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# BELIZE

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## Belize

**Population:** 251,000 (113,000 under 18)

**Government armed forces:** 1,050 (estimate)

**Compulsory recruitment age:** not specified

**Voluntary recruitment age:** 18

**Voting age:** 18

**Optional Protocol:** ratified 1 December 2003

**Other treaties ratified** (see glossary):

CRC, AP I and II, ICC, ILO 138, ILO 182

***There were no reports of under-18s in the armed forces. The minimum age for voluntary recruitment is 18.***

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## Government

### National recruitment legislation and practice

The armed forces, established under the Defence Ordinance of 1977, are responsible for external security and other duties as defined by the Governor General. The police force has primary responsibility for law enforcement and maintenance of order.<sup>1</sup>

The Defence Act provides that volunteers for enlistment must be at least 18 years old (Section 16). Conscriptioin is not prescribed in the Defence Act, but is at the Governor General's determination. When the initial report of Belize to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child was discussed, the Committee recommended that a minimum age of conscription be established at 18.<sup>2</sup> In its second report to the Committee, the Belize government stated that "it is considered inconceivable that [the minimum age for conscription] would ever be set at an age below the age of voluntary enlistment". It also stated that there was merit in "reviewing whether this should be established within the provision of the Act".<sup>3</sup>

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1 Amnesty International, *Government commitments and human rights in Belize*, 5 July 2000, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/engindex>.

2 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding observations: Belize, UN Doc. CRC/C/15/Add.99, 10 May 1999, <http://www.ohchr.org>.

3 Second periodic report of Belize to UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, UN Doc. CRC/C/65/Add.29, 13 July 2004 (to be considered by the Committee in January 2005).