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## The Use of Child Soldiers in Armed Conflicts: Violations of United Nations Convention on Rights of a Child (UNCRC) in Somalia

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**Summary:** 1. Introduction. 2. Literature review. 2.1. Children recruitment in armed rebellion. 2.2. Local factors. 2.3. Material factor. 2.4. Political factor. 2.5. Intrinsic factor. 2.6. Armed conflict in Somalia. 2.7. Armed rebellion groups in Somalia. 2.8. Hizb al Islam. 2.9. Al-Shabab. 3. Methodology. 3.1. Data collection method. 3.2. Chosen case study. 3.3. Findings and analysis. 4. Discussion. 5. Conclusion. 5.1. Recommendations. 5.2. Limitations. 5.3. Future direction. 6. References.

**Abstract:** Recruitment of children in armed rebellion groups is a major international human rights issue in Somalia. There are multiple factors that play a role as far as the recruitment of children in armed groups is concerned. Different rebel groups including Hizb ul Islam and Al-Shabab have been active in the country and violate laws associated with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC). They are recruiting children for the purpose of suicide bombings and

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other terrorist activities. The objective of this research is to find out the factors behind children joining these armed groups in Somalia. Its other objective is to know the role of armed groups in recruiting children into their militias and finally to assess how the international child's rights convention is violated as a result of such activities of the armed groups. Methodology: To achieve the research objectives, a case study approach under the qualitative method is used. Findings: The findings of the research show that Al-Shabab has been recruiting children in their ranks by using various techniques such as propaganda and brainwashing by violating the international child's rights convention and child's rights law in Somalia. Moreover, the findings also show that different factors including local, political, intrinsic, religious and lack of judicial enforcement and legal accountability play a role in compelling children in joining armed groups in the country. Conclusion: The research suggests that there needs a structural reform in the political and judicial system of Somalia that will be helpful to disallow any group to recruit children in their ranks and severe punishment is suggested to stop such crimes in the future.

**Keywords:** Armed Organizations in Somalia; Children Recruited in Armed Rebellion; International Child's Rights Convention; Violation of the Child's Rights Law.

**Resumo:** El reclutamiento de niños por parte de grupos armados rebeldes es un importante problema internacional de derechos humanos en Somalia. Existen múltiples factores que influyen en el reclutamiento de niños por parte de estos grupos. Diferentes grupos rebeldes, como Hizb ul Islam y Al-Shabab, han estado activos en el país y violan las leyes relacionadas con la Convención sobre los Derechos del Niño (CDN) de las Naciones Unidas. Están reclutando a niños para llevar a cabo atentados suicidas y otras actividades terroristas. El objetivo de esta investigación es identificar los factores que llevan a los niños a unirse a estos grupos armados en Somalia. Otro objetivo es conocer el papel de los grupos armados en el reclutamiento de menores para sus milicias y, finalmente, evaluar cómo se viola la convención internacional sobre los derechos del niño como resultado de dichas actividades. Para alcanzar los objetivos de la investigación, se utilizó un enfoque de estudio de caso bajo el método cualitativo. Los hallazgos muestran que Al-Shabab ha estado reclutando niños en sus filas mediante diversas técnicas como la propaganda y el lavado de cerebro, violando así la convención internacional sobre los derechos del niño y las leyes de derechos infantiles en Somalia. Además, los resultados revelan que diferentes factores, incluidos los locales, políticos, intrínsecos, religiosos y la falta de aplicación judicial y de rendición de cuentas legales, influyen en que los menores se vean obligados a unirse a los grupos armados del país. La investigación sugiere que se necesita una reforma estructural en el sistema político y judicial de Somalia, lo cual será útil para impedir que cualquier grupo reclute niños en sus filas. Se recomienda la imposición de castigos severos para frenar este tipo de crímenes en el futuro.

**Palavras-Chave:** . Organizaciones armadas en Somalia; niños reclutados en rebeliones armadas; Convención Internacional sobre los Derechos del Niño; violación de la ley de derechos del niño.

