

(English version)

Question for written answer E-001758/25
to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Leila Chaibi (The Left)
(30 April 2025)

Subject: Recruitment of children and adolescents by armed groups in Colombia

Representatives of the Nasa people recently reported the serious situation of children and adolescents being recruited in the north of Cauca, with 120 cases recorded in 2024. The Ombudsman's Office of Colombia (institution defending human rights) has recorded 409 cases at national level, including 300 in Cauca; 51% of the victims were indigenous people and 39% were girls.

The UN Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict in Colombia highlighted a 58% increase in cases between 2021 and 2023 compared with the previous reporting period. Recruitment is often accompanied by physical, psychological and sexual violence.

1. The EU supports the peace processes in Colombia, but what measures have been taken to end the recruitment of minors by armed groups, and what specific steps will the EU take to put pressure on armed groups, ensuring that they respect international humanitarian law?
2. What initiatives have been put in place to protect children and adolescents and prevent them from being recruited in this way, especially those who come from the most vulnerable communities?
3. Will the EU step up its support for local stakeholders involved in protecting the rights of children in areas affected by the conflict?

Submitted: 30.4.2025

Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas on behalf of the European Commission
(24 June 2025)

Fighting the recruitment of minors in armed conflicts remains among key EU's priorities, in line with the 2003 Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict, as updated in 2024 ⁽¹⁾, ⁽²⁾. The EU regularly raises the issue of child and forced recruitment in Colombia in its bilateral dialogues as well as in multilateral fora ⁽³⁾.

As part of the Group of Friends of United Nations Resolution 1612, the EU supports numerous projects on children and armed conflict in Colombia.

An example is 'Entornos protectores', a project focused on providing guarantees and opportunities for children and adolescents at risk of recruitment/use by armed actors.

This includes culturally sensitive education programmes, psychosocial support, and community-based early warning systems developed in collaboration with local leaders to prevent recruitment, particularly for indigenous communities and girls.

The EU also supports disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration programmes to rehabilitate former child recruits, providing vocational training and reintegration support in a conflict sensitive way.

The EU continues to support human rights defenders in Colombia — including those focused on the rights of the child and on child recruitment — through different means such as the EU Protect Defenders Mechanism ⁽⁴⁾.

The EU Delegation in Colombia is currently implementing human rights and civil society projects for a total budget of EUR 9 239 032. It is also expanding its partnerships with local actors to strengthen community-led conflict and recruitment prevention efforts.

⁽¹⁾ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/06/24/children-and-armed-conflicts-council-updates-eu-guidelines-and-approves-conclusions/>.

⁽²⁾ <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/2025/02/joint-statement-by-eas-secretary-general-srsg-for-children-and-armed-conflict-on-the-international-day-against-the-use-of-child-soldiers/>.

⁽³⁾ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-new-york/eu-statement-%E2%80%93-un-peacebuilding-commission-ambassadorial-meeting-colombia_en.

⁽⁴⁾ <https://protectdefenders.eu/>.