

## I. Summary

By the time he was 16, Maung Zaw Oo had been forcibly recruited into Burma's national army not once, but twice. First recruited at age 14 in 2004, he escaped, only to be recruited again the following year. He learned that the corporal who recruited him had received 20,000 kyat,<sup>1</sup> a sack of rice, and a big tin of cooking oil in exchange for the new recruit. "The corporal sold me," he said. The battalion that "bought" him then delivered him to a recruitment center for an even higher sum—50,000 kyat.

When his aunt learned that Maung Zaw Oo had been recruited a second time, she and his grandmother made a long trip to his battalion camp to try to gain his release. The captain of the battalion company offered to let Maung Zaw Oo go, but only in exchange for five new recruits. Maung Zaw Oo said, "I told my aunt, 'Don't do this. I don't want five others to face this, it's very bad here. I'll just stay and face it myself.'"

By age 16 Maung Zaw Oo seemed resigned to his fate. When his unit went on patrol, he would volunteer for the most dangerous positions, walking either "point" at the front of the column, or last at the back. He said, "In the army, my life was worthless, so I chose it that way."<sup>2</sup>

In Burma, boys like Maung Zaw Oo have become a commodity, literally bought and sold by military recruiters who are desperate to meet recruitment quotas imposed by their superiors. Declining morale in the army, high desertion rates, and a shortage of willing volunteers have created such high demand for new recruits that many boys, some as young as ten, are targeted in massive recruitment drives and forced to become soldiers in Burma's national army, the Tatmadaw Kyi.

For over a decade, consistent reports from the United Nations (UN) and independent sources have documented widespread recruitment and use of children as soldiers in

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<sup>1</sup> Approximately US\$15 at market exchange rate. This amount is more than the typical monthly salary for an army private.

<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Maung Zaw Oo (not his real name), August 2007. In this report, all children's names have been changed for security reasons.

Burma.<sup>3</sup> At the beginning of 2004 the ruling military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), responded to international criticism of its child recruitment practices by establishing a high-level Committee for Prevention of Military Recruitment of Underage Children. However, close scrutiny reveals that the Committee has taken no significant action to redress the issue. Instead, the Committee's primary role appears to be to denounce accounts of child recruitment as false.

Child soldiers are also present in the majority of Burma's 30 or more non-state armed groups, though in far smaller numbers. Some of these groups have taken effective measures to reduce the number of child soldiers among their forces, but other groups continue to recruit children and use them in their ranks.

The UN secretary-general has identified Burma's armed forces as a consistent violator of international standards prohibiting the recruitment and use of child soldiers, listing the Tatmadaw Kyi in four consecutive reports since 2003. Several armed opposition groups have also been listed for recruiting and using child soldiers. The UN Security Council has stated repeatedly that it will consider targeted sanctions, including embargoes of arms and other military assistance, against parties on the secretary-general's list that refuse to end their use of children as soldiers, but so far has taken no action in the case of Burma. Given the abysmal record of the SPDC and some non-state armed groups in this regard, such action is clearly warranted.

## **The Government of Burma's Armed Forces: The Tatmadaw**

The Burmese government claims that its national armed forces, the Tatmadaw, is an all-volunteer force, and that the minimum age for recruitment is 18.<sup>4</sup> However, Tatmadaw soldiers, officers, and other witnesses interviewed by Human Rights Watch consistently testified that the majority of new recruits are conscripts, and that

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<sup>3</sup> See for example, the UN Secretary-General's reports to the Security Council on children and armed conflict, S/2002/1299 (November 26, 2002), S/2003/1053 (October 30, 2003), S/2005/72 (February 9, 2005), and S/2006/826 (October 26, 2006); Rachel Brett and Margaret McCallin, *Children: The Invisible Soldiers* (Save the Children Sweden, 1998); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "Adult Wars, Child Soldiers: Voices of Children Involved in Armed Conflict in the East Asia and Pacific Region," October 2002; Human Rights Watch, "*My Gun Was as Tall as Me*": *Child Soldiers in Burma* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2002), <http://hrw.org/reports/2002/burma/>; Human Rights Education Institute of Burma, "Despite Promises: Child Soldiers in Burma's Armed Forces," 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Letter to Human Rights Watch from the Permanent Mission of the Union of Myanmar to the United Nations, New York, May 8, 2002.

