	Reported and verified incidents by non-state actors.
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)	
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 Democratic Republic of Congo		●	18 - 45 (voluntary and compulsory military service)	Reported and verified incidents by state and non-state actors.
48 Denmark	●		18 (compulsory and voluntary military service)	



Country	 	Age they recruit	Worst offenders
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)	
69 Grenada		No national army	





















Country	 	Age they recruit	Worst offenders
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 a: 16.5 - Navy 17 - Airforce 17.5 - Army)	Reported and verified incidents by non-state actors.
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)	Reported incidents by state and non-state actors.
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)	
88 Kazakhstan		15 - 17 (intermediate cadets - military personnel) 17 - 21 (higher cadets - military personnel) 18 (compulsory military service, but conscription being phased out)	
89 Kenya		U 18 with parental consent 18 - 26 (voluntary military service for males and females)	



Country	 	Age they recruit	Worst offenders
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)	Reported and verified incidents by non-state actors.
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)	Reported incidents.
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)	Reported and verified incidents by non-state actors.
107 Malta	●	18 (voluntary military service)	
108 Marshall Islands	●	No national army	

Country	 	Age they recruit	Worst offenders
I09 Mauritania		16 (with parental consent and at Minister's discretion) 18 (voluntary military service)	
I10 Mauritius		18 (condition of recruitment unclear)	
I11 Mexico		15 (cadets enrolled, considered members of armed forces) 16 (voluntary, with parental consent) 18 (compulsory)	
I12 Micronesia		No national army	
I13 Monaco		21 (Prince's Guard and Fire Brigade) No national army	
I14 Mongolia		18 - 27 (compulsory and voluntary military service)	
I15 Montenegro		18 (voluntary military service)	
I16 Morocco		20 (voluntary military service)	
I17 Mozambique		18 (mandatory registration for all males and females) 18 - 35 (selective compulsory military service)	
I18 Myanmar		18 in law	Reported and verified incidents by non-state actors.
I19 Namibia		18 (voluntary military service)	
I20 Nauru		No national army	
I21 Nepal		18 (voluntary military service)	
I22 Netherlands		17 (parental consent needed)	
I23 New Zealand		17 (minimum voluntary enlistment age, with parental consent unless married)	
I24 Nicaragua		18 - 30 (voluntary military service)	
I25 Niger		Legal age unclear, not specified in law Cited as 18 (compulsory or voluntary military service)	
I26 Nigeria		18 (voluntary military service)	Reported incidents by non-state actors.

Country	 	Age they recruit	Worst offenders
127 Norway		16 (during wartime) 17 (male volunteers) 18 (female volunteers)	
128 Oman		18 - 30 (voluntary military service)	
129 Pakistan		16 - 23 (voluntary service)	Reported incidents by non-state actors.
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)	Reported incidents by non-state actors.
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)	
145 Saint Lucia		18 (voluntary security service) No national army	

Country	 	Age they recruit	Worst offenders
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)	Reported and verified incidents by state and non-state actors.
160 South Africa	●	18 (voluntary male and female service)	
161 South Sudan	●	18 in law	Reported and verified incidents by state and non-state actors.
162 Spain	●	18 - 26 (voluntary military service)	
163 Sri Lanka	●	18 - 22 (voluntary military service)	

Country	 	Age they recruit	Worst offenders
164 Sudan		18 (compulsory and voluntary male and female service)	Reported and verified incidents.
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)	Reported and verified incidents by state and non-state actors.
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 Yugoslav 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)	
181 United Arab Emirates		17 (voluntary for males, with parental consent) 18 (compulsory service for males)	

Country	 	Age they recruit	Worst offenders
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	●	17 (minimum enlistment age for cadets, classified as members of the armed forces) 18 (minimum conscription 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 Vietnam	●	17 (eligible to enrol in military schools) 18 - 25 (male voluntary and compulsory service)	
191 Yemen	●	18 (voluntary military service)	Reported and verified incidents by state and non-state actors.
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

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CIA Factbook

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

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

CRIN Conflict Updates

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

UN CRC OPAC List of
Issues

Annual Report of the
Secretary-General on
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CRIN policy position on
voluntary or compulsory
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