

## THE HOUTHI MILITIAS RECRUITMENT AND USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS: LEGAL CONSEQUENCES AND CHALLENGES

**Ghulam Mohammad Qanet**

Assistant Professor, Public Law Department, Faculty of Law and Political Science, Herat University. Email: [ghulammohammadqanet@gmail.com](mailto:ghulammohammadqanet@gmail.com)

**Navid Nabil**

Senior Assistant Professor, Public Law Department, Faculty of Law and Political Science, Herat University. Email: [navidnabil15@gmail.com](mailto:navidnabil15@gmail.com)

**Kambiz Rahmani**

Teaching Assistant Professor, Private Law Department, Faculty of Law and Political Science, Herat University. Email: [Kambiz34rahmani@gmail.com](mailto:Kambiz34rahmani@gmail.com)

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15328196>

**Abstract.** *The recruitment and use of child soldiers by Houthi militias in armed conflict present significant legal and humanitarian challenges. This paper examines the legal implications of these actions, focusing on the applicable international legal framework and the potential avenues for accountability. International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL) unequivocally prohibit the recruitment and use of children under the age of 18 in armed forces. These prohibitions are enshrined in treaties such as the Geneva Conventions Additional Protocols; Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (2000) (OPAC), and as well as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Moreover, the paper uses a doctrinal approach research design to systematically collect and analyze numerical data. The goal is to measure the extent of the problem, examine the legal consequences, and identify the challenges related to the recruitment and use of child soldiers by the Houthi militias. Furthermore, evidence suggests that Houthi forces have recruited children, deployed them in combat roles, and subjected them to various forms of abuse. These actions constitute war crimes under ICC, and individuals within the Houthi hierarchy may be held criminally responsible. However, bringing perpetrators to justice faces significant challenges, including the ongoing conflict, limited access to evidence, and political obstacles. This study underscores the urgency of addressing the Houthi's use of child soldiers and the importance of ensuring accountability for these grave violations of international law.*

**Keywords:** *Armed Conflict, Child Soldiers, Houthi Militias, Humanitarian Challenges, Recruitment.*

### **ВЕРБОВКА И ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ ДЕТЕЙ-СОЛДАТ ОПОЛЧЕНЦАМИ-ХУСИТАМИ: ПРАВОВЫЕ ПОСЛЕДСТВИЯ И ПРОБЛЕМЫ**

**Аннотация.** *Вербовка и использование детей-солдат ополченцами-хуситами в вооруженном конфликте представляет собой существенные правовые и гуманитарные проблемы. В данной статье рассматриваются правовые последствия этих действий с упором на применимую международно-правовую базу и потенциальные пути привлечения к ответственности. Международное гуманитарное право (МГП) и международное право прав человека (МППЧ) однозначно запрещают вербовку и использование детей в возрасте до 18 лет в вооруженных силах. Эти запреты закреплены в таких договорах, как Дополнительные протоколы к Женевским конвенциям; Конвенция о правах ребенка (КПР); Факультативный протокол к КПР, касающийся участия детей в вооруженных конфликтах (2000 г.) (ОРАС), а также Римский статут Международного уголовного суда (МУС). Кроме того, в статье используется доктринальный подход к исследовательскому дизайну для систематического сбора и анализа числовых данных. Цель состоит в том, чтобы измерить масштаб проблемы, изучить правовые последствия и выявить проблемы, связанные с вербовкой и использованием детей-солдат ополченцами-хуситами. Кроме того, доказательства свидетельствуют о том, что силы хуситов вербовали детей, использовали их в боевых действиях и подвергали их различным формам жестокого обращения. Эти действия являются военными преступлениями в соответствии с Международным уголовным судом, и лица в иерархии хуситов могут быть привлечены к уголовной ответственности. Однако привлечение виновных к ответственности сталкивается со значительными проблемами, включая продолжающийся конфликт, ограниченный доступ к доказательствам и политические препятствия. В этом исследовании подчеркивается неотложность решения проблемы использования хуситов детей-солдат и важность обеспечения ответственности за эти серьезные нарушения международного права.*

**Ключевые слова:** *вооруженный конфликт, дети-солдаты, ополчения хуситов, гуманитарные проблемы, вербовка.*

## 1- Introduction

The recruitment and use of child soldiers by armed groups is a grave violation of international human rights and humanitarian law, with far-reaching consequences for the affected children and their communities. Among the various groups involved in such activities, the Houthi militias in Yemen have been particularly notorious. Their systematic recruitment and utilization of children in armed conflict have not only exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in the region but also posted significant legal and ethical challenges on the international stage (Sheikh, 2022: 1-11). The practice of recruiting child soldiers is explicitly prohibited under various international legal instruments such as Geneva Conventions, Additional protocols, The CRC and its OPAC set clear standards against the recruitment and use of individuals under the age of 18 for military purposes. The ICC further classifies the conscription of child soldiers as a war crime, underscoring the severity of such actions. Despite these robust legal frameworks, enforcement remains a critical issue, particularly in conflict zones where governance and judicial systems are weakened or non-existent (Rasakandan, 2022: 230-235).

Yemen's protracted conflict, involving multiple factions and external actors, has created an environment where children are exceptionally vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups like the Houthi militias. These children, often coerced or manipulated, are subjected to harsh conditions, including combat roles, logistical support, and even human shields. The exploitation of children in such a manner strips them of their innocence and subjects them to severe physical and psychological trauma. The legal consequences of the Houthi militias' recruitment and use of child soldiers are manifold. International law not only seeks to prevent such practices but also aims to hold perpetrators accountable through various mechanisms (Dönmez, 2023: 85-97). The ICC, for instance, plays a crucial role in prosecuting individuals responsible for war crimes, including the conscription of child soldiers. However, bringing those accountable to justice poses significant challenges, especially in regions where conflict and instability prevail (Graf, 2012: 945-959).

One of the key obstacles in addressing the issue of child soldiers is the lack of effective enforcement mechanisms. While international treaties and conventions provide a legal basis for action, the reality on the ground often hampers their implementation. Weak governance, lack of judicial infrastructure, and ongoing violence make it difficult to investigate, prosecute, and punish those responsible for recruiting and using child soldiers. Moreover, the political dynamics within Yemen and the involvement of external actors further complicate efforts to address this

issue (Okereke, 2024: 1961-1972). In addition to legal challenges, there are significant humanitarian concerns associated with the use of child soldiers. These children suffer from severe psychological and social impacts that persist long after the conflict has ended. The trauma of being involved in combat, the loss of family and community, and the stigmatization they face upon returning home are profound and enduring. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration programs that provide psychological support, education, and vocational training to help former child soldiers rebuild their lives (Abdalatif, 2021: 12-22).

## **2- Legal Frameworks Governing Child Soldiers**

The issue of child soldiers—children under the age of 18 who are recruited or used in armed conflict represents a severe violation of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). IHL seeks to protect those who are not directly participating in hostilities, especially vulnerable groups like children (Bosch, 2012: 344-364). The legal framework surrounding child soldiers is founded on multiple treaties and conventions that establish protections for minors in times of war, aiming to prevent their recruitment, use, and exploitation in combat (Groome, 2016: 13-33). Moreover, The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols are central to the protection of civilians, including children, during armed conflict. While the original Geneva Conventions did not specifically address child soldiers, Protocol I (1977) and Protocol II (1977) introduced significant provisions to protect children in international and non-international armed conflicts.

Protocol I prohibits the direct participation of children under the age of 15 in hostilities, while Protocol II similarly forbids their use in non-international armed conflicts. These provisions are critical because they lay the foundation for prohibiting the recruitment and use of children in military actions (Williams, 2011: 1072-1080).

The CRC (1989), a cornerstone of international child protection, prohibits the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. The OPAC raises the minimum age for recruitment and direct participation in hostilities to 18 years. This protocol explicitly aims to prevent the recruitment of children into armed forces and non-state armed groups and urges states to take measures to prevent such recruitment. It also holds parties accountable for violations, including the recruitment of children under the age of 18 (Gasparic, A. (2024:119-127; Gašparić, 2024: 119-125; Dönmez, 2023: 85-97). The Rome Statute of the ICC further strengthens the legal framework by classifying the recruitment or use of children under the age of 15 as a war crime.

