

Amnesty International

Unaccompanied minors



Speech on Child Abuse

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

Today, I stand before you to talk about a plague that affects our societies—a silent plague, hidden under the veil of indifference and often ignored until it becomes impossible to turn a blind eye to its reality. This plague is child abuse.

We live in a world where children should symbolize joy, innocence, and hope. They are the little hands that will shape the future, the curious eyes that explore a world full of possibilities. Yet every day, behind these smiles, thousands of children suffer from physical, psychological, sexual violence, and neglect.

These children, who have done nothing wrong but to be vulnerable, are beaten, humiliated, deprived of care and affection. Their dreams are shattered before they have even had the chance to flourish. The impact of these abuses goes far beyond childhood. Early violence leaves deep, invisible scars, scars that are indelible. These scars can mark an entire life, causing trauma that is passed down from generation to generation.

Think about these children who have no one to turn to. Think of those who are abandoned, not only by their parents but by society, those whose cries of suffering are unheard. Too often, these children are invisible to our eyes, and we do not want to see. Turning a blind eye only allows their suffering to continue—it condemns them to a life marked by pain.

How can we, as a society, accept this? How can we close our eyes to what happens right next to us, behind closed doors, in homes that should be sanctuaries, not prisons?

Child abuse is everyone's problem, a problem we must face together. Each of us has a role to play. A kind glance, a listening ear, a gentle word can sometimes be enough to save a child. It is not just about denouncing acts of violence, but about prevention, education, and awareness. Every child deserves to grow up in a safe, healthy, and loving environment.

It is imperative that we, as a community, become the protectors of those who cannot defend themselves. It is up to us to break the silence, to support victims, and to denounce acts of abuse. We must support parents in their educational role, but also intervene when children are in danger. We have a responsibility to act, not to let these children suffer alone in silence.

If you witness abuse, do not turn a blind eye. Speak up. Let the truth be heard. A simple action, a phone call, can change everything. It is our moral and ethical duty to protect the most vulnerable. Children should not be seen as powerless victims. They have the right to dignity, love, and the attention they deserve. And it is up to us to ensure this.

For every child who suffers, we have the chance to act. For every stolen smile, we have the duty to fight. If today, we choose not to be passive in the face of the suffering of our children, we will contribute to building a future where every child can thrive, in safety and love.

It is together, united, that we must change the reality for these children. Do not close your eyes. Do not be complicit in the silence.

Thank You.

CHILDREN IN GAZA

ARE SUFFERING
FROM THE
DEVASTATING
IMPACTS OF WAR,
VIOLENCE, AND
BLOCKADE



CHILDREN IN GAZA ARE SUFFERING FROM THE DEVASTATING IMPACTS OF WAR, VIOLENCE, AND BLOCKADE.

Many children have lost their homes due to frequent overcrowded and unsafe conditions, live in overcrowded.

Their lives have a severe lack of food, clean water, medicine; their physical and emotional well-being is severely affected by daily experiencing traumatic events such as airstrikes, shelling.

Children often lack access to education as many schools have been damaged or destroyed or destroyed.

Poems and Drawing

Each poem will be about a step of the journey to the adoptive country. For the first poem I decided to write about before the departure and the environment around the children such as war and poverty like in Ukraine or in Libya.

*Cold morning air,
Sounds of gunshots.
Why would they care ?
Life is just short.*

*Politics kill
What should we do ?
Just with a chill, I'll come to you.*

The second one is about the journey to the adoptive country and the rough conditions that they can face in Libyan prisons where they are kept or in the Sahara, and on the Mediterranean sea, this is also the part when most children who decide to leave their birth country die.

*On the savage sea,
We found our way,
Why don't see,
We just can't stay.*

*Violence and screams,
Behind cold walls.
Not as it seems,
Inside us all.*

The third and last poem is the last part of the journey when they arrive in the adoptive country, here in France. Most children face injustices, discriminations and sometimes even violence from people. They are sometimes forced to live in the streets because the French system did not accept them as refugees .

*Lands of promises
It's what we dreamed.
Protect us from harm,
That's all we need.*

*Lands of promises,
It's just a dream.
We won't cause you harm,
But you think you need.*

*Living in streets
We just want rights.
Like school and sheets,
Or sleep at night.*

*Lands of promises,
Just let us live.
Let me feel safe,
Before I leave.*



HOPE AND RIGHTS FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN



ASSOCIATIONS:

La Cimade
L'humanité passe par l'autre



Today we are going to talk about defending the right of immigrant children. Every day thousands of children around the world flee their countries. They flee war, poverty, persecution or natural disasters. They often leave without their parents, hoping to find a better life elsewhere. These children are like us. They love to play, learn, and dream. But their reality is very different from ours. Arriving in a new country, they hope to find peace and security. Yet, what they find is too often exclusion, poverty and sometimes even rejection. Some live in unsanitary camps; others sleep on the streets. Many haven't access to school; they are sometimes considered undesirable foreigners. Even though they are first and foremost, children.

