

Hope for World Peace

“Peace is the only battle worth waging.”

--*Albert Camus (1913-1960)*

Every year more than 1.6 million people worldwide lose their lives to violence.¹ While there are a number of global organizations working to stop acts of violence around the world, more progress needs to be made. It is surprising that, with 16 peacekeeping operations worldwide and more than 90,000 personnel in service, the U.N. spends approximately \$5 billion per year on peacekeeping, which represents less than 0.5 percent spent on global military.²

As the international community continues to push for world peace, the various causes of violence must be addressed and improved. In order to develop and implement the right solutions to combat brutality, one must fully understand the roots of violence and the people inflicting such harmful actions.

Gang Violence

Gang violence is a virus that has pledged nations around the world since the 1800s. The lack of international and national definitions of gangs and gang-related crime have made it difficult for law enforcement and political establishments to combat. Merriam-Webster defines a gang as “a group of persons working together; a group of persons working to unlawful or antisocial ends; *especially*: a band of antisocial adolescents.”³ It is also important to note that gangs can form in cities, suburbs and townships among youth as well as adults. While one could elaborate on the various locations where gang violence has flourished, the areas where such acts have presented the most imminent threats in recent years are in the U.S. and Central America.

America’s first criminal gangs can be traced back to 18th century colonial capitalism. During this time the number of orphan children in the U.S. grew immensely. In an *Associated Content* article, Mark Rathbun suggests that the young orphan population grew as a result of America’s immigrant population. Rathbun’s article, “Gangs—an American Tradition,” suggests that immigrants came to the country hoping to find work, but instead were left unemployed, on the streets, and with no means to care for babies. He states that while orphanages tried to quell and comfort the emerging immigrant American youngsters, the youths, as a natural reaction to such conditions, banded together with others of their origin to steal and ended up resorting to violence to survive.⁴ These gangs are migrating and expanding their jurisdictions throughout the country. Identification and differentiation of these gangs pose new obstacles for law enforcement, especially in rural communities.”⁵ Another American gang known for its violent tactics are outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMGs).

¹ “World report on Violence and Health” [World Health Organization](#), 2002

² [“Fact Sheet,”](#) International Day of Peace, 2006

³ Source: Merriam-Webster, [“Gang,”](#) 2 July, 2008

⁴ [“Gangs - an American Tradition,”](#) [Associated Content](#), Mark Rathbun, 13 September, 2007

⁵ National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations [“2005 National Gang Threat Assessments,”](#) 2005, 10 July, 2008

The 2005 Assessment notes, “OMGs are expanding their territory and forming new clubs. This is reflected in increased violence among OMGs as they battle over territories.”⁶

In the 1980s one of the most dominant gangs in history formed in Los Angeles’ Central American immigrant communities—*Mara Salvatrucha*, or MS-13. MS-13 grew out of a posse of street-tough Salvadorans (*Salvatruchas*) who came to Southern California in the 1980s in the wake of the war in El Salvador. With each new wave of vulnerable immigrants from Central America, MS-13 grew in strength and breadth, forming a loose cohort of semiautonomous subsidiary gangs across the United States and Central America.⁷ Due to tightening U.S. deportation policies, among other reasons, many Salvadorans and other Central Americans who immigrated to Los Angeles in the ‘80s began to return to their countries of origin in the 1990s.⁸

According to government officials in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras (three out of the four Central American countries where members of MS-13 are known to reside), gang violence has become the No. 1 threat for their citizens. “As recorded by the Institute of Legal Medicine, the average annual number of murders per 100,000 in El Salvador is 55.5, followed by 46.2 in Honduras and 37.5 in Guatemala.”⁹ While these numbers may not appear alarming at first, it’s important to note that the comparative annual murder rate in the U.S. is approximately 5.7 per 100,000.¹⁰

What Progress Has Been Made?

To help dissolve violent gangs in the U.S. and Central America, the U.S. government has been forming multi-agency task forces and joint community groups, which have shown to be an effective way to combat gangs.¹¹

In December 2004, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) created a special task force focused on containing the MS-13. Again, in February 2005, the FBI formed a liaison office in San Salvador to coordinate regional information sharing and anti-gang efforts. At this time, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) started Operation Community Shield, an anti-gang initiative that used the agency’s immigration and customs’ personnel in an attempt to dismantle and prosecute violent organizations.¹² For example, the gang task force in Los Angeles investigated and indicted three alleged MS-13 leaders on federal drug distribution charges in 2005. Those local arrests were the catalyst for an international gang sweep where more than 650 gang members were arrested in 12 states as well as El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico.¹³

⁶ National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations

⁷ “[The List: The World’s Most Dangerous Gangs](#),” *Foreign Policy* May 2008, 10 July, 2008

