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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Geledés - Instituto da Mulher Negra, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[4 February 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Addressing Violence against Children

In recent years, the issue of police violence against children and adolescents, particularly those of African descent, has gained prominence in the global discourse. This problem is not confined to specific regions; however, its ramifications are acutely felt in the Global South, with Brazil serving as a poignant example. Research conducted by the Violence Center at the University of São Paulo (USP) sheds light on the early experiences of children and adolescents with police violence, revealing a disturbing pattern of racial discrimination and selective law enforcement .

Between 2016 and 2019, the USP's Violence Center conducted interviews with adolescents aged 11 to 14 enrolled in public schools, exposing how racial discrimination and selective police interventions permeate the lives of young black individuals from an early age. The data for 2022 further underscore the severity of the issue, with 2,489 children and adolescents falling victim to homicides. Shockingly, 67.1% of victims aged 0 to 11 were black, while the percentage rose to 85.1% for those aged 12 to 17 . Additionally, between 2017 and 2019, 2,215 children became casualties of police interventions.

Within the last seven years in the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan area alone, 602 children endured gun violence, resulting in 267 fatalities and 334 injuries. The disconcerting frequency of stray bullets finding their mark on a child's body every four hours paints a bleak picture of the collateral damage stemming from armed conflicts within communities. In 2023, a staggering 80,000 students and 243 schools in the city of Rio de Janeiro have been adversely affected by police operations since the commencement of the academic year .

The impact of armed violence on children and adolescents surviving this undeclared war is multifaceted and severe. The physical and mental repercussions compromise their holistic development, manifesting as anxiety crises, fear of returning to school, and the development of cardiovascular diseases. These health challenges become enduring scars that shape the trajectory of these young lives.

The visible scars left by stray bullets are only the tip of the iceberg. Children who survive gunshot wounds often grapple with long-term physical disabilities, requiring ongoing medical attention and rehabilitation. The trauma associated with these incidents can manifest in various forms, from chronic pain to impaired mobility, robbing these youngsters of a normal, healthy childhood.

The psychological toll on children and adolescents exposed to chronic violence is immeasurable. Anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and depression become pervasive, hindering academic progress and social integration. Fear of violence permeates their daily lives, casting a shadow over their ability to focus on education and personal growth.

The crisis of police violence against children and adolescents in the Global South, exemplified by the situation in Brazil, demands urgent attention and systemic change. The statistics and stories from Rio de Janeiro illustrate the pervasive nature of this issue, affecting the most vulnerable members of society. Addressing the root causes, implementing comprehensive reforms in law enforcement, and investing in community-based initiatives are crucial steps toward ensuring a safer and healthier future for the children and adolescents who continue to bear the brunt of this hidden war.

The Human Rights Council must urge the Members States to include, as a mandatory component, content on human rights, racial relations, combating institutional racism, and fundamental rights and guarantees, as well as international human rights standards, in the training courses for members of justice and public security agencies.

1<https://nev.prp.usp.br/publicacao/a-experiencia-precoce-e-racializada-com-a-policia-2016-2019/>
2<https://forumseguranca.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/anuario-2023.pdf>

3<https://www.metropoles.com/colunas/guilherme-amado/operacoes-policiais-no-rio-de-janeiro-afetaram-80-mil-alunos-em-2023>