a large proportion of them are children. Since the early 1990s the number of voluntary recruits has been far from sufficient to staff the rapidly expanding Tatmadaw. At the same time the Tatmadaw has been plagued by high rates of desertion. To offset high rates of attrition and to staff new regiments, specialized recruitment units have been established throughout the country, and regular army battalions have also been ordered to fill recruitment quotas. In mid-2006 a senior general called for the recruitment of 7,000 new soldiers a month, four times the actual recruitment rate of a year earlier. Battalion commanders failing to meet their recruiting quotas are subject to a range of disciplinary action including the loss of their command posting.

The unrelenting pressure to meet recruitment quotas has placed boys at constant risk of forced or coerced recruitment. Battalions and recruiting centers offer cash and other inducements<sup>5</sup> to their own soldiers to bring in recruits, but are also willing to “buy” recruits from civilian brokers and the police. In 2005 the going rate for new recruits ranged from 25,000 to 50,000 kyt—representing one-and-a-half to over three times the monthly salary of an army private. Would-be recruiters watch train stations, bus stations, markets, and other public places, looking for “targets”—the easiest being young adolescent boys on their own. The boys are then induced with promises of money, clothing, status, a job and a free education, or threatened with arrest for loitering or not being in possession of an identity card and offered military service as the alternative, or they may be otherwise intimidated, coerced, or if necessary beaten into “volunteering” for the army. Some boys interviewed by Human Rights Watch told how they and others had been detained in cells, handcuffed, beaten, bought and sold from one recruiter or battalion to another, and eventually taken to the recruitment centers. As this report was going to press in October 2007, Human Rights Watch continued to receive eyewitness accounts of army units recruiting children and transporting them to training centers.

The government’s deployment of the army in September 2007 to attack Buddhist monks and other peaceful protesters may increase the vulnerability of children to recruitment even further. Even before the crackdown, young men were often reluctant to join the military, because of its low pay, difficult conditions, and the poor treatment

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<sup>5</sup> These variously include foodstuffs, leave, service discharge, and promotions.

of enlisted soldiers. The use of the army in attacks, killings, and detentions of protesters may further discourage voluntary enlistment, and prompt recruiters to seek out even greater numbers of child recruits.

At the time of enlistment, all recruits are required to provide documentary evidence that they are over 18 years old. According to the testimonies collected by Human Rights Watch, such proof is rarely requested and recruitment officers appear to consistently register underage recruits as being 18, even when the child states otherwise. Any reluctance on the part of the recruitment officers to register boys who are particularly young is usually remedied by a bribe, so that the procurer of the recruit can receive his incentive payout. One boy recruited at age 11 told Human Rights Watch that he failed his recruitment medical because he was only four feet three inches (1.3 meters) tall and weighed only 70 pounds (31 kilograms), but that his recruiter bribed the medical officer to ensure his recruitment regardless. Some soldiers interviewed noted that as the demand for new recruits grows, adherence to minimum guidelines on physical, medical, educational, and age standards has become increasingly lax.

Child recruits are held as virtual prisoners until sent for 18 weeks of basic military training, where they are forced to do heavy physical work and are punished if they fail in their training exercises. Recruits who attempt escape, including children, are punished, often severely. Human Rights Watch has received consistent reports of soldiers who desert from training being beaten with sticks by as many as 200 or more trainees; injuries sustained from such punishment sometimes leave them disabled for weeks.

