



The Academy reaffirmed endorsement of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the **statement** below developed by the Sections on Child Abuse and Neglect and International Child Health related to children in war.

### Statement by the American Academy of Pediatrics

See article from April 2001 *AAP News*: [AAP reaffirms endorsement of Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

One of the great tragedies of violent political conflicts is disruption of the education, health care, physical safety and healthy psychological development of children. The present conflict in the Middle East, Africa and the Balkans highlights the dangerous situations children of the world face.

In as much as the American Academy of Pediatrics has endorsed the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it is appropriate at this time of continuing conflict involving children worldwide, to reaffirm our support for Article 38 and Article 39 of that Convention (1).

Clearly, it is not always possible for parents to protect and shelter their children. However, it is not appropriate, no matter what the motivation, when a parent allows or encourages his or her child to participate in acts that have the great potential to place the child's life in danger.

Children throughout the world are being placed in harm's way when they are not prevented from participating in acts of protest that, as a result, put children's lives in danger. Purposefully exposing a child to violence and neglecting to protect children from exposure to violence are recognized forms of maltreatment (2).

We call on all parents and governments to bring to an end their children's participation in non-peaceful demonstrations. We also call on governments to exercise maximum restraint when confronting non-peaceful demonstrations that include children. We believe that it is in the best interest of the healthy development of children to teach and model non-violent methods of conflict resolution. Governments that encourage or permit children to participate in violence, to further political aims, are practicing a form of societal abuse.

It is the belief of [the Sections on International Child Health and Child Abuse] the American Academy of Pediatrics that the contents of this important convention, to advance the well being of children throughout the world, should be upheld by all peoples of the world. It is further the hope of the Academy that the contents of this Convention should be brought to the attention of the American public and Government officials with the expectation that the United States will join the other 189 countries that have already signed and ratified it into law.

Footnotes:

#### (1) Article 38 states in part:

- Parties undertake to respect and to ensure respect for the rules of international humanitarian law applicable to them in armed conflicts, which are relevant to the child.*
- Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that persons who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities.*
- Parties shall refrain from recruiting any person who has not attained the age of fifteen years into their armed forces. In recruiting among those persons who have attained the age of fifteen years but who have not attained the age of eighteen years parties shall endeavor to give priority to those who are oldest.*
- In accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect the civilian population in armed conflicts. States parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by armed conflict.*

#### Article 39 states in part:

*Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment, which foster the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.*

**(2) Recognized forms of psychological maltreatment include: exploiting and corrupting in which caretakers encourage a child to develop inappropriate behaviors through modeling, permitting or encouraging antisocial behavior and terrorizing in which a caretaker places a child in unpredictable, chaotic, or recognizably dangerous circumstances (Hart et al., *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, Volume 1, No 1, 1998).**

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