



AFRICA/R.D. CONGO - Thousands of children kidnapped, raped, murdered, mutilated and exploited in armed conflicts

Goma (Agenzia Fides) - All over the world thousands of children are kidnapped, raped, murdered, mutilated, recruited by armed groups. During the International Day against the use of child soldiers, which has just concluded, it emerged that more than 17 countries recruit children for armed conflicts and, according to various NGOs will continue to do so until serious measures to eradicate the phenomenon and rehabilitate these young victims are not taken. The States, denounced by NGOs are Afghanistan, Chad, Colombia, the Philippines, India, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Pakistan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan Sur, Thailand and Yemen. Mali is the only country that has been added to the list. However, according to some organizations, data on the number of child soldiers in the world continue to be incomplete. According to Amnesty International in January alone armed Islamist groups recruited children between 10 and 17 years of age. The Salesian Missions of Goma, R.D. Congo, home to more than 100 former child soldiers, have denounced the phenomenon also in Mali and Côte d'Ivoire. Every day, thousands of them are involved in armed conflicts, used to commit atrocities, abused, raped or witness killings. Humanitarian organizations that follow the phenomenon refer that it is not always these little victims are directly involved in the fighting but are involved in high-risk operations, such as transporting wounded soldiers or weapons, are spies or messengers, and in the case of girls, they are often exploited as sex slaves. Many countries and armed groups have signed an action plan with the United Nations to combat the phenomenon, thanks to which hundreds of child soldiers have been released and the kidnapers reported. In addition, two cases in 2012 of the International Criminal Court and the Special Court for Sierra Leone declared guilty of war crimes those responsible for the involvement of children in armed conflict. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 14/02/2013)