

CHILDREN IN WAR

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James P. Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF, mentioned the main problems of children in war in his 1994 Report. We can summarize the special section in this report as follows:

"In the 1990s, the world stands at a critical juncture for the cause of protecting children in war. In the last decade alone, an estimated 1.5 million children have been killed in armed conflicts. A further 4 million have become disabled. At least 5 million have become refugees, and 12 million more have been uprooted from their communities. Much larger numbers have seen their health, nutrition and education suffer as conflicts have destroyed crops, infrastructure, clinics, schools.

More recently, the rape of girls has been used as a systematic weapon of war in former Yugoslavia. And in many parts of the world, children have been tortured and forced to watch or participate in atrocities. Hundreds of thousands have been recruited into armies, given drugs and weapons.

In the face of these tragic events, for the protection of children in armed conflicts, a declaration signed by the world's political leaders at the 1990 World Summit for Children and after that the Convention on the Rights of Children has been ratified by some 150 governments. But progress in practice can only be maintained by a loud and insistent public demand for action".

We hear some good news for the protection of children in war from different parts of the world. Professor İhsan DOĞRAMACI, Observer Delegate from Turkey to the UNICEF Executive Board, made an important statement in New York in May 1994:

"Madame Chairperson, as mentioned in the Executive Director's report, Central and Eastern Europe continue to be areas of major concern, throughout 1993, and unfortunately, up to the present time, with the tragedy in the former Yugoslavia dominating world attention and creating Europe's biggest political, military and humanitarian crisis since the Second World War. The invasion of Gorazde is the most recent of the tragedies happening before our eyes.

From Afghanistan to Bosnia, we are facing outdated nationalism, irredentism and ethnic tensions fueling animosity and hatred among peoples. Xenophobic tendencies have emerged in Europe and elsewhere that run counter to the tolerance and understanding we are trying to instill in the world order. We witness

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expansionist movements motivated by sheer greed for land without regard for the misery and suffering of peoples.

The impact of this conflict on children has been devastating, with thousands killed, displaced or under siege. We ask the international community to be more active in stopping these tragedies and to bring justice for the benefit of the children, those who suffer most".

The number of war victims in Bosnia-Herzegovina is too high. Nearly 7% of the total population living in this country has killed or wounded. According to the official numbers provided by the Bosnia-Herzegovina Embassy in Ankara, 16,652 children have been killed, have died of undernourishment and cold or are missing (11.6% of 143,305 total deaths), 34,197 children have been wounded (20.7% of 164,884 total) and 18,279 children have been seriously wounded requiring hospital treatment (24.8% of 73,589 total) (Source: Health consequences of the aggression on the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Bulletin of Committee for Health and Social Security, Republic Institute of Public Health No: 106, 2 April 1994).

Recently, the deans of medical faculties in Ankara prepared a declaration to give to the leaders of the world:

"A conflict which is trampling all the rules of the Geneva Convention is taking place in the heart of Europe for all to see before the eyes of the whole human race. An important part of this conflict has maimed, raped and stolen the most sacred of all human rights –the right to live– from hundreds of thousands of civilians, bombed hospitals, obstructed medical and social emergency assistance and forced people to leave their homes. No one shall escape from the moral and historic responsibility by remaining onlookers to this human drama any longer.

We the undersigned, as representatives of our institutions, call on all international organizations, and above all the United Nations, to bring this meaningless conflict to an end with all possible speed".

We hope to raise the voice of the medical authorities from different parts of the world without losing time to stop the tragedies of children in war.