

# **Stop Violating our rights**

The 5th issue of the newspaper **«Migratory Birds»** is devoted to November 20th, **International Childrens' Rights Day**, and discusses some of those rights from a different angle: our aim is to show how the right to freedom of children and teenagers is being violated and devalued.

This time, our team of teenage journalists sat around a table with the International Convention on the Rights of the Child in front of us in five languages, Farsi, Dari, Arabic, English and Greek, to ensure that everyone could read and understand it. We researched, studied and made comparisons over several days. We discussed, agreed but also disagreed about the articles of the Convention and to what extent these are being adhered to in various countries.

And so we write without fear or hesitation, referring to articles 12, 13 and 14 of the Convention, according to which children have the right to state

their views freely, to seek, receive and impart ideas, and to think and express themselves freely either orally or in writing

We write about things that concern us: how an unaccompanied minor feels in a foreign country, all alone, without his family; why a 14 year–old is forced to fight; why a child is forced into marriage; why a child is not asked before his or her photograph is published.

Forever hoping for a world free from injustice, the team of **«Migratory Birds**» would like to wish you: «Happy Reading».



# The articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

under which the 'Migratory Birds' have prepared their articles.

### Article 12

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

### Article 13

1. The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all

kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

2. The exercise of this right may be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:

(a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others; or

(b) For the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals.

### Article 14

1. States Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

2. States Parties shall respect the rights and duties of the parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child.

3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

### Article 15

1. States Parties recognize the rights of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly.

2. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of these rights other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.



# The treatment of unaccompanied immigrant and refugee minors in Germany.

By Samira Karimi

mmigration or the movement of populations is defined as a change in place and location of residency.

People tend to become immigrants or refugees on account of poverty, illness, politics, war, lack of security, natural phenomena and disasters. Additional reasons might be the desire for better education or healthcare, to improve one's financial situation or acquire greater social and political freedom.

It is not uncommon for children to become separated from their parents during the course of the emigrant journey and to find themselves without protection in one European country or another. In addition, there are under-age immigrants who set off on their own, and there are various reasons for this.

In this article, we will take a look at the rights of unaccompanied immigrant and refugee minors in Germany and see how they are treated there.

As soon as a minor enters Germany, the Youth Welfare Agency "Jugendamt" takes charge.

If the child has relatives in Germany, he or she has the right to ask to stay with them; otherwise, he or she will be placed in a shelter for unaccompanied minors. There then follows a process of placement with a foster family.

All this takes about two weeks. After that, the minor is transferred to one of the 16 federal states of Germany, where the local Immigration Office (Ausländerbehörde) gives him or her the necessary residency documents.

The process for acquiring residency documents for a minor differs greatly from that for adults.

Minors, especially those that are unaccompanied, are unable to make decisions on legal matters regarding their case, so they are assigned a guardian by the Youth Welfare Agency "Jugendamt", who will be responsible for their protection.

All minors entering Germany have the right to go to school or to a vocational training college called "Ausbildung".

Full-time education till the age of 18 is compulsory in all German states.

What is more, all children enjoy the same political and legal rights without discrimination.

It has to be emphasised that all unaccompanied minors have the right to be reunified with their families wherever possible, as is the case with all minors in the country.

In dealing with unaccompanied minors, Germany behaves very responsibly and makes every effort to safeguard their rights.

# Jugendamt

Hilfe für Kinder und Jugendliche mit ihren Eltern

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# Children who have to earn a living

By Fatima Hossaini

very day we come across children who are forced to become street sellers or beggars. The phenomenon of "child labour" is to be found not only in the backstreets of war-torn Afghanistan but also on the bright avenues of New York.

Childhood is vital for the development of one's character and the nurturing of the individual before adulthood. Childhood traumas and social problems can affect children more than anyone else and could hinder their natural, healthy development.