## 1. Introduction

The dignity of children has been undermined due to various ongoing conflicts in the developing world. According to the report of Child Soldiers International released in 2018, there are around 240 million children who are living in areas that are termed conflict zones.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the use of children during conflicts is a violation of their rights. The report of the United Nations states that the presence of children in conflict zones is considered a violation of the right of every child

<sup>2</sup> RELIEFWEB. "Child soldiers international annual report 2017-18", 2018. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/child-soldiers-international-annual-report-2017-18>.

including the right to live, the right to live with their family, the right to healthy life, development, and nurture.<sup>3</sup> However, the recruitment of children in wars is not a new phenomenon as in the past children had been used in world wars and the American revolution.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, various rebellion groups, government forces as well as paramilitary forces have used children during wars, guerrilla wars, and conflicts. In addition, children have been used in various forms during wars and in some cases, they are used for armed conflicts on the front-lines such as they are used for suicide attacks, and in some cases, they are used for spying and sexual purposes. There are various reasons for children's recruitment in armed conflicts. Some children are abducted, and some join out of desperation for a better chance of survival. Therefore, children's freedom to live has been violated by such groups in the past and also in contemporary times.

The recruitment of children in armed conflicts is not new as it has advanced with the changing nature of war. With the changes that occurred in modern war concepts such as proxy wars and guerrilla wars where children have been recruited by armed groups as weapons to inflict major damage to their opponents through suicide bombings. In this regard, the report issued by the UN Secretary-General in 2017 shows that Somalia along with Nigeria and South Sudan are among those countries which are at top of the list as far as "children associated with armed forces of groups (CAAFG)" are concerned.<sup>5</sup> However, state and non-state actors do not just recruit children within their national boundaries instead they are targeting children beyond national boundaries. The non-state actor such as ISIS, which is termed a terrorist group have recruited children in their mission in the Middle East and beyond. Nevertheless, the use of children in armed conflict by both actors and non-state actors is grave abuse of international child rights violation.

Somalia is a country that has experienced conflicts for many decades. The country went to war with its neighboring countries including Ethiopia, involved in a civil war that ended in 1991, and also a famine that resulted in widespread diseases and deaths.<sup>6</sup> In addition, a new rebellion group known as 'Al Shabab' that emerged in 2007 posed a threat to the writ of the state, resulting in another conflict in the country. The group first started its terrorist activities against the then Transnational Federal Government (TFG) and then the new Federal government from 2012 onwards.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the ongoing war in Somalia between the government and the Al-Shabab has created an environment where children have been easily manipulated by militias. In this regard, all those parties who are actively engaged in this conflict are recruiting children through various group commanders and using them in the war against the government. Thus, the wide use of children for the purpose of creating terror in the country by using them as a shield for obtaining their political agendas is a gross violation of international child rights law. Despite the fact that Somalia is part of various international treaties and conventions related to human rights, children are being taken and used by armed rebel groups in the country. The reason for children joining voluntarily or by force in such rebellion armed groups is twofold. The first reason may be children are voluntarily joining such groups or are recruited by armed rebellion commanders because of the lack of opportunities available to these children for livelihood. Secondly, children in Somalia join these groups due to the prevailing security situation in the country for several years, which has normalized violence in the country. Therefore, such an environment has gradually removed the morality concept from children's minds, thus allowing them to join armed rebellion groups for their own survival.

<sup>3</sup> GRAÇA, M. *The impact of war on children: A review of progress since the 1996 United Nations report on the impact of armed conflict on children*. Palgrave, New York, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> ROSEN, D. M. *Child soldiers in the Western imagination: From patriots to victims*. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> UN. SECRETARY-GENERAL. "Children and armed conflict: Report of the Secretary-General", 2024. Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4051293?v=pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Norris, J.; Bruton, B. "Twenty years of collapse and counting the cost of failure in Somalia", 2011. Available at: <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wpcontent/uploads/issues/2011/09/pdf/somalia.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> CANNON B. J. "What's in it for us? Armed drone strikes and the security of Somalia's Federal Government", *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, v. 31, n. 4, 2020, p. 773-800.

