



AMERICA - About 300 000 children recruited for criminal activity in the world

New York City (Agenzia Fides) - Enrolling children in the armed forces is considered an international crime as well as a war crime. However, according to the latest report of the United Nations Fund for Children (UNICEF), currently in the 30 armed conflicts in the world between 250 000 and 300 000 children are involved. The International Criminal Court has not received any complaints of cases of child labor in any of these conflicts. The little ones are used in hazardous activities that see them involved in defusing mines in espionage activities or as suicide bombers, as well as being sexually abused by adults. Most of them are kidnapped in the streets, in the classroom or in refugee camps. There are also cases of children taken by force from their homes without their parents being able to do anything to prevent it. In Africa, in the areas of conflict or political instability, the chances of being recruited by armed groups are higher. Very often the same families hand over their children to the army because they hope to ensure a minimum protection for all its members. Some gangs recruit them in order for them not to enlist with the enemy.

In another study, carried out by the Secretariat of the Security Council of the UN, points out that in 2011, in Afghanistan there were 316 cases of recruitment of children. Most were attributed to armed groups, in particular the Taliban. Last year, 11 children, including a little 8 year old, died due to suicide attacks. Some of them, unaware, wore packages of explosives.

At least 20 complaints were made on the recruitment of Afghan children by armed groups that brought them to Pakistan to train them and bring them back to Afghanistan. In Iraq, it was not possible to quantify the cases, however, 294 children, including an unknown number of Iraqi girls were accused or convicted of acts of terrorism. The Center for the Documentation of Human Rights Violations in Syria reported the deaths of 17 children who were fighting in the rebel ranks of the Free Syrian Army. Yet little has been done to try to limit this phenomenon. In Asia and Africa an action plan has been implemented thanks to which in 2011 11 thousand child soldiers were released. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 10/12/2012)