



OIDEL

INTERVENTIONS IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS 2025



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INTERVENTIONS IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN 2025

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

58th session – 24 February to 4 April 2025

ID: SRSG on children in armed conflict

Date: 12th March 2025

We would like to first thank the entire international community for raising awareness of the rights of children in armed conflict.

Secondly, we wish to underscore that the child exists as a part of the family. Parents are the primary source of guidance during a child's early development and life, providing the child with stability. The Parent-child bond reinforces the fact that the family exists as a unit, not as a group of disparate individuals. The family unit acts as a last line of defense for vulnerable children when conflict affects societies, and accordingly must be protected most vigorously in conflict zones. We must ask, what can human rights mechanisms accomplish to protect those most vulnerable in times of crisis?

Today, children in conflict zones are being forcibly separated from the family in numerous ways, and being deprived of their human rights as a result. They are removed from their families' custody and relocated to other countries, to be indoctrinated through compulsory education and used for propaganda. Elsewhere, they are being denied the right to education entirely, along with the right to healthcare. In extreme cases, institutions necessary for these rights, hospitals and schools, are being systematically targeted and destroyed. In some conflict zones, children are injured and killed indiscriminately alongside adult civilians.

These instances and others happening every day destroy the family unit, leaving children without effective guidance in their most formative years.

Will the international community emphasize the family as one of the most vulnerable communities suffering through all crises?

Link to intervention:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XK0XbUJANTw>



Josyane Zingg
Advocacy and Training Officer
OIDEL

Annual Discussion on Rights of the Child

Date: 13th March 2025

In a child's earliest years the parent is the primary conduit through which the child understands the world. The parent-child bond is the most important bond in a child's early life and studies show that heightened parental nurture has a positive effect on early child development.



The mother, for example, is uniquely positioned as the primary source of guidance in a child's early development, as carrying a child to term positively alters a woman's mental capacities, making her well equipped to helpfully shape a child's early development. This year we will have further discussions on the Optional Protocol on the Convention of the Right of the Child on free pre-primary and secondary education. In those discussions, we encourage the international community to not forget the important role of parents. The trust of public authorities towards parents is essential to grant the full realization of the rights of children in their earliest years.

Essential also, by consequence, is the support for nongovernmental schools that provide educational options acceptable and adaptable to nonmainstream families with different cultural values and identities.

In conclusion, it is essential that the role of the parent be given due respect when considering early childhood development and the right to equal access to quality pre-primary education.

Link to intervention:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hQ7acnPpzes>

UPR Outcome – Norway

Date: 24th March 2025



Audun Rae Secretary General of KFF

We thank the Norwegian government for its commitment to the UPR process.

We welcome Norway's acceptance of several recommendations calling on the delegation to promote and ensure the right to inclusive education for all.

However, independent schools in Norway are concerned by Norway's refusal to accept the recommendation made by the Netherlands that asked for a revision of the Independent Schools Act to ensure the right to establish new independent schools.

Norway's response to this recommendation is based on the following statement: "Norway is not obliged to contribute financially, or in any other way, to the operation of schools other than public schools."

Non-mainstream families have the right to provide their children with culturally acceptable and adaptable education. Denying public funding to non-public schools puts all the education costs on the shoulders of parents from these groups. Many of them are unable to bear such a financial burden, thus restricting their right to choose for their children schools, other than those established by the public authorities (art.13.3, ICESCR).

The CESCR states that the covenant "requires States to take positive measures that enable and assist individuals and communities to enjoy the right to education" (CESCR 1999, GC.13, par. 47).

The VETO right given to the local authorities in Norway deprives parents of providing their children with education in conformity with their own convictions.

The legal framework under which new non-governmental schools can be established and maintained must be based on human rights, rather than arbitrary local political majorities. We therefore call on the government of Norway to revise the Independent Schools Act and bring it in line it with international human rights law.



