

International Convention on the Rights of the Child

Text adapted for children 10 and up

The Convention was adopted by the United Nations (UN) on November 20th, 1989 to protect the rights of children around the world and to better their living conditions.

Article 1 – Definition of Child

The Convention concerns all children. If you are less than 18 years old you are a child, so you are protected by this Convention.

Article 2 – The right to non-discrimination

This convention must be applied to all children without any discrimination:

- You have the right to respect for your differences, whether you are a girl or a boy, and whatever may be your state of health, your social or ethnic origin, your language, your religion, your opinions and your nationality.
- You have the right to equality, that means that a country must respect and protect your rights in the same way as all other children.

Article 3 – The right to well-being

1. For all decisions that concern you, your interests must be taken into account.
2. Countries must protect you and assure your well-being if your parents can't do so for you.
3. Countries must assure that all institutions charged with your well-being (school, police,...) help and protect you effectively.

Article 4 – The right to exercise your rights

Countries must put all necessary measures into place to allow you to exercise all the rights recognized as yours by the Convention.

Article 5 – The right to be guided by your parents

Countries must respect the right and the duty of your parents to guide you and counsel you in the exercise of your rights and the development of your abilities.

Article 6 – The right to life and development

1. Like all children, you have the right to life and to not be killed.

2. Countries must ensure your survival and your proper development in providing you all that you need for your development.

Article 7 – The right to a name and a nationality

1. From your birth, you have the right to a name, a first name, and a nationality. Having a nationality allows you to be accepted and protected by a country. You also have the right to know your parents and to live with them.
2. If you don't have a nationality, countries still must respect your right to have a name, a first name, and to live with your parents.

Article 8 : The right to the protection of your identity

1. Countries must respect your identity. They must help you to not lose your name, your first name, your nationality, and your relationship with your parents.
2. If you are deprived of your identity, countries must protect you and help you get it back as soon as possible.

Article 9 – The right to live with your parents

1. You have the right to live with your parents, except when it is against your interest and your well-being (if you are a victim of abuse or negligence, etc.)
2. If your parents separate, you have the right to give your opinion about the decisions concerning you at the time of their separation.
3. If you are separated from your parents, you have the right to see them regularly, except when it is against your interest and well-being.
4. You have the right to know where your parents are, (if they are in prison, for example) except when it is against your interest and well-being.

Article 10 – The right to find your family again

1. If you are in a different country than your parents, you have the right to leave a country and to enter another to find your parents again. Your parents have the same right.
2. If you live in a different country than your parents, you have the right to rejoin them.

Article 11 – Protection from being abducted and moved to a different country.

1. Countries must protect you from the risks of abduction and being moved to a different country.

2. In case of abduction, to assure your return to your parents, countries must cooperate and work together.

Article 12 : The right to freedom of opinion

1. As soon as you are old enough to have your own opinion, you have the right to give your opinion about all decisions concerning you. Adults have the duty to take your opinion into account.
2. Countries must ensure that your opinion is taken into account for all important decisions concerning you (decision before a judge,..).

Article 13 – The right to freedom of expression

1. You have the right to freely express your opinion. You also have the right to research and receive information and to retransmit it.
2. Your freedom of expression has certain limits:
 - a. You must respect the rights and reputation of others;
 - b. You cannot put society in danger.

Article 14 – The right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion

1. You have the right to freedom of thought and of conscience, and you can practice a religion.
2. Your parents have the right and the duty to guide you in the exercise of this right, according to your age and your abilities.
3. Your freedom to practice a religion and to express your convictions (what you think) has limits:
 - a. You must respect the freedoms and rights of others;
 - b. You cannot put society in danger.

Article 15 – The right to freedom of association

1. You have the right to create groups with other children or adults and to participate in meetings on subjects or activities that interest you.
2. Your freedom to have meetings has limits:
 - a. You must respect the freedoms and rights of others;

b. You cannot put society in danger.

Article 16 – The right to the protection of your privacy

1. No one has the right to intervene, without a legal reason, in your privacy, that means your life with your parents and your private life. Your house, your mail, as well as your honour and your reputation make up your privacy and are equally protected.

2. Countries must create laws that will protect all aspects of your privacy.

Article 17 – The right to be informed

You have the right to receive information (through the media) that is diverse and fair:

a. Countries must make sure that the media (the radio, T.V., newspapers,...) provide children with useful information;

b. They must favor knowledge development and understanding of other cultures;

c. They must encourage the production of books for children;

d. They must encourage the media to take into consideration the culture and language of children coming from minorities;

e. Countries must protect you against any information that could go against your welfare and well-being.