After training, child soldiers are deployed to battalions, where they are subject to physical abuse by officers and are sometimes forced to participate in human rights abuses such as burning villages and using civilians for forced labor. Some battalions keep their younger children away from combat, but in others, child soldiers may be sent into combat zones within a few days to a month of their arrival; most of those interviewed for this report had seen combat and violent death. Leave is rarely granted, and discharge is usually conditioned on bringing in several new recruits.

Those who desert the army are often caught when they return home and imprisoned or re-recruited. Several of those interviewed had escaped only to be recaptured and forced to join the army a second time while still a child. Than Myint Oo, for example, was first recruited at 14, escaped the army, but was captured and sentenced to six months' imprisonment for desertion at age 15. He escaped from prison, was captured and re-recruited to the army, and eventually deserted again and reached Thailand. Now 19, he no longer dares return home.

All of the former soldiers interviewed by Human Rights Watch reported the presence of children in their training companies. Of the 20 interviewed, all but one estimated that at least 30 percent of their fellow trainees were under age 18. The prevalence of child soldiers in army battalions varies significantly. In some infantry battalions child soldiers comprise less than 5 percent of total staffing, while former child soldiers reported that in some newly created battalions, up to 50 to 60 percent of all privates were below age 18. Given these variations and the difficulty of estimating overall staffing levels within the Tatmadaw, this report makes no attempt to estimate the total number of children in Burma's army.

### **Government Failure to Address Child Recruitment**

The SPDC has consistently denied the presence of any child soldiers in the Tatmadaw, and has failed to take substantive action to end the army's institutionalized and pervasive recruitment of children. The Committee for Prevention of Military Recruitment of Underage Children has a Plan of Action to address the issue, but in practice this body has done little to implement the steps outlined therein.

The Committee's Plan of Action calls for public awareness efforts regarding child recruitment, but Human Rights Watch found very little evidence of government-led awareness raising initiatives either within the armed forces, or among the public. None of the current or former soldiers interviewed by Human Rights Watch, including battalion commanders and a clerk in a military operations command headquarters, were aware of any military directives concerning child recruitment. Human Rights Watch found no evidence of public education efforts through various media, as outlined in the Plan of Action. To the contrary, the principal public awareness raising function of the Committee (in fact, its principal effort overall) seems to be to disavow

any child recruitment by the Tatmadaw. The state-run media has asserted that such reports are “slandorous accusations,” and as recently as September 2007 declared that the government was working with UN agencies “to reveal that accusation concerning child soldiers is totally untrue.”<sup>6</sup>

According to figures released by the SPDC, only 122 child soldiers have been released from the army since 2004—an annual rate that is significantly lower than the number of child soldiers reportedly released in the years immediately preceding the Committee’s creation. Some parents who have lodged protests with international organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) have succeeded in having their sons released from the army after these organizations petitioned the government. In other cases, however, the government has refused to accept documentation of claims, or has offered parents money or goods to dissuade them from making formal reports. Human Rights Watch also received numerous reports that military officials had demanded that parents or guardians pay them bribes to secure the release of their children. At the same time, the army continues to arrest child soldiers who desert, to prosecute them, and incarcerate them in prison facilities for adults.

The SPDC claims to have taken disciplinary action against child recruiters in at least 30 cases since 2002. However, it has not made public any information regarding the sanctions imposed, and its own reports indicate that no child recruiters were disciplined in 2005 or 2006. Impunity for child recruiters is the norm. Testimony collected for this report demonstrates that not only do Tatmadaw officials tolerate the recruitment of children, but many are complicit by falsifying age records or paying out money and goods for recruits who are clearly underage.