HRC-MANDATED EXPERT WORKSHOPS

Expert Workshop on Role on the Family – Session 1: Women and girls

Date: 28th –29th May 2025

Historically, human rights discourse has often centered on the individual. However, in many cases, a more holistic approach is essential. For countless children and women, the realization of their human rights cannot be achieved solely through individualistic means. It requires us to consider the rights of minority groups, of indigenous peoples, and of communities as a whole. Human beings often experience the joys and the sufferings of life not in isolation, but in community – with others. This shared humanity calls for a broader, more inclusive framework for the promotion and protection of rights.

As stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society.” Indeed, when children and women suffer human rights violations, they often experience these violations in common with their family members.

The Institute for Family Studies (IFS) has accumulated years of research showing that strong families and family-friendly policies are not only beneficial – they are among the most effective strategies for safeguarding the rights of children and women.

Today, we may hear about violations that occur within families. This is, tragically, true, just as violations can and do occur within indigenous groups, national minorities, States, or any human collective. However, weakening the foundational role of the family in response to such cases will not serve the interests of those we seek to protect. On the contrary, undermining the family risks harming children and women most of all.

Rather than erode the institution of the family, we must strengthen and support it as a vital ally in the promotion of human dignity and rights.

Expert Workshop on Role on the Family – Session 2: Education as cultural rights

Date: 28th–29th May 2025

In the Covenant on the Right of the Child, States Parties agree, in Art. 29, that the education of the child shall be directed to [...] c. The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, [...]. (CRCh, Art. 29.c)

Building roots in family and community is a critical part of a child's education. General Comment 21 of the CESCR gives us insight as to why this is in the best interest of the child. It says States should recall that the fundamental aim of educational development is the transmission and enrichment of common cultural and moral values in which the individual and society find their identity and worth. (CESCR, GC. 21, Art. 26)

The transmission of moral and cultural values is in the best interest of the child because such values provide the setting in which the identity and the worth of the child is built up.



Josyane Zingg

Advocacy and Training Officer OIDEL at the Expert Workshop on the Role on the Family



Who are the actors most important in the early stages of childhood? As stated in many occasions throughout this workshop, it's the parents, the caretakers, the family. They are the first and most important transmitters of cultural values and identity of the child.

Therefore, if States want to ensure the enjoyment of cultural rights of the child in education, they should follow two recommendations given by the SR on minority issues earlier this year.

- States should create participatory platforms involving parents and local minority communities in the design, monitoring and assessment of education policies; (A/HRC/58/69, para. 11.b.)
- States should support minority-led non-governmental schools, based on human rights principles, enabling them to offer free and culturally relevant education aimed at preserving and promoting the cultural, linguistic and religious identities of minorities (A/HRC/58/69, para. 11.e.)

It's with these measures based on trust between State, parents, community and child that the cultural rights of the child in education can be granted.

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL 59th session – 16 June to 9 July 2025

**ID: SR on Right to Education
Date: 19th June 2025**

We wish to respectfully raise a concern regarding certain formulations in the report assessing the educational system of the United States, in particular the reference in paragraph 41 to a universal “right to public education”.



*Josyane Zingg
Advocacy and Training Officer OIDEI at the 59th Session of
the Human Rights Council*

This language departs from the established international legal framework. While Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights guarantees the right to education, it does not equate that right with government-operated education alone. On the contrary, Article 13(3) explicitly affirms the liberty of parents to choose for their children schools other than those established by public authorities.

Framing the right to education as exclusively a right to public schooling risks inverting the proper hierarchy of rights, at the expense of parental freedom and diversity of provision. It is important to note that none of the core international human rights instruments—the ICESCR, ICCPR, or CRC—recognize a “right to public education” per se. Rather, they uphold the broader right to education, while safeguarding pluralism and parental choice.

We have observed that in various contexts, language emphasizing a singular model of provision has preceded forms of indirect discrimination against minorities in the educational sphere. In particular, a narrow interpretation that focuses solely on State provision may unintentionally marginalize children whose families seek pedagogical or cultural alternatives better aligned with their convictions.

We therefore encourage a more inclusive framing—one that reflects the full scope of international standards, respects diversity of provision, and upholds the rights of families and minority communities.

Link to intervention: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qCwdoAjZAMA>



PD: Item 1: Protecting the right to education: gaps and strengths in the international legal framework – pathways for strengthening accountability in protecting children's right to education

Despite some differences we might have, always a pleasure to heard from two honest people from which OIDEI has learned a lot. I would like to address some of the comments regarding private education and the obligations of States toward these actors.

