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Sub-Commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities
Fortieth session
Agenda item 15 (c)

PROMOTION, PROTECTION AND RESTORATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AT
NATIONAL REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN:
HUMAN RIGHTS AND YOUTH

Written statement submitted by Human Rights Advocates,
a non-governmental organization in consultative status
(category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication which
is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council
resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[15 August 1988]

YOUTH, HUMAN RIGHTS AND PEACE

1. This session's annotated agenda reminds us that the Commission on Human Rights, in its resolution 1987/44, "appealed once again to all Governments to consider appropriate measures to ensure that young people have equal opportunities to participate ... in the endeavour to promote ... international peace" (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1988/1/Add.1, para. 219).

2. Young people have identifiably discrete interests regarding actual and threatened armed conflicts; e.g. they usually comprise the main cadre of combatants. Compare the comment in Commission resolution 1987/44, paragraph 2, that "youth attaches crucial importance to the promotion of international peace ..."; dramatic evidence of that fact is provided constantly by news of youth's leadership in so many demonstrations and other protests against nuclear weapons and armed conflict in general. Yet in our time by no means have young people had "equal opportunities to participate ... in the endeavour to promote ... international peace".

3. In recent years the main focus of pertinent United Nations activity seems to have been conscientious objection. (See Weissbrodt, "The United Nations Commission on Human Rights Confirms Conscientious Objection to Military Service as a Human Right", 1988 Netherlands Int'l L. Rev. pp. 53-72. Moreover, youth are almost ignored in the recent, 26-page report on interrelationships between human rights and international peace (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1988/2; see para. 25, quoting from a 1965 declaration).

4. Conscientious objectors obviously are not the only young people who seek to participate in promoting peace. Human Rights Advocates recommends that the Sub-Commission encourage initial inquiries and other activities regarding this matter, perhaps as part of the Advisory Services programme.