Article 18 – Your parents' duties

1. Your parents must bring you up and look after your proper development.

2. Countries must help your parents in this task by creating institutions and services whose job is to look after your welfare and well-being.

3. If both of your parents work, countries must help them take on this responsibility.

Article 19 – The right to be protected against ill-treatment

1. Countries must protect you against any kind of ill-treatment, whether you are under your parents' care or that of someone else. You have the right to be protected against violence, abandonment, neglect, exploitation and sexual violence.

2. Countries must ensure that you never suffer from ill-treatment. But if that should happen to you, they will have to take care of you.

Article 20 – The right to be protected even if you have no family

1. If you no longer have a family, your country must protect you and look after you.
2. It will make sure people look after you and you are not alone.
3. Those who protect you will have to take into consideration your past and your culture.

Article 21 – The right to be adopted

Your adoption will only be allowed if it favors your well-being.

- a. It must be accepted and allowed by those who look after you.
- b. You can be adopted into a country other than yours if that is the best solution for you.
- c. If you are adopted into another country, you will have to have the same rights as if you had been adopted in your country of birth.
- d. Your adoption must never be a way to earn money for those who will adopt you.
- e. Countries will work together so that your adoption is supervised by competent and responsible institutions.

Article 22 – The rights of a child refugee

1. If you are forced to leave your country, you will have the right to be considered a refugee. You will be protected by International Law (laws that are shared by every country) and by this Convention, whether you are alone, with your parents or with other adults.
2. Countries and international organizations will have to help you and look after you. They will have to help you find your parents and your family. If your family is not found, others will look after you and you will not be left alone.

Article 23 – The rights of a handicapped child

1. If you are handicapped, you have the right to lead the best possible life. You have the right to be shown respect for yourself and your dignity. You have the right to be treated like any other child in order to help you become as autonomous as possible and take part in the life of your community.
2. Countries must acknowledge the right of handicapped children to be given special treatment that is essential to their well-being.
3. Countries must therefore give additional help to your parents. This help will, if necessary, be provided freely to ensure you have the right to education, training, health, therapy, employment, leisure activities, social integration and personal development.

4. Countries will work together and exchange any and all useful information to help handicapped children. Developing countries will receive additional help.

Article 24 – The right to health and medical attention

1. Countries must allow you to be in good health by providing you with all necessary treatments.
2. Countries must work first and foremost on:
 - a. Reducing the number of child deaths;
 - b. Improving basic treatments for all children;
 - c. Developing preventive treatments (vaccines, etc.) and fighting malnutrition (problems resulting from the lack of a balanced diet);
 - d. Developing help measures for mothers before and after their baby is born;
 - e. Developing information access on health, nutrition and hygiene;
 - f. Improving family planning (that is, any means that can help parents choose the time when they will have a child)
3. Countries will put an end to traditional practices that are dangerous for a child's health.

Article 25 – The right to have your placement studied again

If your country has placed you in a center to receive health care, you have the right to have your situation regularly examined to find out whether you still need the treatments being provided.

Article 26 – The right to social security

1. You have the right to benefit from social security. It is a national system that gives you access to essential needs (health, education, food, etc.)
2. Countries must help you depending on your situation and that of those taking care of you.

Article 27 – The right to have a good standard of living

1. You have the right to a good standard of living that allows you to develop normally.
2. Your parents are responsible for your development.
3. If necessary, countries will have to help your parents, particularly to provide you with food, clothes and shelter.

4. If you have the right to an alimony, countries will make sure that you get it and that this right is respected wherever you are.

Article 28 – The right to education

1. Countries acknowledge that you have the right to education like any other child:

- a. You have the right to go to primary school for free. Primary school is compulsory;
- b. You have the right to go to secondary school. Secondary school must be free or help must be given to allow you to attend school;
- c. You have the right to tertiary education;
- d. You have the right to educational and vocational information and guidance;
- e. Countries must do all they can to encourage you to go to school.

2. School discipline must respect your rights and dignity.

3. States must work together to fight ignorance and illiteracy (which means not knowing how to read and write) throughout the world and to improve access to scientific and technical knowledge. Developing countries must be helped.

