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Legal Protection of Children Deprived of Family Care: The Algerian Framework for Alternative Care in Light of International Standards

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Abstract

Children deprived of parental or family care constitute a particularly vulnerable group because the loss, absence, incapacity, or inadequacy of the family environment may expose them simultaneously to legal, social, educational, and psychological risks. In Algerian legal and social discourse, this category is often associated with the notion of assisted childhood; in contemporary international legal terminology, the expressions children deprived of family care and children in alternative care are more precise. This article examines the legal protection afforded to these children, with particular attention to Algerian law, Law No. 15-12 of 15 July 2015 relating to child protection, the Family Code rules on kafala, and the institutional mechanisms created for child protection. The analysis also situates Algerian law within the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and the United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children. The article argues that the best interests of the child, prevention of unnecessary separation, family-based alternative care, judicial and administrative oversight, continuity of identity, and preparation for social integration should form a coherent legal system rather than isolated protective measures. It concludes that the Algerian framework contains important guarantees, but effective protection depends on clearer coordination, periodic review of placements, individualized care plans, stronger support for kafala and foster-type solutions, and structured transition assistance for young people leaving care.

Keywords: Children deprived of family care; alternative care; child protection; kafala; best interests of the child; Algerian law.

1. Introduction

The legal protection of children who grow up without adequate parental care lies at the intersection of family law, child protection law, social welfare law, human rights law, and judicial protection. The issue is not limited to children who have lost both parents. A child may be deprived of a safe family environment because of abandonment, neglect, family disintegration, violence, severe social vulnerability, disappearance of parents, incapacity of caregivers, or a judicial decision taken to protect the child from danger. For this reason, modern child law focuses less on labels such as “orphan” and more on the concrete question of whether the child is receiving stable, lawful, and developmentally appropriate care.

The expression “assisted childhood,” sometimes used as a literal translation of the Arabic and French administrative terminology applied to children receiving public care, does not fully capture the legal diversity of the category. The internationally established vocabulary is “children deprived of their family environment” and “children in alternative care.” This terminology is legally useful because it covers temporary and permanent situations, formal and informal care arrangements, family-based and residential placements, and cases in which a child has parents but cannot safely remain with them.

The importance of this subject is reinforced by the principle that the child is an independent holder of rights. Protection is therefore not an act of charity granted by institutions; it is a legal obligation. The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes that a child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment is entitled to special protection and assistance from the State. It also identifies kafala of Islamic law as one of the forms through which alternative care may

be ensured. At the African regional level, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child similarly requires special protection and alternative family care for children deprived of their family environment.

In Algeria, Law No. 15-12 of 15 July 2015 relating to child protection provides the central contemporary framework. Its definition of a child in danger expressly includes the case of a child who has lost his or her parents and remains without family support, as well as situations of neglect and homelessness. The law also establishes mechanisms of social and judicial protection and created the National Body for the Protection and Promotion of Childhood. In parallel, the Algerian Family Code regulates kafala, defined as a legal commitment to maintain, educate, and protect a minor in a manner comparable to parental care, without transforming the child's filiation.

This article adopts a doctrinal and analytical legal method. It examines the applicable international and national norms, identifies the principal rights and safeguards that should govern alternative care, and evaluates the relationship between protection, family placement, institutional care, judicial supervision, and social integration. The central question is: to what extent does the Algerian legal framework provide an integrated rights-based system for children deprived of family care, and what legal and institutional measures can strengthen its effectiveness?

2. The Legal Concept and Status of Children Deprived of Family Care

The first legal difficulty concerns definition. Children deprived of family care do not form a homogeneous group. Some have no known parents, some are orphaned, some retain a legal relationship with parents who are temporarily unable to care for them, and others are removed from their family environment because remaining there would threaten their safety or development. Their legal status may therefore differ with respect to filiation, guardianship, maintenance, inheritance, identity, representation, and the authority entitled to make decisions on their behalf.

A rights-based definition should focus on the child's actual care situation rather than the reason for separation. The decisive element is that the child does not receive appropriate day-to-day care from his or her parents or ordinary family environment. This approach avoids two errors. First, it prevents the law from assuming that all children in residential institutions are orphans. International child-protection practice repeatedly emphasizes that many children in residential care have one or both parents alive. Second, it prevents poverty alone from becoming a reason for permanent family separation. Where the underlying problem is economic hardship, disability, housing insecurity, or lack of services, the preferred legal response should be support to the family whenever that can safely preserve family unity.