According to Article 8(2)(b)(xxvi) of the Rome Statute, the conscription or enlistment of children under 15 into armed forces or groups and their use in hostilities is a war crime. This statute provides a mechanism for prosecuting individuals responsible for the recruitment of child soldiers, offering a form of accountability through international justice (Mohammed Alashqar, 2023: 61-73; Alamuddin, 2010: 1219-1233; Knoops, 2018: 178-186).

Despite these robust legal frameworks, enforcing the prohibition of child soldiers remains a significant challenge. Non-state armed groups and militias, which are often involved in internal conflicts, may ignore international prohibitions and continue to recruit children. States facing internal armed conflicts may also fail to adhere to these protections or lack the capacity to prevent child soldier recruitment (Yurdakul, 2024: 85-101; Littman, 2017: 3-15). Moreover, the enforcement of these laws requires strong international cooperation, effective legal frameworks for prosecution, and comprehensive measures for child rehabilitation and reintegration into society post-conflict. IHL provides a comprehensive legal structure aimed at protecting children from the horrors of armed conflict by prohibiting their recruitment and use as soldiers (Faulkner, 2021: 647-659). The Geneva Conventions, CRC, Rome Statute, and other international treaties play a critical role in safeguarding children's rights during conflict, setting legal standards for the protection of minors and establishing mechanisms for accountability. However, persistent challenges, such as the involvement of non-state actors and weak enforcement in conflict zones, mean that global efforts to combat the use of child soldiers must continue to evolve and adapt to changing realities of modern warfare (Gašparić, 2024: 119-135; Gasparic, 2024:119-135; Rasakandan, 2022: 230-237).

Article 77 of Protocol I specifically addresses the protection of children in armed conflict.

It includes two main provisions related to child soldiers: Article 77(1): This article outlines that children are entitled to special protection due to their vulnerability. It mandates that parties to the conflict must take all feasible measures to avoid the recruitment and use of children under the age of 15 in hostilities. This means that any individual under the age of 15 must not directly participate in military operations, and measures should be taken to protect them from being recruited or conscripted into the armed forces (Crock, 2016: 383-405). Furthermore, Article 77(2): This provision explicitly prohibits children under 15 from taking a direct part in hostilities. It also emphasizes that the parties to the conflict must take all feasible measures to prevent their participation in the conflict.

The goal is to protect children from the inherent dangers and trauma of war, including combat, physical injury, and psychological harm (Happold, 2022: 54-70; Yuvaraj, 2016: 69-77).

The inclusion of children in armed conflicts, particularly in combat roles, is considered one of the most egregious violations of international law, given that children are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, trauma, and long-term psychological and physical damage. Additional Protocol I underscores the importance of preventing the involvement of children in hostilities and setting a minimum age of 15 for direct participation in combat, although it leaves room for further protection, as it can be argued that no child should ever be exposed to war (Happold, 2022: 54-70). The legal provisions under Protocol I are not just about restricting the involvement of children in combat but also serve to raise awareness about the need to protect the rights of children during wartime and ensure that their well-being is prioritized. These articles are part of the broader legal framework that has evolved globally to address the issue of child soldiers, contributing to the CRC and its OPAC, which raises the minimum age for recruitment and participation to 18 (Steinl, 2017: 33-49; Gasparic, 2024: 119-126).

Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions (1977) focuses on the protection of victims in non-international armed conflicts, where the dynamics of the conflict often involve non-state armed groups and internal strife within a country. Article 4(3)(c) of Protocol II explicitly prohibits the recruitment and use of children under the age of 15 in hostilities, similar to the protections established in Additional Protocol I for international conflicts (Creegan, 2010: 345-356). This provision underscores the international community's commitment to protecting children in all forms of armed conflict, not just those between states, but also in internal conflicts where non-state actors often play a significant role. The aim of Protocol II is to ensure that children, who are particularly vulnerable in times of war, are not forced into combat or armed groups. It places a responsibility on parties involved in non-international armed conflicts to refrain from using children as soldiers, emphasizing the need to uphold their rights and safeguard their futures (Bakherad, 2017: 1013-1029). Although Protocol II is less comprehensive than Protocol I (as it applies only to non-international conflicts), it still contributes significantly to international legal standards for the protection of children during armed conflict. While Protocol II is a vital instrument for the protection of children, the challenge lies in its enforcement, particularly in situations involving non-state armed groups that may not be bound by the same international legal standards or who may deliberately disregard these protections.

Nonetheless, Additional Protocol II plays a crucial role in expanding the protections for children in internal conflicts, offering a foundation for further international efforts to combat the use of child soldiers in all types of armed conflicts (Fabijanić Gagro, 2020: 31-47; Clough, 2014: 698-736).

The CRC, adopted by the UN in 1989, is a landmark international treaty that enshrines the rights of children worldwide. It is the most widely ratified human rights treaty and provides comprehensive protection for children, particularly in situations of conflict. Among the most important provisions in the CRC concerning child soldiers are those related to protection from recruitment into armed forces or armed groups and their participation in hostilities (Dudenhoefer, 2016: 45-53). Protection from Armed Conflict Article 38 of the CRC focuses specifically on the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. It emphasizes that children under 15 years of age must not be recruited into armed forces or groups, and they should not directly participate in hostilities. This article outlines the following key principles: Prohibition of Recruitment: It is a violation of international law for parties to an armed conflict to recruit children under the age of 15 into military forces or armed groups. Direct Participation in Hostilities: Children under 15 must not take part in the fighting or combat. This provision seeks to protect children from the physical and psychological trauma of war and ensure that they are not exploited for their vulnerability (Rasakandan, 2022: 230-245; Sandberg, 2018: 15-38). State Obligations: States are required to take all feasible measures to prevent the recruitment of children and to ensure their protection during armed conflict. Moreover, article 39 of the CRC emphasizes the importance of rehabilitation and reintegration for children who have been involved in armed conflict, including those who have been recruited as soldiers. It mandates that children who are victims of war should be provided with appropriate physical and psychological care, education, and reintegration into society. This provision highlights the long-term effects that the use of child soldiers can have on their well-being and underscores the responsibility of governments to support the recovery and healing of these children (Guercio, 2024: 61-76; Van Niekerk, 2020: 23-27).

The others ways, OPAC The OPAC specifically addresses the issue of children in armed conflict and strengthens the protections provided under the CRC. It raises the minimum age for voluntary recruitment into the national armed forces to 16 and bans the recruitment of children under the age of 18 by non-state armed groups.

The OPAC also calls for effective measures to prevent the involvement of children in armed conflict and for accountability mechanisms for violations of these protections. It also reinforces the principle that no child should be involved in hostilities before the age of 18.

Article 1 of the OPAC raises the minimum age for compulsory military service to 18 years (Rasakandan, 2022: 230- 244; Assembly, 2016; Upeniece, 2022: 33-42). Article 2 prohibits the recruitment of children under the age of 18 into armed forces, including non-state armed groups, and emphasizes that governments and non-state actors must ensure that children are not involved in hostilities (Hadjia, 2024: 123-129).

**Challenges in Implementing CRC Protections Against Child Soldiers.** Despite the clear provisions under the CRC and its OPAC, the recruitment and use of child soldiers remain significant challenges worldwide. Various armed groups, particularly non-state actors, continue to recruit children for combat. In some cases, governments also fail to fully adhere to these protections, either through state-sponsored recruitment of children or through insufficient enforcement of laws prohibiting child soldier recruitment (Liles, 2015: 1-16; Tobin, 2020: 3-13).

The main challenges include: **Enforcement Issues,** While the CRC and OPAC set clear legal standards, enforcing these standards can be difficult, particularly in conflict zones where state control is weak or non-existent. **Non-State Armed Groups:** Many non-state actors, such as insurgent groups, militias, and terrorist organizations, are not bound by international treaties like the CRC or its OPAC. This lack of adherence often results in the continued recruitment of children in conflict (Heymann, 2014: 435-445). **Post-Conflict Reintegration:** One of the most significant challenges following conflicts involving child soldiers is reintegration and rehabilitation. These children often face severe psychological trauma, physical injuries, and social stigmatization, making their reintegration into society a complex and long-term process. **International Accountability for Violations,** the CRC and its OPAC provide mechanisms for holding violators accountable, although challenges remain. International criminal law plays a significant role in addressing the recruitment of child soldiers, particularly through the ICC, which can prosecute individuals responsible for war crimes, including the conscription and use of child soldiers under the age of 15 (Moses, 2018: 560-570; Vandenhoe, 2015: 27-42). Under the ICC, the recruitment and use of children in conflict are considered serious violations of international law and can lead to criminal prosecution. Additionally, international bodies such as the UN and UNICEF play a critical role in monitoring violations and providing assistance to countries and communities affected by child soldier recruitment.

