

OPEN LETTER

Joint Letter on Abolishing Statutes of Limitations for Sexual Crimes Against Children

We the undersigned are writing to express our deep concern that statutes of limitations on sexual crimes against children remain in force in many countries around the world. These arbitrary time limits deny survivors their fundamental right to justice and protect perpetrators from accountability.

Survivors of child sexual abuse and exploitation often need years, sometimes decades, before they are able to disclose what happened to them. Trauma, fear of stigma, social taboos, and lack of trust in institutions are well-documented reasons why disclosure is delayed. Yet when survivors are finally ready to speak, too many are met with closed doors: prosecutors cannot act, perpetrators go free, and survivors are retraumatised by being told “it is too late”.

The consequences are devastating. By enforcing these time limits, governments:

- Silence survivors and deny them access to justice.
- Enable perpetrators to escape accountability, leaving them free to continue harming children.
- Undermine trust in justice systems and international human rights commitments.

There are encouraging signs of progress. The European Union has taken decisive steps to strengthen protections for children: in May 2025, Members of the European Parliament’s Civil Liberties Committee (LIBE) voted unanimously in favour of abolishing time limits on the prosecution of sexual crimes against children across the EU. On 17 June 2025, European lawmakers reinforced this commitment by formally voting to abolish statutes of limitations for child sexual abuse and exploitation. This sets an important precedent for governments worldwide to follow.

Every survivor has a right to their day in court, no matter how much time has passed. Survivors should never again be told that it is “too late” to seek justice for the crimes committed against them.

We therefore call on all governments to:

- Abolish all statutes of limitations for child sexual abuse and exploitation crimes.
- Ensure survivor-centred justice systems, with trauma-informed processes that respect dignity, safety, and support.
- Reinforce commitments to children’s rights, aligning with international standards including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the ECOSOC Guidelines on Justice in Matters Involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime.

The credibility of governments’ commitments to children’s rights and to ending sexual violence will be measured by their willingness to remove these unjust barriers. We urge you to act now—justice must never expire.

Sincerely,

- ECPAT International
- The Brave Movement
- Together for Girls
- Child Global
- “Hope For Children” CRC Policy Center
- Advocating the Rights of Children
- Agarrados à Net
- All Survivors Project
- ARALMA - Argentina
- Association Mauritanienne pour la Santé de la Mère et de l'Enfant (AMSME)
- ASTRA - Anti-Trafficking Action
- Barnahus - Georgia
- BAYTI
- BIFERD
- Børns Vilkår
- CAMELEON Association
- Center for Missing and Exploited Children - Croatia
- Centre for Services and Information on Disability (CSID)
- Centrs Dardedze
- Child Helpline International
- Child Rights Centre Albania
- Child Rights Group Pakistan Pediatric Association
- ChildFund Alliance
- Children of India Foundation

- ChildSafeNet
- ChildX
- Coalition ChildSafetyON France
- Connect Children Now (DCI - Lebanon)
- Defence for Children - Liberia
- Defence for Children International
- Defence for Children International - Canada
- Defence for Children International - Italia
- Defence for Children International - Palestine
- Defence for Children International - Sierra Leone
- Defensa de Niñas y Niños - Internacional (DNI - Costa Rica)
- Défense des Enfants International Belgique (DEI - Belgique)
- Democracy School (DCI - Yemen)
- ECPAT Belgium
- ECPAT Germany
- ECPAT Switzerland
- ECPAT Türkiye
- Egyptian Foundation for Advancement of the Childhood Condition (DCI-Egypt)
- Elieen Rebirth & Ethelios
- Faith, Hope, Love
- Family for Every Child
- FENADEB
- Fondazione SOS il Telefono Azzurro ETS
- Free a Girl Netherlands
- Fundación ANAR
- Good Thinkers Organization
- Hands Against Child Marriage
- Healing Together Uganda
- Hintalovon Foundation (ECPAT Hungary)
- IFM-SEI (International Falcon Movement - Socialist Educational International)
- Ignite Philanthropy
- Imagine1day
- Innocence in Danger
- Instituto de Apoio à Criança
- International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC)
- International Justice Mission - Deutschland
- International Policing and Public Protection Research Institute (IPPPRI)
- International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN)
- Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC)
- Islamic Relief Bangladesh
- Kék Vonal Gyermekkrízis Alapítvány - Hungary
- Marie Collins Foundation
- MenAsWell
- Missing Children Europe
- Neglected Children and Women Foundation (ECPAT Bulgaria)
- Network for Children's Rights (Greece)
- Plan International

- Projecto MiudosSegurosNa.Net
- Protect Children ry
- Public Health Foundation of Georgia
- RBC Trust (Stop Global Movement)
- Rede da Criança
- RENEW - Bhutan
- SEJIWA Foundation - Indonesia
- Shakti Samuha
- Stiftung Digitale Chancen - Digital Opportunities Foundation Germany
- SUSTAIN Cameroon
- Terre des Hommes Netherlands
- The First Children's Embassy in the World Megjashi - Macedonia
- The Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures
- The Smile of the Child
- Thorn
- Ubuchingo Defence for Children International Zambia (DCI - Zambia)
- Victim Support Europe
- World Vision International
- YouthKommunity