It is essential to distinguish between for-profit and non-profit non-governmental schools. Many non-profit schools—founded by parents, faith-based organizations, or NGOs—play a crucial role in guaranteeing the right to education as a public good. They often ensure access where the State is absent, such as in remote areas, situations of conflict, or after natural disasters.

They also provide meaningful, acceptable, and adaptable education to non-mainstream communities. I would say that these schools rather than a burden for the realization of human rights are a pillar.

Explicitly excluding these institutions from public funding risks placing an undue burden on families, and therefore families, who, for cultural or other legitimate reasons, choose non-profit non-governmental schools.

In fact, many countries—and even constitutional courts—have affirmed the positive obligations of States to support non-profit schools, particularly in protecting the rights of non-mainstream groups.

This recognition is also reflected in international practice making the distinction between for-profit and non-for-profit. For example, a recent Resolution of the European Parliament states, and I quote: “Encourages, with regard to increasing inclusiveness and ensuring freedom of educational choice, the provision of adequate financial support for schools of all categories and levels, both state schools and not-for-profit private schools.” End of quote.

As we are talking about a binding document, it is important to be precise and that cannot be used by governments to discriminate non-mainstream groups. I would like to invite consideration of an alternative approach: rather than limiting public funding exclusively to State schools, we could affirm that such funding should support all schools that provide education as a public good or public service.

OTHER ORAL INTERVENTIONS

Open-ended intergovernmental working group on an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child Date: 1st to 3rd September 2025

OIDEI, as an NGO specialized in the right to education, is pleased to see the international community joining forces to reinforce their obligations regarding this right. Education is the right that enables us to know who we are, to engage with the world in which we live, and to transform it. Extending the obligations of States to guarantee pre-primary and secondary education would be very good news.



Open-ended intergovernmental working group on an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child



I would like to stress one important dimension, though—one that this Optional Protocol should not overlook if it is to achieve its goals.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes the responsibilities, and therefore the rights and duties, of parents to provide appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the Convention. This recognition is critical to ensuring access to an education that is adaptable and acceptable, particularly for children belonging to minorities and non-mainstream groups.

Non-governmental schools play a vital role in enabling children from non-mainstream groups to understand who they are, to define who they want to be, and to negotiate their identity on equal footing with others. They are critical in order parents belonging to non-mainstream groups to properly guide their children in learning them who they are, their language, their values and their traditions.

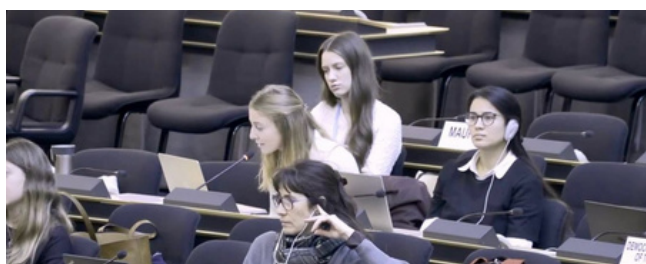
Education has too often been used—both in the past and still today—not as a human right, but as a political tool. The International Commission on the Futures of Education warned that education has been used “as a vehicle for assimilation of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities into mainstream societies, or as a vehicle of religious indoctrination.”

Minorities and indigenous communities are acutely aware of this. Too often, these groups either cannot find schools that are acceptable and adaptable for their children, or cannot access them because they are not publicly funded and therefore require tuition payments.

We encourage the international community to move forward in ensuring that all children can access an education that is available, accessible, adaptable, and acceptable—independent of their family’s income. Many states, according to our research at least 25% of the UN state members, have good legal frameworks that ensure not only that education is a public good, but also that parents can access, free of charge, an education that is acceptable and adaptable for their children regardless of family income.

Only by upholding these principles can we ensure that the right to preprimary and secondary education truly serves every child, in every community, without exception.