These organizations often work on the ground to help reintegrate former child soldiers and advocate for stronger legal frameworks to prevent future violations. Thus, the CRC provides crucial protections against the recruitment and use of child soldiers, recognizing that children, by virtue of their age and vulnerability, should not be exposed to the horrors of armed conflict (Bakker, 2010; Hadja, 2024: 123-130). Article 38 of the CRC, along with the OPAC, establishes clear legal standards and obligations for states to prevent child soldier recruitment and ensure that children are not involved in hostilities. However, challenges in enforcement, particularly in conflict zones involving non-state actors, persist. International human rights law continues to evolve to address the issue of child soldiers, and global efforts must focus not only on prevention but also on rehabilitation and reintegration for those affected by armed conflict (Doek, 2009: 771-782; Feria-Tinta, 2014: 231-248).

The OPAC is a crucial addition to the CRC, aimed at strengthening the legal framework to protect children from being recruited or used in armed conflicts. Adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2000, this Protocol specifically focuses on the prohibition of the recruitment of children under the age of 18 into national armed forces and non-state armed groups, and it sets out the measures that states must take to prevent and respond to the use of child soldiers (Karásková, 2019; van de Haar, 2019; Diaz, 2019: 263-270). Key Provisions of the OPAC, Minimum Age for Recruitment Article 1 the OPAC raises the minimum age for voluntary recruitment into national armed forces to 16 years old but requires that all recruitment of individuals under the age of 18 must be done with the consent of the child and their parents or guardians. Additionally, the Protocol prohibits the recruitment of children under 18 into non-state armed groups, regardless of whether their participation is voluntary. The recruitment and use of children under the age of 18 in armed conflicts is seen as a violation of the child's rights and a grave international crime (Bulayenko, 2016: 51-59; Torquati, 2021: 21-33).

Moreover, State Obligations and Prevention Under Article 4, the OPAC imposes a positive obligation on states to take all feasible measures to ensure that children are not recruited into armed conflict, including in non-international armed conflicts. States must ensure that individuals under 18 are not used as combatants, and they are encouraged to adopt laws, policies, and educational measures to prevent child soldier recruitment. Furthermore, states are required to maintain records of the age of individuals being recruited into the armed forces, and they must ensure that children are not directly involved in hostilities (Jetty, 2011; Eserada, 2019: 1-6).

Furthermore, article 6 of the OPAC emphasizes the importance of providing rehabilitation and reintegration programs for children who have been involved in armed conflict.

These children may have been forcibly recruited or may have volunteered for various reasons, but regardless of their circumstances, they require special care and support to reintegrate into society. This provision reflects the broader international commitment to protecting children's rights after the conflict ends and ensuring their physical, psychological, and social recovery (Sridhar, 2004: 175-183). Prohibition of Non-State Armed Groups Article 4 One of the defining features of the OPAC is its extension of protections to children who are recruited by non-state armed groups, such as militias, rebel groups, and insurgents. Unlike previous international treaties, the Protocol recognizes the particular vulnerability of children in situations where non-state actors are involved in conflict. Non-state armed groups are explicitly prohibited from recruiting children, and efforts must be made to ensure that these groups cease the practice of using children in combat (Sridhar, 2004: 183-191).

The Rome Statute of the ICC, adopted in 1998, is a pivotal international treaty that established the ICC, the first permanent international tribunal to prosecute individuals for the gravest offenses of international concern, including war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. The Rome Statute provides a significant legal framework for addressing the recruitment and use of child soldiers in armed conflict, recognizing the recruitment of children as a serious crime under international law. Specifically, the Rome Statute criminalizes the recruitment and use of children under the age of 15 in armed conflict, thus reinforcing international efforts to protect children from the horrors of war (Knoops, 2018: 178-196). Article 8: War Crimes the Rome Statute explicitly addresses the recruitment and use of child soldiers in Article 8, which defines war crimes under international law. Article 8(2)(b)(xxvi) of the Rome Statute criminalizes the recruitment of children under the age of 15 into armed forces or groups and their use in hostilities. This provision is part of the broader framework that establishes various war crimes, including acts of violence against civilians, torture, and the taking of hostages. The criminalization of child soldier recruitment represents a commitment by the international community to hold individuals accountable for exploiting children in armed conflict (Aysev, 2020: 33-83).

Moreover, Recruitment of Children Under 15: The Rome Statute specifically focuses on children under the age of 15. Any conscription, enlistment, or use of children younger than this age in armed conflicts is considered a war crime.

This provision reflects the international consensus that children, due to their vulnerability and lack of maturity, must be protected from participating in warfare (McCormack, 2015: 333-355). Use of Children in Hostilities: The Statute also criminalizes the use of children under the age of 15 in active combat, including any direct involvement in military operations or violence.

This is in line with broader international human rights and humanitarian laws that prioritize the protection of children in times of conflict. Individual Criminal Responsibility the Rome Statute emphasizes individual accountability for crimes such as the recruitment and use of child soldiers. It holds individuals — whether military commanders, political leaders, or non-state actors — criminally responsible for their involvement in or command of these practices.

This principle of individual criminal responsibility is central to the operations of the ICC, as it seeks to ensure that those who recruit and use child soldiers, as well as those who order or facilitate their involvement, are brought to justice. Command Responsibility: Under the Rome Statute, military leaders and commanders can be held accountable for the actions of their subordinates, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers. If a commander is aware that children under 15 are being used in hostilities and fails to take necessary action to prevent this, they may be prosecuted for war crimes under the Statute. This extends the responsibility for child soldier recruitment beyond individual perpetrators to include those in positions of command and authority (Milanović, 2011: 25-52). Article 25 of the Rome Statute outlines the principle of individual criminal responsibility and includes the recruitment and use of child soldiers as a prosecutable offense. This article establishes the core concept that criminal responsibility is not dependent on the scale of the crime or whether the perpetrator was acting under orders, but rather on the individual's direct involvement in or responsibility for the offense. In cases of child soldiers, individuals can be prosecuted for acts such as: Recruiting children under 15 years old. Using children in active hostilities or military operations. Failing to prevent the recruitment of children when in a position of command (Rastan, 2008: 435-446; Ursini, 2015: 1023-1033; McBride, 2013: 43-82).

### **3- Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers by Houthi Militias**

Since the early 2000s, Yemen has been embroiled in political unrest and conflict, creating fertile ground for the exploitation of children by armed groups. The Houthi movement, officially known as Ansar Allah, emerged in the early 2000s in northern Yemen's Sa'dah governorate. While initially focused on religious and political grievances, the group gradually militarized and began engaging in hostilities against the Yemeni government.

During this early phase (2001–2010), there were already emerging reports of children being used by the Houthis for auxiliary roles, although the scope was limited due to the localized nature of the conflict (Aboulela, 2018: 24-35). The situation escalated in 2011 amid the Arab Spring, when Yemen's long-time president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, was forced to step down. This political vacuum and the fragmentation of national security institutions created new opportunities for the Houthis to expand their control. By 2014, they had taken over the capital, Sana'a, and by 2015, a full-scale civil war broke out, drawing in a Saudi-led coalition supporting the internationally recognized Yemeni government. It was during this period that the recruitment and use of child soldiers by Houthi militias surged dramatically, transforming from sporadic instances to systematic practice (Durac, 2012: 161-178).

