
BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

Brunei Darussalam

Population: 350,000 (126,000 under 18)

Government armed forces: 7,000

Compulsory recruitment age: no conscription

Voluntary recruitment age: 17^{1/2} years (younger with consent)

Voting age: not applicable

Optional Protocol: not signed

Other treaties ratified (see glossary):

CRC, GC AP I and II

The minimum voluntary recruitment age was 17^{1/2} years, but figures for serving under-18s were not available. The armed forces included a “boys’ wing” in which 15 to 17 year olds could enrol for training. Provision appeared to exist for members of the boy’s wing to be enlisted into the armed forces under some circumstances.

Context

Brunei Darussalam has been ruled by royal decree under an absolute monarchy since 1963. From 1962 the United Kingdom (UK) has maintained an army battalion in the country. Although two political parties were permitted in 1985, one was dissolved 13 years later, while the other was subjected to harassment and became inactive.¹

Government

National recruitment legislation and practice

There is no conscription and enlistment is voluntary.² However, the constitution states that “when a Proclamation of Emergency has been made ... His Majesty the Sultan ... may make any Orders whatsoever which he considers desirable in the public interest”, including requiring people to do work or render services (Section 83).³

The Brunei government’s 2003 report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child states that under the Royal Brunei armed forces act, recruiting officers may enlist “eligible persons” who have reached the age of 17^{1/2} years into the armed forces or the reserves (Sections 12 and 13). The report states in addition that “Section 13 also makes provision to allow the recruiting officer to enlist eligible young persons into the Armed Forces or the Reserves Regiment for the purpose of raising and maintaining any unit consisting of

or including boy soldiers or boy reservists with written consent from the boy’s parents, person with parental rights and powers or the District Officer”.⁴

Military training and military schools

The Training Centre, one of the five main units of the armed forces, is responsible for military training, and includes a cadet school and a boys’ company.⁵

The armed forces have a Boys Wing, created in 1979, which provides a two and a half year training program for students aged about 15 to 17 looking for careers as armed forces engineers and technicians. As of January 2004, 619 recruits had graduated from the Boys Wing, of whom 424 were still working with the armed forces.⁶

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- 1 BBC, “Country Profile: Brunei”, updated 13 November 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk>.
 - 2 Government of Brunei Darussalam, <http://www.brunei.gov.bn/government/contitut.htm>.
 - 3 BruneiDirect.com, Emergency (Supplementary Supply) (1999) (No. 4) Order, 1999, <http://www.brudirect.com/BruneiInfo/info/supplementary.htm>; A. P. Blaustein and G. H. Flanz (ed.), *Constitutions of the countries of the world*, Oceana Publications, New York, 1971.
 - 4 Initial report of Brunei Darussalam to UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, UN Doc. CRC/C/61/Add.5, 13 March 2003, <http://www.ohchr.org>.
 - 5 Ministry of Defence, <http://www.mindef.gov.bn/rbaf1.htm>.
 - 6 Royal Television Brunei, “Doa kesyukuran held to mark Boys Wing’s Silver Jubilee”, 3 January 2004, <http://www.rtb.gov.bn/NewsUpdate/2004/January/030104/main2.htm>.