



Submission by Human Rights Watch to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on Cyprus

76th plenary session, September 2017

This submission relates to the review of Cyprus under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. It focuses on the issue of the protection of students, teachers, schools, and universities in situations of armed conflict.

In June 2015, Cyprus co-sponsored a resolution at the United Nations Security Council regarding children and armed conflict. Adopted as resolution 2225 (2015), it:

Expresses deep concern that the military use of schools in contravention of applicable international law may render schools legitimate targets of attack, thus endangering the safety of children and in this regard encourages Member States to take concrete measures to deter such use of schools by armed forces and armed groups.

Human Rights Watch believes that an example of such a concrete measure to deter the military use of schools would be for Cyprus to endorse and implement the Safe Schools Declaration.¹ The Safe Schools Declaration is a political commitment to better protect students, educational staff, schools, and universities during armed conflict. It was drafted through a consultative process led by Norway and Argentina in 2015. The Declaration includes a commitment to use the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict.²

As of June 2017, 66 countries—representing more than one-third of all UN member states—have already endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration, including 20 of Cyprus' fellow European Union member states. Moreover, 12 of the countries contributing to the peacekeeping mission in Cyprus as of May 2017—Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Ireland, Italy, Montenegro, Paraguay, Romania, and Slovakia—have also already endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration.

Human Rights Watch recommends that the Committee:

- Commend the government of Cyprus for its co-sponsorship of UN Security Council Resolution 2225 (2015).
- Ask what steps Cyprus has taken in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2143

¹ Safe Schools Declaration, May 28, 2015, https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/departementene/ud/vedlegg/utvikling/safe_schools_declaration.pdf (accessed October 19, 2016).

² Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*, March 18, 2014, http://protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/guidelines_en.pdf (accessed October 19, 2016).

(2014) and 2225 (2015), which encourage member states to take concrete measures to deter the military use of schools.

- Recommend that the government of Cyprus endorse and implement the Safe Schools Declaration.