Nonetheless, children's recruitment into armed rebellion groups has become a serious crime. According to one estimate, the number of recruited children is around twenty thousand to half a million as victims in the world.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, another study shows that forty percent of children are part of the armed forces such as armies of states, non-state actors' armies, and other insurgent and rebellion organizations around the world.<sup>9</sup> Thus, children have been the victims of armed conflicts around the world both in the hands of state and non-state actors such as Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Al-Shabab, and many others.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Children recruitment in armed rebellion**

Human rights are gravely violated when children are recruited into armed conflict. Despite increased international focus on human rights after the end of the Cold War, universal compliance remains a substantial obstacle for all nations. Numerous national, regional, and international treaties and agreements restrict the recruitment of minors into the military.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, essential liberties have been categorized and systematized in local and international legal frameworks, which has resulted in a substantial increase in the number of connected promises and agreements. In certain nations, however, the state of human rights has deteriorated.

A variety of distinct factors could be to blame for the "children associated with armed forces and groups" (CAAFG) problem.<sup>11</sup>

### **2.2. Local factors**

Local factors are the elements that affect child recruitment inside a nation. In conflict-affected regions, children may join an armed group in quest of food, a level of protection that cannot be achieved elsewhere, money or other material rewards, medical care, or just a way to survive. Moreover, most of the states where this happens are labeled as "fragile" or "failed states."

### **2.3. Material factor**

Another factor attributed to the recruitment of children is related to material factors. Material factors include those that support the recruitment of minors by rebel armies or produce financial gains for them. Armed rebel groups view children as cheap, disposable tools that can be used for various purposes. Children are not paid like adults, do not need adequate shelter or clothing, and can be replaced easily, so they are therefore thought to have fewer material requirements.<sup>12</sup>

### **2.4. Political factor**

Another domestic factor for children's recruitment in armed conflict is related to local political factors. Although children have not fully formed their own identities,

<sup>8</sup> BENNOUNA, C.; STARK, L.; and WESSELLS, M. G. "Children and adolescents in conflict and displacement", *Child, Adolescent and Family Refugee Mental Health: A Global Perspective*, 2020, p. 17-36.

<sup>9</sup> SINGER, P. W. "The Enablers of WAR: Causal factors behind the Child Soldier Phenomenon", 2006. Available at: <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/The-Enablers-of-War%3A-Casual-Factors-behind-the-Singer/21a6f4c5944e9a6f9ff94dc63f2074e8ec9e3997>.

<sup>10</sup> REGILME, S.; SPOLDI, E. "Children in armed conflict: A human rights crisis in Somalia", *Global Jurist*, v. 21, n. 2, 2021, p. 365-402.

<sup>11</sup> SKÅRÅS, M. "The lost boys of Sudan: The reintegration process of school children associated with armed forces and groups", 2009. Available at: [https://www.academia.edu/26953491/The\\_Lost\\_Boys\\_of\\_Sudan\\_The\\_reintegration\\_process\\_of\\_school\\_children\\_associated\\_with\\_armed\\_forces\\_and\\_groups](https://www.academia.edu/26953491/The_Lost_Boys_of_Sudan_The_reintegration_process_of_school_children_associated_with_armed_forces_and_groups).

<sup>12</sup> HAER, R.; BÖHMELT, T. "Child soldiers as time bombs? Adolescents' participation in rebel groups and the recurrence of armed conflict", *European Journal of International Relations*, v. 22, n. 2, 2016, p. 408-436.

they are still looking for a set of values to uphold and a group to belong to. In conflict situations, it is also simpler for leaders and armed groups to indoctrinate children and propagate worldviews that view violence as an essential method of survival for both individuals and groups.