From 2015 onward, the UN and various humanitarian organizations documented a sharp increase in the number of children forcibly recruited or coerced by the Houthis. Boys, and in some cases girls, were used in active combat, checkpoint duties, surveillance missions, and even as human shields. The UN Panel of Experts on Yemen reported in 2017 that Houthi forces had recruited hundreds of children under the age of 15, in clear violation of international humanitarian law, including the Optional Protocol to the CRC and the Rome Statute of the ICC (Lackner, 2020: 15-32; Mulford, 2022: 75-104). Houthi child recruitment strategies became increasingly systematic during this period. Many children were drawn from impoverished or displaced families, often under the pretense of religious education or community service. In some instances, families were pressured or threatened to send their sons to join the fighting. Houthis established indoctrination camps, where children were exposed to sectarian ideology and militaristic propaganda, aimed at shaping them into loyal fighters. The group also targeted schools and mosques as key recruitment sites, taking advantage of the collapse of Yemen's educational infrastructure (Al-Sallal, 2024: 25-33).

In a lesser-known but alarming case, reports emerged from Amran governorate that girls were being recruited for non-combat roles such as spying, message delivery, and medical support. A 14-year-old girl named Samah was recruited under the pretense of working in a hospital. Instead, she was made to carry messages between militia cells and monitor people's movements in her village. Her family only discovered her involvement after she disappeared for three days and was found by a local aid worker (Musa, 2016: 101-124). More case of child soldier, Mohammed, a 15-year-old boy from a poor family in Hajjah governorate, was recruited by Houthis after they pressured his father to contribute a "fighter" to the war effort.

The family was warned that refusal could result in punishment, such as detention or the revocation of humanitarian aid. Mohammed was taken to a training camp, then deployed to a front line in Hodeidah. He was wounded in combat and later rescued by a humanitarian organization, suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and partial hearing loss (Alharazi, 2022: 233-238).

Children recruited by the Houthis were not only used in support roles; many were sent directly to the frontlines, often with minimal training and little regard for their survival. Reports from 2016 onward showed that Houthi commanders used children in dangerous operations such as mine-laying, operating checkpoints in high-conflict zones, or engaging in direct combat against coalition forces. These children were at constant risk of injury, death, and psychological trauma. Many of them witnessed atrocities or were forced to commit acts of violence themselves (Jansen, 2022; 1-15). Furthermore, from 2017 to 2020, international agencies and local NGOs intensified efforts to monitor and report on child recruitment in Yemen. UNICEF, Save the Children, and Human Rights Watch issued detailed reports highlighting the extent of the crisis.

The UN Secretary-General's annual report on Children and Armed Conflict consistently listed the Houthis as violators, noting that they were responsible for the majority of verified cases of child recruitment in Yemen. However, the international community's response remained largely limited to condemnation, with few tangible consequences for perpetrators (Arafat, 2024: 239-268).

Despite these reports, accountability for the recruitment of child soldiers remained elusive. Yemen's fractured judicial system, the lack of state authority in Houthi-controlled areas, and the broader geopolitical tensions between Iran (which supports the Houthis) and the Saudi-led coalition created significant barriers to legal action. Although the UN has imposed sanctions on some individuals and called for investigations, enforcement mechanisms have proven weak.

The absence of political will, combined with the chaos of war, has allowed the cycle of abuse to continue largely unchecked (Al-Sallal, 2024: 25-33; Arafat, 2024: 259-268). The humanitarian consequences of the child soldier crisis intersected with Yemen's broader collapse. The war decimated healthcare systems, education, and economic stability. Families, especially in rural or frontline areas, had few alternatives for survival. Some sent their children to fight in exchange for promises of food, small salaries, or protection. Others simply lost control as children were abducted or deceived.

The ongoing economic blockade, inflation, and famine-like conditions exacerbated these vulnerabilities, making children even more susceptible to exploitation by armed groups (Lackner, 2020: 15-32; Mulford, 2022: 95-104).

Between 2020 and 2023, as the war dragged on, the Houthis expanded their recruitment networks into newly occupied territories. In areas like Al-Jawf, Hajjah, and Al-Hudaydah, reports emerged of mobile recruitment caravans targeting children through lectures, religious ceremonies, and public events. Schools in Houthi-controlled areas were often forced to promote militarized curricula that glorified martyrdom and jihad, and children were encouraged to see participation in war as a moral and religious duty. This cultural normalization of militarized childhood became a deeply disturbing trend (Knights, 2024: 1-20). Ahmad, a 16-year-old former child soldier from Taiz, shared his story with a rehabilitation center supported by UNICEF. He had been recruited at age 12 after his school was shut down and food aid was cut off. Trained for four weeks and deployed as a guard, he witnessed torture and killings. After escaping, Ahmad struggled with reintegration, faced stigma from his community, and experienced night terrors and depression. His case highlights the long-term psychological toll on children involved in conflict (Colburn, 2021; 1023-1045). By 2024, the estimated number of children recruited by the Houthis since the start of the war had reached several thousand. According to field reports and interviews with former child soldiers, many of these children had spent years cycling in and out of armed service, with little hope of returning to a normal life. Rehabilitation centers operated by NGOs and UN agencies were grossly underfunded and limited in capacity. In some cases, children were stigmatized by their communities upon return, particularly if they had committed violence under duress (Arafat, 2024: 249-268).

In camps for internally displaced people in Al-Jawf, humanitarian agencies reported targeted recruitment by Houthi operatives. Children were offered small sums of money, food, or new clothes in exchange for attending “training programs.” A 12-year-old boy named Saleh was taken to a remote area for weapons handling training. His mother later stated in a UN interview that he was misled and feared punishment if he refused. He returned home after being injured, traumatized, and severely malnourished (Refaat, 2021: 44-69). In Dhamar, a village elder who spoke out against Houthi child recruitment faced retaliation. When he tried to prevent local boys from being taken, the militia arrested his son and threatened to withhold aid to the entire community.

After international outcry, he was released, but recruitment resumed under greater secrecy. This incident reflects how community resistance is often silenced through coercion and collective punishment (Mugahed, R. (2022: 1033-1037).

The year 2025 has seen a renewed push by international human rights bodies to hold the Houthis accountable for their use of child soldiers. The ICC has expressed interest in opening preliminary investigations, although challenges persist regarding jurisdiction and evidence collection in a conflict zone. Some countries and advocacy groups are calling for the establishment of a special tribunal or an UN-mandated inquiry commission focused specifically on crimes against children in Yemen. However, progress remains slow due to geopolitical complications and the limited enforcement power of international institutions (Hilaire, 2025). Despite this bleak picture, there have been some efforts at reform and advocacy within Yemen. Civil society organizations, religious leaders, and educators in non-Houthi areas have launched community awareness campaigns against the militarization of children. They promote education, peacebuilding, and psychological healing for children affected by the war. These initiatives, though small in scale, represent a glimmer of hope in an otherwise devastated landscape. They underscore the resilience of Yemenis determined to protect future generations (Şen, 2024: 21-56).

Regional and international actors must intensify their support for demobilization and reintegration programs. This includes funding child-friendly spaces, providing psychosocial support, offering vocational training, and restoring education infrastructure. Preventing re-recruitment is just as crucial as rescuing children from active combat. Policies must address the root causes of vulnerability, such as poverty, displacement, and loss of guardianship. Effective protection requires a long-term, multi-sectoral approach (Bisht, 2024:13-19). Thus, the recruitment and use of child soldiers by Houthi militias from 2001 to 2024 reflect a tragic convergence of armed conflict, ideological indoctrination, and systemic impunity. Thousands of Yemeni children have paid the price for a war not of their making, stripped of their innocence and future. While international law clearly prohibits such practices, enforcement remains weak.

A decisive, collective global effort is urgently needed to bring justice to victims, hold perpetrators accountable, and rebuild a society where children are nurtured, not exploited. Without meaningful action, this crisis will continue to shape a generation marked by war and trauma (Schulz, 2024: 34-52). These cases not only illustrate the widespread and systematic nature of Houthi child recruitment but also point to urgent humanitarian, legal, and protection

needs for affected children. Would you like these cases formatted for inclusion in a research paper, report, or presentation? I can also help turn them into a case study section or infographic.

