

## CHILDREN AS VICTIMS OF ARMED CONFLICT AT THE TURN OF XX AND XXI CENTURIES. THE PROBLEM OUTLINE

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UDC 355.01–058.65–053.6“199/20”

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In civilised countries in the world, the greatest value of every family is children. It is the parents and families who take care of their upbringing, education and, if necessary, their adult lives, according to their needs, provide the necessary help.

The fact that there are countries in the XXIst century which tolerate children soldiers and, in extreme cases, suicide children, should be met with the protest of everyone whose primary good is their successors.

The fact that ten-year-olds or even teenagers are being used in armed combat should never happen, above all for moral, cultural and demographic reasons.

**Key words:** children, soldiers, suicides, wars, family, parents, victims.

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**Діти як жертви збройних конфліктів на рубежі XX–XXI ст.**

#### **Опис проблеми**

У цивілізованих країнах світу найбільша цінність кожної сім'ї – це діти. А саме батьки та сім'ї піклуються про їх виховання, освіту та, якщо необхідно, у дорослому житті, відповідно до своїх можливостей надають необхідну допомогу.

Насправді ж в XXI столітті існують країни, що визнають дітей-військових, а в окремих випадках навіть дітей-самогубців, тому закони та положення цих країн щодо розглянутого питання повинні бути засуджені міжнародним суспільством, оскільки діти є найціннішим скарбом.

Використання десятирічних дітей чи підлітків у збройних конфліктах є неприпустимим, насамперед, з етичних, моральних, культурних та демографічних причин.

**Ключові слова:** діти, військові, самогубці, війни, сім'я, батьки, жертви.

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### **Дети как жертва вооруженных конфликтов на рубеже XX–XXI вв. Описание проблемы**

В цивилизованных странах мира самая большая ценность каждой семьи – это дети. А именно родители и семьи заботятся об их воспитание, образование и, если необходимо, во взрослой жизни, в меру своих возможностей оказывают необходимую помощь.

На самом же деле в XXI веке существуют страны, что признают детей-военных, а в отдельных случаях даже детей-самоубийц, поэтому законы этих стран относительно рассмотренного вопроса должны быть осуждены международным обществом, поскольку дети являются самым ценным сокровищем.

Использование десятилетних детей или подростков в вооруженных конфликтах недопустимо, прежде всего с этических, моральных, культурных и демографических причин.

**Ключевые слова:** дети, военные, самоубийцы, войны, семья, родители, жертвы.

**The research justification grounds.** For the purpose of this work, we have assumed that armed conflicts are all manifestations of fighting, including unspoken ones, in which the participants are parties who are not subjects of international law. The above term in the literature is used interchangeably with the term “conflict actions”.

It should be noted, however, that none of the treaties currently in force defines what should be understood by the term “armed conflict”. International humanitarian law contains some guidelines to explain this concept. The Committee of the International Red Cross considers that this term should be understood not as a legal term but rather as a “de facto situation” and should be applied to the realities where armed events occur alternately with ceasefire periods<sup>1</sup>.

It is also said that “acts of war” is understood as acts of war aimed at attacking enemy forces, including personnel and equipment. This includes the period of preparation for possible battles and the return to bases after they have been completed<sup>2</sup>.

As far as wars are concerned, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “war is a greater armed conflict in which military troops under two or more governments and at least one military organisation are fighting for a long time”<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> M. Prucnal, *Ochrona dzieci przed uczestnictwem w działaniach wojennych we współczesnym prawie międzynarodowym*, Warszawa 2012, s. 29.

<sup>2</sup> M. Michalak, *Ochrona praw dziecka podczas konfliktu zbrojnego*, referat wygłoszony podczas konferencji naukowej „Ludność cywilna wobec aktów terroru”, Wieluń 2014, s. 3.

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**The aim of the article.** The concept of “children”, on which no official document has developed a commonly accepted definition, also needs to be clarified. However, it is believed that this group includes persons under the age of 15, although some documents refer to children for persons under the age of 18<sup>4</sup>.

**The main research material.** In view of the fact that contemporary conflicts are more frequent and claimed by far more victims than wars, we decided to discuss this very problem, highlighting children as the main victims of these actions. We are thinking here of both the deaths and the disability suffered as a result of fighting, as well as of biological and social orphanhood. This interest in the subject is justified by the fact that, as a scientist, I have a duty to make known to me data to warn those in power against harming the most vulnerable groups of society in each country – children, who are often used in a ruthless way even for their active participation as combatants.

