



# *Peace Movement Aotearoa*

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## **NGO Written Statement for the Committee on the Rights of the Child 93rd Pre-Sessional Working Group: New Zealand**

22 September 2022

Thank you for this opportunity to provide a written statement for the Committee's 93rd Pre-Sessional Working Group.

Due to time constraints, we were not able to include recommendations in our August 2022 Report on New Zealand's compliance with the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention), and have therefore compiled our recommendations into this statement.

As summarised below, our August 2022 Report has six sections on concerning developments which in some instances involve breaches of the provisions of both instruments and, in others, a failure to fully respect the spirit of OPAC and to provide full protection for children in all circumstances.

Section C of our Report provides an outline of some concerns around the New Zealand Defence Force (armed forces) in relation to OPAC, with information about the age of recruitment and recruitment practices (including concerns about safety issues, bullying, sexual harassment and violence), overseas combat operations and child rights, military policy and child rights, and the New Zealand Cadet Forces.

Section D provides information about New Zealand's Budget and spending priorities, and the lack of a Child Rights Impact Assessment on spending proposals. Section E provides information about the increasing level of military involvement in education, and Section F provides information about the increasing level of military involvement in youth development programmes. Section G outlines some concerns about the education curriculum and peace education, and Section H has some brief comments about dissemination and training on OPAC.

Recommendations for each of these Sections are included below, with references to the relevant paragraphs in our August 2022 Report by each heading.

### **C. The New Zealand Defence Force and OPAC**

#### **i) Age of recruitment and recruitment practices (paras 12 - 30)**

*Recommendations:* a) Raise the age of recruitment to 18 years; b) End all recruitment activities aimed at, and around, children and young persons; and c) Ensure all OPAC Article 3.3 obligations are met, whatever the recruitment age.

**ii) Overseas combat operations and child rights** (paras 31 - 41)

*Recommendation:* Ensure child rights are fully respected during combat operations, including any detention of minor civilians or combatants, in keeping with the Convention, OPAC, the Convention Against Torture, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Geneva Conventions, and other relevant international instruments. Particular care must be taken to ensure there are no civilian casualties, including children and young persons.

**iii) Military policy and child rights** (para 42)

*Recommendation:* Ensure all military policy and related documents include references to the Convention and OPAC.

**v) New Zealand Cadet Forces** (paras 43 - 48)

*Recommendation:* Remove the statutory requirements for military or military-style training of children and young persons in the Cadet Forces, and “promotion of an appreciation among members of the Cadet Forces of the functions and operations of the armed forces”, in the Defence Act 1990, sect. 77 (a) and (b).

**D. Public spending priorities and child rights** (paras 49 - 53)

*Recommendations:* a) Ensure a Child Rights Impact Assessment is carried out on all government spending proposals, including military spending; and b) Reduce spending on combat equipment, vessels, vehicles, aircraft and training to increase the resources available for social spending - including the annual amount allocated for the armed forces, currently more than NZ\$6 billion per annum, and the additional NZ\$20 billion allocated for purchasing enhanced combat capabilities over the next decade.

**E. Military involvement in education and firearms in schools** (paras 54 - 63)

*Recommendations:* a) End all military involvement in education; b) Cease taking funding from Vote Education for the army; and c) Establish all schools and wananga as firearms-free zones.

**F. Military involvement in youth development programmes** (paras 64 - 65)

*Recommendation:* End all military involvement in youth development programmes.

**G. Education curriculum and peace education** (paras 66 - 67)

*Recommendations:* Ensure there is a comprehensive programme of Māori language teaching, and a coherent wide-ranging programme of peace and human rights education, in all schools.

**H. Dissemination of, and training on, OPAC** (paras 68 - 69)

*Recommendation:* Ensure there is a thorough programme of public education on OPAC, including educating parliamentarians and government officials on their obligations with regard to both the Convention and OPAC.

Thank you for your attention to our comments.