#### **4- Challenges in Addressing the Issue**

Addressing the issue of child soldier recruitment by the Houthi militias in Yemen presents a series of profound and intertwined challenges, particularly given the ongoing conflict's complexity. One of the most significant challenges is the weak enforcement of international laws (Sheikh, 2022: 3-15). While international treaties such as the Geneva Conventions, Rome Statute, and the CRC explicitly prohibit the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, enforcement remains a serious obstacle. The Houthis and other non-state armed groups involved in the Yemeni conflict operate with minimal accountability, and international mechanisms to hold them responsible for violating international law are often ineffective (Dönmez, 2023: 85-97; Al Tolkani, 2025: 1-22). Although the ICC and other international bodies exist to prosecute war crimes, the absence of effective political and military pressure, combined with a lack of cooperation from Yemen's government and Houthi authorities, often results in the continuation of such practices with little deterrence. This creates a situation where, despite legal frameworks designed to protect children, the failure to prosecute and enforce accountability means that child soldiers continue to be recruited and exploited in conflict zones (Fazio, 2020: 25-39).

A second major challenge arises from the political instability and fragmentation of the Yemeni conflict, which complicates efforts to protect children from recruitment. Yemen's ongoing civil war has seen numerous factions fighting for control, with the Houthi militias occupying a significant portion of northern Yemen (Lewis, 2012: 156-177). This fragmented situation, coupled with the involvement of various external factors such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, means that international efforts to curtail child soldier recruitment are often thwarted by competing political agendas. The absence of a centralized authority in areas controlled by the Houthis makes it incredibly difficult for humanitarian organizations and governments to intervene effectively. Local militias and armed groups can act with impunity, and the Houthis continue to prioritize military gains over international legal obligations. Furthermore, the conflict has exacerbated Yemen's political and economic fragmentation, making it even more difficult to coordinate any kind of unified response to child soldier recruitment (Lewis, 2013: 45-56; Hamood Al Qaoud, 2024: 155-169; Tsalikis, 2024: 451-475.).

Socio-economic vulnerability is another significant factor driving the recruitment of child soldiers in Yemen.

The war has left millions of Yemenis in extreme poverty, with many families living in desperate conditions. As a result, children, especially in rural and conflict-affected areas, often become targets for recruitment by armed groups offering them food, money, or a sense of belonging. With the collapse of education systems, limited access to healthcare, and a lack of livelihood opportunities, children and their families may see joining armed groups like the Houthis as the only viable option for survival (Yang, 2022: 1023-1035; Lewis, 2012: 192-205).

This economic vulnerability is compounded by the lack of safe and alternative paths for young people in Yemen, particularly in areas where armed groups control resources and infrastructure. Children who are recruited into militias are often told they will receive a steady income, an offer that is particularly tempting to families who cannot afford basic necessities. As a result, many children are exploited as both combatants and laborers, with their future prospects severely diminished by their involvement in armed conflict (Kandeh, 2015: 1923-1935.).

A further challenge to addressing the issue of child soldier recruitment is the psychological and emotional toll that war exerts on the children involved. Many children recruited by the Houthis are subjected to brutal training, forced to participate in violent combat, and are exposed to horrific atrocities that leave lasting psychological scars. These children often suffer from PTSD, depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders, which can persist long after their involvement in combat ends (D'Alessandra, 2014: 1-22; Ahmed, 2024: 1-10). The trauma of warfare can prevent children from returning to normal civilian life, making reintegration efforts even more challenging. Moreover, communities where these children return may be hesitant to accept them, out of fear of retaliation or retribution. Stigmatization of former child soldiers often exacerbates their isolation, leaving them vulnerable to being drawn back into armed groups or perpetuating cycles of violence. As such, mental health support and psychosocial care are critical but often underfunded or overlooked in conflict zones. Without these services, efforts to demobilize and reintegrate child soldiers into civilian society are unlikely to succeed (Molla, 2018: 1-30).

In addition to the immediate challenges of enforcement, political instability, and socio-economic factors, the lack of comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration programs for child soldiers significantly hampers efforts to address this issue. Child soldiers who manage to escape or are rescued from armed groups like the Houthis often face an uphill battle when it comes to reintegration into society. In a country like Yemen, which has been devastated by years of conflict, there are limited resources and infrastructure to support their rehabilitation (Yang, 2022:

1023-1035; Lewis, 2012: 192-205). The absence of schools, vocational training centers, and job opportunities exacerbates the challenges that former child soldiers face in rebuilding their lives.

Efforts to reintegrate these children must not only address their immediate psychological needs but also provide them with the tools to rebuild their futures, including education, employment opportunities, and social reintegration programs. International aid organizations and local governments must work together to create sustainable reintegration programs that are tailored to the specific needs of children affected by armed conflict, which should include access to education, trauma counseling, and community support systems (Knights, 2024: 1-20; Şen, 2024: 21-56).

Furthermore, the involvement of external actors complicates efforts to curb the recruitment of child soldiers. Iran has provided support to the Houthis, including military aid and resources, which enables the group to continue its recruitment efforts. Similarly, the Saudi-led coalition, which opposes the Houthis, has also been accused of human rights violations, including recruiting children into their own military operations (Johnston, 2020; 1-55). This involvement of external powers creates a broader geopolitical dimension to the problem, as their interests in the conflict often overshadow concerns about human rights and the protection of children. Diplomatic solutions and peace negotiations must take these external influences into account, working to create a framework where all parties are held accountable for their role in the recruitment and use of child soldiers. International pressure on both local and foreign actors to comply with international law is essential for reducing the recruitment of children by all parties in the conflict (Juneau, 2016: 647-663; Mazzucco, 2024: 25-38).

The issue of child soldiers in Yemen also highlights the long-term impact of war on future generations. The use of children in combat not only robs them of their childhood but also destabilizes the social fabric of communities and contributes to a cycle of violence that may persist for generations. Children who grow up in conflict zones, especially those who have been involved in violent activities, may come to view violence as an acceptable means of resolving conflict. As these children mature, they may become more likely to join future armed groups or perpetuate violent cycles within their communities (Al Tolkani, 2025; 1-18). This further entrenches the broader humanitarian crisis in Yemen, as it becomes increasingly difficult to break the patterns of violence and instability that have taken hold.

The impact of child soldier recruitment is thus not only a humanitarian issue but also a long-term developmental challenge that requires international support, not just for immediate relief, but for long-term peacebuilding and stability in the region (Richter, 2022; 7-15).

Finally, the lack of coordination and communication between humanitarian agencies, governments, and international actors exacerbates these challenges. The fragmented nature of the Yemeni conflict, coupled with varying interests among external actors, has resulted in a lack of cohesive action on the ground. Humanitarian agencies face difficulties accessing areas under Houthi control due to security risks and restrictions imposed by the militia (Ager, 2011: 1045-1052). Additionally, the limited reach of international law in these areas means that many children remain vulnerable to exploitation. To effectively address the issue of child soldier recruitment, a more coordinated and holistic approach is necessary, one that involves all stakeholders, including local communities, international organizations, and political actors.

Collaboration between these parties is critical to creating sustainable solutions that address both the immediate needs of child soldiers and the root causes that perpetuate their recruitment (Elayah, 2024: 3-12).

## **5- Conclusion**

The recruitment and use of child soldiers by the Houthi militias in Yemen is a grave violation of international humanitarian law and a significant humanitarian crisis. This practice not only contravenes legal norms but also inflicts severe physical and psychological trauma on the affected children. The Houthi militias' exploitation of socio-economic vulnerabilities to recruit children highlights the complex interplay of poverty, lack of education, and conflict in perpetuating this issue. The legal consequences of recruiting and using child soldiers are clear under international law. Instruments such as the CRC and its OPAC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, as well as the Rome Statute of the ICC, explicitly prohibit the recruitment of children under the age of 18 for military purposes. Despite these legal frameworks, enforcement remains a significant challenge due to the ongoing conflict and political instability in Yemen.

One of the primary challenges in addressing the issue of child soldiers is the lack of effective enforcement mechanisms. The international community must strengthen its efforts to hold perpetrators accountable and ensure that legal protections for children are upheld. This requires not only legal action but also political will and cooperation from all parties involved in the conflict.

Socio-economic factors play a crucial role in the recruitment of child soldiers. Poverty, lack of access to education, and limited economic opportunities drive many children to join armed groups. Addressing these root causes is essential for preventing the recruitment of child soldiers. This involves providing socio-economic support, improving access to education, and creating economic opportunities for vulnerable communities. The psychological trauma experienced by child soldiers is profound and long-lasting. Rehabilitation and reintegration programs are crucial for helping these children heal and rebuild their lives. These programs should provide comprehensive psychological support, education, and vocational training to help former child soldiers reintegrate into society and build a future away from conflict.

