Abstract

Brazil has seen a rise in children in narco-trafficking due to increased conflicts between factions and local law enforcement. Mainstream media and scholars tend to frame actions of these factions as organized crime, ignoring the generalized violence the communities and children experience.

The aim of this study is to analyse whether or not Brazilian children involved in drug trafficking can be classified as child soldiers. Drawing from the international definition of Armed Conflict in Article 3 of the Geneva Convention of 1949 and Article 1 of the Additional Protocol II, and comparing situations of realities faced by Brazilian children involved in narco-trafficking, I argue that their reality is analogous to that of child soldiers, as defined by the Paris Principles on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict - 2007; thus, going beyond the organized crime definition.

In characterizing them as child soldiers, I argue for improving the children's ability to be reintegrated into society, with the collective help of the international community.

Image 1: Child carrying a gun in a Brazilian favela

Introduction

Increase of violent deaths in Brazil is heavily linked with conflict between drug factions. Adolescents and children comprise more than half of the deaths.

Materials


Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Article 1 of the Additional Protocol II - non-international armed conflict definition

Results

Brazil meets the four criteria of armed conflict by international law: there are confrontations with the State and between drug factions, with (above the) minimum level of intensity and organization; on a territory of State party (Brazil).

Children involved in armed conflicts are characterized by their vulnerable situations; they often volunteer and their participation goes beyond the involvement in hostility.

Likewise, drug factions in Brazil target low income areas, where it serves as a labor alternative for local youth. Children become more active in factions as demands for cocaine increases, with fixed salaries based on their roles.

Discussion

Current Brazilian efforts to reintegrate children in socio-educative measure have been failing. These measures that are meant to be pedagogical often leave children with a negative view on institutional education and formal labor market.

International organizations battling against the recruitment of child soldier have been having successful measures to promote protections.

With the help of international collective efforts, the current situation of both children in socio-educative centers and still involved in the armed conflict can have more humanized possibilities for their future.

Conclusion

This presentation seeks to bring attention to the situation of children involved in drug trafficking in Brazil. By shifting the demonizing narrative of these children and promoting their rights to protection with international collective action, international law can offer an alternative, and more positive, future to them.