Some sources report that there are more than 300,000 child soldiers in the world today. Some of them can be classified as slaves<sup>5</sup>.

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, mentioned above, states that until the 1990s as many as 61 UN member states waged wars, and in 1990 alone 31 states fought. It was also calculated that in the period from 1945 to 1990, only 3 years passed without wars. Between 1990 and 2000 a further 41 conflicts were recorded, with 19 such events only in 1997 and 20 more large-scale battles in 2001. It should be stressed, however, that from the second half of the twentieth century to the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, ethnic and internal conflicts increased in strength, while international fights became a rarity<sup>6</sup>.

Scientists researching war issues claim that between 1945 and 2005 there were over 400 armed conflicts in the world, which, due to their motives, were divided into several categories. These include conflicts based on: national liberation, ideological, religious, ethnic, border or economic grounds<sup>7</sup>. Their intensity is evidenced by the number of people killed. The most dramatic events in the 1950s were, for example, when in 1951 the number of victims was 1 125 200, and a year later there were 1 148 800 people killed. Equally tragic was 1971, when 1 293 000 citizens died in various conflicts around the world. It should also be noted that at the turn of the 20th and 21st century alone, 2 361 100 people were killed. This huge number of deaths, broken down by year, is as follows.

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<sup>3</sup> R. Artymiak, *Wojny i konflikty w XX wieku*, w: *Konflikty współczesnego świata*, red. R. Borkowski, Kraków 2001, s. 39.

<sup>4</sup> M. Prucnal, *Ochrona dzieci przed uczestnictwem w działaniach wojennych we współczesnym prawie międzynarodowym*, Warszawa 2012, s. 69, 70.

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF: Nawet 300 000 dzieci-żołnierzy na świecie, <https://www.unicef.pl/Centrum-prasowe/Informacje-prasowe/UNICEF-Nawet-300-000-dzieci-zolnierzy-na-swiecie>, data odczytu 1 marca 2018.

<sup>6</sup> J. Szkoła, *Współczesne konflikty zbrojne i ich rozwiązywanie*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Ruchu Studenckiego” 2011, nr 2, s. 51

<sup>7</sup> P. L. Wilczyński, *Uwarunkowania geograficzne i zróżnicowanie regionalne konfliktów zbrojnych na świecie po drugiej wojnie światowej*, Łódź 2011, s. 37.

Table 1

## Number of people killed in armed conflicts around the world from 1998 to 2004

Year	Number of victims	Year	Number of victims
1997	93100	2001	326400
1998	327300	2002	67900
1999	704200	2003	90200
2000	667000	2004	85000

*Victims of armed conflicts at the turn of the 20th and 21st century*

Source: P. L. Wilczyński, *Geographical conditions and regional diversity of armed conflicts in the world after the Second World War*, Łódź, 2011, p. 36.

European Union documents provide estimates that in the past decade armed conflicts have caused the deaths of more than two million children and six million have been physically injured. In addition, around twenty million children have been displaced or have had to flee in search of shelter, and around one million are orphans. Others are being held hostage, abducted or sold<sup>8</sup>.

This is despite the fact that the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the United Nations General Assembly has been in operation since 1989. The comprehensive document contains, inter alia, Article 6, which states that: 1. States Parties recognise that every child has the right to life. 2. States Parties shall ensure as far as possible the living conditions and development of children<sup>9</sup>.

However, since the turn of the century, there has been a widespread belief that wars have changed radically and that between 80 % and 90 % of civilians, including, of course, children, are victims of wars. This view was reflected in the European Security Strategy for the European Union, adopted by the European Council in Brussels in December 2003<sup>10</sup>.

From the point of view of this text, the provisions of Article 38 of the aforementioned Convention are important, two of which seem to be essential: "2. States Parties shall take all possible steps (...) to ensure that persons [under fifteen years of age] are not directly involved in armed activities. 3 States Parties shall refrain from recruiting to their armed forces [persons under the age of fifteen] years [and shall recruit

<sup>8</sup> Wytyczne UE w sprawach dzieci w konfliktach zbrojnych, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/10019.pl08.pdf>, data odczytu 27 września 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Konwencja o prawach dziecka, przyjęta przez Zgromadzenie Ogólne Narodów Zjednoczonych dnia 20 listopada 1989 r., Dziennik Ustaw (Dz. U.) z 1991 Nr 120 poz. 526.

