

GLOSSARY

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PRE-READING

1 Working in small groups, answer the following questions.

1. What is a civil war? What can you remember about the American Civil War?
2. In which countries in the world are there wars today?

READING

2 Read the passages and complete the following sentences.

1. More than 200,000 people
2. Wars today are different because
3. Many women and children
4. Bombs and landmines
5. Ex-child soldiers
6. The United Nations protocol says that

From armies to civilians

On May 8th 1945, thousands of British people celebrated VE Day (Victory in Europe Day) in Trafalgar Square, happy that a terrible conflict, in which millions of soldiers and civilians died, was over. However, the war continued outside Europe, and only ended after two nuclear bombs were dropped on the Japanese towns of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing over 200,000 people. But sadly, the Second World War did not stop conflict. Since 1945, there has been fighting **nearly** every day somewhere in the world, and it is estimated that over 30 million people have lost their lives as a result. One of the characteristics

of wars today is the fact that they involve more and more civilians. This is because most of them are not wars between different states, but internal ethnic or religious conflicts. Their aim is often to send ethnic groups away from certain areas, as in ex-Yugoslavia, the Caucasus and Africa. So, the wars of the past, where professional **armies** of soldiers fought in fields far away from towns and cities, have now disappeared. At the beginning of the 20th century, civilians represented only 5 per cent of fatalities in war; this percentage increased to 15 per cent during World War I, and then to 65 per cent by the end of World War II. Today, more than 90 per cent of the deaths in wars are of civilians, including many women and children.



Today's wars



Children at war

One of the most tragic aspects of war today is that millions of its victims are children. A United Nations report found that war now kills more children than soldiers. About 2 million children have been killed in wars in the last 10 years, and 6 million have become disabled, often because of bombs or **landmines**. There are 90-100 million unexploded landmines in the world, above all in countries of the developing world, and each year, 10,000 children are victims of them.

In some countries, children are even forced to take an active part in conflicts. There are 250,000 child soldiers in the world: they fight in wars, or serve as spies or messengers. Most child soldiers are aged between 15 and 18 years old, but some are

younger than 15. They are forced to become soldiers: adult soldiers take them away when they are at school, at home or on the streets. One of the reasons why child soldiers are used in wars is that it is easier to force them to obey orders and to commit acts of violence. In addition, it is very hard for them to escape, and many of them do not have families to go back to.

This brutal situation has terrible psychological effects on these children, and it is extremely difficult for them to be reintegrated into society.

Many organizations are trying to prevent this abuse of children: the *Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers* was created in 1998, and in 2000 the United Nations produced a protocol on the protection of children in armed conflicts, which says that the minimum age to be a soldier is 18. These organizations want to make sure that children are protected from the worst horrors of war.

As one 15-year old girl from Uganda said: "I would like you to give a message. Please do your best to tell the world what is happening to us, so that other children don't have to pass through this violence".

(source: Amnesty International)



WRITING

3 Here are the answers to some questions based on the passages. Write the questions, using the question words given.

1. Over 30 million. How many
2. Because most of them are ethnic conflicts. Why
3. They fight in wars, or serve as spies or messengers. What
4. In countries of the developing world. Where
5. In 1998. When

SPEAKING EXAM practice

4 Prepare a short oral report about how children suffer in wars today, mentioning the following points:

- number of children killed
- number of children disabled
- landmines
- child soldiers