## **2.5. Intrinsic factor**

Another factor is related to an intrinsic factor which includes the apparently innate qualities that are usually associated with children. The majority of individuals feel that youngsters are more subject to threats and physical violence than adults, making them more amenable to instructions, manipulable, and exploitable. Examining Mozambique, Furley discovered that leaders of the "Mozambique National Resistance" preferred children because they could terrify them sufficiently to deter escape attempts, which were more common among adults.<sup>13</sup>

## **2.6. Armed conflict in Somalia**

From 2008 through 2013, Somalia topped the "Fragile State Index" of the Fund for Peace (FFP) six years in a row.<sup>14</sup> In 2012, the first official parliament was constituted, and the country held its first presidential election since 1967. In February 2017, a new administration headed by President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, better known as Farmajo, was chosen to administer the country.<sup>15</sup> It was originally intended to conduct a nationwide, one-person, one-vote poll of all adults, but security considerations forced the employment of the electoral college system.

## **2.7. Armed rebellion groups in Somalia**

Since the civil war, there has been an increase in the variety of supplied bunches in Somalia, along with a horizontal expansion in the number of groupings.<sup>16</sup> Following the fall of the state, the clan or "faction" militias were often the clans' political representatives as well as security providers. These faction militias continue to make up the majority of Somalia's armed organizations.

## **2.8. Hizb al Islam**

The jihadist organization Hizbul Islam was based in Somalia. Four Islamist organizations from Somalia came together to form it on February 4th, 2009; the Anole, also known as the Anole Forces, Ras Kamboni Brigade, Jabhatul Islamiya (Islamic Front), and the Alliance for the Re-emancipation of Somalia (ARS).<sup>17</sup>

## **2.9. Al-Shabab**

Al-Shabaab, which is translated as "the youth," is an effective and armed organization that fights to establish a fundamentalist Islamic state in Somalia. The primary violent organization in Somalia since 2010 has been Al-Shabab.<sup>18</sup> Al-Shabab has suffered numerous important territorial and tactical setbacks. Between January 2016 and October 2017, the United Nations stated that over 4,500 civilians were killed or injured in Somalia, with Al Shabab responsible for 60% of these deaths. Al-Shabab and the Somali National Army, backed by AMISOM and the United States, continue to battle vigorously, resulting in frequent strikes throughout

<sup>13</sup> FURLEY, O. "Child Soldiers in Africa", in *Conflict in Africa*, I.B.Tauris, London, 1995.

<sup>14</sup> MENKHAUS, K. *Somalia: State collapse and the threat of terrorism*. Routledge, London, 2013.

<sup>15</sup> CANNON, B. J. "Foreign state influence and Somalia's 2017 Presidential Election: An analysis", *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies*, v. 18, n. 1, 2019, p. 20-49.

<sup>16</sup> VINCI, A. "An analysis and comparison of armed groups in Somalia", *African Security Studies*, v. 15, n. 1, 2006, p. 75-90.

<sup>17</sup> BARBER, V. "The evolution of al Qaeda's global network and al Qaeda core's position within it: A network analysis", *Perspectives on Terrorism*, v. 9, n. 6, 2015, p. 2-35.

<sup>18</sup> Daniel Agbibo. "Terrorism without Borders: Somalia's Al-Shabaab and the global jihad network".

the nation.<sup>19</sup>

### **3. Methodology**

Both qualitative and quantitative research approaches are considered to be the primary types of research methods. In order to acquire data, these two main strategies are utilized.<sup>20</sup> Quantitative research involves the collection of data in numerical form, and one of the fundamental aspects of the quantitative research approach is having direct interaction with the participant. The qualitative research approach, on the other hand, is centered on the study of observations and the explanation of those observations in order to establish relationships.<sup>21</sup> Numerical data does not exist in qualitative research. The qualitative research approach, on the other hand, focuses on answering the issues of "how" and "why" of a particular situation. In addition, the objectives of the research study are taken into consideration when choosing the research method to use. In this particular piece of writing, a qualitative research approach is utilized. The case study approach is going to be employed as this research method's methodology. In order to accomplish the goals of the research, the case study will be crafted through the utilization of secondary materials.