The International Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the UN in 1989, clearly states that all children have the same rights, regardless of origin, language, nationality. This means that every child has the right to education and protection. So why are these rights so often violated for immigrant children? Why are children left alone unprotected when they are the most vulnerable? We believe it is our duty, as young citizens, not to look the other way. We must speak for those who are not listened to. We must remind them that childhood knows no borders. That solidarity is stronger than fear. Just because a child comes from elsewhere does not mean they are less valuable than us.

On the contrary, they need us, our welcome, our respect. This is not a political issue, it is a question of humanity. I dream of a world where every child can go to school, can have a future, no matter where they come from. This world is possible if each of us believes in it and takes action, even if it's just our own little bit.

The Journey of Immigrant Children Infographic

THE JOURNEY OF IMMIGRANT CHILDREN



IMMIGRANT CHILDREN

An immigrant child is a young person who has moved from one country to another, either with their family or alone, usually in search of better living conditions, safety, or opportunities. They may face challenges such as adapting to a new language, culture, and school system.



During the migration journey, families are often separated, sometimes for long periods. In many cases, only one or a few members—usually young adults or the heads of the family—are sent ahead to the new country. They take on the responsibility of finding work and earning money, which they send back to support the relatives who remain in their home country. This financial support, often called remittances, is crucial for the survival and well-being of the family left behind.

FAMILY



TRAVEL CONDITIONS

The journey of immigrants is often long and dangerous. Many travel in overcrowded vehicles, boats, or on foot, with little food, water, or medical care. They may face harsh weather, exploitation by smugglers, and the constant fear of being caught or turned back. These difficult conditions can put their health and lives at serious risk.



THE DEATHS

Immigrants, particularly those undertaking dangerous journeys, often face high risks of death. Many lose their lives due to accidents during travel, such as capsized boats, exposure to extreme weather, or accidents in overcrowded vehicles. Others may die from exhaustion, hunger, or violence, and some tragically perish while trying to cross borders illegally. These deaths highlight the dangers immigrants face in their search for a better life.



HOST COUNTRIES

Host countries respond to immigrants in different ways. Some welcome them with support programs, housing, and education, recognizing their potential contributions to society. Others may be less accepting, expressing concerns about jobs, security, or cultural differences. These mixed reactions often lead to debates about immigration policies and the balance between help and control.



REASONS FOR LEAVING

The main reasons for immigration include seeking better economic opportunities, escaping poverty, and finding work. Many immigrants also leave their home countries to flee conflict, war, or political persecution. Others migrate in search of better educational opportunities or to join family members who have already relocated. Safety and the desire for a better quality of life are also key driving factors.



HUMAN RIGHTS FOR CHILDREN



You can help protect children's rights too! Talk about it, learn more, and support those in need. Together, let's amplify their voices and build a fairer world.

Poster on Defending and Promoting Children's Rights



DEFEND AND

PROMOTE

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

EVERY CHILD AS RIGHTS. LET'S PROTECT THEM

basic rights of children

~The right to education:
every child should be able to go to
school and learn

~right to health:
children need proper food, clean
water and medical care

~right to protection:
all children must be safe from
violence and abuse

~right to be heard:
children have the right to express
themselves and be listened to.

Why is this important?

Because a child who is protected,
educated and heard grows into a
stronger, free and happier adult. In
defending their rights, we build a
better world.

What can we do?

~Talk about children's rights

~Respect and listen to children

~support groups that help children

~speak up when you see injustice

Article

Unaccompanied Minors : Defending the Children the World Forgets

In a world where children should grow up surrounded by love, education, and safety, some cross borders alone, fleeing war or poverty, and fall into an administrative and humanitarian void. They are known as unaccompanied minors. And too often, they are forgotten.

First and foremost: a child

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted in 1989, every human being under the age of 18 is a child-and thus entitled to fundamental, inalienable rights. Whether they are French, Syrian, Malian, Afghan, or stateless, whether they were born here or arrived alone by sea, they have the right to protection, education, healthcare, and a life of dignity. Yet this legal reality often fails to protect the most vulnerable children-those who flee on their own, without adults, without documents, armed only with their courage and hope.

The invisible at our borders

An unaccompanied minor (UAM) is a child under 18, who is not accompanied by a legal guardian and is present in a foreign country. Each year, tens of thousands arrive in Europe, often after journeys marked by violence, trafficking, abuse, or death. In France, between 25,000 and 30,000 such children are officially taken in each year by the Child Welfare Services (ASE). But thousands more are left out-sleeping rough, denied recognition, or falling through the cracks. Why? Because people doubt them. Because they're asked for documents they don't have. Because they're subjected to unreliable bone age tests. Because some consider them "fake minors" abusing the system, not what they really are : children in distress.

A legal and moral obligation

France, like all countries that ratified the CRC, has a legal obligation to protect every child on its soil. This means:

- Providing shelter, food, healthcare, and education
- Appointing a legal representative for administrative and legal procedures
- Guaranteeing fair and humane age assessment procedures

Prohibiting detention except under strict, rare conditions

Yet, the day-to-day reality for unaccompanied minors is often one of suspicion, long delays, and exclusion. Some are denied basic support, left vulnerable to exploitation, or barred from schooling.