"Working children" and street children are the most vulnerable individuals. They are obliged to work because of poverty and they have to survive in a very dangerous environment because essentially the street becomes their home. Girls are at an even graver danger because they are susceptible to sexual exploitation. "Working children" are denied basic rights, such as protection, a healthy diet, schooling, basic hygiene and they live far away from their family, loved ones or guardians. These children usually end up on the streets because of parental divorce, poverty, or as a result of immigration. Reality forces them to work. "Street children" usually join a gang, which replaces the family. There is always a gang leader who tends to be one of the stronger and cleverer gang members. In some cases, children are forced to carry out illegal jobs such as drug dealing and illicit trade, even trade in human organs. They also shine shoes, sell tissues, flowers etc. It is really sad that these children are belittled and humiliated in this way. So, who is responsible for all this?

Children should go to school; they should be close to their loved ones and enjoy the gentle care of their family. So why are they out on the streets, indulging in petty theft and selling drugs... These children go out onto the streets by day and return home at night. They leave their childhood behind and quickly turn into street youths, exposed to all kinds of risks and dangers.

This problem needs to be addressed as soon as possible. The point is that today's philanthropists feel sorry for these children and try to help them financially, but what they need to do is to remove them from the situation they find themselves in. They should support their studies, for example, so that they can become useful members of society in the future.

Those children have lost their childhood in busy streets and at traffic lights, where even the wait for the light to turn red offers them a glimmer of hope.

I really wish that no child would ever have to work on the streets.





# The Right to Education

By Fatime Sedaqat

Il children, wherever they are in the world, have a right to education. They have this right in order to succeed in acquiring skills for the good of society and their country.

Children develop and display their talent within school, while forming stronger and more productive relations in the community. Yet, there are many children in various parts of the world who are unable to go to school or acquire an education, due to economic hardship, lack of safety or other obstacles.

I personally don't know much about Afghanistan, because I was born in Iran and have never visited the country.

Iran is full of schools, yet a child without legal papers is denied access to them. Even with the right documentation, a child who is allowed to go to school must pay hefty fees in contrast with Iranian pupils. The result is that young Afghans start school much later. Sometimes their parents are unable to afford the fees, resulting in their children being denied the right to education. In theory, all pupils attending the same school have equal right to lessons and games, but this does not apply to Afghan children. For example, the organisers of school trips might say that children from Afghanistan are not allowed to take part. This, of course can be extremely hurtful.

Another example of discrimination is that young Afghans are forbidden to choose their subject of study. They are not allowed to go to technical college, which means that many are forced abandon their studies and go out to work. No one seems to have a clear, logical response to this.

I hope that children throughout the world can achieve their goals and not have to face such problems. They should be a source of pride and joy for their families.

May all children be happy!



# Give us back our childhood, give us back our peace.

### By Mirna Aslan

am putting pen to paper, to record some of what I have suffered from my perception of time and the constraints of space. What am I? I am an opportunist who trades in delusions, phantoms and the night. I love living, playing, having fun. I love and admire my fifteen years and my damp body as it sways like a fountain.

They live inside me, as if hiding and they die inside me like delusions or imaginary beings.

I am a doll-like child that people play with, but who knows nothing about the meaning of life. Like a ship without a captain, the waves of the sea do with me as they please.

No need to summarise my résumé - I am writing it myself with my own blood.

I don't care what your name is, or where and how I was born. I have woven my true story with my fingers and my words.

Who are all of you!!!

You are nothing. You were simply the cause of my death and the reason I have been denied my childhood. You are guilty.

Who am I? And why have you killed me!!!...

I am the mistake of a homeland filled with wars.

I am the mistake of a couple that thinks I will stand in the way of its miserable life.

I am the mistake of a renowned and well-educated doctor, whose only objective is profit.

I am the mistake of a young man who raped a young woman and who will never be brought to justice or punished, simply because he has money. I am the mistake of a woman who was not ready for motherhood.

I am a child that was denied life because a man and a woman were irresponsible.

I am the dream of a couple that couldn't have children.

