General Assembly

Human Rights Council
Fifty-seventh session
9 September–9 October 2024
Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by Forum for Development and Human Rights Dialogue, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[13 August 2024]

---

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.

Education and Peace for Children

The Forum for Development and Human Rights Dialogue would like to confirm that education has a more central and pivotal role in building peace, by promoting social cohesion and peaceful coexistence, as it is a vital component of human development and preserving values, including peace, justice, tolerance, and acceptance of others. It also contributes to Promoting the psychological, social, and cognitive development of communities. Furthermore, It allows communities to learn skills such as mediation and changing people's behaviors for the better, which will avoid future conflicts and disputes. Therefore, the Sustainable Development Goals have not neglected to emphasize the importance of ensuring education for all, especially children.

Education provides children in emergencies or crises with life-saving information, increases their awareness of their rights and responsibilities, develops their capabilities, develops their skills, and makes them more alert and ready during any incidents that may pose a threat to their lives. Their loss of the right to education represents a means and an easy goal to exploit them in arduous and dangerous professions or to be recruited by armed groups.

Regarding the relationship between children and armed conflicts or crises, the rights of children, in general, may be exposed to ongoing blatant violations, especially in conflicts and warzones, where they are deprived of exercising their rights to education, in addition to the dire consequences of these conflicts on the development of children's capabilities and their awareness of the outside world, which negatively affects children's mental and physical health. These conflicts may lead to widespread displacement, the destruction of schools, and economic instability, making access to education a major challenge for children.

The negative impact of wars and conflicts goes beyond the destruction of the educational infrastructure and includes the educational waste imposed by the war. The students did not learn anything for an entire academic year and lost what they had learned during the previous years due to the long period of interruption from school. In addition, it is expected that the dropout rate from education will increase significantly after the end of the war, as happened in Iraq, where 6 years have passed since the defeat of ISIS and no Students have returned fully to their schools.

In a related context, according to the UNICEF report "Stolen Futures: Young but Out of School," in 2018, one-third of children aged 5-17 years living in countries affected by conflict or disaster - numbering 104 million children - are not enrolled in school. This number represents a third of the total number of children aged 5-17 years who are not enrolled in school in the world, which is 303 million children. Also, 1 in 5 adolescents aged 15-17 years living in countries affected by conflict or disasters have never entered any school, and 2 out of every 5 did not complete primary school.

Moreover, according to the International Rescue Committee, 20% of primary school-aged students cannot go to school in general in conflict areas in 22 countries around the world, and there are about 8,850 schools in Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen, and Libya, which were destroyed or damaged so that they cannot be used. They are now housing displaced families or have been occupied by parties to the conflict, and the exposure of schools and educational infrastructure to attacks is a major reason why children are not attending school.

In March 2017, the International Rescue Committee examined the effects of war on children's education in the Syrian Arab Republic, showing that throughout the Syrian conflict, children's education had been disrupted due to displacement and insecurity. It was also found that 5.8 million children between the ages of 5 and 17 years in the Syrian Arab Republic need assistance in the field of education, and about 1.75 million children and adolescents have already left school, in addition to many people who face the risk of dropping out of school.

As for Gaza, more than 87% of the schools in the Gaza Strip need "major reconstruction or rehabilitation" to be able to operate again. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Public Works and Housing, about 332 schools and universities were partially destroyed.

In comparison, about 117 schools and universities were completely destroyed, and according to the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education, there are at least 8,000 martyrs in the Gaza Strip who are of school age.

In addition, the number of schools affiliated with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Refugees (UNRWA) designated as shelter centers and targeted by the occupation by bombing has increased to about 150 schools, out of 228 schools affiliated with the Agency in the Gaza Strip.

Therefore, the Forum for Development and Human Rights Dialogue expresses its deep concern about schools being turned into targets or constantly being used militarily by warring parties, as ignoring the protection of civilian infrastructure such as schools and hospitals often translates into a lack of distinction between civilians and the military.

The Forum for Development and Human Rights Dialogue would like to confirm that the child alone remains the first victim and the weakest link in societies that are going through intense conflicts and unstable political and economic conditions, which affects his life. Therefore, the utmost attention must be given to children's issues and rights, especially the right to education, in countries that suffer from wars, as they are a serious issue. Sensitivity concerns the future generation.

Furthermore,the Forum for Development and Human Rights Dialogue points out that this problem can be confronted with some simple solutions, including:

• Community educational initiatives, where (available) community resources such as mosques and community centers are used to provide basic education to children.

• Education via radio, where educational content can be broadcast at specific times

• Mobile learning units: Mobile learning units can be developed to deliver minimum education (numeracy and reading) directly to displaced populations or remote communities.

• Providing psychosocial support, as children affected by war need psychosocial support to deal with the traumas resulting from these conflicts.

Finally, the Forum for Development and Human Rights Dialogue also recommends:

• All warring parties must fulfill their obligations to protect children and end grave violations against them in times of war.

• End deliberate attacks on education and its infrastructure, including attacks against students, teachers, and schools, as well as end the use of schools for military purposes.

• Enhancing and strengthening psychological support and care for children away from the horrors of wars and conflicts.

• Working to spread peace and a culture of tolerance and acceptance of others among children, and create a positive learning environment for them, so that they can develop their abilities and skills.

• It is necessary to enact more legislation and take bold decisions to build a culture of peace that comes from focusing on science and knowledge because the prosperity of countries requires security, peace, and stability, which are important guarantees for building strong societies.

• Promoting study plans with materials and courses aimed at developing the values of tolerance, peace, social cohesion, cooperation, and acceptance of others, and rejecting intolerance and extremism, so the importance of peace education will be established.

• Raising awareness of the importance of prevention, and the relationship of peace to sustainable development, climate action, and food security, especially among children and youth, is important because peace is more than just the absence of violence.