<sup>10</sup> A. Roberts, *Lives and Statistics: Are 90% of War Victims Civilians?*, „Survival” 2010, vol. 52, no. 3, p. 115.

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from among persons aged [at least fifteen] but not yet eighteen years old, States Parties [193 States Parties] shall endeavour to give priority to taking into account older persons”<sup>11</sup>.

At its third session in 1993, the Committee on the Rights of the Child drew the attention of the UN General Assembly to the need for research aimed at developing ways and means to raise standards of protection of children from the harmful effects of armed conflict. There was even presented a report prepared by Graca Machel, who referred to horrifying statistics, stating that millions of children are victims of murders, rapes, mutilations, and hundreds of thousands of others have fallen victim to the fate of child soldiers. The author of the report, quoting cruel statistical data proving the absolute violation of children's rights on a huge scale, draws a painful conclusion from them, claiming that 'the world is sinking deeper and deeper into a huge moral vacuum cast out of man's fundamental values, in which millions of children are exposed to inhumane acts of violence'<sup>12</sup>.

It should also be noted that, in addition to the above Convention, in 2002. The United Nations has adopted the Second Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

In addition, the UN Security Council adopted two resolutions: the first in 2004 under the number 1539 on children and armed conflict and repeated it in 2005 (Resolution 1612). The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, adopted as long ago as 1990, is also a regional instrument. On the same subject, a number of countries have also adopted a number of relevant legal acts. From this point of view, it appears that formally children are adequately protected by global and internal law, all the more so as there are mechanisms to monitor and enforce compliance with international obligations to protect children in armed conflicts. These include, but are not limited to: The Committee on the Rights of the Child, the General Assembly and the UN Security Council, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and international non-governmental organisations<sup>13</sup>. There are also institutions for enforcing compliance with obligations to protect children in armed conflicts. This is primarily the International Criminal Court.

The phenomenon of child abuse in armed conflicts occurs most frequently in Africa. An example of this is the more than ten-year civil war in Sierra Leone, which lasted from 1991 to 2001, in which about 10,000 children fought, which accounted for as

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<sup>11</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>12</sup> M. Prucnal, *Ochrona dzieci przed uczestnictwem w działaniach zbrojnych we współczesnym prawie międzynarodowym*, Warszawa 2012, s. 143, 144.

<sup>13</sup> M. Michalak, *Ochrona praw dziecka podczas konfliktu zbrojnego*, referat wygłoszony podczas konferencji naukowej „Ludność cywilna wobec aktów terroru”, Wieluń 2014, s. 10.

much as 25 % of the total number of all soldiers involved in the conflict<sup>14</sup>. In Burma, some 70 000 minors were officially conscripted into the army. A similar number are fighting in Somalia and around 40 000 in the Democratic Republic of Congo<sup>15</sup>.

The armed conflict in the last of these countries, which has been going on since 1996, has so far resulted in the deaths of some 5.4 million people, forcing another million to flee their homes<sup>16</sup>.

The Sudan People's Liberation Army committed itself to demobilising children from its ranks by July 2005. To this end, a National Council for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) and DDR Commissions for the North and South were established at the end of 2006. The success of the programme was demobilization – between January 2001 and April 2006 about 20,000 children from the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), who returned to their families<sup>17</sup>.

In the on-going war in Liberia (1989–1995), out of 60,000 soldiers taking part in armed fighting, about 17,500 (i.e. almost 29 %) were children<sup>18</sup>.

For 20 years in northern Uganda, fighting has been taking place, hidden from the public and, above all, concealed from the media. Despite the efforts made by the parties to the conflicts, it is known that at least 20,000 children died in this region of Africa as a result of the so-called Lord's Resistance Army actions<sup>19</sup>.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, in less than two years of war, about 60 % of Sarajevo children up to the age of ten survived the artillery shelling of their homes or found themselves under fire – such information is contained in a report prepared by UNICEF. The authors also reported that 37 % of children lost a relative in Sarajevo and 32% helped to carry the dead or injured, 58 % refused to live, 70 % were persecuted by night-time cruel predictions and 91 % suffered from gastric neurosis, for example<sup>20</sup>.

Magdalena Adamczuk reports that during the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s, many thousands of Iranian boys attacked Iraqi shooting positions, believing that they were doing so in the name of Allah and Khomeini<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> K. Janiszewska, *Wojna w Sierra Leone – z dziećmi w roli głównej*, „Refleksje” Poznań 2013, nr. 8, s. 185.