#### **3.1. Data collection method**

The descriptive research design that falls under qualitative research may be broken down into three distinct kinds. Case studies, surveys, and observations are the three types of qualitative research.<sup>22</sup> As a result of this, the approach known as a case study is specifically chosen for this research study in order to conduct an analysis of the factors included in this study.

#### **3.2. Chosen case study**

The investigation of the appropriate case study is still another essential component of this research study. A case study on the recruitment of children in Somalia's armed rebel groups was produced based on the terms that are most important. For example, "children recruitment in armed groups" was utilized as a key phrase in developing the case study of Somalia. This term was used for the case study of Somalia.

#### **3.3. Findings and analysis**

There are various groups that are involved in the recruitment of children in their ranks in Somalia. One such group is Al-Shabab, which is actively recruiting children to carry out attacks in the country.<sup>23</sup> Al-Shabaab initially targeted youngsters from severely impoverished communities in both Somalia and Kenya. Nonetheless, as the group's popularity grew, it also began targeting university students, giving them cash and regular wages.<sup>24</sup> Al-Shabaab's recruitment methods range from tempting children with money and gifts to physically bullying them or their families. Moreover, extremists began kidnapping children in seminaries,

<sup>19</sup> AGBIBOA, D. "Terrorism without Borders: Somalia's Al-Shabaab and the global jihad network", *Journal of Terrorism Research*, v. 5, n. 1, 2014, p. 27-34.

<sup>20</sup> BRYMAN, A. *Social research methods*. Oxford University Press, New York, 2016.

<sup>21</sup> ABAWI, K. "Qualitative and quantitative research", *World Health*, v. 2, n. 1, 2008, p. 1-10.

<sup>22</sup> BAXTER, P. E.; JACK, S. M. "Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers", *The qualitative report*, v. 13, n. 4, 2010, p. 544-559.

<sup>23</sup> AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. Somalia: Testimonies from 'in the line of fire: Somalia's children under Attack'. Amnesty International, 2011. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr52/005/2011/en/>.

<sup>24</sup> WEST, S. "Al-Shabaab recruitment from Kenyan Universities Alarms Officials", *Terrorism Monitor*, v. 14, n. 1, 2016.

marketplaces, play areas, and other packed outside places.<sup>25</sup> Many of the men fighting for Al-Shabaab recruit youngsters from their own families to assist the war, especially in areas under the group's control. Recruiters also compel clan elders to supply the army with a specified number of children. Consequently, a number of children join the guerilla in order to escape poverty. When youngsters or members of their families refuse to enlist, Al-Shabaab frequently executes, floggings, or even kills them in public. Since 2016, Al Shabab has recruited 6,843 children, and annual patterns imply a 300 percent surge in child recruitment and use over the last five years.<sup>26</sup> This demonstrates conclusively that Al Shabab has adopted a program of child recruiting.

#### Tactics of Al-Shabab for recruiting children

To recruit young people, Al-Shabab uses several methods, including propaganda and brainwashing. In order to persuade young boys and girls that the 'holy' battle is allowable and would make them good believers, giving them 'admission into paradise. The fact that Al-Shabab primarily recruits and uses children and teenagers for military service is evidence that several of the criteria stated in the general literature analysis on CAAFG are present. Al-Shabab takes advantage of the internal situation to recruit young people into their ranks by promising them jobs, financial compensation, or a greater role in the so-called holy war.

