

## Children Human Rights Defenders: A Day of Discussion.



Illustration: Gina Thorstensen

### Who are human rights defenders?

Human rights defenders are people who take action to defend their own rights or those of others.

One famous example is **Malala** who has argued for girls' right to education in Pakistan and now defends the right to education all over the world.

### Who is having the day of discussion?



The United Nations **Committee on the Rights of the Child** is a group of 18 experts from all over the world that gives advice to governments about how to keep the promises they made to children under the **Convention on the Rights of the Child**.

The Convention contains rights that are very important when children are acting as human rights defenders.

These include the rights to:

- access information
- express views freely
- have views taken seriously
- be safe and protected from harm
- join a group
- join a public assembly (such as a protest)
- learn about human rights

### Why are they interested in discussing this?

It is generally only adults who are called 'human rights defenders'. Instead, children are called things like 'civic actors' or 'agents'.

Often children don't appear in documents that set out protections for human rights defenders.

This is in spite of the fact that children can face extra challenges when they act as human rights defenders. These include:

- Children cannot access information as easily as adults.
- Laws stop them joining or setting up their own groups.
- Adults don't take them seriously.
- Adults decide that children cannot get involved.

- Some children do not get included in discussions.

### What will happen at the day of discussion?

The day of discussion will take place in the Palais de Nations Geneva in Switzerland.



Some of the things that will be discussed will be:

- **The role that children can and do play as human rights defenders.**
- **What helps children to act as human rights defenders.**
- **What the barriers are and what risks children face.**
- **How to protect children human rights defenders.**
- **How children can be supported by adults to act as human rights defenders.**

The Committee will ask politicians and experts for their ideas on all of these issues.

The Committee wants to make sure that children's views are part of the discussion.

It will do this by talking to children across the world before the day, making sure that children take part in the discussions on the day itself and keeping them informed and involved afterwards.

### What will happen afterwards?

Once the day of discussion has taken place, a report and a video of the day will be put on the Committee's website. There will also be a child-friendly version of the report.

The Committee and other human rights bodies will use the ideas to inform its work and promote the rights of children human rights defenders. It might issue special guidance to governments and others on the issue.

Children human rights defenders and children's organisations will be able to use the day of discussion to argue for better protections for children who are, or seek to become, a human rights defender.

### Who is helping the Committee to organise the day of discussion?

The Committee is in charge of the event but Child Rights Connect, working with many children's organisations, will be organising and making the day happen.