The legal status of the child must remain distinct from the administrative status of the institution that provides care. Placement in a public or authorized establishment does not suspend the child's fundamental rights. The child retains the right to identity, dignity, education, health care, protection from violence, privacy, participation according to age and maturity, and access to an effective remedy. The institution acts as a caregiver within a legal framework; it does not acquire unlimited authority over the child.

Algerian Law No. 15-12 is significant because it adopts a broad concept of the "child in danger." The law covers situations in which health, morals, education, security, living conditions, behavior, or environment expose the child to present or potential harm. The express inclusion of loss of parents without family support demonstrates that deprivation of family care is legally treated as a protection concern and not merely a matter of social assistance. This classification is important because it activates protective responsibilities and makes the case subject to professional assessment and, where necessary, judicial intervention.

Legal doctrine should also distinguish between temporary protection and a long-term alternative-care solution. Emergency shelter may be necessary when a child faces immediate danger, but emergency placement should not automatically become a permanent arrangement. A lawful system requires an individual assessment, identification of relatives when appropriate, examination of family reintegration possibilities, consideration of kafala or another suitable family-based arrangement, and periodic review. The longer a child remains in uncertainty, the greater the risk that temporary protection itself becomes a source of instability.

3. International Legal Foundations

The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides the primary universal framework. Four general principles influence every decision concerning children deprived of family care: non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right to life, survival and development, and respect for the views of the child. These principles are not abstract ideals. They guide decisions about whether separation is necessary, which placement is appropriate, whether siblings should remain together, how cultural and religious identity should be preserved, and when a placement must be reviewed.

Article 20 of the Convention is especially important. It recognizes the right of a child deprived of his or her family environment to special protection and assistance and requires States to ensure alternative care in accordance with national law. The Convention expressly mentions foster placement, kafala of Islamic law, adoption where permitted, and suitable institutional placement. The structure of this provision shows that alternative care is not limited to institutions. It also requires due regard to continuity in upbringing and to the child's ethnic, religious, cultural, and linguistic background.

The principle of best interests requires an individualized assessment. It does not mean that one type of placement is always best. A newborn, a child with strong ties to extended family, an adolescent preparing for independence, and siblings who should remain together may require different solutions. The legal duty is to identify the arrangement that best protects the particular child's rights while avoiding unnecessary disruption of identity and relationships.

The United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, welcomed by the General Assembly in Resolution 64/142, develop two major concepts: necessity and suitability. The necessity principle asks whether alternative care is genuinely required. States should work to prevent unnecessary separation and should support parents and families where safe and appropriate. The suitability principle asks whether the selected form of care matches the child's individual needs and circumstances. These principles provide a useful legal test for administrative and judicial decisions: the authorities should justify both why the child cannot safely remain in or return to family care and why the chosen placement is appropriate.

The Guidelines also encourage family-based and community-based solutions, caution against reliance on large-scale institutionalization, and stress review, monitoring, accountability, and preparation for leaving care. Residential care may be necessary in some circumstances, especially for short-term protection or specialized support, but it should be used because it serves the child's assessed interests rather than because it is administratively convenient.

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child reinforces these obligations. Article 25 requires special protection and assistance for a child permanently or temporarily deprived of the family environment and calls for alternative family care, including foster placement or placement in suitable institutions. It also emphasizes continuity in upbringing and the child's ethnic, religious, and linguistic background. For Algeria, the regional framework is particularly relevant because it combines universal child-rights principles with African legal and social realities.

Together, these international instruments establish a hierarchy of concerns: prevent unnecessary separation; protect the child immediately when danger exists; seek a stable and suitable family environment whenever possible; ensure that any residential placement is lawful, necessary, and monitored; preserve identity and meaningful relationships; listen to the child; and review the arrangement as circumstances evolve.

4. The Algerian Legal Framework for Child Protection

Algeria's modern child-protection framework is centered on Law No. 15-12 of 15 July 2015. The law aims to determine the rules and mechanisms of child protection and reflects a shift toward a comprehensive system combining social and judicial measures. It defines a child as every person under the age of eighteen and gives legal significance to situations of danger that may affect physical, psychological, educational, or social well-being.