⁸ “Youth Gangs in Central America,” *Differing Perspectives on Gangs*, Washington Office on Latin America Special Report, Nov. 2006, 8 July, 2008

⁹ Christopher A. Araujo, “[Central America’s Increasing Gang Problem: A Comforting Handshake Needed as Much as a Tough Fist to Fight Crime Epidemic](#),” Council on Hemispheric Affairs, 31 July, 2007, 10 July 2007

¹⁰ Araujo

¹¹ 2005 National Gang Threat Assessments

¹² Araujo

¹³ Mueller

Furthermore, in early February 2007, U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales announced that the state department would fund a new transnational anti-gang unit for Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Belize that would be established to help combat gang violence in Central America. Up until the Attorney General's announcement, gangs were mostly tackled on a country-by-country basis.¹⁴ The formation of this transnational unit was a critical development for global anti-gang violence efforts.

Future Outlook

A July 2008 article in the *Washington Times* suggests that while gang-related violence in the U.S. has been wavering since its rise in the early 1900s, federal figures show that numbers are rising again. Kevin Carwile, chief of the U.S. Justice Department's Gang Squad, states, "The rates of gang violence have risen as federal resources have been moved to fight the war on terrorism."¹⁵ In a February 2007 interview with the *BBC*, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa also noted that gang-related crime had increased in Los Angeles despite a drop in overall crime rates in recent years.

When discussing the future outlook for ending gang violence in South America, Council on Hemispheric Affairs' researcher Christopher A. Araujo stated, "Central American governments need to take a more sustainable approach, focusing less exclusively on judicial reforms since this strategy has proven to be grossly unsuccessful. Since El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras seem to follow similar anti-gang policies—all ineffective—they would do well to look elsewhere for a better strategy." While the U.S.' involvement in Central America's anti-gang strategies has been somewhat effective, the threat of gang violence still exists and is far from being dissolved.

Children of War

Children as young as six years old across Asia, Africa and Latin America are carrying AK-47s instead of books and toys.¹⁶ According to the U.N. Children's Fund, there are roughly 300,000 children soldiers under the age of 18 participating in 30 armed conflicts worldwide.¹⁷ This means that one out of every 10 soldiers worldwide is a child. The majority of the children who fight in armies or guerrilla forces do not do so by choice. "They fight because they have no choice," Larry Cox, executive director of Amnesty International told *ABC News* during an interview. In his interview, Cox noted that children of war go through intensive soldier training camps where they are "drugged and forced to perform horrendous acts... killing people they know, sometimes even their own parents."¹⁸ Not only are these children suffering mentally and physically when they are unwillingly pushed into brutal war zones; in many instances, they are sacrificing their lives for wars they can barely comprehend.

¹⁴ "[Plea for Gang Violence Crackdown.](#)" *BBC News* 8 Feb. 2007, 7 July 2008.

¹⁵ Jennifer Haberkorn, "[Agencies Join Forces to Tackle Violent Gangs.](#)" *Washington Times*, 8 July, 2008, national ed.

¹⁶ Richardson & Setrakian

¹⁷ Thalif Deen, "[War-Affected Youth Subject Of Major Global Conference.](#)" The United Nations Children's Fund, 1WorldCommunication.org

¹⁸ Jerika Richardson and Laura Setrakian, "Exclusive: Child Soldiers Recall Learning Lessons of War in the Classroom" *ABC News, Law & Justice Unit* 7 Dec., 2006, 8 July, 2008.

In a U.N.-commissioned report, “Impact of Armed Conflict on Children,” Graça Machel, former expert of the Secretary-General of the U.N., explained that there are a number of reasons why children are being recruited to fight in wars. She notes, “Some are conscripted, others are press-ganged or kidnapped, and still others are forced to join armed groups to defend their families. In many instances, recruits are arbitrarily seized from the streets, or even from schools and orphanages, when armed militia, police or army cadres roam the streets, picking up anyone they encounter.”¹⁹ Machel’s report also blames hunger and poverty for driving many desperate parents to send their children for service in exchange for pay.

Current Situation

While the international community has taken steps to prohibit involving children in war and armed conflicts, the problem is far from being eradicated. In May 2000 the General Assembly of the U.N. adopted the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child regarding the involvement of children in armed conflict (or ‘child soldiers’ treaty’), which came into force in February 2002. Although 111 countries have signed the ‘child soldiers’ treaty’ recognizing that forcibly recruiting children into war is wrong, only 46 countries have made a binding legal commitment to enforce the Protocol. Sadly, there are a number of recent examples worldwide where children have been recruited and sold into war.

