

Beyond Conflict and the Ukrainian Welcome Centre are proud to present

CHILD OF WAR: A HUMAN-RIGHTS AND MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

A Panel Discussion

London, 6 June 2024, 6-8pm

Introduction:

The 20th and early 21st centuries have witnessed the consolidation of international law, establishment of various multilateral mechanisms within and outside the UN system, emergence of modern collective security frameworks, and other political efforts aimed at prevention of aggression and war. Despite this, armed conflicts continue to break out and have the most severe effects on civilian populations, especially children. Today, more than 400 million children live in a country affected by war (UNICEF).

The targeting of civilians and children continues to be a norm in armed conflicts. The populations face death, injury, starvation, kidnapping, displacement, deportation. They suffer atrocities on a mass scale that often amount to genocide. As a consequence, many children around the world are living with fear of attack, losing loved ones, friends, home and country. This has led to a far-reaching consequence: a mental health crisis amongst children of war across the world.

This crisis has taken on alarming proportions: one in five children living in conflict zones have serious mental health issues, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), suffering from conditions like depression, anxiety, PTSD and panic attacks. From Ukraine to Gaza, children as young as five have thoughts of self-harm and suicide. Yet despite a growing and urgent need for help, there is a severe lack of funding and capacity on the ground to tackle this growing crisis.

Co-Organisers:

Beyond Conflict was formed in January 2018 to boost mental health support for victims of war and provide training for frontline workers. In six years, we have worked on projects in five countries: helping Ukrainian refugees; supporting widows and orphans in southern Iraq; supporting mental health training of frontline workers in the Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh; supporting MPHSS in the Palestinian West Bank in response to the regional conflict; and finally, a mental health project for youngsters in southern Israel affected by the 2023 Hamas attack.

From April 2022, the Ukrainian Welcome Centre has supported displaced Ukrainians in the UK, most of whom are mothers with children, many facing mental health issues acquired as a result of war and relocation. UWC is a point of contact for all essential information for arrival, settling, housing and long-term living in the UK as well as a social hub providing psychological support and helping Ukrainians network and stay connected to their culture and heritage. The Centre is headquartered on the premises of the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral in Mayfair.

Objectives and Key Themes:

- 1) Promote awareness and understanding of the unique challenges and vulnerabilities of children in conflict zones;
- 2) Discuss strategies and identify best practices for addressing the emotional and psychological needs of these children, highlight the empowering role of education in restoring normalcy and nurturing resilience amidst adversity;

- 3) Examine the importance of accessible and culturally sensitive mental health care and social support in conflict-affected settings;
- 4) Explore more effective ways of advocating for children's rights and ensuring their protection under international law in today's complicated political environment;
- 5) Identify the risks of the world's complacency and failure to act.

To throw a spotlight on the plight of children in the hot spots of today's, the panel discussion will capitalise on the concurrent Child of War Exhibition by Arabella Dorman, an award-winning artist and Beyond Conflict Ambassador.

Format:

The panel discussion will feature a line-up of distinguished speakers, including global and Ukrainian experts in child and refugee protection, and charity organisations. The target audience will comprise policymakers, academics, civil society, media representatives as well as members of the public with an interest in children's rights, humanitarian action and peacebuilding.

The event will be conducted on the premises of the Ukrainian Welcome Centre, 6 Weighhouse Street, London W1K 5LT.

Expected Outcomes:

- 1) Increased awareness and enhanced collaboration among stakeholders working to support and protect children affected by war;
- 2) Production of recommendations and strategies for improving the delivery of services for children in conflict-affected settings;
- 3) Mobilisation of resources and support for initiatives aimed at promoting the rights and well-being of children affected by war.

This panel discussion aims to encourage knowledge-sharing and networking among participants to provide insights into the experiences and needs of children of war, and explore the necessary steps to support and empower them.

This is also an important and timely opportunity to catalyse international action towards building a safer, more inclusive, and equitable world for all children, regardless of their circumstances.

Through dialogue, solidarity and advocacy, we can work towards upholding the rights and fulfilling aspirations of every child, everywhere.

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME

Welcome: Andriy Marchenko, Director of the Ukrainian Welcome Centre, and Edna Fernandes, Director/Co-Founder of Beyond Conflict (5 minutes total)

Film: Demonstration of a film on Child of War by the British film director Nick Turner (10 minutes)

Moderator: Welcome to the Panelists (5 minutes)

Moderating the event will be Edmund Newell, Chair of Beyond Conflict, Chief Executive of the educational foundation Cumberland Lodge, Windsor, and a priest in the Church of England. Previously, he was Sub-Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, Canon Chancellor of St Paul's Cathedral, where he was founding Director of St Paul's Institute, and a Research Fellow at Nuffield College, Oxford. He is the author/editor of eight books and a regular contributor to Pause for Thought on BBC Radio 2.