Social Forum: ID: Political Rights (Participation, Voice, Citizenship)
Date: 30–31 October 2025



Sonja Winkler
Intern at OIDEI

As stated in art. 13 of the ICESCR, education should prepare people to take part in a free and democratic society.

To achieve this, the education system should be a space that promotes cultural diversity and mutual understanding between different groups, especially in our increasingly pluralistic world. We have seen that public education alone cannot respond to those needs because a single model of education risks marginalizing minorities.



How can an education system best foster a wide diversity of communities? By recognizing and respecting parental rights in education as affirmed in art. 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reflected in other international human rights instruments. Respecting parental rights in education allows every child to receive an education that reflects their cultural context.

In this regard, the European Court of Human Rights has affirmed on several occasions that the duty to respect parental rights means more than merely acknowledging them, it also implies positive obligations for states. (as in *Lautsi and Others v. Italy* (§ 61) and *Campbell and Cosans v. the United Kingdom* (§ 37)). The court underlined, (in *Folgerø v. Norway* (§84)) that upholding these rights and promoting educational pluralism are essential conditions to preserve a democratic society.

Furthermore, the CESCR General Comments 13 and 21, require States to take concrete steps, such as supporting diverse educational institutions and providing financial support for them, so that all families can effectively exercise their freedom of choice, for children to receive culturally relevant education and, in that way, can participate meaningfully in the rich exchange of perspectives that form the foundation for a plural and democratic society.

Link to intervention:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZyia-kJaGA>

Forum on Minority Issues: ID: Item 1: Building trust and social cohesion: addressing barriers to peaceful coexistence
Date: 27th–28th November 2025

Cohesion grows when diversity is recognized as a strength, not a challenge. Minorities are not outside contributors, they are part of the social fabric itself. What does this mean for education?

It means respecting their right to freedom of education. It means granting parents in minority communities the right to choose an education that reflects their culture, language, and belief. This is what freedom of education means: real access to quality education that also respects the convictions and identity of families.

A common concern is that allowing such diversity might fragment societies. Yet research does not support this assumption. A study of OIDEL together with CEU-CEFAS found no correlation between educational freedom and social fragmentation. For example, some of the countries with the greatest diversification in schooling options, such as Belgium and the Netherlands, are not fragmented societies.

Of course, minority-led schools, like all schools, must be aligned with the minimum educational standards set by the State. However, States must not set those standards in a way to undermine parental and cultural rights. Standards must remain compatible with the acceptability and adaptability of education also for minorities.



Elena L'Eplattenier
Intern at OIDEL

This is where social cohesion grows through education: Where governments respect this balance and trust parents and communities as partners, minority groups become co-creators of the education system.

Link to intervention: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ilLBj-iINZI>

International symposium on the future of the right to education: Renewing global commitments and charting future direction

Digitalisation, displacement, and broader societal shifts are moving us toward a common space that is increasingly less homogeneous and more plural. This reality has profound implications for the right to education.

These transformations present genuine opportunities, but also significant risks. On the one hand, they can foster education systems that are more pluralistic, encourage intercultural dialogue, and better reflect the needs of diverse communities. On the other hand, they may lead to systems in which non-mainstream groups face growing discrimination, where only those who belong to dominant communities, or who have sufficient resources, can access culturally relevant education.

Intercultural dialogue on an equal footing, and education rooted in one's culture, depend on preventing this divide.

As early as 2015, UNESCO's report *Rethinking Education: Towards a Global Common Good?* warned that, to address emerging challenges to the right to education, the traditional public-private distinction was no longer sufficient.

In an increasingly plural world, trust becomes a key word. Children are not isolated islands; they flourish within families, communities, and cultural environments. For this reason, we propose two pillars to foster trust.

First, moving forward requires placing parents and civil society at the center of the education discussion.

Second, it is essential to establish frameworks in which all actors in the educational ecosystem can meet and shape evolving minimum requirements, while allowing parental and civil society initiatives to flourish.



International symposium on the future of the right to education: Renewing global commitments and charting future direction



OIDEL Kyoto Building c/o COE, Chemin du Pommier 42, 1218 Le Grand Saconnex, Suisse



+41 22 789 29 49



<https://www.oidel.org/>



oidel@oidel.org



OIDEL