For children deprived of family care, the law is important at three levels. First, it identifies absence of family support, neglect, and homelessness among the situations that can place a child in danger. Second, it organizes intervention mechanisms that may begin through social protection and, where required, lead to judicial protection. Third, it creates or reinforces institutions responsible for coordinating child-rights protection, including the National Body for the Protection and Promotion of Childhood.

The National Body has a strategic and protective role. It receives or follows situations involving violations of children's rights and contributes to coordination among relevant actors. Executive Decree No. 16-334 of 19 December 2016 specifies the conditions and modalities for the organization and functioning of the Body. This institutional design is significant because children deprived of family care usually interact with several sectors at the same time: social solidarity services, justice, civil status authorities, health services, education, local administration, and sometimes civil-society organizations. Without coordination, legal rights can be lost between administrative boundaries.

Law No. 15-12 should be read with the Algerian Family Code. The Family Code regulates personal status, family relations, guardianship, and kafala. Under Article 116, kafala is a legal undertaking to provide, without payment, for the maintenance, education, and protection of a minor in the same manner as a father would care for a child. Kafala is established by a legal act. The legal institution is particularly important because it offers a family-based form of care compatible with Islamic legal principles while preserving the child's original filiation where known.

The relationship between child-protection law and family law must be practical rather than merely formal. A child-protection authority may determine that a child cannot remain safely in the current environment, but the long-term legal solution may depend on family-law procedures. Conversely, a kafala decision should not be treated as the end of all child-protection responsibilities. Suitability assessment, follow-up, access to services, and protection against abuse remain necessary.

The Penal Code and other sectoral laws also contribute to protection by criminalizing forms of violence, exploitation, abandonment, and abuse. Yet criminal law has a limited role in alternative care. Punishing an offender may protect the child from a specific threat, but it does not itself provide a stable family environment, education, psychosocial care, or a plan for adulthood. Effective protection therefore depends on the interaction of criminal justice with social and family-based measures.

A coherent interpretation of Algerian law should treat the best interests of the child as an operational principle. Every authority dealing with placement should document the reasons for its decision, the alternatives considered, the child's views where appropriate, the expected duration, and the conditions for review. This reduces the risk of indefinite administrative placement and strengthens accountability.

5. Kafala and Family-Based Alternative Care

Kafala occupies a central place in the legal protection of children deprived of family care in Algeria. Unlike adoption systems that may create a new legal filiation, kafala is based on care, maintenance, education, and protection without legally

replacing biological descent. This distinction is important in Islamic family law and explains why the Convention on the Rights of the Child expressly recognizes kafala as a form of alternative care.

From a child-rights perspective, the value of kafala lies in its potential to provide a stable family setting. Family life can offer continuity of attachment, individualized care, everyday participation in community life, and greater opportunities for social inclusion than long-term institutional placement. However, the legal label alone does not guarantee quality. The central question remains whether the caregivers are suitable and whether the arrangement protects the child's best interests.

A robust kafala system therefore requires careful assessment before placement. Relevant factors include the capacity and motivation of prospective caregivers, the safety and stability of the household, the ability to meet educational and health needs, the child's age and background, the preservation of identity, sibling relationships, and the child's views according to age and maturity. Assessment should be professional and child-centered rather than limited to formal eligibility documents.

Post-placement support is equally important. Families caring for a child under kafala may face administrative, educational, health, identity, or psychosocial questions that differ from ordinary parenting. Authorities should therefore provide accessible guidance and follow-up, especially during the early stages of placement and at key transitions such as school entry, adolescence, or preparation for adulthood. Follow-up should support the family rather than create unnecessary intrusion, while retaining the ability to identify risk.

The child's right to identity deserves special care. Where origins are known, records concerning birth, filiation, family history, and legal status should be preserved securely. The child should not be subjected to stigma because of the circumstances of birth or care. Administrative practices should respect privacy and should avoid unnecessary disclosure of the child's status in schools, health services, or other settings.