<sup>15</sup> E. Zielińska, *Konflikty zbrojne a dzieci*, „Głos Gila” 2007, nr. 10 i 1/2, s. 3.

<sup>16</sup> J. Szambelan, *Krwawe minerały*, [http://www.ekonsument.pl/a66700\\_krwawe\\_minerały.html](http://www.ekonsument.pl/a66700_krwawe_minerały.html), data odczytu 17 listopada 2014.

<sup>17</sup> O. Guz, *Dzieci żołnierze – przykład Sudanu*, „Przez Pryzmat Praw Człowieka” 2013, nr. 1, s. 21.

<sup>18</sup> M. Musiał-Karg, *Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf – pierwszy prezydent w Afryce*, w: *Kobiety we współczesnym świecie. Rola i miejsce kobiet w życiu politycznym*, red. M. Musiał-Karg, B. Secler, Poznań 2010, s. 196.

<sup>19</sup> B. Żero, *Dzieci ofiary wojny*, „Głos Afryki” Natalin 2006, nr. 14, s. 20.

<sup>20</sup> M. Trawczyńska, *Geneza i konsekwencje konfliktu w Bośni i Hercegowinie w latach 1992-1995*, <http://www.repozytorium.uni.wroc.pl/Content/32200/0011.pdf>, s. 162.

<sup>21</sup> M. Adamczuk, *Rola dzieci w strategii islamskich organizacji terrorystycznych*, „Bezpieczeństwo Narodowe” 2012, nr. 21, s. 104.

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It should be noted that even 10-year-old children, who were often taken away from their parents, were on the one hand shocked by what they experienced, but at the same time charmed by what they heard about Hussein and were ready, and even wanted to become his followers. Moreover, the training ground exercises, which lasted for many hours a day, caused the unaware and in a way demented children-recruits – to learn how to use rifles and grenades. After such training, many of them were sent to the front, supplying them with so-called “keys to paradise” with an inscription: “I have a special permission for imam Khomeini to ascend to heaven”. For each child on the front, parents received 6,000 tomanas – the equivalent of the then monthly salary of an Iranian worker. If the child died, the family received a martyr's ID, which gave them privileges when buying food and clothing, and also meant social advancement<sup>22</sup>.

In Burma, parents voluntarily train their children for the rebellious Karen army, as the partisans provide clothes and two meals a day. In 1990, there were about 900 soldiers under the age of 15 in Karen's army. In other African countries, the youngest citizens of the world are also dying as a result of tribal wars. For example, it is estimated that 330 000 children were killed in Angola between 1980 and 1988 and 490 000 young people died in Mozambique<sup>23</sup>.

In August 2000, before the outbreak of the fighting, The New York Times reported on the existence of Palestinian summer camps, where 27 000 children were taught guerrilla tactics, how to use firearms and how to learn about the secrets of kidnappings, etc. In October 2000. UNICEF called on Palestine to take strong measures to discourage people under the age of 18 from taking part in any violent action that poses too great a risk to them<sup>24</sup>.

Meanwhile, many foreign publications confirm that the emphasis on dedication intifada is often born at home. Many Palestinian parents see the role of young people in the uprising as useful and even honourable. For example, the father of a 13-year-old was supposed to say, 'I pray that God will choose him to be a martyr. One of the mothers, after the tragic death of her son, spoke to a journalist at The Times in London: “I am glad that [the son] was martyred [at the age of 13]. I will dedicate all my sons and daughters (12 children in total) to Al-Aqsa and Jerusalem. Another reason why Palestinian parents allow and even encourage children to engage in combat is the financial incentive offered to

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<sup>22</sup> *Potencjalne Zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego. Bezpieczeństwo kulturowe, terroryzm, radykalizacja, kobiety terrorystki, kryzys migracyjny*, red. Magdalena El Ghamari, Warszawa 2016, s. 290, 291.

<sup>23</sup> *Children as soldiers*, <https://www.unicef.org/sowc96/2csoldrs.htm>, data odczytu 3 lutego 2018.

<sup>24</sup> A. Weinreb, A. Weinreb, *Has Israel Used Indiscriminate Force*, „Middle East Quarterly”, 2002, pp. 17–22.

Por. także <http://www.meforum.org/175/has-israel-used-indiscriminate-force>, data odczytu 3 lutego 2018.



martyr families. Palestine paid \$2000 for the killed child and \$300 for each injured child”<sup>25</sup>.