The SPDC has taken no positive action over the past five years that is likely to seriously affect the continued recruitment and use of child soldiers in their forces. To the contrary, unsustainable recruitment quotas, and systematic disregard for national and international laws prohibiting child recruitment suggest that the

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<sup>6</sup> “Myanmar still facing unjust accusations of child soldiers as only slanders and falsehood reach UN,” *The New Light of Myanmar*, February 4, 2005; “Myanmar working in cooperation with UN agencies to reveal that accusation concerning child soldiers is totally untrue,” *The New Light of Myanmar*, September 18, 2007.

practice is only likely to continue. Any promises of future action, should be taken seriously only if followed by effective action with demonstrable results, and independent verification through unrestricted monitoring.

## **Non-state Armed Groups**

This report does not attempt to document the use of child soldiers by all non-state armed groups in Burma, but rather discusses 12 groups as examples, including most of the larger groups. Most of Burma's non-state armed groups have at least some child soldiers in their ranks, but they differ greatly in how these children are recruited and treated, and in their willingness and efforts to stop using child soldiers. These groups are much smaller in troop strength than the Tatmadaw, and as a whole have far fewer child soldiers than the Tatmadaw.

Many child recruits volunteer to serve in these groups, either because their families cannot support them or because they wish to participate in the armed struggle or to defend their families and villages against the Burma army's human rights abuses. Some armed groups impose recruit quotas requiring villages or households to supply a recruit. In such cases a family often sends a child under 18 so that it can retain the older, more productive family members for the household, or because they have no children over 18.

Many non-state groups have only recently begun seeing child recruitment as an issue. Human Rights Watch found that while some groups, like the Karenni Army and the Karen National Liberation Army, have taken steps to address child recruitment, other groups persist in the practice, including the United Wa State Army, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, and the Karenni Nationalities People's Liberation Front. Many are wary of engaging the international community on this issue: for example, the Shan State Army–South, which appears to have taken some measures on its own but is reluctant to allow outside monitoring, and the Kachin Independence Army, which considers accepting children into non-combat roles in the army as a form of foster care for vulnerable children, and prefers to deal with the issue without outside involvement.

Both the Karenni Army and the Karen National Liberation Army have taken measures to try to bring their practices into line with international standards, including the recent signing by both groups of Deeds of Commitment promising to end child recruitment, demobilize children in their forces, and allow outsiders to independently monitor their compliance. Although previous Human Rights Watch research found children present in the Karenni Army, our current investigation found no evidence of recruitment or use of child soldiers by the group.

Based on the evidence gathered for this report, Human Rights Watch recommends that the Karenni Army (KA) be removed from the secretary-general's list of parties to armed conflict in violation of international norms prohibiting the recruitment and use of child soldiers, but that the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army and the Karenni Nationalities People's Liberation Front (KNPLF) should be among groups considered for addition to the list.

## **The Local and International Response**

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Labour Organization, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and some nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), have attempted to address issues related to child soldiers in a variety of ways in recent years. These efforts include case work aimed at securing the release of specific children who have been recruited, and broader preventive initiatives to keep children in school, improve birth registration procedures, raise public awareness, and engage the government, the military, and non-state armed groups on child rights issues.

In some cases, international and local organizations have been able to successfully intervene to have child soldiers released, although their efforts in others are obstructed. Broader initiatives in Burma have met with limited success because they address the issue indirectly. Efforts to register births and keep children in school are undermined by poverty, economic mismanagement, and governmental corruption.

In neighboring countries, local and international NGOs have attempted to improve protection and to reintegrate escaped Tatmadaw child soldiers, who are extremely vulnerable. Although these initiatives have helped some children, they are severely



hindered by governmental restrictions imposed on refugees and the organizations that help them. Tatmadaw deserters dare not return to Burma, may be vulnerable within refugee camps, but are in danger of refoulement if they are living outside of refugee camps. In many cases resettlement to a third country is the most viable solution for former child soldiers, but the Thai government, as host to the largest refugee population from Burma, is now blocking this option for most of them as well.

