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# Red Hand Day: ICRC calls for end to recruitment of child soldiers

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*Geneva (ICRC) – Marking Red Hand Day, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has appealed for an end to the use of children as soldiers and for other tasks in armies.*

The Red Hand symbol is used all over the world by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers and a range of other organizations in order to raise awareness of the problem.

More than 250,000 children – some as young as seven – were recruited in 2006, according to the United Nations children's agency UNICEF.

Governments from some 60 nations met in Paris last week to pledge more action to prevent children from being used as fighters and more action to help young combatants resume a normal life.

The participants made the so-called Paris Commitments, which include raising the minimum recruitment age to 18.

The ICRC contributed extensively to the drafting of the commitments.

"The ICRC's activities in this area are essentially twofold.

We help develop international rules and standards, focusing both on prevention and on the reintegration of young combatants," said Alain Aeschlimann, head of the organization's protection unit.

"And more broadly we try to ensure that children in war have adequate access to medical care, food and water.

Where desirable and possible, we reunite them with their families." Between 2005 and 2006, the ICRC brought some 4,000 children together with their families in conflict-affected countries around the world such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and Nepal.

More than 800 of these children had formerly been associated with their country's armed forces or other armed groups.

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