Street children in Indonesia*

**Demographic data**
- Age: the average age at which children had started working on the streets was 10–12 years (boys) and 9–12 years (girls).
- Working hours: only 4% of children worked fewer than 4 h a day, and less than 2% worked fewer than 2 days a week.
- Work: children worked as hawkers, street singers, scavengers, shoe shiners, beggars, parking attendants, and market labourers.
- Housing: 74% of boys and 83% of girls lived with their parents. The rest lived in huts or semipermanent housing such as boxes, train wagons, and floors of malls.

**Case studies**
- Mansyr (boy, 15 years) had been living in train stations for over 3 years. Hopping on and off the train was something he did every day.
  One evening he jumped off a moving train in Jatinegara station (Jakarta) and the train struck one of his feet. His left foot below the knee was broken. He fainted and no-one brought him to the hospital. One of his friends knew a Church priest nearby who took care of homeless children. The priest took him to hospital. Mansyr’s left foot was amputated.
- Dikid (boy, 13 years) was almost asleep in the Jatinegara station when a security police caught him, accused him of having littered the station, and ordered him to lick the floor to clean the dirt.
- Aryo (boy, 12 years) was brought to a police station and accused of stealing. The police put a hot iron on his lap until he acknowledged his crime.
- 12-year-old boy: “He asked me to accompany him sightseeing. Then he said: ‘little brother, do you like a Walkman?’ ‘Oh sure, I like that’, I replied. ‘Then take off your pants and tilt up your rear end’ he said. I wanted that Walkman desperately, so I closed my eyes and suddenly I felt something was inside me and it was painful. I was ashamed and in serious pain. I said ‘Ouch, it hurts. Please stop! Please do not do that to me!’ It was a terrible experience. He left without giving me the Walkman. He gave me 5000 IDR (US$0.5). I learned my lessons and I won’t get close to a man like that again.”
- 13-year-old boy: “I could not refuse since he gave me meals. I let him do what he did to me sexually. It was very painful when he did it for the first time. Now I am ok. I do not feel the pain anymore. I could even enjoy the act.”

In Honduras, 69 children and youths younger than 23 years were murdered in September 2002—bringing the total killed since January, 1998, to 1412 (data from Casa Alianza legal aid programme). Firearms are the most common weapon, but in a particularly gruesome turn, on Aug 13, two 18-year-olds, Rembar Molina and Jamin Lopez, were murdered in what seems to have been a satanic ritual. The killers dismembered the youths’ bodies and scattered bits of them around the capital of Tegucigalpa. The numbers of murders of children and youths in Honduras continue to grow despite the formation of a high level commission, a presidential campaign of zero tolerance towards crime, and the formation of a special police unit to investigate child murders. More than 60% of these murders have yet to be adequately investigated—illustrating either an inept police force or an unwillingness to investigate certain crimes. Of the 565 murders that have been investigated, a third were committed by police, a third by vigilantes, and a third by gang members killing their rivals in a turf war.

**Murdering homeless children, although pragmatic in the sense of getting rid of the problem, is hardly acceptable to most people. Casa Alianza is pushing for the Honduran government to fulfill its legal obligations to investigate the murders of children and youths and bring the perpetrators to justice—whether they are uniformed or not. We cannot accept that any children, anywhere in the world, are disposable or so-called throw-aways. Those of us who have the privilege to live in a democracy must call upon our elected officials and government leaders to ask the Honduran authorities to stop the slaughter of these children.**


**Bruce Harris**
Casa Alianza, Latin American Programmes
e-mail: bruce@casa-alianza.org