



USA: Ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child!



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We hope you will feel inspired to take action on all of our campaigns but remind you that all actions are optional.

This mailing is also available to download at

www.amnesty.org.uk/youth

IN BRIEF:

Last November marked the 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the first treaty to address the particular needs of children. It is the world's most widely accepted human rights treaty and nearly every member of the United Nations has ratified it. However, despite having signed the Convention in 1995 the USA has still not ratified it.

We are asking you to:

- Get as many people as possible to sign a petition calling on the USA to ratify the Convention
- Come up with a visual way to symbolise the articles in the CRC.
- Write a letter to the US Ambassador in London

What is the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was introduced to protect the rights of children in all countries. These rights include a child's rights to education, play, culture and identity, as well as protection from economic, social and sexual exploitation.

There are 54 articles of the CRC and they are guided by four key principles.

- **Non-Discrimination:** Children should neither benefit nor suffer because of their race, ethnicity, gender, the language they speak, religion, political opinion, or disability.
- **The best interest of the child:** All laws and actions to do involving children must be in their best interest and should benefit them in the best possible way
- **Survival, development and protection:** Children must be protected to ensure their full development – physically, spiritually, morally and socially
- **Participation:** Children have the right to discuss decisions that affect them and have their opinions taken into account.

Get to know the CRC!

- Hand out copies of the CRC (you'll find a simplified version attached).
- In groups, see if you can decide which articles of the convention fall under each of the key principles. Compare answers and see what you came up with.

There have been three additions to the CRC which are optional and can be ratified* separately. These 'optional protocols' are:

1. A ban on children working in the military (introduced in 2000)
2. A ban on the sale of children, child pornography and the child prostitution (introduced in 2000)
3. The right for children or their representatives to file complaints directly to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (introduced in 2011).

Why is there a convention just for children?

This convention was created because people under the age of 18 need special care and protection which adults do not necessarily need. All governments are responsible for the safety of children and making sure that all everyone knows and understand this convention.

***What exactly is 'ratification'?**

Ratification is the formal process of accepting a treaty and adding it to a country's laws. By ratifying a treaty, a country is also committing itself to implementing all aspects of the treaty, and making sure it does not conflict with other laws which already exist. A country can therefore *sign* a convention indicating that it generally agrees with its principles. However, until the country actually *ratifies* it, it hasn't yet committed to carrying out what the treaty asks.

Did you know?

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most widely and rapidly ratified human rights treaty in history.

The case of the USA

The USA played a large role in in drafting the CRC and in 1995, signed the treaty to show that they agreed with it. The USA also ratified the first two optional protocols to the CRC mentioned above. South Sudan and Somalia haven't technically ratified the treaty either but we have reasons to believe they may do so soon in which case the USA will be the only country in the world not to have ratified the CRC.

TAKE ACTION 1 – Petition

You can take action by getting as many people as you can to sign the attached petition. We are hoping to hand in the petitions to the US Embassy in London. Let's see if we can beat the 3,000 we got from youth groups last year for the Women in Afghanistan campaign!

DEADLINE: 13th March 2015

TAKE ACTION 2 – Creative action

Can you think of any visual ways to illustrate any of the articles in the CRC? Or a creative way to get your message across to the US authorities? We would like to hand in the petitions with something visual and creative.

For inspiration have a look at what students from Tadcaster Grammar School group in Yorkshire came up with during a recent visit to our office. Please send in photos of what you come up with (or the actual thing if it's not too big!) to:

Anne Montague, Community Organiser (Youth), Amnesty International UK, 17-25 New Inn Yard, EC2A 3EA.

DEADLINE: 13th March 2015



TAKE ACTION 3: Write to the US Ambassador in the UK

If you have time please also write to the US ambassador. Here's an example of the kind of wording to use (although it's best to write in your own words if possible).

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 other country of 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 on the Rights of the Child.

Yours Sincerely,

Find out more

Children and Human Rights:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/children>

The Convention on the Rights of the Child

<http://www.unicef.org/crc/>

<http://www.crae.org.uk/childrens-rights-the-law/laws-protecting-childrens-rights/un-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child/>

<http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/child-rights/un-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child>



UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

(from www.unicef.org/rightsite/files/uncrcchildfriendlylanguage.pdf)

Article 1

Everyone under 18 has these rights.