The international community must also address the broader humanitarian crisis in Yemen. This includes ensuring access to humanitarian aid, protecting civilians, and working towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The plight of child soldiers is a symptom of the larger crisis, and addressing it requires a holistic approach that considers the needs and rights of all affected populations. In conclusion, the recruitment and use of child soldiers by the Houthi militias is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted response. Legal action, socio-economic support, psychological rehabilitation, and efforts to address the broader humanitarian crisis are all essential components of a comprehensive strategy to protect children and prevent their exploitation in armed conflicts. The international community must remain committed to these efforts and work together to ensure that the rights and well-being of children are upheld in Yemen and beyond.

## **6- Suggestions**

The issue of child soldier recruitment by the Houthi militias in Yemen is a grave violation of international law, requiring urgent action on multiple fronts. To address this, it is essential to strengthen enforcement of existing legal frameworks, such as the Geneva Conventions and Rome Statute, through international cooperation and accountability measures, including prosecutions by the ICC. Diplomatic pressure should be applied to the Houthis and other conflict actors, urging them to end the recruitment of children and engage in peace talks. Additionally, comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration programs for former child soldiers, along with community-based support and educational opportunities, are crucial to break the cycle of violence. International humanitarian aid must also be increased to address the root causes of child soldier recruitment, such as poverty and lack of education.

By focusing on legal accountability, diplomatic engagement, and socio-economic support, the international community can take meaningful steps to protect Yemen's children from further exploitation in armed conflict.

1. **Strengthen International Accountability Mechanisms:** The recruitment and use of child soldiers by the Houthi militias represents a severe violation of international law, including the Geneva Conventions, Rome Statute, and the CRC. The ICC should continue to pursue investigations and prosecutions for those responsible within the Houthi leadership for the recruitment of children under the age of 18. States and international organizations should press for stronger enforcement of international human rights and humanitarian law, ensuring that those who orchestrate and facilitate the use of child soldiers face legal consequences. Sanctions should be considered against both the Houthi leadership and external parties supporting them, including restrictions on financial support and arms supplies, which often fund and sustain these practices.

2. **Enhance Diplomatic Pressure and Dialogue with Houthi Leadership:** Given the significant role the Houthi militia plays in the ongoing Yemeni conflict; international diplomatic efforts should focus on pressuring the group to cease child soldier recruitment and use. The UN and influential countries, such as those in the Saudi-led coalition, should engage in dialogue with the Houthis, encouraging compliance with international legal standards. Negotiation frameworks could include clear commitments to end the recruitment of children in exchange for specific political or humanitarian concessions. Engaging with local leaders within Houthi-controlled areas, such as tribal figures and community influencers, can also help amplify the message against the recruitment of children by emphasizing its negative social and long-term impacts on their community.

3. **Strengthen National and International Monitoring Efforts:** There is a need for stronger monitoring mechanisms to track the use of child soldiers by the Houthi militia. The UN has already established mechanisms to monitor and report violations in conflict zones, but the monitoring efforts should be significantly enhanced in Yemen, focusing specifically on identifying and documenting the use of children by the Houthis. Additionally, humanitarian organizations and independent local civil society groups should be empowered to collect data on child soldier recruitment, document cases, and provide this information to international bodies. Effective monitoring will not only provide evidence for accountability but also raise international awareness of the scale of the problem, potentially leading to stronger international interventions.

4. **Community-Based Interventions and Local Reintegration Programs:** One of the key challenges in addressing the issue of child soldiers is their reintegration into society. International efforts should prioritize community-based programs that focus on the rehabilitation and reintegration of child soldiers within Yemen. These programs should involve local communities, schools, and families to create an environment of trust and support for children who have been recruited by armed groups. These interventions should include psychological counseling, educational opportunities, vocational training, and community support mechanisms to help children transition back into their civilian lives. Since the conflict is deeply entrenched in local communities, reintegration programs must consider the social stigma that former child soldiers may face and create environments that facilitate acceptance and understanding.

5. **International Humanitarian Aid and Protection for Affected Children:** The humanitarian crisis in Yemen has significantly exacerbated the vulnerability of children, increasing the risk of recruitment by armed groups like the Houthis. International organizations, such as the UNICEF, should continue to provide humanitarian aid to children affected by the conflict, ensuring that displaced children have access to basic needs like food, shelter, and education. In addition, protection mechanisms should be reinforced, particularly in areas under Houthi control. This includes providing safe spaces for children, educational programs, and vocational training that can offer an alternative to joining armed groups. Humanitarian aid must also focus on the psychological support of children who have been traumatized by the violence they've witnessed or participated in, in efforts to stop the cycle of recruitment.

6. **Enhance Public Awareness and Advocacy Campaigns:** To reduce the use of child soldiers, global advocacy campaigns must work to raise awareness of the issue, both inside Yemen and globally. International human rights organizations should collaborate with local entities to educate the public on the harmful impacts of child soldier recruitment, not only on the children but also on the broader society. Public campaigns could use both traditional media and social media platforms to highlight the plight of child soldiers in Yemen, specifically those recruited by the Houthis. Increased awareness could lead to greater public pressure on the international community to take decisive action to stop the recruitment of children.

7. **Support for Regional Cooperation and Capacity Building:** The issue of child soldiers is not limited to Yemen; it is a regional problem that requires collaboration among neighboring states, especially those affected by the conflict such as Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Ethiopia. Regional cooperation should focus on bolstering the capacity of local governments to protect

children from recruitment into armed groups, strengthening the rule of law, and creating shared programs for child protection. International and regional stakeholders can help by providing training for local authorities on international standards related to child protection and providing logistical and financial support for law enforcement efforts to prevent child soldier recruitment.

8. **Develop Long-Term Disarmament and Demobilization Programs:** Long-term strategies must be developed to demobilize child soldiers and prevent future recruitment. After the cessation of hostilities, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs should be specifically designed for children, recognizing the unique challenges they face. These programs should include counseling, education, and community support to help children disengage from armed groups and return to civilian life. It's crucial that such programs are integrated into post-conflict reconstruction efforts, ensuring that children who have been recruited are not left behind in the rebuilding of their country. Given the prolonged nature of the Yemeni conflict, such programs should be designed to last for many years to ensure the full recovery of children affected by the conflict.

9. **Address the Role of External Support and Arms Supplies:** The recruitment and use of child soldiers by the Houthis are partly fueled by external support, including arms supplies and political backing, particularly from Iran. International efforts should focus on curtailing arms shipments and any forms of support to non-state armed groups involved in recruiting child soldiers. The arms embargo against parties involved in the conflict, such as the Houthis, should be strictly enforced, with an emphasis on preventing the flow of weapons and other resources that sustain their recruitment activities. In addition, diplomatic pressure should be applied to external actors to cease their involvement in exacerbating the conflict and directly or indirectly supporting child soldier recruitment.

10. **Legal Advocacy and Support for Child Victims of War:** Legal support for victims of child soldier recruitment should be expanded. International legal frameworks should provide pathways for accountability and justice for children who have been forcibly recruited or used in armed conflict. Victim support programs should be established to help child soldiers navigate the legal processes necessary for securing their rights. Moreover, advocacy for legal recognition of child soldiers as victims rather than perpetrators is important to ensure that they receive the necessary protections under both national and international law.

In summary, addressing the recruitment and use of child soldiers by the Houthi militias requires a multi-pronged approach that includes legal accountability, diplomacy, community-

based interventions, and long-term rehabilitation programs. By strengthening both legal frameworks and practical interventions, the international community can contribute to ending the exploitation of children in Yemen and help break the cycle of violence that perpetuates this tragic issue.