#### Violation of UN Convention on Rights of a Child (UNCRC) in Somalia

Amnesty International released a new study that details the extent of war crimes committed against Somali children, including the systematic recruitment of child soldiers under the age of 15 by armed Islamist groups.<sup>27</sup> Armed Islamist groups have subjected children to public floggings, stonings, amputations, and executions, among other heinous violations of human rights. Children have also witnessed family members and acquaintances being slain or tortured. As a result of the human rights violations, they faced or witnessed during the conflict, Somali refugees, including children, are highly traumatized. Henceforth, the armed groups are Somalia have been violating the UN convention on Rights of a Child (UNCRC) in the country. The UN Convention, which has 54 articles, provide the civil, political, social, economic and cultural aspects of a child. Moreover, the convention has universal application and the articles included in the UNCRC are applicable to all children around the world. The convention also discusses the obligation of governments and adults to work together so that the rights of children can be safeguarded. For example, article 2 of the UN Convention on Rights of a Child (UNCRC) states that: "Every child has rights, without discrimination of any kind against the child, parent, or legal guardian" (Article 2).<sup>28</sup> Thus, various armed groups have violated various articles of UN Convention on Rights of a Child in the country.

## 4. Discussion

The aforementioned findings and analysis show that Somalia has been doing gross violations of international child law. In addition, the findings depict that children due to various socio-economic factors join various armed rebel groups in Somalia. One of the groups such as Al-Shabab has been recruiting children in their ranks through their local commanders and by other tactics. Moreover, the review of the literature shows that various factors convince children to join armed rebellion groups in Somalia. These factors can be local, political, intrinsic, and extrinsic. According to Wessells, in conflict-affected places, youngsters may join a militant group in search of food, a level of security unavailable elsewhere, money or other

<sup>25</sup> BOTHA, A.; MAHDI A. "Radicalisation and al-Shabaab recruitment in Somalia", *Institute for Security Studies Papers*, n. 266, 2014, p. 20.

<sup>26</sup> UNICEF. "Grave child rights violations in Somalia", 2021. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/somalia/press-releases/grave-child-rights-violations-somalia>.

<sup>27</sup> AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA. "Children in Somalia facing war crimes", 2017. Available at: <https://www.amnestyusa.org/reports/children-in-somalia-facing-war-crimes/>.

<sup>28</sup> UNICEF. "What is the UN convention on child rights?", 2024. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>.

material rewards, medical attention, or just a means to survive.<sup>29</sup> In addition, the majority of nations in which this occurs are classified as "fragile" or "failed." State. These conditions lead to weakened institutions, the collapse of the majority of infrastructures, negative economic growth rates, and a substantial decline in the populace's standard of living. However, the above findings also show that children in Somalia are recruited by armed groups such as Al-Shabab by using such tactics including providing money and gift and also threatening their families of dire consequences if they refuse to join their ranks as stated by Botha and Abdel.<sup>30</sup> As a result of such activities of armed groups, the rights of children are grossly violated in the country.

## **5. Conclusion**

The recruitment of minors in armed conflicts is not a new phenomenon, as the nature of war has evolved over time. With the evolution of modern war concepts such as proxy wars and guerilla warfare, armed groups have recruited youngsters as suicide bombers to inflict significant harm on their opponents. In this regard, the 2017 report by the UN Secretary-General indicates that Somalia, Nigeria, and South Sudan are among the countries with the highest prevalence of "children associated with armed forces of groups" (CAAFG). In addition, many groups in Somalia are involved in the recruitment of children into their ranks. Al-Shabab is one of those groups, actively recruiting children to carry out government assaults throughout the country. Al-Shabab control over a greater area in "central and southern Somalia," where severe "codes of conduct" have been implemented that has led to an increase in the number of children it recruits.

### **5.1. Recommendations**

For children not to get involved in armed conflicts, there need to be structural reforms that discourage everyone from picking up arms in Somalia. In addition, the state should make such laws that make it an illegal and heinous crime to recruit children into armed groups. Severe punishment should be introduced in the law for violating the rights of children through such acts. However, this can only be possible if the state makes sure that it gains economic growth and prefers to make long-term investment in the human development of its people.

Thus, the author has proposed various policy recommendations to strengthen legal measures in Somalia in order to avoid armed conflicts that use children in their ranks:

**Reforms in domestic legislation:** It is important that the national legislation to be brought in Somalia must be in accordance with international law including various international treaties and protocols. In this regard, the government must fully implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) of the United Nation along with its optional protocols that deal with the involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC). In addition, the government must bring reforms to the domestic laws and enact legislation related to the strict punishment and criminalize the use of children as soldiers by armed groups. Moreover, it is also advised that those children who were part of armed groups must be treated as victims instead of perpetrators and they should be properly rehabilitated through various programs so that they can be part of the society again.

