

PRESS RELEASE

UN Security Council expands its Children and Armed Conflict Agenda, adds abductions as trigger

New York, June 18, 2015 – Today, the Security Council held an Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict, highlighting the theme of abductions of children in armed conflict. Member States discussed the Secretary-General’s annual report on children and armed conflict and its list of parties to conflict that perpetrate grave violations against children. Most importantly, the Security Council adopted a resolution that expands the Council’s Children and Armed Conflict agenda by adding abductions as the fifth ‘trigger’ for inclusion of parties to conflict on the UN Secretary-General’s ‘list of shame’.

“Today, the Council seized an opportunity to condemn abductions of children, which has seen an increase in recent years, with mass abductions by Boko Haram, ISIS, and armed groups in South Sudan. By adding abductions as the fifth ‘trigger’ violation, the Council makes it possible for responsible parties to be held to account,” said Eva Smets from Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, a network of international human rights and humanitarian organizations. “This is a laudable step towards enhancing the international community’s ability to protect children,” said Smets.

Despite this important stride for children in armed conflict accomplished today, Watchlist expresses its disappointment that the Council failed to take note of the [Safe Schools Declaration](#) adopted in Oslo on 29 May, and joined by 38 countries, in this resolution. The signatories of the Safe Schools Declaration agree to endorse and use the [Guidelines for protecting schools and universities from military use during armed conflict](#), which calls upon parties to armed conflict to avoid using educational buildings or making them targets of attack. The Declaration is a result of a process led by the Governments of Norway and Argentina.

Furthermore, the Secretary-General’s annual report itself is cause for concern.

“We at Watchlist are very disappointed that parties named for violations against children in successive annual reports remain absent from the ‘list of shame’. The UN should maintain a consistent and independent approach in the treatment of parties responsible for grave violations against children irrespective of the military and political contexts in which they operate. Only a rigorous and impartial method will guarantee the integrity of the system,” said Smets.

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.

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Background on abductions:

Abductions are identified by the UNSC as one of the six grave violations perpetrated against children in

situations of armed conflict. SCR 1612 (2005) established a Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism to document and report on these violations. However, unlike four of the six grave violations—recruitment and use, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and attacks on schools and/or hospitals—abductions do not “trigger” listing of responsible parties in the Secretary-General’s annual report on children and armed conflict. Children are abducted for a number of reasons, including exploitation, punishment, ransom, and indoctrination. Often, abductions are a precursor to other violations, such as recruitment and use, rape and other forms of sexual violence, or killing and maiming. In many cases, little, if any, information is known about the fate of the child after s/he is abducted. Abductions are far removed from any plausible legal authority or due process. They are always illegal. The expansion of the listing criteria to include abductions would be an important step toward enhancing the international community’s ability to protect children and hold perpetrators to account. During the March 2015 Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict, seven Council Members and 14 Member States urged the Council to designate abductions as a new criteria for listing of parties in the SG’s annual report.

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

Watchlist staff will be in attendance at the June 18th Open Debate and available for interviews. They will be live-tweeting from the Security Council chamber.

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