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‘Old enough to kill but too young to vote’

The UN Working Group drafting the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts will meet from **2 to 13 February 1998** in Geneva.

There are an estimated 250,000 children and young people under the age of 18 years in government armed forces and/or armed opposition groups. These young combatants are not only the victims of grave human rights abuses but all too often the perpetrators of such abuses.

Amnesty International has drawn attention to abuses in the context of child recruitment both by government and/or armed opposition groups. The organization believes there is no excuse or acceptable argument for abusing and exploiting children as combatants, and that in order to end what Amnesty International calls a “moral outrage”, the optional protocol should raise the minimum age for participation in hostilities and recruitment into armed forces to the age of 18.

In preparation for the meeting Amnesty International has produced a public document entitled *‘Old enough to kill but too young to vote’ Draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts* (AI index: IOR 51/01/98). The worldwide human rights organization believes the protocol should specifically:

1. Prohibit persons below 18 years of age from participating in hostilities.
2. Prohibit the compulsory or voluntary recruitment of persons below 18 years of age into government armed forces.
3. Prohibit the recruitment of persons below the age of 18 years into armed opposition groups.

Martin Macpherson from Amnesty International’s International Secretariat will represent the organization at the Working Group’s meeting, and is available for interview. For further information or to arrange an interview, please phone:

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