**Reforms in judiciary and Transparency in Accountability:** To prevent children from being recruited by armed groups in Somalia the government must establish special courts that can prosecute such groups who are involved in such heinous crimes. For this purpose, special courts and tribunals should be created and empowered to prosecute such groups without any pressures. Moreover, the prosecution must make its case strong so that such groups cannot take advantage

<sup>29</sup> WESSELLS, M. *Child soldiers: From violence to protection*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2006.

<sup>30</sup> BOTHA, A.; MAHDI A. "Radicalisation and al-Shabaab recruitment in Somalia", *Institute for Security Studies Papers*, n. 266, 2014, p. 20.



of weak prosecution. However, for such proposals to be successful, the United Nations need to play its role in terms of providing training to legal experts and professionals as per international and human rights law. Finally, the government with the support of civil societies must work for the establishment of criminal tribunal courts in order to bring justice to child victims who were recruited by armed groups and ensure transparency in the accountability.

**Cooperation and Coordination at International Level:** Since Somalia is a war torn country and it has been involved in armed conflict among various groups for quite long time. The government has very limited capacity and resources to bring drastic changes in the legal and judicial frameworks. Therefore, it is recommended that there should be a cooperation and coordination among various stakeholders, United Nations, African Union, Nongovernmental organizations, Intergovernmental organizations, International Criminal Court of Justice (ICC) and civil societies. The benefit of involving the aforementioned organizations in the reform process is that they have the capacity and resources for providing technical support, monitoring of prosecution in courts and tribunals and providing training to judges and prosecution so that accountability and transparency is ensured in the courts. In addition, there should be a proper mechanism of information sharing between Somalia and other countries regarding the groups who are involved in children recruitment in armed conflicts and their networks can be dismantled.

**Involvement of Local Community in Somalia:** Conflict resolution and conflict prevention cannot be successful without the involvement of local communities in the process. Legal frameworks and reforms in the judicial system cannot be a successfully yield results if the local communities in Somalia are not involved in preventing their children from being the victims of armed groups in the country. Therefore, there should be community based programs in the country so that local population can be educated regarding the legal consequences of sending their children to armed groups. Moreover, they should be educated and provide awareness about the international and domestic child protection laws. For this purpose, the local leaders, religious figures and institutions and schools should be engaged to educate parents and children about the child's rights. Finally, free legal services should be provided from the state to the communities where family of those whose children are recruited by armed groups by force can seek justice.

**Social Development Initiatives in Somalia:** The root cause of children involved in armed conflict as discussed in the result and discussion is poverty. Therefore, without eradicating the root cause of any problem the major initiatives or proposals as recommended above cannot be successful. The government must develop such policies which can be helpful in tackling poverty and unemployment in the country. Although there are a lot of international organizations and also UN organizations working to improve the livelihood of people but again more coordinated efforts are needed from the international community to tackle poverty and provide quality education to children in Somalia.

Henceforth, the state can create a conducive environment for children in Somalia by implementing various policy recommendations as mentioned above to prevent children from being victims by joining various armed groups in Somalia. Moreover, legal and judicial reforms along with economic reforms and opportunities can help children to secure their lives in Somalia.

## **5.2. Limitations**

This research study has several shortcomings. This research study focuses on only two factors, which is one of its significant drawbacks. In addition, this research is restricted to a single case study and few variables. Consequently, the evidence may not be applicable to determining the other causes of child rights violations in Somalia.

## **5.3. Future direction**

There are further problems and concerns that could be addressed in a future study on "children in armed conflict and international law". Furthermore,

researchers may also do research on some other factors like lack of progressive legislation and judicial reforms that compel children to join armed rebellion groups in Somalia.

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