## REFERENCES

1. Abdalatif, F. A. (2021). In Search of Home; Child Soldiers in al-Shabaab's Ranks.
2. Aboulela, I. H. I. S. (2018). Manifestation of Saudi-Iranian Proxy War: the Yemeni Struggle. *Tallinn University of Technology*. <https://digi.lib.ttu.ee/download/11277,3,B5itlus>.
3. Ager, A., Blake, C., Stark, L., & Daniel, T. (2011). Child protection assessment in humanitarian emergencies: Case studies from Georgia, Gaza, Haiti and Yemen. *Child abuse & neglect*, 35(12), 1045-1052.
4. Ahmed, S. H., Zakai, A., Zahid, M., Jawad, M. Y., Fu, R., & Chaiton, M. (2024). Prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder and depressive symptoms among civilians residing in armed conflict-affected regions: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *General Psychiatry*, 37(3), e101438.
5. Al Tolkani, S. S. Y., & Alfatlawi, A. A. (2025). Legal Implications Arising from the Children's Involvement in Armed Conflicts Across the Middle East Conflicts. *Atâtôt-Revista Interdisciplinar de Direitos Humanos da UEG*, 6(1).
6. Alamuddin, A., & Webb, P. (2010). Expanding jurisdiction over war crimes under Article 8 of the ICC Statute. *Journal of International Criminal Justice*, 8(5), 1219-1243.
7. Alharazi, T. (2022). Intestinal parasitic infection among rural schoolchildren in Taiz, Yemen: School-based assessment of the prevalence and associated risk factors. *Helminthologia*, 59(3), 233.
8. Al-Sallal, Y. A. S. (2024). *The Houthi Rebel Movement: Analysis on the Role of Wartime Social Order, Legitimacy and Greed in the Houthi Rebel Resilience in Yemen between 2017 and 2023* (Master's thesis).
9. Arafat, A. A. D. (2024). Terrorism and Non-state Armed Groups. In *Human Security in the Middle East and North Africa* (pp. 219-268). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.
10. Arafat, A. A. D. (2024). Terrorism and Non-state Armed Groups. In *Human Security in the Middle East and North Africa* (pp. 219-268). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.

11. Assembly, U. G. (2016). Sacrificed on the Altar of the Sovereign State? Protection of Children in the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.
12. Aysev, U. Y. (2020). Continuing or Settled? Prosecution of Israeli Settlements under Article 8 (2)(b)(viii) of the Rome Statute. *The Palestine Yearbook of International Law Online*, 20(1), 33-83.
13. Bakherad, M., Keivanloo, A., Gholizadeh, M., Doosti, R., & Javanmardi, M. (2017). Using magnetized water as a solvent for a green, catalyst-free, and efficient protocol for the synthesis of pyrano [2, 3-c] pyrazoles and pyrano [4', 3': 5, 6] pyrazolo [2, 3-d] pyrimidines. *Research on Chemical Intermediates*, 43, 1013-1029.
14. Bakker, C. (2010). *Prosecuting international crimes against children: the legal framework*. UN.
15. Bisht, T. C. (2024). *Forced displacement: A rapidly rising vulnerability and its challenges for an inclusive and sustainable Asia and the Pacific* (No. 1465). ADBI Working Paper.
16. Bosch, S. (2012). Targeting and prosecuting under-aged child soldiers in international armed conflicts, in light of the international humanitarian law prohibition against civilian direct participation in hostilities. *Comparative and International Law Journal of Southern Africa*, 45(3), 324-364.
17. Bulayenko, O. (2016). Permissibility of Non-Voluntary Collective Management of Copyright Under EU Law: The Case of the French Law on Out-of-Commerce Books. *J. Intell. Prop. Info. Tech. & Elec. Com. L.*, 7, 51.
18. Clough, J. (2014). A world of difference: the Budapest convention on cybercrime and the challenges of harmonisation. *Monash University Law Review*, 40(3), 698-736.
19. Colburn, M., Saleh, F., Al-Barbi, M., & Saleem, S. (2021). Bringing Forth the Voices of Muhamasheen. *Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies*.
20. Creegan, E. (2010). Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Treatment of Terrorist Combatants (Protocol IV)-A Proposal. *Cal. W. Int'l LJ*, 41, 345.
21. Crock, M. (2016). The protection of vulnerable groups. In *Research handbook on disasters and international law* (pp. 383-405). Edward Elgar Publishing.
22. D'Alessandra, F. (2014). The Psychological Consequences of Becoming a Child Soldiers: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Major Depression, and Other Forms of Impairment. *Source: [https://carrcenter.hks.harvard.edu/files/cchr/files/dalessandra\\_pshychol\\_cons\\_of\\_childsoldiers.pdf](https://carrcenter.hks.harvard.edu/files/cchr/files/dalessandra_pshychol_cons_of_childsoldiers.pdf) (accessed: 2.07. 2018)*, 1-22.

23. Diaz, S. J. (2019). An Elusive Mandate: Enforcing the Prohibition on the Use of Child Soldiers. *Child. Legal Rts. J.*, 39, 263.
24. Doek, J. E. (2009). The CRC 20 years: An overview of some of the major achievements and remaining challenges. *Child abuse & neglect*, 33(11), 771-782.
25. Dönmez, S. (2023). Child Soldiers and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. *Border Crossing*, 13(2), 85-97.
26. Durac, V. (2012). Yemen's Arab Spring—Democratic Opening or Regime Maintenance?. *Mediterranean Politics*, 17(2), 161-178.
27. Elayah, M., & Al-Mansori, R. (2024). Yemen's humanitarian collaboration during conflict: UN and local NGOs in focus. *World Development Perspectives*, 34, 100585.
28. Eserada, R. E., & Okolo, S. E. (2019). Use of online public access catalogue (Opac) in selected university libraries in South-South Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*, 2586.
29. Fabijanić Gagro, S. (2020). The implementation of RtoP when the protection of children in armed conflicts within the UN system is concerned—who is responsible?. *Pecs journal of international and European law*, 2, 31-47.
30. Faulkner, C. M., & Doctor, A. C. (2021). Rebel fragmentation and the recruitment of child soldiers. *International Studies Quarterly*, 65(3), 647-659.
31. Fazio, G. (2020). *International Humanitarian Law for Whom? an Analysis of Starvation as a Method of Warfare in Yemen* (Master's thesis, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa (Portugal)).
32. Feria-Tinta, M. (2014, September). The crc as a litigation tool before the Inter-American System of Protection of Human Rights. In *Litigating the Rights of the Child: the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Domestic and International Jurisprudence* (pp. 231-248). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
33. Gasparic, A. (2024). Liability and Protection of Child Soldiers under International Criminal Law. *Child & Fam. Contemp. Soc'y*, 1, 119.
34. Gašparić, A. (2024). LIABILITY AND PROTECTION OF CHILD SOLDIERS UNDER INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL LAW. *Dijete i obitelj u suvremenom društvu*, 2(1), 119-135.
35. Graf, R. (2012). The International Criminal Court and child soldiers: An appraisal of the Lubanga judgment. *Journal of International Criminal Justice*, 10(4), 945-969.
36. Groome, D. (2016). Child Soldiers-Both Victims and Combatants: Is There Anything IHL Can Do?. Available at SSRN 2869484.

37. Guercio, L., & Massidda, P. (2024). Creating an International Institution for the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Children Involved in Armed Conflict. In *Globalisation, Cultural Diversity and Human Rights* (pp. 61-86). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.
38. Hadja, O. (2024). Child Recruitment Phenomenon between Prohibition and Practice according to International Law and Jurisprudence. *Law & World*, 30, 123.
39. Hadja, O. (2024). Child Recruitment Phenomenon between Prohibition and Practice according to International Law and Jurisprudence. *Law & World*, 30, 123.
40. Hamood Al Qaoud, H. M., & Begum, H. (2024). Settlement of Yemen Crisis through Consociationalism: Possibilities and Challenges. *Library of Progress-Library Science, Information Technology & Computer*, 44(3).
41. Happold, M. (2022). The legal regulation of the recruitment and use of children in hostilities: International humanitarian law. In *Child soldiers in international law* (pp. 54-70). Manchester University Press.
42. Heymann, J., McNeill, K., & Raub, A. (2014). Assessing compliance with the CRC: Indicators of law and policy in 191 countries. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, 22(3), 425-445.
43. Hilaire, M. (2025). *The Permanent Members of the United Nations Security Council and International Law*. Logos Verlag Berlin GmbH.
44. Jansen, S. L. H. (2022). *Part of the Solution: Exploring Armed Non-State Actor Commitment to and Compliance with an Anti-Personnel Landmine Ban* (Doctoral dissertation, Carleton University).
45. Jetty, S., Anbu K, J., Jain, P., & Hopkinson, A. (2011, February). OPAC 2.0: Towards the next generation of online library catalogues. In *International Conference of Asian Special Libraries*,.
46. Johnston, T., Lane, M., Casey, A., Williams, H. J., Rhoades, A. L., Sladden, J., ... & Haberman, R. (2020). Could the Houthis be the next Hizballah. *Iranian proxy development in Yemen and the future of the Houthi movement*. Rand.
47. Juneau, T. (2016). Iran's policy towards the Houthis in Yemen: a limited return on a modest investment. *International Affairs*, 92(3), 647-663.
48. Kande, J., & Kumar, L. (2015). Developing a relative ranking of social vulnerability of governorates of Yemen to humanitarian crisis. *ISPRS International Journal of Geo-Information*, 4(4), 1913-1935.
49. Karásková, K. (2019). Child Soldiers: Recruitment and Abuse of Children in Armed Conflicts.