I am the dream of every girl that is a single child.

I am the dream of every grandmother who desires to see grandchildren before she dies.

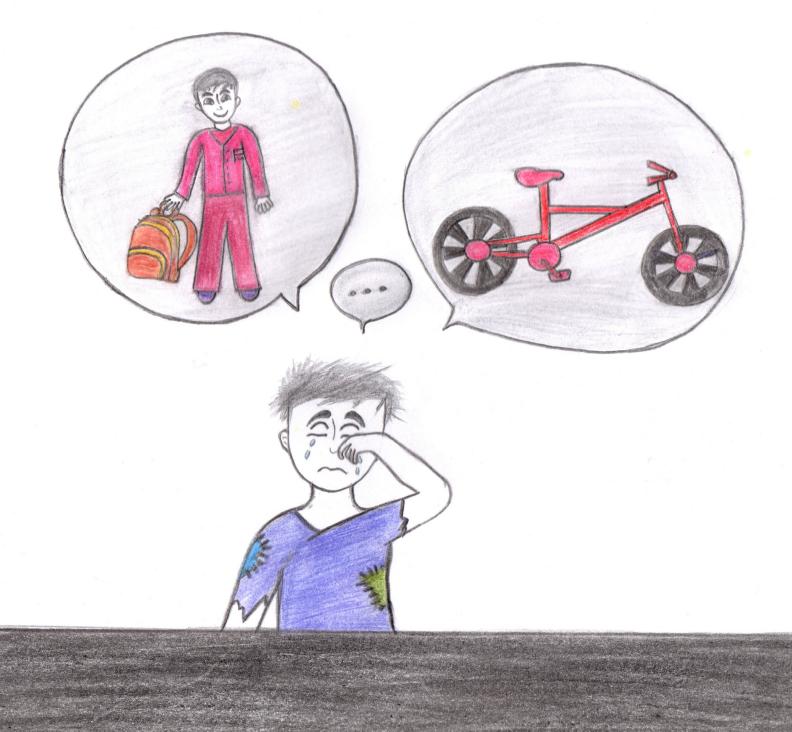
Was it so easy to kill me and torture me?

You finished off my childhood and my dreams.

Don't think for a moment that I will ever forgive you...

I use the second person to address all those things that deny a child its rights or the chance to live a normal childhood. It might be war, parents, siblings, grandparents, or a variety of situations in a country.





# A homeless dream

### By Zahra Habibi

very child has certain rights within the family, for example the right to be fed and clothed, the right to play and feel safe. However, there are many countries all over the world where children are denied those rights.

Undoubtedly many of those children would like to voice their complaints one way or another, but are unable to do so because conditions in their homeland do not allow them to.

In today's society, there are children who are supported neither by their family, nor by a national or international authority that will ensure that their rights are respected and protected.

The International Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly lays out their rights, but the Convention is flouted by numerous countries in more ways than would seem possible. The wishes of children are totally ignored.

For example, a child ought to live with his or her family in a secure and stable environment, to be equal to other children and not be the victim of discrimination.

The development and progress of each child, within the limitations of his or her own personal strengths and skills, should not only be permitted but encouraged both at local and international level. Yet, it is evident that a number of children are deprived not only of these basic rights but also of the necessary attention they require.

"I looked into the eyes of a child and learned his bitter secret. For a long time now, his dreams had not come true. His tiny legs carried him on the distant road towards the future. He couldn't turn his thoughts into reality. He no longer said anything about all the things he couldn't reach. In the end he redeemed his joy with tears...!"

Pay more attention to the lives and rights of children.



# Arranged marriage

### By Farangis Zafari

t's almost impossible to see what lies behind the eyes of a child that has made an overnight crossing from the fun and joy of childhood to the ordeals of adulthood.

Children who ought to be feeling the warm embrace of their parents are instead having to deal with the laughter and cries of another child who has ended up in their embrace.

