

Ishmael Beah

Author, ex-Child Soldier and Child Advocate

Born in Sierra Leone in 1980, Ishmael Beah was recruited to fight as a child soldier at the age of thirteen. He fought for over two years before he was removed from the army by UNICEF and placed in a rehabilitation home. There, he struggled to regain his humanity and to reenter the world of civilians, who viewed him then with fear and suspicion.

Mr. Beah now works to bring attention to the plight of child soldiers around the world, speaking at the UN General Assembly, serving on a UN panel with Secretary General Kofi Annan and discussing the issue with dignitaries such as Nelson Mandela and Bill Clinton. He is a member of the Human Rights Watch Children's Rights Division Advisory Committee and has spoken before the UN, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Center for Emerging Threats and Opportunities (CETO), the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory and on many NGO panels on children affected by war. He currently runs the the Ishmael Beah Foundation, a private institution dedicated to helping former child soldiers reintegrate into society and to improve their lives.

Mr. Beah finished his last two years of high school at the United Nations International School in New York. He graduated from Oberlin College with a B.A. in political science in 2004.