Family-based care also extends beyond formal kafala. Extended-family placement may be appropriate where relatives can provide safe and stable care. Such arrangements can preserve family ties and cultural continuity, but they should not be presumed safe simply because the caregivers are relatives. The same principles of assessment, support, and review should apply when the State has intervened in a child-protection case.

International standards generally favor family-based alternatives over unnecessary institutionalization, but this preference must not become an automatic hierarchy that ignores individual needs. Some children may need specialized residential care for a period, including children with complex protection or therapeutic needs. The legal objective is not to eliminate all institutions; it is to ensure that placement is necessary, suitable, time-conscious, and connected to a longer-term care plan.

6. Rights and Safeguards in Residential and Institutional Care

Where residential placement is necessary, the institution must operate within a rights-based legal framework. The first safeguard is legality: placement should rest on a clear legal or administrative basis, with identification of the competent authority and the reasons for the decision. The second is proportionality: residential care should respond to the child's actual needs and should not continue longer than required merely because no review is scheduled.

Every child in care should have an individualized care plan. Such a plan should identify health, education, psychological support, family-contact arrangements, identity documentation, recreational needs, and the intended long-term solution. For younger children, permanency and stable attachment require particular urgency. For adolescents, the plan must increasingly address autonomy, vocational preparation, housing, financial literacy, and post-care support.

The right to education applies fully to children in care. Institutional placement must not create a parallel educational track of lower quality unless individualized educational needs justify specialized support. Children should, as far as possible, access ordinary community schools, participate in extracurricular activities, and receive assistance to prevent dropout. Educational records should follow the child during transfers so that changes in placement do not repeatedly interrupt schooling.

Health rights include preventive care, treatment, mental-health support, nutrition, and access to disability-related services where needed. Children who have experienced abandonment, neglect, violence, or repeated separation may need psychological support, but care must avoid stigmatizing them as inherently disordered. The purpose is to support recovery, resilience, and development.

Protection from violence is non-negotiable. Residential settings require clear rules prohibiting corporal punishment, degrading treatment, intimidation, sexual abuse, exploitation, and harmful disciplinary practices. Staff recruitment, supervision, training, and complaint mechanisms are therefore legal safeguards, not merely administrative quality measures. Children should know how to report concerns safely and should have access to an independent authority capable of responding.

Privacy and dignity must also be protected. Children should have personal space appropriate to the setting, confidential communication where compatible with safety, protection of personal records, and respectful treatment of clothing, hygiene, and religious practice. Photographs, personal stories, or case histories should not be used for publicity or fundraising in ways that expose the child's identity without lawful and ethically appropriate safeguards.

Contact with parents, relatives, and siblings should be maintained when it is safe and consistent with the child's interests. Separation from a harmful caregiver may be necessary, but separation from every meaningful relationship is not. Sibling contact can be especially important for identity and emotional continuity. Any restriction should be based on a reasoned protection assessment rather than institutional convenience.

Finally, institutional care must be subject to external monitoring. Internal reports are insufficient because the institution cannot be the sole judge of the legality and quality of its own practices. Inspection, judicial oversight where applicable, complaint procedures, and periodic review of individual placements create a system of accountability.

7. Judicial and Social Protection Mechanisms

Children deprived of family care often require both social and judicial protection. Social protection is essential because many situations can be improved through family support, mediation, social assistance, health care, education, or temporary placement without immediately converting the case into adversarial litigation. Judicial protection becomes necessary when rights are disputed, coercive measures are needed, a child faces serious danger, or a legally binding placement or guardianship decision must be made.

The child judge and other competent judicial authorities therefore play a crucial role. Judicial decisions should be based on reliable social information and should explain why a measure is necessary. A placement order that merely states that the child is “in danger” without identifying the concrete risk and the intended protective objective makes later review difficult. Reasoned decisions strengthen both legality and continuity of care.

The child’s participation is another essential safeguard. Participation does not mean transferring the decision to the child. It means that the child receives understandable information and has a meaningful opportunity to express views, with the weight given to those views increasing with age and maturity. For an adolescent, a care plan designed without consultation is unlikely to be effective. Even younger children can communicate preferences, fears, attachments, and experiences that are important to assessing best interests.