We are occasionally informed by friends and relatives about a marriage between under-age boys and girls. We find this peculiar and we condemn it.

In the past such marriages were considered more or less the norm, but in today's world, thanks to cultural and educational progress, such marriages have become much rarer. Yet for various reasons, such under-age marriages continue to be arranged in some areas and in certain societies.

Marriages of children under the age of 18 involve both boys and girls, but girls tend to be the majority of sufferers of this unreasonable practice.

Firstly, such marriages destroy a child's innocence and happiness and secondly, they obstruct the child's development, denying him or her

education and schooling.

Girls that are obliged to marry young bear the physical and psychological consequences for life, mainly due to premature pregnancy.

Underage marriages do not only take place in poor countries, but also in wealthy ones, even though they are clearly banned and declared illegal.

One of the most important negative consequences of early marriage is that the child is separated from its parents, something that Article 9 of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child expressly forbids, unless that separation is in the best interests of the child. Clearly, this is not the case in child marriages.

Further adverse effects include the removal of the child from familiar surroundings and the denial to the child of specific rights.

The fact is that the majority of these marriages are arranged with the agreement of both the parents and the minors. Article 13 gives the child the right to decide but what happens in practice is that most children give in to parental pressure.

Early marriage is a peculiar tradition.

How can one put an end to this unacceptable custom? Through formal, moral and social education, together with the provision of essential information about any unpredictable and harmful effects and consequences.

Until we can find a way of changing people's attitude on this matter and until we can formulate a correct strategy to deal with this irrational custom, we cannot rest easily with our consciences nor consider the matter closed.





### **Child soldiers**

By Abdul Rashed Mohammadi

This article is dedicated to children growing up in Afghanistan, who are taken against their will, brainwashed and sent to the war front.

Afghanistan has been in a state of war for many years now.

Armed forces conflict in Afghanistan.

In many parts of the world, as in Afghanistan, the forceful transfer of minors to the war front is carried out intentionally by the armed forces.

Children under 18 are obliged to take part in combat operations, instead of enjoying life as befits their age.

A large majority of these children are killed at the front, while those that survive face several psychosomatic problems and often become victims of exploitation by adults.

The armed forces use children to retrieve shells and weapons from battlefields, detect mines, and remove the injured from the front, but also as human shields. This last use results in serious injury, meaning that those children are no longer able to lead normal lives. There is also proof that children have been used by armed forces in terrorist suicide operations with explosives. These children usually come from very poor families and take part in terrorist or military activities because of countless promises of financial compensation.

Sending children to the front is a violation of their basic rights.

For example, not only are they denied basic education but also the right to act out of free will and decide their own fate.

Article 15 of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child states that minors under the age of 15 must on no account take part in any military action, and that if conflict breaks out in their own country, their government is obliged to offer them special protection.

I have friends who have been maimed in such military operations and are sadly no longer able to lead a normal life.



# **Silent victims**

### By Mahdiah Hossaini



hildren are one of the most vulnerable groups in society, requiring the most care and attention. The primary and most important responsibility of a parent is the care and protection of their children.

#### Abuse of children.

Many children suffer either as a result of something that an adult does, or because of something the adult neglects to do. The physical and mental effects can be both damaging and permanent. The result of the neglect may not be immediately evident, for example if a child is denied food or education, or if it is confined somewhere. Other forms of ill treatment and abuse are more evident, such as corporal punishment and sexual exploitation, and cause physical and mental trauma for the child.

It would seem that the laws governing physical abuse of children are interpreted differently in every country. In the majority of countries, there are specific laws that forbid and punish sexual relations with under-age children. The protection of children's rights in this matter is guaranteed internationally by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### Means of prevention.

The sexual exploitation of children has a long history amongst many peoples. The punishment and reformation of the offender are vital of course, but even more important is the protection of the child through prevention of such occurrences, in order to avoid adverse mental and social consequences.