Panelists:

1) Arabella Dorman, an award-winning, internationally renowned artist and one of Britain's leading portrait painters. She has painted members of the Royal family, senior military personnel and other high-profile individuals. She is the curator of Child of War, an exploration of the impact of war upon children, in partnership with Beyond Conflict, of which she is an Ambassador. As an officially accredited British war artist, Dorman has worked across the Middle-East since 2006. She has been embedded with the British Army in Iraq (2006) and Afghanistan (2009 - 2013). Her humanitarian work has taken her to Gaza, Palestine & Israel (2017) Lebanon, Syria (2018) and most recently, Ukraine (2023). Dorman's work explores the realities of modern conflict, its immediate impacts and long-term consequences, and the light that can be born out of the darkness of war (*a 5-minute presentation*).

2) Iuliia Osmolovska, Director of the GLOBSEC Kyiv Office and a member of the Civil Council of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. Head of GLOBSEC Task Force on PTSD, head of GLOBSEC Task Force on Demining. Team lead on GLOBSEC Research Scars on Their Souls: PTSD and Veterans of Ukraine. A career diplomat with 15 years of Ukrainian diplomatic service, two diplomatic postings at the Embassy of Ukraine in the UK and other work for the governmental sector of Ukraine. She is a recognized media expert on international relations, EU affairs and security, diplomacy and the Russian-Ukrainian war (*a 10-minute presentation*).

3) Golam Abbas, a retiree from UNHCR, a UN Refugee Agency. Served twice in Bangladesh as UNHCR interim Country Representative. Also held a number of senior positions with the UN, *inter alia*, Representative, Thailand; Deputy Regional Representative in Central Europe; Head of East & Horn of Africa Desk at UNHCR HQs; Head of Operation Darfur, Sudan; Assistant Chief of Mission, Iran; Dep. Representative, Liberia; Senior Emergency Coordinator, Saudi Arabia; Head of Offices in Somalia & Tanzania; Senior Advisor, Ethiopia; and Senior Advisor with the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in Bangladesh. Served as UN Designated Officer for staff and operational safety and security in several countries; represented UN/UNHCR at numerous regional and global thematic fora on the topics of peace and reconciliation, conflict resolution, human rights, elimination of sexual exploitation and abuse, investigation, fraud detection and prevention, procurement and supply chain management, elimination of statelessness, staff welfare and mentoring, people-oriented planning and training of the trainers. Served twice in the UNHCR global board of Appointment, Promotion and Placement. Abbas is currently head of Global Development Corporation (GDC) and Beyond Conflict's partner on the project supporting the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh (*a 10-minute presentation*).

4) Hugh McLeod, Communications Lead for the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT), the world's leading network of legal and health professionals who support survivors of torture and other ill-treatment through rehabilitation and their fight for justice. Before joining the IRCT, Hugh qualified as a barrister at the English Bar having completed a Master's in International Human Rights Law at Oxford University. As a journalist based in the Middle East for a decade, Hugh reported for The Guardian and The Sunday Times, among others, covering war and political upheaval in Syria, Lebanon and Yemen. He is also an award winning documentary maker. 'Inside Assad's Torture Chambers', a short film featuring a child tortured in Syria and a regime perpetrator of torture, was part of an entry that won a 2011 Peabody Award.

5) Narmina Mammadova, Founder of the War Through Children's Eyes (WTCE) competition. She grew up in Baku, Azerbaijan, during a time of great change after the Soviet Union's collapse. She witnessed firsthand the devastation of war. Since its launch in 2022, the response to the competition has been overwhelming, with schools across the UK joining in. WTCE's aim is to give a voice to voiceless children affected by wars around the world. WTCE also supports charities like Beyond Conflict, providing much-needed help to survivors. Narmina's greatest ambition is to transform the competition's artwork into murals across numerous cities, honouring those lost in conflicts worldwide. Her greatest dream is a world where every child can sleep soundly, without fear of violence (*a 5-minute presentation*).

Open Discussion by the Panellists, led by the Moderator (20 minutes)

Audience Q/A (45 minutes)

Conclusion: Thanks/Invitation to Reception Drinks (Andriy Marchenko)