According to “Child Soldiers, Global Report 2008,” governments that used child soldiers in armed conflict between April 2004 and October 2007 include:

- Chad
- Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)
- Israel
- Myanmar
- Somalia
- Sudan & Southern Sudan
- Uganda
- Yemen
- Additionally, the United Kingdom deployed soldiers under the age of 18 to Iraq

What Can be Done to Solve This Problem?

In Dr. Victoria Forbes Adam’s *Acknowledgements* in the “Child Soldiers, Global Report 2008,” which tracks the global efforts that have been made between April 2004 and October 2007 to prevent and eradicate the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, she admits that completely eradicating this practice will not be easy. However, based on the recent efforts and progress made from the international community, Adam is hopeful that the momentum will continue. She notes the developments that she finds to be the most promising. “The Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict has been ratified by 120 states; special war crime tribunals and the International Criminal Courts (ICC) are becoming a more important means for bringing the perpetrators

¹⁹ Graça Machel “[Impact of Armed Conflict on Children](#)” Special Concerns, *CHILD SOLDIERS: AN AFFRONT TO HUMANITY*, 1996

of crimes against children to justice.” Other efforts made by the Security Council and the U.N. to monitor and eliminate the use of children in war are also indicators that action is being taken. In February 2007, the Paris Principles and Guidelines on children associated with armed forces and armed groups was formally adopted by 58 countries that “pledged to work for the release of all child soldiers from fighting forces, and to support programs which genuinely address the complex needs of returning child soldiers.”²⁰ As of October 2007, the Guidelines have been endorsed by an additional eight governments.

In addition to the growing support from these governments and the U.N.’s initiatives, several armed groups (Côte d’Ivoire, Sri Lanka and Myanmar) have committed themselves to ending the recruitment and use of children.” The U.N. is working with these armed groups to develop and implement time-bound action plans to release children and prevent their recruitment.²¹

Genocide

Genocides and other mass murders have killed more people in the 20th Century than all the period’s wars combined.²² However, the term genocide was first used in 1944 by Polish-Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin, who was looking for a word to describe the Nazi’s policies of systematic murder. “He formed the word ‘genocide’ by combining *geno-*, from the Greek word for race or tribe, with *-cide*, from the Latin word for killing.”²³ In 1945, when the International Military Tribunal charged top Nazi leaders with “crimes against humanity,” the word “genocide” was used in the indictment to describe their offenses. The term was first used in a legal sense in December 1948 when the U.N. approved the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which defined genocide as:²⁴

[A]ny of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) killing members of the group;
- (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

While there have been many occurrences of genocide recognized globally, Darfur has been among the world’s most devastating and hotly debated. One side of the armed conflict in Sudan’s Western region is comprised of the Sudanese military and the Janjaweed, a militia group. The opposition consists of a variety of rebel groups, notably the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). The conflict between the military militia and the rebel groups are rooted in ethnic and tribal differences. The rebellion

²⁰ [“Child Solider Global Report 2008”](#) Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008, P9, 9 July, 2008.

²¹ [Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers](#), P14.

²² “The International Campaign to End Genocide” Genocidewatch.org, accessed on 8 July, 2008

²³ [“What is Genocide?”](#) United States Holocaust Memorial Museum 20 May, 2008, 10 July, 2008.

²⁴

started in 2003 against the Arab-dominated Sudanese government, in which it was accused of oppressing non-Arabs and neglecting the Darfur region of Sudan. In response, the government mounted an aerial campaign in Darfur, supported by Janjaweed-led ground attacks targeting the SLM and JEM groups, among others. Since early 2003, genocide in Darfur has claimed 400,000 lives and displaced more than 2.5 million people. More than 100 people die each day; 5,000 die every month.²⁵

On July 14, 2008, prosecutors at the ICC filed 10 charges of war crimes against Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir: three counts of genocide, five of crimes against humanity and two of murder. The ICC's prosecutors claimed that al-Bashir "masterminded and implemented a plan to destroy a substantial part" of three tribal groups in Darfur based on their ethnicity.²⁶

How to End Genocide

There has yet to be a clear, proven and agreed upon solution to end genocide. When speaking about how to end the crisis in Darfur, Dirk Moses of the Social Science Research Council, says, "Darfur will end when it suits the great powers that have a stake in the region."

The International Campaign to End Genocide provides the following four goals which, if met, will end genocide:²⁷

1. The provision of public information on the nature of genocide and creation of the political will to prevent and end it.
2. The creation of an effective early-warning system to alert the world and especially the U.N. Security Council, NATO and other regional alliances to potential ethnic conflict and genocide.
3. The establishment of a powerful United Nations rapid response force in accordance with Articles 43-47 of the U.N. Charter, as well as regional rapid response forces, and international police ready to be sent to areas where genocide threatens or has begun.
4. Effective arrest, trial, and punishment of those who commit genocide, including the early and effective functioning of the ICC, the use of national courts with universal jurisdiction, and the creation of special international tribunals to prosecute perpetrators of genocide.

