
IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CIRCUIT

Case No. 07-1156

OMAR KHADR,
Petitioner,

v.

ROBERT M. GATES,
Respondent.

AFFIDAVIT OF Rebecca Symington

I, Rebecca Symington, hereby declare upon information and belief, that:

1. I am the acting Senior Adviser on Children Affected by Armed Conflict, Child Protection Section, Program Division, and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Headquarters. I submit this affidavit at the request of Petitioner Omar Khadr.

RS

2. In this Affidavit I will set out the components of successful demobilization and reintegration programs for child soldiers, based on lessons learned from UNICEF's twenty years supporting such programs.

3. In my position I take a leading role in developing UNICEF's global policies and programs on the issue of children affected by armed conflict. Those policies and programs include disarmament, demobilization and reintegration ("DDR") programs for child soldiers.

UNICEF's involvement in reintegration programs

4. UNICEF was established by United Nations General Assembly resolution 57 (I) of 11 December 1946, and mandated to help all children on the basis of need "without discrimination because of race, creed, nationality, status, or political belief." (United Nations General Assembly Resolution 57 (I) 1946 on the Establishment of an International Children's Emergency Fund, 2.b.ii.)

5. UNICEF has a mandate to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.

UNICEF's experience in Demobilization and Reintegration of Child Soldiers

6. With the help of the international community, UNICEF has supported demobilization and reintegration programs in many countries where children have been used as soldiers. These include Afghanistan, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mozambique, Nepal, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Uganda. These programs range from the relatively modest in size (some 3,000 child beneficiaries in Burundi), to somewhat larger (8,000 children in Afghanistan), to substantial (30,000 children in Democratic Republic of the Congo).

7. UNICEF-supported programs are monitored and evaluated to determine whether they are achieving their goals. As confirmed in several evaluations referenced below, a properly-designed DDR program can have a significant positive impact on the children involved.

8. UNICEF receives support for DDR programs from several donor governments, including the United States of America – which funds reintegration programs in Afghanistan through the Department of Labor, Office of Child Labor, Forced

Labor, and Human Trafficking, and the United States Agency for International Development. Other governments, including those of Belgium, Canada, France, the Netherlands, Japan and the United Kingdom, also support UNICEF's work in this area.

Components of successful DDR programs

9. UNICEF has supported DDR programs since 1988, when it initiated a program for children who had been child soldiers during the civil war in Mozambique. UNICEF has a clear understanding of what works and what does not work in these programs. Significant components of successful DDR programs are set out below.

10. Family reunification and family-based care: Sustained contact with immediate or extended family is important to reintegration. (UNICEF, Liberia "Evaluation of the Disarmament and Demobilization Programme for Children Associated with Fighting Forces in Liberia", 2005). Former child soldiers should be returned to their family and community or integrated into a family and community environment after their release. Where it is not possible to

integrate children into their own families, alternative family-based care arrangements should be found.

11. Support to mediate between the individual, the families and the

community: The capacity of the family and community to care for and protect former child soldiers should be developed and supported through social services. The community to which the child is returning should be prepared to understand that the former child soldier is primarily a victim, not a perpetrator. Studies of rehabilitation and reintegration efforts show that children who have been associated with armed groups or armed forces for any length of time require regular family and community visits by social workers upon reintegration to mediate between the individual, the family and the community. Structured activities in the community should be designed to increase social inclusion and mobility of affected persons. (UNICEF Regional Office, Dakar, Senegal, "The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Children Associated with the Fighting Forces: Lessons Learned in Sierra Leone 1998-2002", 2005).

12. Positive civilian role models in the community: UNICEF programs in Liberia (UNICEF, Liberia, “Evaluation of the Disarmament and Demobilization Programme for Children Associated with Fighting Forces in Liberia”, 2005) and Sierra Leone (UNICEF, Regional Office, Dakar, Senegal, “The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Children Associated with the Fighting Forces: Lessons Learned in Sierra Leone 1998-2002”, 2005) show that the presence of, and communication with, positive civilian role models outside the child’s own - or any other - military command structure have influenced the child’s ability to reintegrate successfully.

13. Education and preparation for a productive role in the community: Few children benefit from education during their time as child soldiers. In UNICEF’s experience, providing an education, engaging former child soldiers in community service and helping them enter productive social roles are important to their reintegration and to overcoming the stigma often associated with having been a child soldier. Reintegration programs in Sudan, among other experiences, illustrate that education and skills training, coupled with appropriate access to sustainable income generation, are critical to successful reintegration (UNICEF, Sudan, “Assessment of UNICEF Supported

Programmes for Reintegration of Children Formerly Associated with Armed Groups and Forces in Sudan, final draft”, January 2008).

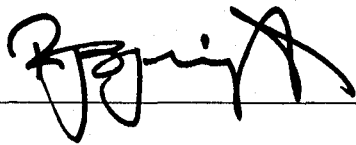
14. Psychological support: Reintegration support should include adequate identification of mental as well as physical health problems. All psychological and social activities are understood to contribute towards healing but some children may require individual attention. Each child’s progress and emotional needs should be monitored by a caregiver and social worker. In addition to group work and peer group support, children may benefit from individual counseling and/or opportunities to participate in traditional healing ceremonies. (UNICEF, Liberia, “Evaluation of the Disarmament and Demobilization Programme for Children Associated with Fighting Forces in Liberia”, 2005). All screening instruments and psychological interventions should be conducted by trained professionals; and principles of impartiality should be scrupulously observed, particularly where the armed conflict is on-going. (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, “Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines on Mental Health and Psycho-social Support in Emergency Settings”, 2007).

15. I make this affidavit and submit it to this honorable Court without waiving the privileges and immunities of the United Nations (including UNICEF) or those

afforded to me as an official of the United Nations, pursuant to the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, 1946, or otherwise.

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, I certify under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on 28 March 2008



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. J. ...", is written over a horizontal line.