



First session

Agenda item
20 March 2021

**Synopsis for Police Abuse of
Street Children**

Synopsis for Police Abuse of Street Children

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the United Nations Children's Fund the topic synopsis entitled "Police Abuse of Street Children" (UNICEF/SYN/IIC/00.2).



Police Abuse of Street Children

unicef@thhsmun.org

Section I—Introduction

UNICEF, or the United Nations Children’s Fund, is an organ of the United Nations whose focus is to assist children and mothers within developing nations as well as offer humanitarian aid for those suffering individuals. On December 11, 1946 UNICEF was created in order to offer aid for children who had been devastated by WWII. In its wake, UNICEF, who relies on contributions from governments and private donors, worked to combat infectious disease outbreaks as well as quotidian lack of necessities with developing nations.

Section II—Topic Background

Police abuse is defined as excessive physical and verbal assault by a police officer when conducting police procedures. In some countries, police brutality can reach the extent of the United Nations definition of torture. Examples of police abuse include false arrest, intimidation, racial profiling, politics, extreme surveillance, sexual abuse, and bribery. This abuse is especially common among street children, which UNICEF defines as “children for whom the street has become his or her habitual source of livelihood; and also who is inadequately protected, supervised, or directed by responsible adults.” Younger children, as well as refugees are especially susceptible to abuse because they are more vulnerable, which makes them easy to exploit. Historically, police brutality was aimed towards lower socioeconomic and socially marginalized people. Factors contributing to this treatment by the police include a lack of education and training, violence and abuse as part of their training, a lack of non-violent conflict solving and communication skills, a lack of awareness of their own rights and those of other people, including children, and poor recruitment procedures that fail to root out people looking to abuse their power. The standards of brutality are unclear, and punishment is minimal for the offender. One huge problem that arises is the fact that other officers are not reporting the abuses they have seen conducted, making police abuse a very secretive crime.

The United Nations established its own United Nations Police division (UNPOL) in the 1960s and currently fields approximately 11,000 officers in support of 16 different peacekeeping operations. 129 countries have contributed officers towards this cause since 1990. The United Nations has reviewed and implemented changes to its own police forces to eliminate sources of abuse. The UN has also worked to advance standards of behavior among police forces of member states as well.

Section III—Possible Solutions

One of the primary steps in reducing police abuse of street children is to empower governments to enact laws which define police abuse and correct it when it is encountered. Education to change cultural and societal norms is essential for this process to be fully implemented. While a country’s sovereignty must be maintained, it is imperative to establish a regional cooperative effort to combat police abuse.

In addition, framework should be established for incoming police officers to meet standards of behavior. For change to be effective, it must transcend age and level of experience. Corruption in multiple areas of government must also be taken into consideration.

Section IV—Bloc Positions

African Bloc: War, political instability, sectarian violence and the use of children as soldiers have all contributed to significant issues in many countries in this bloc. An appreciable amount of the population falls under the legal age of adulthood, and this provides additional opportunities for abuse. Drug abuse, sexual exploitation, and child labor are compounding factors.

Asian Bloc: Among some portions of the Asian Bloc, the rule of law prevails. However, portions of the Asian bloc face significant obstacles in challenging police abuse. A lack of economic opportunity, especially among rural populations, has complicated the issue further. Authoritarian regimes and corruption among some more democratic governments allow for more violent, less restrained responses from law enforcement.

Latin American Bloc: Varying levels of corruption, political and economic instability, and disparity in education and economic opportunity allow for systemic abuse of authority. Throughout the region, civil war and struggle over who will rule has led to phenomenon such as “the Disappeared”, where protestors and dissidents were targeted for arrest, torture, and mass killing.

Middle Eastern Bloc: Authoritarian regimes, civil wars, and sectarian violence contribute to the possibility for terrible abuses of power. Economic inequality has similarly provided cycles of abuse. A child’s status in a cultural and legal context can contribute to their vulnerable status.

Western Bloc: Countries in the Western Bloc, while often lacking authoritarian regimes and instability, nonetheless experience abuse of street children at the hands of authorities. The abuse tends to apply more socio-economically and along divisions of race and ethnicity, most notably, the “Stolen Generations” of Australia and the American Indian Boarding schools of the early 20th century.

Section V—Questions That Should Be Taken Into Consideration

How are street children treated and do they have equal rights in comparison to other residents / citizens?

Where abuse is found, does the rule of law apply and is it enforced?

What are the UN and NGOs doing for police abuse of street children and how can your country bring a unique, efficient solution that is different from solutions tried before?

Section VI—Helpful Sites and Resources

Article—Consortium for Street Children— About Street Children: Street Children Are One Of The Most Vulnerable Children On The Planet

bit.ly/2uedhOA (Shortened URL from www.streetchildren.org)

Article—Journal of Public Health, Africa— The Health Profile Of Street Children In Africa: A Literature Review

bit.ly/2PgKcJM (Shortened URL from www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)

Report—UNICEF—6 Street Children’s Experience In the Justice System

uni.cf/37SrEpA (Shortened URL from www.unicef.org)

Statement—UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner—The Role Of UN Police In Preventing Conflict And Sustaining Peace

bit.ly/2HHYvmx (Shortened URL from www.ohchr.org)

Article—United Nations—UN Police

bit.ly/39Zzb7D (Shortened URL from peacekeeping.un.org)

Potential Search Terms—police abuse of street children, reasons for police brutality, police corruption, rights of street children, treatment of street children, UN on police abuse globally