
Amnesty International

MONTHLY ACTION

ACTIVISM TEAM, Amnesty International UK
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November 2014

25 YEARS OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Call on the USA to ratify the Convention

This month marks 25 years since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 20th November 1989, and entered into force on 2nd September 1990. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was the first treaty that sought to address the particular needs of children and provide a minimum standard of protection for children's rights.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the world's most widely accepted human rights treaty, having been ratified by almost every member state of the United Nations. However, despite having signed the Convention in 1995, the USA has still not ratified it.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

Action 1 - WRITE TO the US Ambassador in London

Please write to the US ambassador at the address below, using the sample letter below;

Ambassador Matthew W. Barzun
24 Grosvenor Square
London, W1K 6AH
United Kingdom

Dear Ambassador,

*On the 25th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child I/we believe it is unacceptable that the US government has yet to protect these vital rights. **Almost every country in the world has ratified this treaty. The USA has yet to join them.** I urge the USA to finally commit to the protection of one of the most vulnerable groups and to ratify the Convention of the Rights of the Child.*

Yours Sincerely,

Action 2 – Petition

Please collect signatures for a petition (a copy is enclosed) calling on the USA to finally commit to protecting the rights of children by ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Please send the completed petition to the above address by 31 Dec 2014.

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Background Information

CALL ON THE USA TO RATIFY THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises the particular needs of children, with 41 of its 54 articles directly relating to the rights provided by the Convention. These include children's rights to education, play, culture and identity, as well as protection from economic, social and sexual exploitation.

The Convention also requires states to give primary consideration to the child's best interests when making decisions which affect them, and makes clear a child's right to be heard in relation to such decisions.

The implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is supervised by the Committee for the Rights of the Child, which was established by the Convention. The states that have ratified the Convention submit periodic reports on the national situation of children's rights to the Committee, which examines each report and can make recommendations to the State.

There are three further optional protocols to the Convention, which can be ratified separately from the Convention. The first bans children from the military, particularly from being conscripted. The second bans the sale of children, child pornography, and bans children from working as prostitutes. Both of these protocols were adopted on 25 May 2000. More recently the third optional protocol, adopted in 2011, allows children or their representatives to file complaints directly with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Ratification of an international treaty is where a state commits itself to being bound by the treaty and to implementing measures to ensure it complies with the provisions of the treaty. The practice of legislative approval of treaties before ratification varies from country to country. In most countries, the constitution requires treaties to be approved by the legislature before they can formally enter into force and bind the country in question.

The USA was heavily involved in the original drafting of the text of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and signed it in 1995. Subsequently it has both signed and ratified the first two optional protocols - on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. However, the USA has still not ratified the Convention itself.

To be ratified in the USA the Convention must be submitted to the Senate for advice and consent. It must be approved by a two thirds majority, before going back to the President, who could then ratify it.

CONTENTS

- The guidance sheet
- Background information
- Sample letter

GOT QUERIES OR WANT TO DO MORE?

If you have any queries about this action please contact childrensnetwork@amnesty.org.uk

Local group's monthly mailing can be downloaded from: www.amnesty.org.uk/groups