Legal representation and access to complaint mechanisms are particularly important when the child’s interests may conflict with those of parents, caregivers, or an institution. The system should ensure that children can raise concerns without retaliation. Complaint procedures should be accessible, confidential, age-appropriate, and connected to an authority with power to investigate and remedy violations.

Social services require adequate professional capacity. Case management should follow the child rather than the institution. When a child moves from emergency accommodation to residential care, then to kafala or family reintegration, essential information and responsibility should not be lost at each transition. A designated case professional or coordinated team can maintain continuity and monitor whether the legal objectives of protection are being achieved.

Intersectoral coordination is therefore a legal necessity. Civil-status documentation affects access to education, health care, examinations, travel, and later employment. Educational authorities must understand confidentiality and enrollment rights. Health services must be able to act when consent or guardianship questions arise. Justice authorities need timely social assessments. Local administrations may be involved in documentation and assistance. Effective child protection depends on protocols that define who is responsible, what information may be shared, and how confidentiality is preserved.

The National Body for the Protection and Promotion of Childhood provides an institutional platform for coordination and rights protection. Its role can be strengthened through systematic data collection, analysis of recurring legal problems, publication of guidance, and cooperation with judicial and social actors. National oversight is especially useful for identifying gaps that cannot be solved at the level of a single institution or province.

8. Major Legal and Practical Challenges

The first challenge is the risk of institutionalization becoming a default response. Institutions are visible, administratively organized, and capable of receiving children quickly. Family-based alternatives require recruitment, assessment, preparation, support, and follow-up. If these systems are underdeveloped, residential care may expand because it is easier to administer, not because it best serves children. Legal policy should therefore invest in family-strengthening and family-based alternatives so that courts and social services have real choices.

A second challenge is the duration of placement. A child can enter care under temporary circumstances and remain for years because no authority is required to resolve the long-term plan within a clear timetable. Periodic review should therefore examine not only whether the placement remains safe, but whether progress is being made toward reintegration, stable family care, or another durable solution.

A third challenge concerns transition from care to adulthood. Child-protection laws often provide strong measures up to the age of eighteen and then abruptly reduce support. Yet a young person leaving residential care may lack housing, family networks, income, employment, or practical experience. A rights-based system should begin transition planning before majority and should provide time-limited aftercare, especially for education, vocational training, housing, documentation, and access to employment services.

A fourth challenge is stigma. Legal protection can be undermined when social attitudes classify children according to birth status, family history, or placement. Anti-discrimination rules should be reinforced through confidential administration and professional training. Schools and public services should request only information that is legally necessary. The child’s history belongs first to the child, not to the public.

A fifth challenge is data and accountability. Aggregate statistics are needed to understand how many children enter care, for what reasons, how long they remain, how many return to families, how many enter kafala or other family settings, and what happens after leaving care. Data should be anonymized and used for policy, while individual files remain confidential. Without reliable information, authorities cannot determine whether legal reforms are reducing unnecessary separation or merely moving children between institutions.

A sixth challenge concerns the quality of legal implementation across regions. A national law may guarantee the same rights everywhere, while services differ substantially according to local resources. Minimum national standards, professional training, inspection, and complaint systems are necessary to reduce territorial inequality.

Finally, the law must reconcile protection with family preservation. Authorities must not leave a child in danger in the name of family unity, but they should also avoid treating removal as the first response to poverty or social difficulty. The correct legal approach is graduated: prevent harm; support families; intervene decisively when safety requires it; and continuously work toward a stable long-term solution.

9. Recommendations for Strengthening the Legal Protection System

A first priority is to formalize the principles of necessity and suitability in placement practice. Every decision placing a child outside the family should identify why separation is necessary and why the selected form of care is suitable. Standardized assessment tools can assist professionals, but they should not replace individualized reasoning.

Second, periodic review should be guaranteed by clear procedures and documented deadlines. Reviews should consider changes in the family situation, the child's development, the quality of the placement, the child's views, contact with relatives, and the feasibility of a more permanent family solution. Long-term residential care should trigger especially rigorous review.

Third, Algeria can continue strengthening family-based care, including kafala and appropriate kinship or foster-type arrangements. This requires preparation and support for caregivers, not only legal authorization. Social assistance, counseling, educational guidance, and access to specialized services can prevent placement breakdown.

