

Statement of

# **The Honorable Sam Brownback**

United States Senator  
Kansas  
April 24, 2007

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"Casualties of War: Child Soldiers and the Law"  
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Mr. Chairman, thank you for calling this hearing on the issue of child soldiers. This week, the Child Soldiers Prevention Act was introduced to end the use of child soldiers around the world by encouraging governments to disarm, demobilize, and rehabilitate child soldiers from government forces and government-supported paramilitaries.

Under international law, the recruitment and use of children under the age of 18 is prohibited. However, an estimated 250,000 children are exploited each day in state-run armies, paramilitaries and guerilla groups in over 20 countries around the world, of which the following eight receive U.S. military funding: Burundi, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Paraguay, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda. The health and lives of these vulnerable children, some as young as 8 years old, are subjected to extreme brutality as they are abducted, manipulated and forced to commit some of the most atrocious acts of violence.

Children are particularly vulnerable to recruitment if they have been separated from their families, displaced from their homes, and have limited access to education. Many of these boys and girls are manipulated into becoming child soldiers, because they believe it is the only way out of the intense poverty they face. Once recruited, child soldiers serve as combatants, porters, human mine detectors, and sex slaves.

The Child Soldiers Prevention Act would curtail U.S. military assistance to governments that fail to take concrete steps to end and involvement in the recruitment or use of child soldiers. Countries that take part in ending this practice and demobilize children from their forces would be eligible for assistance of their forces for up to two years before any prohibition would be imposed.

The depressing facts about the plight of children used as soldiers and sex slaves underscore the need for more hearings like this one, and again I commend Chairman Durbin for convening this hearing. The U.S. and the international community should use its global stop the atrocities against children who have suffered the cruel and awful fate of being forced to kill others or be killed themselves.

I proudly join Chairman Durbin and others in standing up for the human dignity of suffering children trapped in unconscionable circumstances who are unable to stand up for themselves. I truly believe that America is great because America is good. One way that we can ensure our

country's greatness for generations to come is standing up for children who are exploited around the world.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.