Article 29 – The goals of your education

The goal of your education is:

- a. To promote your personal growth and develop your abilities;
- b. To teach you to respect the rights of others and their fundamental freedoms;
- c. To teach you to respect your native culture and the country where you live;
- d. To prepare you to take on responsibilities in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality and friendship for all;
- e. To teach you to respect your natural surroundings.

Article 30 – Children's rights for minorities and indigenous groups (*)

If you belong to an ethnic, religious, or linguistic minority, you too have the right to your cultural life, to practice your religion and to speak the language of your group.

() Indigenous groups are people who have lived in a particular region since ancestral times and who live in harmony with nature.*

Article 31 – The right to Free Time

1. You have the right to rest, to free time, to games and recreational activities. You also have the right to participate in artistic and cultural activities for your age group.

2. Your country must protect your right to free time and promote the development of this right.

Article 32 – The right to protection from exploitation

1. Your country must protect you from exploitation, meaning being forced to work. You cannot do any dangerous work or any work that is considered bad for your health, your development or your education.

2. Your country must take all possible measures to protect you from exploitation, including:

- a. They must set a minimum age under which you are not allowed to work;
- b. They must set rules concerning hours and conditions for working;
- c. They must punish anyone who does not respect these rules.

Article 33 – The right to protection from drugs

Your country must take all necessary measures to protect you from drugs. They must also keep you from being used for or involved in the production and trafficking of drugs.

Article 34 – The right to protection from sexual abuse

Your country must protect you from all forms of sexual abuse or violence.

Countries will work together to establish necessary measures to:

- a. Prevent anyone from encouraging or forcing you to do illegal sexual activities ;
- b. Prevent you from being used for prostitution ;
- c. Prevent you from being exploited for pornographic productions (photos or films).

Article 35 – The right to protection from trafficking

Your country must protect you from being sold or abducted.

Article 36 – The right to protection from any other form of exploitation

Your country must protect you from any other form of exploitation that is bad for your well-being.

Article 37 – The right to protection from torture and being held captive

1. Your country must assure that:

- a. You are not subjected to torture or any other cruel or degrading punishment. You cannot be sentenced to the death penalty or life in prison.
- b. You cannot be arbitrarily arrested, meaning arrested without a real reason. Your arrest and your imprisonment must be the last possible solution.
- c. If you are being held, you must be treated humanely and with dignity and you may not be imprisoned with adults. Your needs (according to your age) must be taken into account and you will have the right to stay in touch with your family.
- d. If you are being held, you have access to different forms of help. You have the right to challenge the reason that you are in prison before a fair jury, which will give a verdict as quickly as possible.

Article 38 – The right to protection from violent conflict

1. In case of violent conflict, your country must protect you while respecting the international human rights law (the law that controls armed conflicts)
2. If you are younger than 15 years old, your country must prevent you from participating directly in combat.
3. If you are younger than 15 years old, you may not be recruited into an army. If you are between 15 and 18 years old, countries may include you in an armed force, but they must first select older people.
4. If you are involved in an armed conflict, countries must protect you and care for you.

Article 39 – The right to readjustment and rehabilitation

If you have been the victim of negligence, exploitation, torture or any other form of cruel treatment, countries must help you recover and get your life back to normal.

Article 40 – Justice and the rights of minors

1. If you are suspected or found guilty of having committed a crime, countries must respect your fundamental rights. Your age must be taken into account and everything must be done so that you can rejoin society in a good condition.

2. Your country must assure that :

a. You are not falsely accused ;

b. You are assured of these rights :

– You are innocent until proven guilty;

– You are informed quickly regarding the reason for your accusation ;

– You have a fair and just trial (meaning a trial in front of a fair jury) that takes into account your age and well being ;

– You are not forced to confess guilt ;

– You can appeal your verdict, meaning you have the right to request that your first verdict be reviewed.

– You can have the help of a lawyer

– You can also be assisted by an interpreter if you do not speak the language.

– Your life and privacy must be respected during the entire process.

3. Your country must adopt laws specifically for your age group :

a. They must define the age under which it is considered impossible to break the law.

b. They must take measures as much as possible to take care of you without having to legally intervene.

4. Your country must organize a system of development and education in relation to your living situation and the crime you have committed to assure your well being.

Article 41 – The right to the highest protection

If the law in the country where you live is more favorable than this Convention's, your country's law must be applied.

Article 42 – Spreading your rights

Your country must make this Convention known to adults and children alike.