Ethnic Cleansing

The term ethnic cleansing is a literal translation of the Serbo-Croatian phrase *etničko ciscenje*. It was widely employed in the 1990s (though the term first appeared earlier) to describe the brutal treatment of various civilian groups in the conflicts that erupted upon the disintegration of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

While the term is not formerly defined under international law, the official U.N. definition of ethnic cleansing is "rendering an area ethnically homogeneous by using force or intimidation to remove from a given area persons of another

²⁵ "[Genocide in Darfur, Sudan](#)" DarfurSources.org, accessed on 8 July, 2008

²⁶ Peter Walker, "[Darfur Genocide Charges for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir](#)". [The Guardian](#) 14 July, 2008, United Kingdom

²⁷ "[International Campaign to End Genocide](#)," Genocide Watch

ethnic or religious group.”²⁸ The terms “ethnic cleansing” and “genocide” are often confused and wrongly interchanged; however, the terms can be distinguished by the intent of the perpetrator. “Whereas the primary goal of genocide is the destruction of an ethnic, racial, or religious group, the main purpose of ethnic cleansing is the establishment of ethnically homogeneous lands, which may be achieved by any of a number of methods including genocide.”²⁹

An example of when ethnic cleansing was used (as opposed to genocide) was seen in late 2007 in Kenya. A massive crisis erupted in Kenya after incumbent President Mwai Kibaki was declared the winner of the presidential election held on December 27, 2007. Supporters of Kibaki's opponent, Raila Odinga of the Orange Democratic Movement, alleged electoral manipulation and protested the election results. The dispute led to targeted ethnic violence in Kenya's Rift Valley between those who supported Kibaki, the Kikuyus group, and those who supported Odinga, the Kalenjin group. According to a *BBC* report, “more than 600 people died in unrest since [December 27, 2007], and another quarter of a million have been driven from their homes.”³⁰ Historically, the Rift Valley was home to ethnic groups that long felt that other groups do not belong. A top American diplomat for Africa said that the recent violence that swept across Kenya in early 2008 was ethnic cleansing intended to drive people from their homes, and emphasized that the crisis should not be considered genocide.³¹

Solutions to Ending Ethnic Cleansing

Ethnic cleansing is very similar to genocide, in that there is no single solution to combating such hostilities. Progress has been made on a case-by-case basis, but there are still millions of ethnic groups being displaced around the world.

One example of combating ethnic cleansing has, in fact, occurred in Kenya. According to a February 29, 2008, *BBC* report, “Kenya's President Mwai Kibaki and opposition leader Raila Odinga signed a power-sharing agreement,” in which they conceded to create a prime minister post.

Former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan mediated the negotiations in what came to be the National Accord and Reconciliation Act. According to the *BBC*, the key points of the Act were as follows:

- The post of prime minister will be created, with the holder having the authority to co-ordinate and supervise the execution of government functions
- The prime minister will be an elected member of parliament and the parliamentary leader of the largest party in the National Assembly, or of a coalition if the largest party does not command a majority in parliament

²⁸ Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992), 27 May 1994, “[Ethnic Cleansing](#)” section III.B

²⁹ “[What is the Difference Between Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing?](#)” SudanWatch.org (blog) 8 April, 2006, 10 July, 2008

³⁰ “Odinga Denies 'Ethnic Cleansing'” *BBC News* 16 January, 2008, 10 July, 2008

³¹ Jeffrey Gettleman, “[Official Sees Kenyan Ethnic Cleansing](#)” *New York Times*

- Two deputy prime ministers to be appointed, one to be nominated by each member of the coalition
- The prime minister and deputy prime ministers can only be removed if the National Assembly passes a motion of no-confidence with a majority vote
- A cabinet to consist of a president, vice-president, prime minister, two deputy prime ministers and other ministers
- The removal of a minister of the coalition will be subject to consultation and agreement in writing by the leaders
- The composition of the coalition government will at all times take into account the principle of portfolio balance, and reflect the parties' relative parliamentary strengths
- The coalition will be dissolved if the current parliament is dissolved; or if the parties agree in writing; or if one coalition partner withdraws from the coalition

It is clear that there is no mathematical equation or scientific solution to stop gang violence, eradicate children from war and armed conflicts, or eliminate occurrences of genocide and ethnic cleansing. However, every contribution—whether it's on a local, national or global scale—can truly make a difference.

Project 7

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