Other initiatives include teaching child rights to refugees and displaced villagers; establishing accelerated schools for adolescent children who have never had any education, in order to decrease their vulnerability to recruitment; and training officers in non-state armed groups about child rights. These initiatives have been successful in reducing child recruitment in some areas, but they tend to be under-resourced. A greater political will to engage non-state armed groups on this issue, combined with more resources, would probably yield positive results.

## II. Recommendations

### To the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC)

- Immediately end all recruitment of children under the age of 18, and demobilize children under the age of 18 from the armed forces.
- Offer the option of an honorable discharge to any soldier now over the age of 18 but who was recruited as a child.
- Ensure that all recruits to the military are at least 18 years of age. To this end, enforce the requirement (already stated in recruitment brochures) that all recruits to the military must provide documentary proof that they are 18 years of age or over, and enact a system for monitoring that such documents have been received and verified.
- Implement comprehensive birth registration and ensure that all children have proof of age.
- Develop and impose effective and appropriate sanctions against individuals found to be recruiting children under 18 into the armed forces, and publicize information about these sanctions within the military and publicly. Sanctions including potential conviction and imprisonment must apply to anyone who recruits children for the military, including military recruiters, police, members of groups such as the fire brigades, and civilians in general.
- Eliminate all incentives, including monetary compensation, promotions, or military discharge for soldiers who recruit children.
- Seek international cooperation with relevant agencies in order to verify recruitment practices. As part of this, allow monitoring of recruitment and training centers by independent outside bodies.
- Establish a system for recruits, their families, or concerned parties to inquire whether a particular child has been recruited, and if so to petition for that child's release, without fear of retaliation against the child or the petitioner. This could be set up in conjunction with international organizations or as an independent office, monitored by outside organizations. Publicize this system nationwide.
- Ensure that children and soldiers recruited as children who run away from the armed forces are not treated as deserters or subject to punishment.

Immediately release all children or those recruited as children who are detained or imprisoned for desertion.

- Create a mechanism to assist former child soldiers, including children from the Ye Nyunt, to reunite with their families without fear of state punishment or retaliation.
- Cooperate with international nongovernmental organizations, UNICEF, and UNHCR to reunite former child soldiers with their families, and facilitate their rehabilitation and social reintegration, including appropriate educational and vocational opportunities.
- Sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts, and consistent with existing national law, deposit a binding declaration establishing a minimum age of voluntary recruitment of at least 18.
- Ratify the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (International Labour Organization Convention No. 182), which defines the forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict as one of the worst forms of child labor.
- Ratify the Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court, which includes the recruitment or use of children under the age of 15 in its definition of war crimes.
- Conduct public education campaigns through the media and elsewhere to inform children and parents of the rights of children, including their right not to be recruited into armed forces or groups, in accordance with the Plan of Action of the Committee for Prevention of Military Recruitment of Underage Children.
- Increase information sharing with international organizations regarding the work of the Committee for Prevention of Military Recruitment of Underage Children, and work with UNICEF to amend the Committee's Plan of Action to reflect international standards, UN Security Council resolutions 1539 and 1612, and the Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups.
- In cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, UNICEF, and nongovernmental organizations, conduct trainings in international

humanitarian law and the rights of children for all soldiers, including officers and recruiters.

- Remove restrictions on humanitarian access by international organizations, and cooperate with these organizations in ending all recruitment and use of child soldiers.
- Allow Burmese civil society organizations to report and act on cases of child recruitment without threat of reprisals.
- Ensure that all children have access to free and compulsory quality primary education, and work towards the progressive introduction of free secondary education. Waive school fees and other associated costs of education, including costs for books and uniforms, or develop fee assistance programs for children whose families are unable to afford them.
- Ensure that any educational programs for children run by or in conjunction with the armed forces meet internationally accepted standards of education. Ensure that participation in such programs is voluntary, with the informed consent of the child's parents or guardian, and that students are not members of the armed forces or used for any military activities.
- Ensure that all children enrolled in educational programs run by the armed forces have regular contact, including visits, with their families.
- Ensure that orphans and abandoned children have access to mainstream (non-military) schools, and receive adequate care.
- Ensure that educational opportunities offered to orphans, displaced, or other children are not conditioned on military service either during or after completion.
- Where the government has relations with non-state armed groups (such as "ceasefire groups"), press these groups to comply with international standards relating to the recruitment and use of children as soldiers, and provide or refer them to outside technical support when necessary to help them do so.

