

Children's Safety and Security

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Editorial

We are currently facing a new problem in western countries, i.e., how to preserve the cultural and personal identity of immigrants and at the same time guarantee security to our inhabitants and citizens. This is a huge field involving both a broad number of different cultures and situations, and the additional difficulties which are caused by terrorism. Although cultural values are essential, it is extremely important to avoid ambiguity. While worldwide birth registration provides children with civil rights, including health care, social services, and education, security also increases thanks to personal identification. Extreme poverty adds further risks. Education is one important aspect in preventing criminal acts and terrorism, because it is easier for criminal associations and terrorism to recruit people on the fringe of poverty and social isolation. In the currently existing melting pot, names lack constancy and reliability as a basis for identification.

The respect of children's identity, under different viewpoints, is a huge problem which involves some aspects related to security both in industrialized countries and in underdeveloped areas. One of the most commonly used methods of identifying people is by their names. Everyone has a name, but the way of assigning names and registering them is different around the world and the use of family names varies among cultures. The legal and administrative systems of many countries have difficulties with non-European names, which may, for example, have different sequences, have additional components in the name, may be incomplete, may be assigned in unfamiliar ways (e.g. the

surname may come from the matriarchal rather than patriarchal line, they change in ways or at times that are foreign to local traditions) and can vary depending on the local context.

As reported by UNICEF, nowadays many children do not have a formal identity. Having an official identity is a fundamental human right. This is also proof of the child's relationship with his/her parents, family, nationality. Later, when unregistered children grow up, they may be unable to apply for a formal job or a passport, open a bank account, get a marriage license, vote or obtain social security.

Every day, news programs report stories about children in war zones and in underdeveloped countries who lose both their own personal identity and their cultural and familial identities. Children's sufferings during wartime are one of the ugliest aspects of war. In addition, for many children difficulties and sufferance do not end when the war is over. In the wake of war, children fathered by foreign or enemy soldiers become victims of social harassment and fail to receive the social benefits available to most children. These so-called war children are often socially stigmatized and denied even the most elementary education and social security. War children suffer from the loss of identity because they may not know who their father is, and in many cases even who their mother is.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989 and ratified by 192 countries. By ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Governments agreed to safeguard children from violence and remissness.