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Jordan: Ratification of the Optional Protocol to Convention on the Rights of the Child

The involvement of children in armed forces is not inevitable. There is no excuse or acceptable argument for abusing and exploiting children as combatants. The recruitment and participation of children in armed conflicts is a decision made by governments or by leaders of armed political groups. It is unforgivable that children and young persons are encouraged to commit barbaric acts as well as being the victims of grave human rights abuses. It is time to exclude children from participating in war.

As part of the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, AI is campaigning for states to ratify the Optional Protocol to Convention on the Rights of the Child, without reservations, to set at least eighteen as the minimum age for all forms of recruitment and to implement the Protocol's provisions into their national legislation.

Please write to the government of Bolivia, using the following sample letter as a guide.

Your Majesty (if writing to the King) or Dear Prime Minister

I am deeply concerned by the fate of more than 300,000 children who are engaged in armed conflict worldwide. Children who are used as soldiers are exposed to the worst dangers and the most horrible suffering, both psychological and physical. Many of these children have witnessed or taken part in acts of violence, often against their own families or communities.

Your country played an important role in drawing international attention to this concern, when it co-hosted the Amman Conference on the Use of Children as Soldiers, in April 2001. The declaration adopted by the Conference, among other things, urges all states to ratify or accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, without reservations and declaring at least 18 years as the minimum age for all forms of voluntary recruitment.

The Protocol, which entered into force on 12 February 2002 and which your country signed on 6 September 2000, sends a clear message that any use of children in war is unacceptable.

I hope that your government will:

- ratify without reservations the Optional Protocol to the (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict;
- adopt a minimum age of at least eighteen for voluntary recruitment, and stipulate this age in the binding declaration to be made under article 3 of the Optional Protocol at the time of ratification;
- adopt whatever legislation is necessary to ensure that the international obligations arising from the Optional Protocol are implemented in the laws of your country;

Yours sincerely,

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