Fourth, each child in formal alternative care should have an individualized written care plan and a clearly identified case-management responsibility. The plan should include short-term protection goals and long-term objectives. The child should participate in its development according to age and maturity.

Fifth, independent monitoring should be strengthened. Institutions should be subject to regular inspection and children should have confidential access to complaint mechanisms. Serious allegations must be referred promptly to competent investigative and judicial authorities. Monitoring should assess daily lived conditions, not only administrative paperwork.

Sixth, transition-to-adulthood provisions should be developed as a distinct component of child-protection policy. Preparation should begin well before eighteen and should include civil documentation, continued education, vocational skills, housing pathways, health coverage, budgeting, and access to mentoring or trusted adults. A limited extension of support after majority can prevent homelessness and exploitation.

Seventh, legal and administrative rules should protect identity and privacy. Records of origins and family history must be preserved, while disclosure should be controlled. Children should be supported to understand their legal status in an age-appropriate manner, rather than discovering essential information accidentally or through discriminatory treatment.

Eighth, professional specialization should be expanded. Judges, social workers, educators, psychologists, police officers, health professionals, and institutional staff require training in child rights, trauma-informed practice, interviewing children, confidentiality, best-interests assessment, and alternative care law. Multidisciplinary practice should be organized around clear legal responsibilities.

Ninth, national data systems should track pathways through care without exposing personal identities. Indicators should include reasons for entry, placement type, duration, review frequency, family contact, reintegration, kafala, education outcomes, and post-care status. Such information can guide legislative evaluation and resource allocation.

Finally, the system should treat prevention as part of child-protection law. Family support, disability services, social assistance, school retention, and early intervention can prevent separation. The strongest alternative-care system is one that provides high-quality care when necessary while reducing the number of children who need to enter care in the first place.

10. Legal Policy Outlook

The future development of alternative-care law in Algeria can be approached through the idea of a continuum of protection. At one end lies prevention: social and legal measures that help families remain safely together. At the other lies durable protection for children who cannot return to parental care. Between them are emergency intervention, temporary placement, judicial review, family tracing, kinship options, kafala, specialized residential care, and transition planning. Treating these measures as parts of one continuum can reduce fragmentation and ensure that every intervention has a clearly stated purpose.

Digital administration may also improve continuity if it is designed with strong confidentiality safeguards. Secure case-management systems can reduce lost records, duplicated assessments, and delays in civil documentation. However, access should be limited according to professional responsibility, and sensitive information about origins, health, or family history should never become broadly available merely because it is stored electronically.

Legislative evaluation should likewise become a regular process. The effectiveness of Law No. 15-12 should be assessed not only by the existence of institutions and procedures, but also by measurable legal outcomes: whether emergency placements are reviewed promptly, whether children participate in decisions, whether family reintegration succeeds when appropriate, whether stable family-based alternatives are available, and whether care leavers maintain access to education, housing, documentation, and protection. This outcome-oriented approach can help transform child protection from a collection of services into a coordinated legal guarantee.

11. Conclusion

The legal protection of children deprived of family care requires more than shelter. It requires a coherent system that combines prevention, immediate safety, family support, lawful placement, family-based alternatives, judicial guarantees, institutional accountability, identity protection, participation, and preparation for adult life. International law provides a clear framework through the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and the United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children.

Algerian law contains important foundations for such a system. Law No. 15-12 recognizes children without family support as children who may be in danger and establishes social, judicial, and institutional protection mechanisms. The Family Code provides kafala as a legally recognized family-care arrangement, while the National Body for the Protection and Promotion of Childhood contributes to coordination and rights protection.

The principal task is therefore not simply to create additional legal categories, but to ensure that existing rules operate as an integrated pathway centered on the child. The best interests principle should be translated into documented assessment; temporary placements should be reviewed; family solutions should be supported; institutions should be monitored; the child's voice should be heard; and young people should not lose all support at the moment they reach adulthood.

A modern legal approach to children deprived of family care ultimately measures success not by the number of places available in institutions, but by the degree to which every child enjoys safety, stable relationships, legal identity, education, dignity, and a realistic path toward independent participation in society.

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- Note: This article is an academic legal analysis prepared from the legislation and international instruments listed above; it is not a substitute for case-specific legal advice.*