

## Press release

Project team: A day for the Children of War

The National Association of Finnish War Children (in Sweden)

### **A Day for the Children of War: 20<sup>th</sup> November in Stockholm and London**

**On 20<sup>th</sup> November, 1989 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. On the same date this year (and years to come), Finnish War Children in Sweden will honour all children of war anywhere in the world. A meeting will take place in the Finnish Church in Stockholm as well as in London's Westminster Abbey. The focus will be on the situation of today's children in and from countries affected by war. We appeal to everyone who shares our concern for children of war to gather friends and acquaintances to commemorate "A Day for the Children of War" by engaging in activities that would strengthen all war children and could help to ease their plight.**

During World War II (1939-1945) the most extensive transfer of children in modern history took place. All over Europe millions of children were evacuated from their homes, away from the horrors of war, either to safer rural areas or to other countries less affected by the fighting. In many countries in Europe former war children, now retired, have organized themselves in associations in order to deal with their often severe traumatic memories as well as coping with their daily life.

Nearly 80,000 Finnish children were sent from war-torn Finland to stay in neutral Sweden until the war was over. The youngest were only a couple of months old; the oldest had reached the age of 14. They were victims of war, as were the children who remained in Finland. Today there are associations in Finland of children who were evacuated, of children of veterans of military and civil war efforts, of German soldiers serving in Finland, of prisoners of war, and of orphans bereaved of one or both parents. The Swedish National Association of Finnish War Children currently has close to 700 members; war children who for various reasons remained in Sweden. Our sister association in Finland – for children that were evacuated to Sweden but returned after the war – has about 1350 members. The traumatic separation from our families in Finland and subsequently from our new families in Sweden has left nearly all of us with slow-healing mental wounds. Many of us have always had difficulties knowing where we belong, to Finland or to Sweden? At best we have been able to benefit from two cultures and two languages – and thereby leading a better life.

Regrettably wars and conflicts continue to rage in the world, exposing children to extreme stress and afflicting them traumas similar to the ones that we experienced seventy years ago. Still today, children are in great numbers fleeing war zones. These refugee children need help and support from sympathetic people who care and can provide some coherence to their shattered lives. In the year 2012 alone, nearly 3 600 refugee children came to Sweden without their parents. How many war children are there in Europe? In the whole world? Who pays attention?

We, now ancient children of war, propose the 20<sup>th</sup> November as an opportunity also for our fellow human beings to show that they care!

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**The National Association of Finnish War Children**

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