

## And How are the Children?

by James Moos  
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The semi-nomadic Maasai tribe of Kenya and Tanzania maintains many of its cultural traditions, even as it engages the modern world. To this day, the Maasai use the traditional greeting of Kasserian ingera. It means, “And how are the children?” It reflects the high value the Maasai have always placed on their children’s well being. The hoped-for answer is, “All the children are well.”

The Maasai are daily reminded of their responsibility to care for the young and the powerless. When “all the children are well,” it means that life is good for everybody.

What would happen to our consciousness if we were daily asked, “And how are the children?” It would be a constant reminder of God’s call to care for the children and other vulnerable people in our communities and throughout the world.

And how are the children? The latest round of violence in Palestine and Israel was initiated with the murder of three Israeli and one Palestinian youth. A 15-year-old American of Palestinian descent, Tariq Khdeir, was also brutally beaten by Israeli police in East Jerusalem. He asked that the world remember all of the children being victimized by violence: “They have names like mine. No child, whether they are Palestinian or Israeli, deserves to die that way.” Since Tariq made that statement, hundreds of Palestinian children have been killed by Israeli military action in Gaza.

And how are the children? Tens of thousands of unaccompanied minors are entering into the United States from Central America, fleeing violence and poverty. Gang violence, especially in Honduras and El Salvador, is driving

much of the exodus from those countries. Teenagers are recruited for gangs; if they refuse, they and their families are threatened with retaliation. The entry into the United States of these minors has reignited calls for tighter border security and expedited deportation proceedings, condemning untold thousands to poverty and violence.

And how are the children? The Democratic Republic of Congo is home to the world's deadliest conflict since World War II. In the past 25 years, more than 5.4 million Congolese have lost their lives. More than 50 percent of the lives lost are children under the age of 5. Rape is being used as an instrument of war, including the rape of children. The conflict is over the Congo's vast mineral wealth, including is the mineral coltan, which is used in electronic equipment. Our cell phones could not function without coltan.

And how are the children? In 1989 the Convention of the Rights of the Child was adopted by the UN General Assembly and it was quickly and widely ratified. It sets standards for children's education, health care, penal codes and social services. The treaty has been adopted by all but three nations: Somalia, South Sudan and the United States.

And how are the children? This is more than a polite greeting in Maasai culture; it is a question God asks us. It is also a question we must ask of every candidate for public office. Justice for everyone comes when we can truly say, "all the children are well."



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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