***As short-term interim measures until all children have been demobilized from the military:***

- Ensure that children in the armed forces receive regular leave and are allowed to communicate regularly with their families.
- Immediately end all physical and psychological abuse of child soldiers.

## To All Non-state Armed Groups

- Immediately end all recruitment of children under the age of 18 and demobilize children under age 18 from armed groups.
- Offer the option of an honorable discharge to any soldier now over the age of 18 but who was recruited as a child.
- Formalize a commitment to end all child recruitment, demobilize children in the armed forces, and allow outside monitoring, for example, by signing a Deed of Commitment like those already signed by the Karenni Army and Karen National Liberation Army and reproduced in this report.
- Develop and enforce clear policies, if they do not already exist, to prohibit the recruitment of children under the age of 18. Ensure that such policies are widely communicated to members of the armed forces and to civilians within the group's area of influence.
- Develop reliable systems to verify the age of individuals recruited into the armed group, and ensure that all such recruits are at least 18 years old.
- Develop and impose systematic sanctions against individuals found to be recruiting children under 18.
- Ensure that children under age 18 who desert SPDC forces or are captured are not recruited as soldiers into opposition forces.
- Seek international cooperation with relevant agencies in order to independently verify recruitment practices.
- Conduct public education campaigns to inform children and parents within the group's area of influence of the rights of children, including their right not to be recruited into armed forces or groups.
- In cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, UNICEF, and nongovernmental organizations, conduct trainings in international humanitarian law and the rights of children for all soldiers, including officers and recruiters.
- Wherever possible, establish educational programs and vocational training, and encourage children and their families to utilize such opportunities.
- Ensure that educational opportunities offered to orphans, displaced, or other children are not conditioned on military service either during or after completion.

## **To the Governments of Thailand, Laos, Bangladesh, India, and China**

- Notify UNHCR and relevant nongovernmental organizations when children who have deserted SPDC forces or individuals who may have been child soldiers are taken into custody, to allow access and a determination of their status.
- Ensure that such children and individuals receive special protection and that they are not refouled. To this end, rescind and repudiate any refoulement agreement for former child soldiers.

## **To the Government of Thailand**

- Rescind the agreement of the Joint Border Cooperation Committee which specifies that deserters from SPDC forces found on Thai soil will be handed over to Burmese authorities.
- Allow UNHCR, UNICEF, the ICRC, and nongovernmental organizations to establish protection and support mechanisms for former child soldiers both in and outside of existing refugee camps.
- Allow UNHCR, UNICEF, the ICRC, and nongovernmental organizations to conduct workshops and other initiatives on child rights to prevent recruitment of children into armed groups from refugee camps or other locations in Thailand.

## **To the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**

- In refugee status determinations, take into account the special circumstances of children recruited before the age of 18 (even in cases where the applicant is now over the age of 18), including the possibility of extrajudicial execution if they are returned to Burma.
- Fully apply the “UNHCR Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum” and the “UNHCR Guidelines on Protection and Care of Refugee Children,” especially those sections relating to procedures and criteria for refugee status determination for unaccompanied minors.
- Amend the “Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status” to provide guidance on considering the claims of unaccompanied

children, and in particular former child soldiers, that is consistent with other UNHCR policies and guidelines and that fully takes into account the fact that the recruitment of children under the age of 18 is internationally considered to be a human rights violation.