50. Knights, M. (2024). Assessing the Houthi war effort since October 2023. *CTC Sentinel*, 17(4),1-20.
51. Knoops, G. J. A., & Van Giessen, I. (2018). The Investigative Scope of Article 8 (2)(b)(viii) of the Rome Statute before the icc within the Palestine Situation. *international criminal law review*, 18(1), 178-196.
52. Lackner, H. (2020). The role of the United Nations in the Yemen crisis. *Global, regional, and local dynamics in the Yemen crisis*, 15-32.
53. Lewis, A. (2012). *Violent Crime and Fragility: A Study On Violent Offending Among Children and Young People in Yemen*.
54. Lewis, A. (2012). *Violent Crime and Fragility: A Study On Violent Offending Among Children and Young People in Yemen*.
55. Lewis, A. (2013). *Violence and Fragility: A Study of Violent Young Offending in Yemen and Other Fragile States* (Doctoral dissertation, University of York).
56. Liles, E. G., Schneider, J. L., Feldstein, A. C., Mosen, D. M., Perrin, N., Rosales, A. G., & Smith, D. H. (2015). Implementation challenges and successes of a population-based colorectal cancer screening program: a qualitative study of stakeholder perspectives. *Implementation Science*, 10, 1-16.
57. Littman, R. (2017). Children and extreme violence: Insights from social science on child trajectories into and out of non-state armed groups.
58. Mazzucco, L. J. M. (2024). IRAN AND THE HOUTHIS'ASYMMETRIC MARITIME WARFARE CAMPAIGN IN THE RED SEA: A STUDY OF THE SPONSOR-PROXY MODEL. *JOURNAL FOR IRANIAN STUDIES*, 8(20), 25.
59. McBride, J. (2013). The Rome Statute: Codification of the Crime. In *The War Crime of Child Soldier Recruitment* (pp. 43-82). The Hague: TMC Asser Press.
60. McCormack, T. (2015). 21 Challenges in Applying Article 8 of the Rome Statute. In *For the Sake of Present and Future Generations* (pp. 333-355). Brill Nijhoff.
61. Milanović, M. (2011). Is the Rome Statute binding on individuals?(And why we should care). *Journal of International Criminal Justice*, 9(1), 25-52.
62. Mohammed Alashqar, M., Abdul Rahim, A., & Abd Aziz, A. S. (2023). War Crimes in Gaza Strip from Year 2008 2021: Individual Criminal Responsibility Under the Legal Framework of Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. *Journal of International Studies (JIS)*, 19(1), 61-93.

63. Molla, B., & Berhanu, Z. (2018). The Experiences of Ethiopian Unaccompanied and Separated Migrant Children in Yemen. *Ethiopian Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities*, 14(1), 1-30.
64. Moses, L. B., & De Koker, L. (2018). Open secrets: Balancing operational secrecy and transparency in the collection and use of data by national security and law enforcement agencies. *Melbourne University Law Review*, 41(2), 530-570.
65. Mugahed, R. (2022). Tribes and the State in Yemen. *Sana Center for Strategic Studies*, 21.
66. Mulford, F. (2022). Circumventing the responsibility to protect in Yemen: Rhetorical adaptation and the United Nations Security Council. *Global Responsibility to Protect*, 14(1), 75-104.
67. Musa, M. (2016). Malayan women during the Japanese Occupation. *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 89(2), 101-124.
68. Okereke, O. N., Nnawulezi, U., Magashi, S. B., Adiyatma, S. E., & Balarabe, K. (2024). Addressing challenges and development in enforcing international laws on child soldiers: The need for legal reform. *Journal of Law and Legal Reform*, 5(4).
69. Rasakandan, S., & Tehrani, P. M. (2022). Protection of Children from Recruitment and Use in Armed Conflict: Role of International Legal Framework. *J. Pol. & L.*, 15, 230.
70. Refaat, M. (2021). *Crimes against humanity of Saudi Arabia & UAE in Yemen*. European institute for international law and international relations.
71. Sandberg, K. (2018). Children's right to protection under the CRC. *Human rights in child protection: Implications for professional practice and policy*, 15-38.
72. Schulz, M. C. (2024). State Actors vis-à-vis Non-State Actors in the Middle East.
73. Şen, D. Ö. (2024). *The Effect of Peace Education Program on Conflict Resolution Skills of 4th Grade Students* (Doctoral dissertation, Middle East Technical University (Turkey)).
74. Sheikh, E. Y. S., Alshageri, S., & Hamood, M. A. H. H. (2022). Factors influencing children armed recruitment in Yemen. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 8(1), 2108137.
75. Sridhar, M. S. (2004). OPAC vs card catalogue: a comparative study of user behaviour. *The Electronic Library*, 22(2), 175-183.
76. Sridhar, M. S. (2004). Subject searching in the OPAC of a special library: problems and issues. *OCLC Systems & Services: International digital library perspectives*, 20(4), 183-191.
77. Steinl, L. (2017). Child Soldiers as Agents of War and Peace. *A Restorative Transitional Justice Approach to Accountability for Crimes Under International Law*. Berlin: Springer.

78. Tobin, J., & Cashmore, J. (2020). Thirty years of the CRC: Child protection progress, challenges and opportunities. *Child abuse & neglect*, 110, 104436.
79. Torquati, B., Pedini, S., Santucci, F. M., & Da Re, R. (2021). Participatory guarantee system and social Capital for Sustainable Development in Brazil: the case study of OPAC Orgânicos Sul de Minas. *Sustainability*, 13(20), 11555.
80. Tsalikis, A., & Pedi, R. (2024). Debating the Yemen conflict: Toward a synthesis of debates and diverse perspectives on causes and actors. *Digest of Middle East Studies*, 33(4), 451-475.
81. Upeniece, V. (2022). Right to Conscientious Objection to Military Services: International to National Perspective.
82. van de Haar, J. A. (2019). *The Innocence and Danger of Child Soldiers: Advocacy Efforts of INGOs and TANS to Prevent Children's Recruitment in Armed Forces and Participation in Armed Conflict through Framing and Non-Discursive Means* (Master's thesis).
83. Van Niekerk, A. (2020). *The Impact of the Syrian Non-international Armed Conflict on Its Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers: The Accused Child and the Juvenile Justice System*. University of Johannesburg (South Africa).
84. Vandenhoe, W. (2015). Children's rights from a legal perspective: Children's rights law. In *Routledge international handbook of Children's rights studies* (pp. 27-42). Routledge.
85. Williams, J. (2011). The international campaign to prohibit child soldiers: a critical evaluation. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 15(7), 1072-1090.
86. Yang, Y. J. (2022). *Recruiting the most vulnerable: what explains the use of child soldiers?* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Essex).
87. Yurdakul, İ. T., & Alkan, M. N. (2024). Warlord of the Flies: Child Soldiers and Non-State Actors in New Wars. *Uluslararası Kriz ve Siyaset Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 8(1), 85-101.
88. Yuvaraj, J. (2016). When Does a Child Participate Actively in Hostilities under the Rome Statute? Protecting Children from Use in Hostilities after Lubanga. *Utrecht J. Int'l & Eur. L.*, 32, 69.