

**Defending Rights of the Child and
Building a Safer Future for Children**

***“Every Child Matters”
“Our Children: Their Rights and Our Future”***

Tuesday, 21st July 2010
6:00pm – 9:00pm

Amnesty International UK | The Human Rights Centre
17-25 New Inn Yard
London EC2A 3EA

Speaker: Vijay Mehta

President, VM Centre for Peace
Chair, Action for UN Renewal

vijay@vmpeace.org
www.vmpeace.org
www.actionforunrenewal.org.uk

Other speakers include:

Kema Rajandran, Marianne Malky, Bruce Kent, Thana Narashiman, Hamid
Kamali-Shervadani, Kathy Hill, Len Aldis

Contents

20th June 2010

1. Introduction
2. The problem of escalating knife crimes, child soldiers and human trafficking.
3. Defending the convention of the rights of children.
4. Recommendations for building a safer future for children.
5. Conclusion.

Introduction

The violation of the rights of the child includes all forms of sexual exploitation, especially forced prostitution, abduction, trafficking, violence and degradation of children – one of the most evil problems of our times today.

Women and children in many parts of the world are sold to foreign slave markets. There are cases where even a 10-year old girl child already had a grown man husband that she was sold to.

According to the United Nations Report, over 27,000,000 people are bought and sold, held captive, brutalised, exploited for profit. These are the 21st century **SLAVES!**

Although it is hard to believe that slavery still exists in the world, but the poor and powerless often find themselves sacrificing their dignity, their children, their own bodies piece by piece, to global market with an appetite for inhuman profit.

The problem of escalating knife crimes, child soldiers and human trafficking.

Defending the convention on the rights of child.

The convention on the rights of the child is a magna carta for safeguarding children. All 54 articles under the Convention of the rights of the child are important. However, to keep focused on our talk today on articles that are concerned with separation and reunification with parents and family, kidnapping, respect for the views of the child, child labour, sexual exploitation, abduction sale and trafficking, protection from all forms of violence and war and armed conflicts.

However, the problem is not with the articles themselves, but with certain countries not signing the convention and others failing on enforcement and implementation of the convention.

Two countries have not even ratified the UN convention on Rights of the Child – Somalia and USA. Somalia as we know is a failed state without any effective government. So it cannot sign the convention and the country has no mechanism to enforce it.

However, in the case of America, there are reasons and suspicion among the Americans that if they ratify the convention, they will have to stop beating their children and so many other superficial fears. Furthermore, under the radical Obama administration, there is a real chance to sign the convention as President Obama is taking bold decisions as passing the healthcare legislation and have recently agreed with Russia a reduction in nuclear weapons. Considering these achievements there is real chance if we have a strong enough campaign to push the new American administration to sign the convention of the rights of the child, it can become a reality. So my suggestion is to start a campaign to “Ratify the Rights of the Child Convention.” Let us start a 100,000 signature campaign and send it to the White House.

Recommendations for building a safer future for children.

In a 24/7 entertained society frenetic with sound bites, Blackberries, iPods, text messages and emails, there is a deep need for reflection and introspection. We have to discuss face to face in living rooms, school auditoriums, village squares and town meetings what is happening to us and our diminishing democratic processes by the pressures and controls of the insatiable corporate state.

And what needs to be done from the home to the public arenas and marketplaces with old and new superior models, new accountabilities and new thinking.

For our history has shown that whenever the people get more engaged and more serious, they live better on all fronts.

- Design education for meeting the physical, mental and emotional needs of children for achieving their full potential.
- Hold school and university debates on model convention of the rights of the child for awareness, promoting and defending better human rights for children and youth.
- Lobbying elected leaders to make this issue a priority and use the full resources of our governments to stop it, including passing better legislation to protect and provide for the children caught in the rape trade.
- Tracking key trade routes and blocking ships carrying kidnapped girls and women in key transit ports.
- Writing and promoting programs tailored for children and youth like crafts and painting for very young and skills training such as swing and bag making. In other words finding hope and stability in the life of children.
- Promote social relationships that support intimacy and bonding.
- Teach children anger management techniques for cultivating a more peaceful behaviour.

Conclusion.

Teach children peace education and a culture of peace, which is key for an ethical foundation of our society and to protect the core values of life, shared responsibility and peaceful coexistence. These shared values comprise some of the most basic aspirations of human kind – freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and multiculturalism.

If there are more children and youth who can muster the courage to spread the message of peace, non-violence and love in the world, a time will come in the history of mankind when the perception of sudden change from a gun culture to a culture of peace becomes a reality. That period in history can become the golden age of living. The children and youth of today can make it happen as they have the advantage of information technology on their side.

The bottom line is we need to realise that defending children's rights is not a dream. It's a goal that each and everyone of us has to strive for and can contribute to working closely together everyday.

If we adults learn to be children all over again, have innocence, devoid of any conceit and lies, spontaneous in our response to the world then, most of our ills of today's society will disappear.

As Khalil Gibran the poet says in *The Prophet*

*Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.
They come through you but not from you,
And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.
You may give them your love but not your thoughts.
For they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.
You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.
For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.
You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.
The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.
Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;
For even as he loves the arrow that flies, so He loves also the bow*

Thank you for listening.

Three billion women, girls and children – nearly half of the world's population struggle to live on less than \$2 per day.

DECLARATION: Document stating agreed upon standards but is not legally binding. UN conferences, like the 1993 Conference on Human Rights in Vienna and the 1995 World Conference for Women in Beijing, usually produce two sets of declarations: one written by government representatives and one by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The UN General Assembly often issues influential but legally non binding declarations.

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (adopted 1989; entered into force 1990): Convention setting forth a full spectrum of civil, cultural, economic, social and political rights for children. Since its adoption, it has been ratified more quickly and by more governments than any other human rights instrument. The USA and Somalia are the only countries which have failed to ratify. The Convention is also the only international human rights treaty that expressly gives non-governmental organisations (NGOs) a role in monitoring its implementation (under Article 45a). Visit CRIN's page on the Convention [here](#)

The full version of this speech can be downloaded from:

VM Centre for Peace
Action for UN Renewal

www.vmpeace.org
www.action-for-un-renewal.org.uk

Vijay Mehta is president of VM Centre for Peace www.vmpeace.org , Founding Trustee of Fortune Forum Charity www.fortuneforum.org , Chair of Action for UN Renewal www.action-for-un-renewal.org.uk and co-Chair of World Disarmament Campaign. He is an author and global activist for peace, development, human rights and the environment. Some of his notable books are The Fortune Forum Summit: For a Sustainable Future, Arms No More, and The United Nations and Its Future in the 21st Century.

His latest book is on Global Warming and is called 'Climate Change IQ,' which is available to download free of charge in electronic form from the website www.climatechange365.co.uk He along with his daughter Renu Mehta founder of Fortune Forum charity held two summits in London in 2006 and 2007. The summits raised over a million pounds for charity and attracted a worldwide audience of 1.3 billion people (one fifth of humanity) including print and media coverage. The keynote speakers for the first and second summit were Bill Clinton, former US President and Al Gore, former US vice-President, and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize 2007.

Vijay Mehta has appeared in various TV programmes including BBC World, Press TV, Ajtak-24 hour Indian news channel, and Think Peace documentary, Canada, among others. The Sunday Times, Independent, Observer and Guardian newspapers, among other journals have written about him. His life is devoted to the service of peace, humanity and our planet