The correct education, not just in school but also in the home through good parenting, is of fundamental importance. Basically, children should

be taught to listen only to their parents and never allow a stranger to tell them what to do. In this way, no one can order or force a child to do something. If parents suspect that their child is being harassed, they should immediately get in touch with a child psychologist. They must understand that covering up the matter is the most unjust thing they can do to their child.

Can a child overcome the effects of sexual abuse?

In order to avoid further long-term negative consequences, the first major step is to allow the child to describe and report what has happened. Children that can discuss the matter with an adult of trust tend to overcome the problem with fewer repercussions than children who hide it.

Individuals who have experienced such violence during their childhood may well suffer from depression and mental instability as adults, and they might display self-destructive tendencies or become addicted to drugs.

A child victim of sexual abuse needs to live in peaceful surroundings and must be given the opportunity to open up his or her heart and talk about his or her fears.

Sexual education.

According to some psychologists, children should be given sexual education appropriate to their age, which will prevent them from falling into a trap or becoming victims of sexual abuse.

Interrupted sleep, eating and learning disorders, isolation from school friends and school activities, are all signs that might suggest sexual abuse.

Finally, we would ask all parents to teach their children to say NO and to make it clear that they are available to listen to anything the child has to say.



# The Life of an unaccompanied immigrant minor in Greece

### By Najaf Sabir

How the United Nations International Convention relates to the life and rights of minors in Greece

y name is Natzaf Sabir, I am 17 years old and I am from Pakistan. When I came to Greece I had no idea that I would have the right to express my thoughts and develop my skills alongside other people.

I now participate in various activities. I live in a hostel with another 20 children from Pakistan. We live alone without our parents. Apart from taking part in activities I go to school in order to have a better future.

Here, immigrants, Europeans and Greeks are all equal. The laws are

the same for all. People are not discriminated against on the grounds of race or religion, and they are all equal. Everyone has rights. Here your nationality doesn't make you different. Here we can take part in a wide range of activities, and we can convey our thoughts and display our skills to others.

The right to education:

In Greece, school is compulsory between the ages of 6 to 15, while primary, secondary and tertiary education is free.

The right to healthcare:

Anyone living legally in Greece is entitled to healthcare services.

UN International Convention on the Rights of the Child

According to this convention, all children under 18 have full rights.

The convention applies to everyone, regardless of race, religion or ability, regardless of what they think or who their family is.

Children have the right to participate in groups and organisations and to socialise with other children.

Children with special needs require specialist care so that they can become independent and the state is obliged to provide this.

All children have the right to education, rest, and participation in a wide range of activities.

Children born in this country have the right to speak their mother tongue and follow their own customs, while becoming integrated into society here.



(11)

The right to freedom of expression includes...twittering, and the Migratory Birds are getting ready to twitter at the Olympia Festival! Last summer, when the Migratory Birds were busy preparing their second issue, two of our contributors – two teenage girls – together with other children residing in the refugee reception centre of Schisto, began building their own set, sometimes in the classrooms and other times in their containers, in order to produce their own animated film! They chose this medium as their way of expressing the difficulties faced by refugees and also the right of every child to be with its family.

Their story is about to embark on its first journey, to the Olympia International Film Festival where it will participate in the European Meeting of Youth Audiovisual Creation – Camera Zizanio! On Monday December 4th, "Birdsong" will be shown in the category "Films by Young Refugees" at the Ilia Regional Unit Conference Centre. See you there!

# The Migratory Birds twitter at the Olympia Festival

# I play and so I learn, discover, live!

### By Fereshteh and Elham Esmaili

very child has the right to play and the right to happiness. Although all children everywhere in the world have these rights, there are unfortunately quite a few people who neither observe, appreciate nor respect them. Many families find it difficult to value those rights properly because they have other problems to contend with.

In theory, every child has these rights and every family ought to respect them in order to avoid later adverse psychological consequences. It's not that difficult; for example, a family could arrange an outing to the park or a playground. This is a pleasurable pastime and would really make a child happy.

