

PRESS RELEASE:

Twenty Years On, UN Security Council and Member States Should Affirm Support for the Children and Armed Conflict Agenda

New York, August 1, 2016 – The Security Council should hold perpetrators accountable for violations against children in armed conflict irrespective of political pressure, said Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict in advance of the Security Council’s August 2 Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict. The debate follows a highly controversial decision by the Secretary-General in June to remove the Saudi Arabia-led coalition from his list of parties committing grave violations against children.

In his annual [report](#) on children and armed conflict, the Secretary-General attributes 60 percent of casualties – nearly 2,000 dead or injured children in 2015 – to Saudi Arabia-led coalition air strikes in Yemen. Additionally, the UN found that coalition airstrikes account for almost half of the 100 documented and verified attacks on schools and hospitals in the report for 2015. Despite UN-verified data establishing a pattern of killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals in Yemen, the Secretary-General removed the coalition immediately following the report’s publication, under strong pressure from Saudi Arabia and its allies.

“At this debate, Member States should condemn any use of political pressure to escape scrutiny,” said Dragica Mikavica, Advocacy Officer at Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, a network of international human rights and humanitarian organizations. “The Secretary-General’s list should be based on evidence, not politics.”

Today’s Open Debate falls near the twentieth anniversary of the publication of Graça Machel’s groundbreaking report, [Impact of armed conflict on children](#), in which she called for the elimination of the flagrant abuse and exploitation of children during armed conflict. Among the immediate steps taken by the UN General Assembly was to establish the post of the Special-Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to serve as the highest moral voice and independent advocate for the protection and well-being of boys and girls affected by war.

The Security Council debate is an opportunity to reflect on the monumental strides of the Children and Armed Conflict Agenda to prevent and end grave violations of children’s rights over the last 20 years. It is also anticipated the Debate will focus on the theme of violent extremism and its impact on children’s rights as a new challenge the Agenda needs to grapple with. In at least 15 countries, children are detained or prosecuted for suspected involvement with militant or extremist groups.

“Too many governments are treating children as security threats, rather than victims, including detaining them solely on the basis of their alleged association with fighting forces,” said Mikavica. “Governments should establish alternatives to detention and ensure that children associated with armed groups receive the rehabilitation they need.”

In 1996, the Machel Report depicted the reality of contemporary wars as often going hand in hand with the disintegration of support systems and the destruction of education and health services. Twenty years later, these phenomena continue on an even greater scale.

“In too many countries, violations against children are escalating,” said Mikavica. “Now more than ever, the Security Council’s child protection agenda needs support and action.”

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Background on the report:

Each year, the Secretary-General submits a report on children and armed conflict to the UN Security Council. These annual reports provide information on grave violations committed against children. The reports include annexes listing the names of parties responsible for these violations. The listing of a party in the Secretary-General's reports is not only a 'name and shame' strategy, it also triggers enhanced monitoring and reporting pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1612 (2005). Including parties on the 'list of shame' enhances the protection of children in armed conflict by facilitating UN's engagement with the responsible parties to end grave violations.

Background on Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict:

Established in 2001, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict ('Watchlist') is an international network of human rights and humanitarian non-governmental organizations striving to end violations against children in armed conflict and to guarantee their rights. As a global network, Watchlist builds partnerships among local, national and international NGOs, enhancing mutual capacities and strengths. Working together, we strategically collect and disseminate information on violations against children in conflict to influence key decision-makers to create and implement programs and policies that effectively protect children. Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict is a project of Tides Center, a non-profit public charity.

Website: www.watchlist.org

Special Multimedia Page for the Open Debate Social Media Campaign #ChildrensRightsUpFront:
<http://www.childrensrighsupfront.com/>

Watchlist staff will be in attendance at the August 2nd Open Debate and available for interviews. They will be live-tweeting from the Security Council chamber.

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Press Contact:

Matthew Amaral

+1 212.972.0695

matthewa@watchlist.org