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Education Fund Launched for Iraqi Refugee Children**Chad Commits to Demobilizing Child Soldiers**

Following our reporting on militia violence and the use of child soldiers in Chad, the Chadian government pledged in May to cooperate with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in identifying and demobilizing children in armed forces. Since then, several hundred children, some as young as eight, have been released from a military base in central Chad. While conducting advocacy at the United Nations Security Council this month, officials at the French mission told us that the French government used our January 2007 report as the basis of the high-level diplomacy that eventually compelled Chad to commit to the demobilization agreement. To date, only government-backed paramilitary groups have demobilized children, and we are pressing

Chadian authorities to demobilize children within the ranks of the national army as well. We also continue to report on how the Chadian army, government-backed paramilitary groups, and rebel forces have used and recruited child soldiers in Chad and in Darfur. Read more at: <http://hrw.org/doc?t=africa&c=chad>.



Thousands of children, both boys and girls, in Chad have been recruited as child soldiers by all parties to the conflict.
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Convictions for War Crimes in Sierra Leone

On June 20, the special war crimes court for Sierra Leone handed down its first three convictions of members of a rebel group, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council. In her sentencing statement, the judge noted that the three convicted were "responsible for some of the most heinous, brutal, and atrocious crimes ever recorded in human history." The convictions were also the first ever by a UN-backed tribunal for the recruitment and use of child soldiers. Human Rights Watch's documentation of atrocities including killings, amputations, sexual violence, abductions, and the use of child soldiers provided background and, in many cases, direct leads for the court's investigators. We made a strong case for creating the special court in 2002, provided recommendations to strengthen its operations, and urged international donors to provide it with sufficient funding. Read more at: <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/06/20/sierra16214.htm>

US-Colombia Free Trade Agreement Tied to Human Rights

Following intense advocacy by Human Rights Watch, Democratic leaders from the House of Representatives announced on June 29 that they would oppose a US-Colombia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) until Colombia shows evidence of sustained results in addressing violence against trade unionists and paramilitary abuses. This decision imposes real pressure on Colombia to combat these crimes. Human Rights Watch has long urged the United States, Colombia's largest donor, to tie assistance to human rights benchmarks. On June 28, we testified at a congressional hearing about violence against trade unionists, the impunity enjoyed by the majority of the perpetrators (most of whom are paramilitaries), the largely failed paramilitary demobilization process, and the responsibility of multinational corporations in Colombia toward trade unionists. We met with the Office of the US Trade Representative to recommend that meaningful human rights pre-conditions be included in the agreement, and with members of the House Ways and Means Committee and other members of Congress to urge them to oppose the agreement until Colombia reins in the paramilitary units that have been killing trade unionists and many others. Through media interviews, op-eds, letters to key officials, and public statements we kept pressure on policymakers to condition relations with Colombia on meaningful human rights improvements. Read more at: <http://hrw.org/doc?t=americas&c=colomb>

Education Fund Launched for Iraqi Refugee Children

On July 27 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and UNICEF announced a \$129 million joint appeal to provide education for Iraqi refugee children in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt. Jordan also announced that it will give all Iraqi children living in the country access to Jordanian schools. Our November 2006 report on Iraqi refugees in Jordan exposed for the first time the widespread lack of access to education for Iraqi children. In our report and in the Jordanian media, we urged the government to provide all Iraqi children with access to free primary education.

In addition, the US State Department announced on July 12 an additional pledge of \$19 million for Iraqi refugees, more than doubling its previous commitment. The statement was released just weeks after Human Rights Watch wrote to the editors of the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post* criticizing the State Department for pledging only \$18 million to the UNHCR for its Iraq program. In advocacy meetings, reports, and op-eds, Human Rights Watch criticized the US and other western countries for providing so little funding for the 2 million people who have fled Iraq and the 2 million who are internally displaced. Going forward, we will continue to push Iraq's neighbors and the international community to address the immediate and pressing needs of displaced Iraqis. Read more at: <http://www.hrw.org/doc?t=mideast&c=iraq>

IN THE NEWS Op-Eds by Our Staff

UK Should Press US on Abuses

London Director Tom Porteous, writing in *the Guardian* (http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/tom_porteous/2007/07/adding_values_to_the_special_relationship.html), urges Prime Minister Gordon Brown to speak out against US counterterrorism-related abuses, such as torture, disappearances, and arbitrary detention, during his visit to Washington. Read more at: <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/07/30/uk16532.htm>

Examine Civilian Deaths in Lebanon

In the *Huffington Post*, Executive Director Kenneth Roth writes that attacks by Israeli forces in last year's war in Lebanon failed to distinguish at all times between civilians and combatants and notes that, to avoid such deaths in the future, there must be a serious assessment of what happened. Read more at: <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/07/30/isrlpa16542.htm>

Burma's Neighbors Must Demand Reform

Writing in Thailand's *The Nation*, Asia Director Brad Adams notes that the human rights situation in Burma has not improved, and urges ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) to press the government to end widespread human rights violations and create a credible process for handing power to a civilian government through free and fair elections. Read more at: <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/07/28/burma16534.htm>

Restore Habeas Corpus

Legal and Policy Director Jim Ross, writing in the *Miami Herald*, describes serious criticisms by a panelist on the Combatant Status Review Tribunals at Guantanamo, and urges policymakers to restore detainees' rights to have habeas corpus petitions heard in federal courts, rather than rely on the deeply flawed panels. Read more at: <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/07/02/usint16325.htm>

China's Legal System Must Be Independent

In the *Wall Street Journal*, Asia researcher Nicholas Bequelin writes that China's inadequate legal system, which lacks true independence from the government, cannot effectively address citizen concerns and exacerbates rather than alleviates local corruption. Read more at: <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/07/02/china16329.htm>

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