Article 2

All children have these rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion is, whether they are a boy or girl, what their culture is, whether they have a disability, whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.

Article 3

All adults should do what is best for you. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children.

Article 4

The government has a responsibility to make sure your rights are protected. They must help your family to protect your rights and create an environment where you can grow and reach your potential.

Article 5

Your family has the responsibility to help you learn to exercise your rights, and to ensure that your rights are protected.

Article 6

You have the right to be alive.

Article 7

You have the right to a name, and this should be officially recognized by the government. You have the right to a nationality (to belong to a country).

Article 8

You have the right to an identity – an official record of who you are. No one should take this away from you.

Article 9

You have the right to live with your parent(s), unless it is bad for you. You have the right to live with a family who cares for you.

Article 10

If you live in a different country than your parents do, you have the right to be together in the same place.

Article 11

You have the right to be protected from kidnapping.

Article 12

You have the right to give your opinion, and for adults to listen and take it seriously.

Article 13

You have the right to find out things and share what you think with others, by talking, drawing, writing or in any other way unless it harms or offends other people.

Article 14

You have the right to choose your own religion and beliefs. Your parents should help you decide what is right and wrong, and what is best for you.

Article 15

You have the right to choose your own friends and join or set up groups, as long as it isn't harmful to others.

Article 16

You have the right to privacy.

Article 17

You have the right to get information that is important to your well-being, from radio, newspaper, books, computers and other sources. Adults should make sure that the information you are getting is not harmful, and help you find and understand the information you need.

Article 18

You have the right to be raised by your parent(s) if possible.

Article 19

You have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, in body or mind.

Article 20

You have the right to special care and help if you cannot live with your parents.

Article 21

You have the right to care and protection if you are adopted or in foster care.

Article 22

You have the right to special protection and help if you are a refugee (if you have been forced to leave your home and live in another country), as well as all the rights in this Convention.

Article 23

You have the right to special education and care if you have a disability, as well as all the rights in this Convention, so that you can live a full life.

Article 24

You have the right to the best health care possible, safe water to drink, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and information to help you stay well.

Article 25

If you live in care or in other situations away from home, you have the right to have these living arrangements looked at regularly to see if they are the most appropriate.

Article 26

You have the right to help from the government if you are poor or in need.

Article 27

You have the right to food, clothing, a safe place to live and to have your basic needs met. You should not be disadvantaged so that you can't do many of the things other kids can do.

Article 28

You have the right to a good quality education. You should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level you can.

Article 29

Your education should help you use and develop your talents and abilities. It should also help you learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people.

Article 30

You have the right to practice your own culture, language and religion - or any you choose. Minority and indigenous groups need special protection of this right.

Article 31

You have the right to play and rest.

Article 32

You have the right to protection from work that harms you, and is bad for your health and education. If you work, you have the right to be safe and paid fairly.

Article 33

You have the right to protection from harmful drugs and from the drug trade.

Article 34

You have the right to be free from sexual abuse.

Article 35 No one is allowed to kidnap or sell you.

Article 36

You have the right to protection from any kind of exploitation (being taken advantage of).

Article 37

No one is allowed to punish you in a cruel or harmful way.

Article 38

You have the right to protection and freedom from war. Children under 15 cannot be forced to go into the army or take part in war.

Article 39

You have the right to help if you've been hurt, neglected or badly treated.

Article 40

You have the right to legal help and fair treatment in the justice system that respects your rights.

Article 41

If the laws of your country provide better protection of your rights than the articles in this Convention, those laws should apply.

Article 42

You have the right to know your rights! Adults should know about these rights and help you learn about them, too.

Articles 43 to 54

These articles explain how governments and international organizations like UNICEF will work to ensure children are protected with their rights.

USA: Protect Children's Rights

Ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child



On the 25th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 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. We, the undersigned, urge the USA to finally commit to protecting one of the most vulnerable groups in the world, and to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Name	School Address	School Postcode	Signature

Please send completed petitions to: Anne Montague, Amnesty International UK, The Human Rights Action Centre, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA.
Please return by 13 March 2015