



HREIB

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Press Release:

“Despite Promises: Child Soldiers are still in Burma’s Armed Forces” A New Research Report

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The government of Burma continues to recruit large numbers of children into its army, many by force, despite its promises to stop this internationally-condemned practice, says a new report issued today by Human Rights Education Institute of Burma (HREIB).

HREIB researchers conducted extensive interviews with more than 50 child recruits who fled to the Thai border for its report, “Despite Promises: Child Soldiers in Burma’s Armed Forces.” Most of the children said they were coerced and deceived to join the army and suffer its horrible conditions in training camps and dangers of injury and death on the battlefield fighting insurgents. Other children said they joined the military because of economic hardships and social pressures, conditions that make children in Burma easy targets for government recruiters.

The HREIB interviews show that child recruitment continues at an alarming rate even after the government, under international pressure, created a high-level committee that promised to handle the problem. The “Committee for Prevention of Military Recruitment of Under-age Children” was formed in January 2004 after the U.N. Secretary-General reported to the U.N. Security Council that Burma was violating international laws prohibiting the recruitment and use of children as soldiers. But rather than trying to resolve the problem, the committee focuses on public relations exercises and contesting allegations from the U.N. and from international human rights groups about the use of child soldiers.

“This committee has done little to protect children from being recruited into the military,” says Aung Myo Min, the director of HREIB and the lead author of the new report. “Neither does the committee take any serious action on complaints from family members of children currently serving in the armed forces.”

“By continuing to use and recruit children into the army and by failing to demobilize child combatants, the SPDC is in violation of the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child,” he says.

The SPDC – the State Peace and Development Council – is the official name of the government in Burma, which is also called Myanmar.

HREIB calls on the government to immediately carry out its stated policy of prohibiting the recruitment of children and to punish those who violate this policy. The government must play a central role in disarming, demobilizing, and rehabilitating former child soldiers and should invite assistance from international humanitarian organizations for the effort.

The HREIB report can be accessed at: www.hreib.com or <http://www.hreib.childsoldier.pdf>.

HREIB is a non-governmental, non-profit institute run by exiled Burmese activists and based along the Thai- Burma border. It promotes human rights, women rights and child rights.

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