



Submission by Human Rights Watch to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on Guinea

76th plenary session, September 2017

This submission relates to the review of Guinea under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. It focuses on the issue of the protection of students, teachers, schools, and universities in situations of armed conflict.

As of May 2017, Guinea was contributing 850 troops and 11 staff officers to United Nations peacekeeping operations around the world. Such troops are required to comply with the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations' United Nations Infantry Battalion Manual (2012), which includes the provision that "schools shall not be used by the military in their operations."

Moreover, the new 2017 Child Protection Policy of the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Department of Field Support, and Department of Political Affairs notes:

United Nations peace operations should refrain from all actions that impede children's access to education, including the use of school premises. This applies particularly to uniformed personnel. Furthermore, recognizing the adverse impact of the use of schools for military purposes, in particular its effects on the safety of children and education personnel, the civilian nature of schools, and the right to education, United Nations peace operations personnel shall at no time and for no amount of time use schools for military purposes...

In June 2015, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2225 (2015) on children and armed conflict, which:

Expresses deep concern that the military use of schools in contravention of applicable international law may render schools legitimate targets of attack, thus endangering the safety of children and in this regard encourages Member States to take concrete measures to deter such use of schools by armed forces and armed groups.

Human Rights Watch believes that an example of such a concrete measure to deter the military use of schools would be for Guinea to endorse and implement the Safe Schools Declaration.¹ The Safe

¹ Safe Schools Declaration, May 28, 2015, https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/departementene/ud/vedlegg/utvikling/safe_schools_declaration.pdf (accessed October 19, 2016).

Schools Declaration is a political commitment to better protect students, educational staff, schools, and universities during armed conflict. It was drafted through a consultative process led by Norway and Argentina in 2015. The Declaration includes a commitment to use the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict.²

As of June 2017, 66 countries—representing more than one third of all UN member states—have already endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration, including 18 of Guinea’s fellow African Union member states. Indeed, in August 2016, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union “encouraged all Member States that have not yet done so, to sign the Safe Schools’ Declaration.”

Human Rights Watch recommends that the Committee:

- Ask whether protections for schools from military use are included in any policies, rules, or pre-deployment trainings for Guinea’s armed forces.
- Recommend that the government of Guinea endorse and implement the Safe Schools Declaration.

² Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*, March 18, 2014, http://protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/guidelines_en.pdf (accessed October 19, 2016).