



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)  
LEGAL AID BOARD

## **DRC - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 10 May 2013**

### **Information on forced recruitment of children as labourers or child soldiers by rebels groups such as M23.**

The *United States Department of State* commenting on events occurring in 2012, released a report in April 2013 which notes that:

“Increasingly during the year, RMG forcibly recruited individuals, including children, to serve as porters, guides, and combatants.” (United States Department of State (United States Department of State (19 April 2013) *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012, Congo, Democratic Republic of the*, Section 1g Use of Excessive Force and Other Abuses in Internal Conflicts /Physical Abuse, Punishment, and Torture)

RMG is an acronym for Rebel and Militia Groups.

This document also points out that:

“The recruitment and use of children in North Kivu, South Kivu, and Orientale provinces by RMG and the FARDC continued (particularly within the poorly integrated elements, including ex-CNDP). The government took steps to reduce and limit the use of child soldiers, including by signing and initiating the implementation of a UN-backed Action Plan to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers, starting awareness campaigns for FARDC personnel, and working with partner organizations to ensure children were not recruited by the FARDC and to develop training materials. In addition FARDC commanders made an increased effort to remove child soldiers, particularly when FARDC elements retook command of units that had been led by ex-CNDP commanders. In multiple instances incoming FARDC commanders requested assistance from MONUSCO, UNICEF, or other humanitarian organizations and transferred children to their care.” (ibid, Section 1g Use of Excessive Force and Other Abuses in Internal Conflicts /Child Soldiers)

FARDC is an acronym for the national army.

A document issued by *Human Rights Watch* in February 2013 notes:

“Since the start of the M23 rebellion in April 2012, M23 fighters have been responsible for deliberate attacks on civilians, summary executions, rapes, and forced recruitment of children.” (Human Rights Watch (5 February 2013) *DR Congo: War Crimes by M23, Congolese Army*)

Commenting on events occurring in late 2012, a report issued in May 2013 by the *United Nations Joint Human Rights Office* states:

“The UNJHRO also documented cases of recruitment and use of children, forced labour, cruel inhuman or degrading treatment, and looting by M23 forces during the same period.” (United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (May 2013) *Report of the*

*United Nations Joint Human Rights Office on Human Rights Violations Perpetrated by Soldiers of the Congolese Armed Forces and Combatants of the M23 from 15 November to 2 December 2012, p.4)*

This report also points out that:

“..the violations of human rights outlined in this report may constitute crimes according to Congolese criminal law, such as murder, rape, child recruitment, and theft and abduction, all of which are crimes punishable by a prison sentence.” (ibid, p.8)

It is also stated in this document that:

“MONUSCO continues to receive credible allegations of forced recruitment by M23 combatants, including of children, in Rutshuru territory, North Kivu province and in Rwanda. These allegations are the subject of ongoing investigations by MONUSCO.” (ibid, p.13)

MONUSCO is an acronym for the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

A report published in January 2013 by *Freedom House* commenting on events of the previous year states:

“The M23...also reportedly recruited child soldiers...” (Freedom House (January 2013) *Freedom in the World 2013 - Congo, Democratic Republic of (Kinshasa)*)

A document issued by the *United Nations Security Council* in February 2013 notes:

“Grave violations against children, including the use of child soldiers, have been widespread in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.” (United Nations Security Council (27 February 2013) *Special report of the Secretary-General on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes Region [S/2013/119]*)

In February 2013 a publication released by the *United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo* states commenting on events from late 2012 onwards that:

“An alarming number of reports of grave violations of children’s rights were documented, including killing and maiming, child recruitment, sexual violence and occupation of schools.” (United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (15 February 2013) *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, p.11)*

This document also notes:

“Child recruitment by armed groups also increased dramatically...Of particular concern are ongoing reports of child recruitment by M23 in both Rwandan and Congolese territory.” (ibid, p.12)

In April 2013 a report commenting on events of 2012 by the *United Kingdom: Foreign and Commonwealth Office* points out that:

“The recruitment and use of child soldiers by illegal militia groups and the presence of child soldiers in the Congolese army remains a problem.” (United Kingdom: Foreign and Commonwealth Office (15 April 2013) *Human Rights and Democracy: The 2012 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report - Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)*)

## References

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information

currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

### **Sources Consulted**

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