- Investigate cases of deserters, including child deserters, being detained for possible deportation by authorities in Thailand and in Burma's other neighboring countries.
- Provide technical support and material assistance for initiatives aimed at preventing child recruitment and reintegrating former child soldiers in refugee camps and other locations in Burma's neighboring countries.
- Provide technical and material assistance to civil society and non-state armed groups charged with the care and protection of child deserters from any armed force who reach a neighboring country.

## **To UNICEF**

- Continue to advocate with the SPDC for an immediate end to all recruitment of child soldiers and demobilization of those already in the armed forces.
- Work with the SPDC to establish mechanisms to demobilize children from the armed forces, and establish programs to facilitate the rehabilitation and social reintegration of former child soldiers, including appropriate educational and vocational opportunities.
- Help to reunite former child soldiers with their families.
- Reestablish contact with non-state armed groups, including those still in armed conflict with the Tatmadaw, and resume discussions and initiatives with these groups to address the issue of child soldiers.
- Provide technical support and material assistance for initiatives aimed at preventing child recruitment and reintegrating former child soldiers in non-state armed groups as well as the Tatmadaw; this should include support for projects such as "accelerated schools" in refugee camps and related projects in refugee camps, areas controlled by non-state groups, and areas controlled by the state.
- Provide technical and material assistance to civil society and non-state armed groups charged with the care and protection of child deserters from any armed force. Assistance should not be biased in favor of actors linked to or at

peace with the state, as this is a violation of humanitarian neutrality; therefore assistance for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs offered to the SPDC should also be offered in appropriate proportion to non-state groups who are expected to abide by the same standards.

- In line with the above, offer technical assistance to improve birth registration in areas controlled by non-state groups similar to that which is being offered to the SPDC in areas that it controls.

### **To the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict**

- Continue direct contact with the SPDC and non-state groups and actively monitor whether their commitments are implemented effectively.
- Engage with civil society actors inside and outside Burma, including those outside the UN system, who can help monitor the situation and who can provide advice on ways forward.
- Immediately establish contact with the non-state armed groups on the secretary-general's list of groups using child soldiers, both formally and informally, regarding their compliance with international standards.
- Remove the Karenni Army from the list of armed groups using child soldiers to be included in the secretary-general's next report to the Security Council on children and armed conflict, and consider adding groups for which strong evidence exists that they are significant abusers of child soldiers, including the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) and the Karenni Nationalities People's Liberation Front (KNPLF).

### **To Member States of the United Nations**

- In accordance with Security Council resolution 1379 on children and armed conflict (November 20, 2001), paragraph 9, use all legal, political, diplomatic, financial, and material measures to ensure respect for international norms for the protection of children by parties to armed conflict. In particular, states should unequivocally condemn the recruitment and use of children as soldiers by the SPDC and other armed groups, and withhold any financial,



political, or military support to these forces or groups until they end all child recruitment and release all children in their ranks.

- Use diplomatic and other appropriate means to press the governments of Burma's neighboring countries to protect and not refoule escaped and prospective child soldiers, and to allow civil society initiatives to assist and protect these children.

### **To the UN Security Council**

- In accordance with Security Council resolutions 1539 (paragraph 5) and 1612 (paragraph 9) on children and armed conflict, adopt targeted measures to address the failure of the SPDC to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers. Consider measures recommended by the secretary-general, including the imposition of travel restrictions on leaders, a ban on the supply of small arms, a ban on military assistance, and restriction on the flow of financial resources.

### **To the International Labour Organization**

- From the Rangoon office, continue accepting and pursuing cases of the reported recruitment of child soldiers through the ILO mechanism for reports of forced labor. Where the government refuses to act on a case despite documentary evidence provided by the ILO, press further for action on these cases and raise them with the higher levels of the ILO itself.

### **To the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar**

- Continue to research and report on the recruitment and use of child soldiers by the Burma army and other armed groups, and include relevant findings on this subject whenever presenting information to the General Assembly or the Human Rights Council.