In addition, the Arab Liberation Front, a Palestinian group loyal to the then Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, paid the injured and the families of the deceased \$500 each for the wounds they suffered; \$1000 for disability; \$10,000 to families, as martyrs' children were described; and \$25,000 to each family for a suicide martyr.<sup>26</sup>

Saudi Arabia played an important role in recruiting the youngest children and announced that it had promised \$250 million as the first contribution to a \$1 billion fund to support Palestinian martyr families.

According to information provided by the Minister of the Interior of Pakistan, terrorists are buying children in regions of poverty and families with many children live in extreme poverty. The recruits paid between \$500 and \$25,000 for the child, who is likely to be forced to commit a suicide bombing. The Taliban valued the lives of children between \$7,000 and \$14,000, and the difference in the proposed rates resulted from the tasks that the purchased child was supposed to perform<sup>27</sup>.

A statement made by a senior officer of such a group in Chad in 2007 testifies to the willingness to recruit children to local armed forces. "Child soldiers are ideal because they don't complain, don't expect payment, and if you tell them to kill, they'll kill"<sup>28</sup>.

In Nigeria, eight girls between the ages of 12 and 15 were kidnapped in early May 2014. Most likely, the Boko Haram group was behind their abduction. The incident took place in Warabe, a bastion of the Islamist Boko Haram militia. Since April 2014, the group has kidnapped more than 200 schoolgirls. According to the police, they were transported along with the stolen cattle and food. This organisation seeks to establish a Muslim religious state in the northern part of Nigeria with sharia law. The detained girls were used as porters. At the same time, they had to prepare meals...<sup>29</sup>.

Interesting data on military preparation of children and youth, and especially girls, is provided by a publication on the website [tolercja.pl](http://tolercja.pl), which, referring to Bratni Zew publishing house, wrote that according to Save the Children's report at the turn of the 20th and 21st century in the world, 120 thousand girls were involved in armed conflicts. From

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<sup>25</sup> J. Weiner, *Child abuse In the Palestynian Authority*, October 5, 2002, <https://likud.nl/2002/10/child-abuse-in-the-palestinian-authority/#content>, data odczytu 3 lutego 2018.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>27</sup> *Potencjalne Zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego. Bezpieczeństwo kulturowe, terroryzm, radykalizacja, kobiety terrorystki, kryzys migracyjny*, red. Magdalena El Ghamari, Warszawa 2016, s. 230, 231.

<sup>28</sup> W. Stankiewicz, *Prawnomiędzynarodowe aspekty udziału dzieci-żołnierzy w konfliktach zbrojnych*, <http://www.npw.internetdsl.pl/Dokumenty/2013-2/2013-2-4.pdf>, s. 6.

<sup>29</sup> *Konflikty zbrojne odbierają dzieciństwo*, *Wiadomości ze świata*, „Kompanionie”, Kraków 2014, s. 6.



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1990 to 2003, girls took an active part in so-called government armed groups, militias and paramilitary units in 55 countries, 38 of which were active in tribal battles.

The situation of children in Syria, in which the fighting has been going on since March 2011, deserves a special discussion. It is estimated that as many as 7.5 million of the country's youngest citizens entered the adult world knowing only war and its consequences. As in other countries where armed conflicts took place and Syria, education has also been degraded. It is reported that around 2 million children are not attending school and 25 % of the institutions have been partially or even completely destroyed. Estimates show that during the fighting as many as 60 % of children were forced to work for armed groups or serve in their troops. This type of situation does not exclude a very dangerous threat for the future – susceptibility to radicalisation and Islamic indoctrination in their adult life<sup>30</sup>.

The situation in Syria is unfavourable inasmuch as more than 250,000 citizens of that country died as a result of the fighting, and 12 million were forced to migrate externally and internally<sup>31</sup>. Another source states that the fighting claimed 320,000 lives, including 17,400 children and 11,000 women<sup>32</sup>.

An important effect of armed conflicts is also the degradation of education. According to UNESCO 28 million children did not go to school. They were mainly citizens of poor countries, where conflicts of various kinds lasted. It should be stressed that none of the combatants was interested in educating children and the functioning of schools. For example, in Afghanistan in 2009 there were about 613 attacks on educational institutions, while in 2008 there were 347 such actions. In addition, rape and sexual violence have been and continue to be one of the methods of humiliation, and fear of physical violence prevents children, and especially girls, from attending school. UNESCO also points out that humanitarian aid “bypasses the children” of these countries and that only “less than 2 % of humanitarian aid”, i.e. around USD 149 million, is allocated to education, 'which makes it possible to meet only a small proportion of requests for aid' in this area. At the same time, UNESCO postulates, among other things, the establishment of the International Commission on Rape and Sexual Violence and the reform of the humanitarian aid system<sup>33</sup>.

