

Humanitarian engagement of armed non-state actors in child protection. Recommendation to the Council

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In a proposal for a recommendation to the Council (tabled pursuant to Rule 121(1) of the Rules of Procedure), Eva JOLY (FR), Catherine GRÈZE (FR), Keith TAYLOR (UK), Judith SARGENTINI (NL), Bart STAES (BE), Isabella LÖVIN (SE) on behalf of the Greens/EFA Group, called on the European Parliament to make a series of recommendations to the Council on humanitarian engagement of armed non-state actors in child protection.

The proposal recalled that most contemporary armed conflicts involve one or more armed non-state actors fighting governments or other armed groups, with civilians and particularly children bearing the brunt of these wars. In order to improve the protection of civilians, and particularly children, **it is necessary that international humanitarian norms apply to and bind all parties in an armed conflict.**

Members recalled that the Statute of the International Criminal Court **criminalises the act of conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 into armed forces or groups**, or using them to participate actively in hostilities. International law prohibits all forms of sexual violence, including against children.

Members also stated that the international community has a moral duty to seek commitments from all parties involved in conflicts, including both states and armed non-state actors, in order to protect children. It is for this reason that they addressed the following recommendations to the Commissioner for Development and the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy:

- encourage the signing of action plans for the protection of children in armed conflict with the UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict by concerned states and armed non-state actors;
- include in political dialogues with third countries, for instance within the framework of the Cotonou Agreement, the **goal of preventing and stopping the recruitment and forced involvement of children under the age of 18** and ensuring their release and reintegration into society;
- reiterate that states and armed non-state actors must comply with international humanitarian law and international humanitarian customary law, and support them in their efforts to take special measures to protect civilians, particularly children;
- engage directly, or indirectly through specialised NGOs, with armed non-state actors on the issue of protection of girls and boys, with a view to alleviating children's suffering in armed conflict;
- support humanitarian NGOs that engage in dialogue with armed non-state actors in order to promote respect for international humanitarian norms in armed conflict.