



PRESS RELEASE

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French Nonprofit Organizations Call for a UN Inquiry Into Violations of the Rights of Unaccompanied Minors in France

The French Council of Associations for the Rights of the Child (COFRADE) and Kids Empowerment have, with the support of other nonprofits and grassroots organizations, petitioned the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (hereafter the Committee) to denounce serious and systematic breaches of the rights of unaccompanied minors (UNAM) in France. This petition, declared admissible by the Committee, opens the possibility for an inquiry. This would be an essential step forward aiming at the reform of the regulatory framework currently in force in France and the evolution away from reprehensible local practices.

Based on the information provided in the [petition](#) prepared by two lawyers members of the Alliance of Lawyers for Human Rights (AADH), Camille Oberkamp and Delphine Mahé, the petitioners are asking the Committee on the Rights of the Child to:

- Conduct an inquiry into the alleged violations by France, a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, of the rights set forth in the said Convention with regard to the reception and support of unaccompanied minors present on the French territory,
- Submit comments and necessary recommendations ensuring the protection of the rights of these children.

To support their complaint, the petitioners provided the Committee with numerous quantitative and qualitative data, including concrete findings from the field demonstrating serious and systematic violations of the rights of unaccompanied minors in France, notably their right to unconditional protection. Access to healthcare, accommodation and education are also covered in the 80-page document, which concludes that without doubt, the rights of these minors deprived of parental care are not respected in France.

The petition considers that two main elements are responsible for the violations reported: the denial of underage status suffered by these children which deprives them of schemes of French child care protection, and unequal treatment suffered by these children on the French territory.

In addition, the inadequate financial, human and material resources allocated by the Government to the departments responsible for child care of these children, along neither an efficient control body nor state coordination, weaken all attempt at the protection of the rights of these particularly vulnerable children.

While thousands of unaccompanied minors present on French territory see their rights violated on a daily basis, the response from the Committee should lead to the legal recognition of a “presumption of underage status” still lacking despite the recommendations of the Constitutional Jurisdiction, the European Court of Human Rights and the Committee itself. Such recognition, would finally guaranty that child protection take precedence over any other consideration (including the fight against irregular immigration), while ensuring respect for the “best interests of the child”.

Currently, thousands of unaccompanied minors depend on the voluntary support of nonprofit and grassroots organizations whereas they should, like any other minor present on the French territory, benefit from state childcare protection schemes.

The parties :

- petitioning organizations
 - *the French Council of Associations for the Rights of the Child (COFRADE)*
 - *Kids Empowerment*
- supporting partner organizations
 - *Alliance of Lawyers for Human Rights (AADH)*
 - *The States General on Migration (EGM)*
 - *Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)*
 - *Sorority, Solidarity, Reception (SOROSA)*
 - *Utopia 56*

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