Afghanistan is expected to sign a formal agreement with the United Nations on Sunday to stop the recruitment of children into its police forces and ban the common practice of boys being used as sex slaves by military commanders, according to Afghan and United Nations officials.

The effort by Afghanistan's international backers to rapidly expand the country's police and military forces has had the unintended consequence of drawing many under-age boys into service, the officials conceded.

Stung by Afghanistan's inclusion on the United Nations' blacklist of countries where child soldiers are commonly used, like the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda, government leaders are expected to sign an undertaking with Radhika Coomaraswamy, the secretary general's special representative for children and armed conflict, during her visit to Kabul on Sunday, the officials said.

With the agreement on an action plan to combat the problem, the government will for the first time officially acknowledge the problem of child sex slaves. As part of the Afghan tradition of bacha bazi, literally "boy play," boys as young as 9 are dressed as girls and trained to dance for male audiences, then prostituted in an auction to the highest bidder. Many powerful men, particularly commanders in the military and the police, keep such boys, often dressed in uniforms, as constant companions for sexual purposes.

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