At 18, abandonment

Tragically, as they approach their 18th birthday, these young people often see their situation take a turn for the worse. Without a residence permit, they face the threat of deportation. It doesn't matter if they've learned the language, enrolled in school, or formed connections. Their vulnerability doesn't vanish overnight. Some are granted legal status thanks to school records or support from advocacy groups. But many fall into undocumented status, living in fear and invisibility.

Civil society on the front line

Thankfully, countless NGOs, lawyers, social workers, and volunteers are fighting to defend these children. Organizations like La Cimade, France Terre d'Asile, Médecins du Monde, RESF, and Apprentis d'Auteuil work tirelessly to protect their rights and dignity. Some cities-like Nantes, Strasbourg, or Grenoble-have launched progressive policies to support UAMs. Families open their homes. Teachers campaign to keep their students in class. Because behind every administrative file is a name, a story, a smile, a dream.

Changing the narrative

Welcoming an unaccompanied child is not giving in to a "migrant crisis." It is acting with humanity. It is respecting international and national law. It is refusing to rank children by origin or legal status. It is saying: you are a child, and you deserve dignity. In a time marked by fear of the Other, defending the world's forgotten children is a declaration of our most essential values. Because a child is still a child-even when they come from far away, even when they are alone.

Poster on Defending Children's Rights



Defending Children's Human Rights

- The right to go to school
- The right to be protected from violence
- The right to have food, water and a home
- The right to play and rest
- The right to express their opinion

Universal Children's day was established in 1954 and is celebrated every year on November 20 to promote respect rights for children.



UNACCOMPANIED MINORS (UAMs)



? Who are they?

Children or teenagers under 18, who have arrived alone in a foreign country without parents or legal guardians

🌐 Where do they come from?

- West Africa (Mali, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire..)
- North Africa (Maghreb)
- Middle East (Syria, Afghanistan...)
- Eastern Europe



🚶 Why do they flee their countries?

- Armed conflicts
- Persecutions
- Extreme poverty
- Extreme poverty
- Forced labor or early marriage



⚠️ What are their rights in France?

- Age disputes
- Isolation, trauma
- Integration and schooling difficulties
- Risks of exploitation or disappearance



🤝 How can we help them?

- Ensure they are welcomed with dignity
- Support associations (France Terre d'Asile, Médecins du-Monde...)



Every minor has the right to protection – wherever they are!

A Speech and Poem

Today, thousands of children around the world are forced to leave their homes due to war, poverty, or violence. Among them, many travel alone, without parents or legal guardians, hoping to find safety and a better future. These unaccompanied migrant children often face extreme dangers during their journey and after arriving in Europe. According to Amnesty International and other human rights organizations, they are frequently denied basic rights such as shelter, education, and protection. This issue raises serious moral and legal questions, especially for countries like France, where the number of unaccompanied minors continues to grow. How can we ensure that these vulnerable children are treated with dignity and humanity?

No Child Alone - A poem for unaccompanied migrant children

*Across the deserts, through the storm,
With shoes worn thin and hearts not warm,
They walk through borders, lost, afraid,
With childhood dreams that slowly fade.*

*No teddy bear, no parent near,
They carry pain instead of cheer.
Their names are whispered to the sky —
Unknown, unseen, as time drifts by.*

*In 2023, the numbers soared,
Forty-five thousand, EU-recorded.
Children who came without a guide,
With only hope to be their stride.*

*In France alone, where shelters strain,
Sixteen thousand crossed through pain.
They sought protection, food, a bed,
And found cold streets and fear instead.*

*Amnesty International warns us loud:
These children vanish in the crowd.
Detained in camps, or worse — ignored,
Their rights dismissed, their cries unheard.*

*The Convention of '89
Declared each child's life as divine.
But signatures don't warm the air,
And many laws are thin as air.*

*Some face abuse, some disappear,
Some live in limbo, year by year.
And though their stories break the heart,
The world has failed to do its part.*

*Still, in their eyes, a quiet flame,
A strength that shames the ones who blame.
A right to live, to dream, to play,
To build a life, to find their way.*

*So let us rise, not turn aside,
Not let these children run and hide.
No barbed-wire wall, no border stone,
Should leave a child to cry alone.*

*Let policy be not just speech,
But something real, within their reach.
Because no matter where they're from —
Each child deserves a home, a home.*

In conclusion, the situation of unaccompanied migrant children in Europe remains deeply concerning. According to Eurostat, over 45,000 unaccompanied minors were registered at the European Union's external borders in 2023, fleeing conflict, poverty, or persecution. In France, the Direction de la Protection Judiciaire de la Jeunesse (DPJJ) reported nearly 16,000 such children in need of care that same year. These minors, alone and vulnerable, often face serious risks such as exploitation, trafficking, or detention in unsuitable facilities. Despite the commitments made under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), many governments still fail to provide adequate protection, legal assistance, and safe living conditions. Human rights organizations like Amnesty International continue to raise alarms about these violations and call for stronger action. Ensuring the dignity, safety, and future of these children should be a priority for all.