
BENIN

Republic of Benin

Population: 8.4 million (4.3 million under 18)

Government armed forces: 4,800

Compulsory recruitment age: 18

Voluntary recruitment age: 18

Voting age: 18

Optional Protocol: ratified 31 January 2005

Other treaties ratified (see glossary):

CRC, GC AP I and II, ICC, ILO 138, ILO 182, ACRWC

There were no reports of under-18s in the armed forces.

Government

National recruitment legislation and practice

The 1990 constitution stated that the defence of the nation and its territorial integrity was the duty of all citizens, and that military service was compulsory under the terms set down by law (Article 32). Recruitment to the armed forces was governed by Law No. 63-5 of 30 May 1963, as amended by Ordinance No. 75-77 of 28 November 1975.

Benin's declaration on ratifying the Optional Protocol stated that the minimum age for voluntary recruitment into the armed forces or gendarmerie was 18, and that applicants had to submit a birth certificate and a certificate of school attendance.¹ Previously it had stated to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child that the age for voluntary and compulsory recruitment was 21.²

A new law on national service came into effect in October 2007.³ It provided that citizens between 18 and 35 would be liable for compulsory selection for military service in the national interest.⁴ Recruits, who had to have higher-education diplomas, would undertake military training before being deployed in sectors deemed to be in the national interest, including education and health.⁵

Developments

At a February 2007 ministerial meeting in Paris, Benin and 58 other states endorsed the Paris Commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups and the Paris Principles and guidelines on children associated with armed forces or armed groups. The documents reaffirmed international standards and operational principles for protecting and assisting child soldiers and followed a wide-ranging global consultation

jointly sponsored by the French government and UNICEF.

International standards

Benin ratified the Optional Protocol in January 2005.

- 1 Declaration on accession to the Optional Protocol, www2.ohchr.org.
- 2 Initial report of Benin to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, UN Doc. CRC/C/3/Add.52, 4 July 1997.
- 3 Loi no. 2007-27 portant institution du Service Militaire d'Intérêt National; Gouvernement du Bénin, Conseil des ministres no. 26/PR/SGG/Com/2007, 19 October 2007.
- 4 "Le service militaire est désormais obligatoire pour les jeunes Béninois", PANAPRESS, 24 September 2007, at www.jeuneafrique.com.
- 5 "Bientôt 3000 jeunes enseignants pour réveiller l'école béninoise", Fraternité (Cotonou), Bénin, 22 October 2007, at <http://fr.allafrica.com>.