

The Minerva Center for Human Rights
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

and

The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute

Call for Papers

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES DURING ARMED CONFLICT

An International Conference
Jerusalem, 6-8 June 2010

Introduction:

The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and the Minerva Center for Human Rights at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem are organizing an international, interdisciplinary conference on the Protection of Children and Families during Armed Conflict. This event will examine legal, social and political mechanisms that protect children and families in the course of international and domestic armed conflicts. The conference will take place in Jerusalem from the 6th to the 8th of June 2010.

Recipients of this call for papers are invited to submit proposals to present a paper at the symposium. Authors of the selected proposals will be offered flight expenses to Israel and accommodations for the duration of the conference.

Invited speakers who have already confirmed their participation include Prof. Jaap Doek (Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam; former Chairperson, UN Committee on the Rights of the Child), Prof. Carolyn Hamilton (University of Essex; Director, Children's Legal Centre) and Prof. Michael Wessells (Professor of Clinical Population and Family Health, Columbia University; Professor of Psychology, Randolph-Macon College; Senior Advisor on Child Protection, Christian Children's Fund).

Need for the conference:

The need for a conference is made salient by the events of the second Lebanon War in 2006 and by the Palestinian-Israeli conflict involving Gaza in 2008-2009, in both of which children were injured and killed and families suffered. This need continues in the current stage in the conflicts of the Middle East, which continue to endanger families and children.

Background:

The importance of studying the impact of political conflict on children and families, and of preventing that impact arises from a number of empirically-based factors. First, armed conflicts are unfortunately a part of life in many parts of the world and are not likely to disappear soon. Second, children are among the most vulnerable people in any conflict, since they are not fully developed individuals. Third, families play a central role in the socialization of children so that damage to the structure and function of a family will add considerably to the suffering of the children. Fourth, developmental research shows that the risks and traumas experienced in childhood may be long-lasting and lead to

poor developmental outcomes. Finally, there is evidence that exposure to armed conflict may lead to a perpetuation of the trauma and conflict across generation.

Children are affected by political violence, not only in their experiencing of it but in the potential for this experience to affect the rest of their lives. While international legal safeguards for children exist, and there has been extensive research on the effects of exposure to political violence, the topic of protection of children in conflict has not received adequate research attention, and actual protection efforts have been weak and inconsistent. There is too little thinking about protecting children and families in one's own society, and even less on protecting those on the "other side".

Goals of the Conference:

The proposed conference will engage researchers, policy makers and child advocates from the fields of international law, the social sciences and medicine. The goals of the conference are:

1. Presentation and exchange of ideas on the prevention of adverse effects on children and families as a result of armed conflict.
2. Dialogue between researchers and professionals who deal with children's rights directly. As part of the conference we strive to bring Israeli and Palestinian researchers security personnel, and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to discuss approaches to prevent harm to children and families on both sides of a conflict.
3. Formulation of concrete proposals to all warring states and parties which may significantly reduce the impact of armed conflict on children and their families.
4. Publication of relevant papers in a volume designed to influence future research and practice in child protection and intervention during armed conflict.

Format of the Conference:

We are inviting figures from the international community as well as Israelis and Palestinians to present their research and engage in a dialogue concerning the protection of children in armed conflict. Speakers will present papers relating to the following issues: effects of political violence on children and families; rehabilitation of children and families; the role of the communications media in encouraging or discouraging protection for children and families; and the ethical, legal, political and organizational aspects of affording protection to children and families in armed conflict.

The participants in the conference will discuss the background for the observance and the violation by different sides in an armed conflict of the international conventions on human rights and children's rights, as well as effective ways to encourage compliance with these conventions.

Researchers interested in addressing these questions, or other questions related to the topic of the conference, are invited to respond to this call for papers with a one-page proposal for an article and presentation, along with a brief curriculum vitae (CV). Proposals should be submitted no later than 15 February 2010 by e-mail to the Minerva Center for Human Rights at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (mchr@savion.huji.ac.il).

All applicants should receive notification of the academic committee's decision by 10 March 2010. Short written contributions (of approximately 8-10 pages) based on the selected proposals will be expected by 25 May 2010. Full-length papers based on presentations made at the conference will be considered by the organizers for inclusion in a book or law journal symposium to be published following the conference.

Chair, Conference Academic Committee:

Prof. Charles Greenbaum, Hebrew University of Jerusalem