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EU Policy on Child Soldiers in Yemen: Child Rights, Regional Stability and Humanitarian Challenges

Role: EU Policy Analyst

Audience: European External Action Service (EEAS) / Members of the European Parliment

KEY POINTS

1. Children in Yemen continue to face recruitment by parties to the armed conflict

2. Use of child soldiers threaten regional stability

3. EU aid to serious humanitarian and child protection challenges in Yemen

Summary

The ongoing armed conflict in Yemen has exposed children to serious violations of their rights including recruitment and use by parties to the conflict. This policy brief aims to look at the problems associated with child soldiers in Yemen and the role of the European Union about protecting children who are affected by the conflict. The main research question is “How can the European Union contribute to preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers in Yemen?”. It argues that greater EU diplomatic involvement together with more support for child protection programmes can serve to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers. According to the United Nations (2026) some 262 children were recruited and used by the Yemen Armed Forces and connected forces and groups.



1- Child Recruitment in Yemen

According to the United Nations (2026) , 262 children were recruited and also used by the Yemen Armed Forces and affiliated forces and groups in 2025 [1]. This issue is directly related to the EU's child protection policy. In its 2022 results on Yemen, the Council of the European Union called on disagreement parties to release recruited children and cooperate with the United Nations and humanitarian organisations to support their reintegration into their communities [2]. This shows that the EU recognises child enlistment as an issue requiring action in Yemen. The EU can build on this position by supporting efforts to protect children and help them return to their civilian life.



2- EU's Role in Regional Stability Threat

The use of child soldiers threatens regional stability by prolonging armed conflicts and undermining peace efforts. In its 2025 conclusions on Yemen,the Council of the European Union expressed concern about the risk of further escalation in Yemen and the wider region [3].Therefore, preventing child recruitment should be the part of the European Union to promote peace and security in Yemen.

3- EU's Humanitarian Role in Yemen

The countinuing conflict in Yemen has creates serious humanitarian problems. According to the European Commission 19.5 million people in Yemen needed humanitarian assistance and almost 2 million children suffered from underfeeding. The EU allocated €120 million for aid to Yemen in 2025 including an additional €40 million announced in September [4]. This funding supports emergency food and healthcare assistance for vulnerable communities

Reccomendations

1- Strenghten Child Protection Actions

The EU should strenghten its support for child protection actions in Yemen like protecting children recruited by armed groups. EU should work with United Nations to ensure these actions reach children. This approach would help keep safe childrens right and support peace and stability in Yemen.

2- Expand Access to Education and Healthcare

The EU should increase its support for education and healthcare services for children affected by this conflict. Improving access to education and healthcare would help to protect children's prosperity and reduce the long term results of the conflict.

FOOTNOTE

1- **United Nations. (2026). Children and armed conflict Report**

https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/report/report-of-the-secretary-general-children-and-armed-conflict/S_2026_357_UNEDITED.pdf

2- **Council of the European Union (12 December 2022) Yemen Council approves conclusions.**

https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/12/12/yemen-council-approves-conclusions/

3- Council of the EU (20 May 2025) Council Conclusions on Yemen

https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8690-2025-INIT/en/pdf?

4- European Commission Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (24 September 2025)

https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/news/eu-increases-aid-yemen-amid-escalating-humanitarian-crisis-2025-09-24_en?utm

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This Policy Brief has been prepared as part of the participants / students' assessment in the framework of the EU Politics lecture.

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