The majority of seven-year-olds really enjoy walking with their parents to a park, playground or restaurant. Families are also responsible for protecting their children from harm and danger. Although many children play outside the home and tend to enjoy their neighbourhood, some families are not at ease with the idea because they fear their child might be insulted, (sexually) exploited, become lost or have to deal with other problems.

Children's pastimes depend on their gender, since girls play mostly with dolls and skipping ropes, or visit one another, while boys play football, cars and plastic weapons.

There are also mind games, which assist the development of the brain and help a child's memory.

The truth is that many young people are unable to fulfill their dreams. For example, many girls would like to play volleyball and football, but can't because there are men who forbid it. This is very hard for them because it means they are not allowed do something that might have given them much pleasure and at which they might have excelled.

Just about everyone in the world knows that children's rights should not be restricted, but they don't actually do anything about it, which means that the children in question may well have problems later on in life.

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# Individual Freedom

### By Sara Hossaini

ccording to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, minors have certain rights, but the issue I wish to discuss here isn't actually included in these.

I wish to write about the individual freedom of each young person. The best way to put this across is to tell you about a personal experience of mine.

A few months ago we were living in the refugee camp at Elliniko where we took part, amongst other activities, in drawing lessons. I personally don't like drawing very much, even so, my brother, sister and I went along to the classes. A short while later, an exhibition of our work was scheduled but I was not particularly keen, because at that time we were getting reports about several explosions in Kabul, and the news showed images of the streets of the city full of blood and dead bodies. One image in particular drew my attention. It was of a young man whose body had been literally cut in half. Every time I saw it, I cried tears of pain and misery.

The date of the exhibition had been set and couldn't be altered, but I couldn't get my mind off the explosion that had cost that young man his life.

I wanted the world to see that scene, to grasp the extent of the tragedy and pain and to feel it the way I felt it. I wanted everyone to know that so many boys and girls have been killed while demonstrating in my city for justice and freedom. I was deep in all those muddled thoughts when my sister informed me that the deadline for submitting works for the exhibition had arrived and that everyone, apart from me had completed theirs.

Suddenly I decided to draw that young man with half his body lying on the ground. It was hard for me, but I gave it a go. I went to the classroom, took the colours I needed and began. I think I finished the painting quite quickly. It seems that because I was in such a hurry and so agitated,

I pricked my hand and added my blood to the painting, as a mark of compassion. I felt I was showing sympathy and support for the pain of our martyrs. I had created that painting with my soul, so when I finished it I felt quite satisfied. I noticed that the camp residents did not look kindly upon my work of art. I don't blame anyone. My father always said that it doesn't matter how others see you or what they think of you, what matters is what sort of person you are. "Do what you consider to be the right thing", he would say. His advice is engraved on my heart.

I submitted my painting to the organisers who were to hang it in the exhibition the following day. At the day of the opening, there were cameramen, journalists and critics present. I didn't think that anyone would like my painting but there were many visitors who showed a lot of interest.

They would stand in front of it, looking very curious. I would explain to them that the painting was nothing more than the portrayal of real life events in the city of Kabul. Many took photographs not just of the painting but of me too. I really enjoyed the exhibition opening.

A few days later, the man in charge of the camp showed us a newspaper with lots of photographs of us all: the children of the drawing class, the teachers, my brother, sister and me. There were group photographs but also one of me alone because, as the man in charge of the camp said, there was a discussion about all of our works on the television, but more specifically about mine.

Around four months later, I found out that someone had created an image of me with a young man using Photoshop, which they had then posted on Facebook and shared with everyone.

This made me really sad but also very angry. I didn't want to believe that there are people who do things like that. Aren't they ashamed to do such awful things?

Even though I informed those in charge, a few days later the same Photoshopped image appeared on Facebook again, this time with my sisters, a boy and me.