Zdzisław Polcikiewicz rightly pointed out that wars have a negative and even ruinous impact on young generations. As I have already mentioned, it is estimated that currently around 300 000 children are serving in various armed groups, and in fact the number of children soldiers may be much higher. One of the reasons for this type of phenomenon is the lack of alternatives for children and young people for a different life

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<sup>30</sup> W. Wilk, *Wojna w Syrii i kryzys humanitarny*, Warszawa 2016, s. 19.

<sup>31</sup> *Syria kobiet, wojna i ucieczki*, red. M. Kurpiński, Warszawa 2016, s. 16.

<sup>32</sup> *320 tys. zabitych w wojnie w Syrii*, „Demence 24” 13.03.2017, s. 1.

<sup>33</sup> MW, *UNESCO: konflikty zbrojne pozbawiają edukacji 28 mln dzieci*, „Nauka w Polsce” PAP, <http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,380237,unesco-konflikty-zbrojne-pozbawiaja-edukacji-28-mln-dzieci.html>, data odczytu 27 listopada 2014.

in some countries. A juvenile warrior (soldier?) used in the field of adult warfare can use and actually uses the means available to him, not because he is right, but simply because he has no other choice. In the recruitment of children's candidates for the armed forces, partisan movements in African, Asian and South American countries specialize in particular. After ideological and military training [not-contingent order], the children participate in regular battles, distinguished by commitment, great courage and often exceptional brutality. Evidence that this was and still is the case of ethnic cleansing and massacres, in which child soldiers are particularly active. It should be noted that as a result of the war with young people in uniforms, they are demoralised to such an extent that its effects are often far-reaching and irreversible<sup>34</sup>.

Over the last decade, about two million children have been killed in armed conflict. Three times more seriously injured or permanently disabled, many of whom have been injured by landmines. Many other children have been forced to observe and even participate in other horrific acts of violence<sup>35</sup>.

In addition to the above-mentioned negative effects of children's participation in armed conflicts or wars, there is the so-called war orphanhood. Norman Davies, among others, drew attention to this fact. He noted that the knowledge about the child's war suffering goes beyond the schematic picture of war, which usually focuses on battles, heroism, crimes, torture, liberation or enslavement. War orphanhood is therefore a historical-social phenomenon, as well as a psychophysical phenomenon, which was directly or indirectly triggered by wars, armed conflicts and the accompanying disasters, such as hunger, disease, homelessness or orphanhood, which in a particular way exposes the youngest citizens to loss of life, health and the right to develop in accordance with the laws of nature<sup>36</sup>.

In my opinion, no hasty conclusions should be drawn from this information. In many countries of the world, military education for young people is provided as part of school education, but this has nothing to do with the use of young citizens in current wars. As voluntary undertakings of this kind, they even deserve a positive assessment, as they prepare society in the event of a possible need to save people (e.g. sanitary training), or provide a basis for a possible future profession.

**To sum up**, it should be said that many countries, especially the so-called Third World to maintain local or central government, are using children, giving them weapons to hand, and training in killing and directing them to the front. The millions of victims are clear proof that, in my opinion, the criminal activity of adults should not take place. It should also be noted that a young soldier who was taught to kill, and who actually killed,

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<sup>34</sup> Z. Polcikiewicz, *Właściwości przyszłych wojen oraz ich implikacje społeczne*, „Zeszyty Naukowe WSOWL” 2012, nr. 1 (163), s. 108, 109.

<sup>35</sup> *Impact of armed conflict on children*, United Nations, General Assembly, item 108 of the provisional agenda A/51/150, 26 August 1996.

<sup>36</sup> W. Theiss, *Sieroctwo wojenne polskich dzieci (1939-1945). Zarys problemu*, „Przegląd Pedagogiczny” 2012, nr. 1, s. 79

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may in future follow in the footsteps of his adult predecessors. As I said earlier, the losses are enormous: from the loss of society, through the reduction in the level of education, the loss of moral behaviour by part of the population, the demoralization of society and, last but not least, the regression in the democratic development of countries.

Finally, I am aware that the subject matter presented in the article is only a signalling of the problem and that was its assumption. I would also add that the choice of regions was not accidental, if only because of the fact that in these areas we are dealing with the mass participation of children in armed conflicts.

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