No one asked if they could put my photograph on Facebook. No one asked if they could take that photograph and Photoshop it to create a fake one which offends me. My rights are supposedly protected, but no one showed any respect for them.



November 20th – International Children's Rights Day – 2017 Campaign

# "I am silent, I whisper, I speak, I shout. I'll have my say!"

nother November has come round and we are here once more to remind everyone about children's rights through the campaign organised to coincide with International Children's Rights Day.

This year the campaign focuses on the freedom of expression and the children "will have their say!" They can do this in various ways: softly or loudly, with a whisper, even with silence.

Therefore our slogan is:

"I am silent, I whisper, I speak, I shout. I'll have my say!"

Do children have the right to dance? To sing? To express themselves with their body, or through drawing, writing, talking? Do they have the right to express their opinion freely? To be involved in decisions that concern them?

Do children have the right to have their opinion heard, respected and taken into consideration by adults?

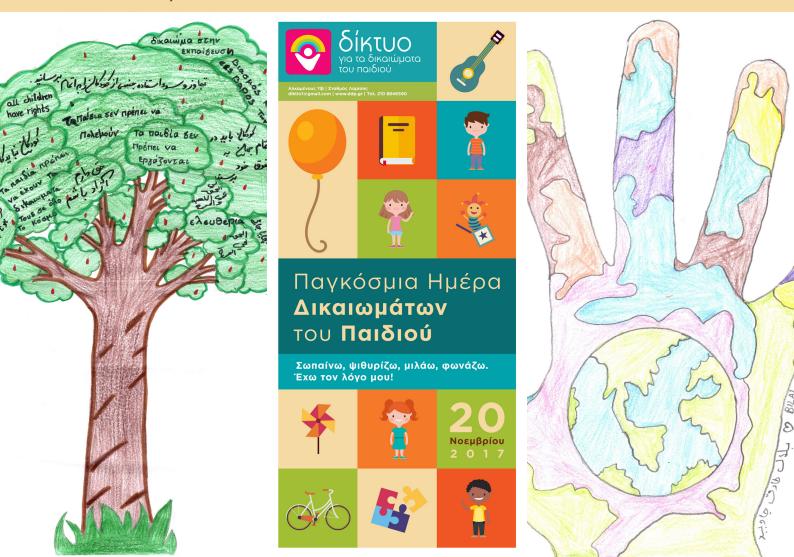
Whenever we talk about the rights of children, we tend to refer to the ones that concern daily life, the family, health, education, protection and discrimination. Often, the right to freedom of expression and opinion, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom to select one's own friends, to join a group and meet with that group, the right to privacy and the right to access information, all these tend to take second place.

Every day, instead of encouraging freedom of expression in children, we restrict it or discourage it. We prevent them from expressing their opinions both actively and passively. And even if we give them the space and the ability to express themselves, we do not listen, and we don't take give equal weight to what they have to say. Maybe it's because we don't think of children as independent beings, or because we don't think their opinion is important enough, or, even worse, we believe that they can't have an opinion because "after all, they are children, how should they know?" If we prevent them from exercising their rights, we essentially prevent them from recognising and understanding them.

Children's experiences in their environment, family, school and community will affect the sort of citizen they become. If the adults around them deny children their rights, or even limit them instead of encouraging them, how will these children grow into citizens who are informed, who can develop a point of view and are able to voice it, or who can use arguments to demand change both locally and globally. If adults do not listen to a child's point of view nor take it into consideration, how will that child become a citizen who respects the rights, expression and opinions of others?

Children who are encouraged to express their thoughts and whose opinions are respected, acquire the foundations to develop into adults who are able to have an in-depth understanding of the rights of man and the concept of democracy. They will have vision, daring and the ability to create and they will push for new ideas and opinions.

The children at the Network for Children's Rights "will have their say!" and the rest of us will listen. The Network's activities facilitate critical thought and become the means through which children can express themselves whichever way they wish: loudly or softly, through silence or free expression.



THE NEWSPAPER

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