

Children and Armed Conflict:

SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN DEBATE ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

SPECIAL UPDATE:
AUGUST 2016

Recommendations for the Security Council and Member States

On August 2, 2016, the UN Security Council will hold an Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict (CAC), which will take place under the Presidency of Malaysia, Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. At the Open Debate, the Secretary-General (SG) will present his annual report on children and armed conflict ([A/70/836-S/2016/360, addendum](#)) to the UN Security Council pursuant to SCR 2225 (2015), covering the period from January 1 to December 31, 2015. Malaysia intends to draw attention to the report's two thematic sections: reducing the impact of violent extremism on children and children displaced by conflict.

This year, the SG succumbed to political pressure following the publication of his annual report and agreed to "temporarily remove" the Saudi Arabia-led coalition forces listed in the report's annexes for killing and maiming and attacks on schools and hospitals in Yemen. The listing's temporary removal sets a dangerous precedent for other listed governments to use improper pressure to remove themselves from the SG's "blacklist," thereby threatening the very foundation of the UN's Children and Armed Conflict agenda. Annually, the evidence used to list parties is gathered, reviewed and rigorously verified by the UN-led 1612 Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism, and the SG's message to perpetrators should be that all parties to armed conflict – without exception – are held to the same standard.

In his report, the SG raised concerns regarding Member States' responses to violent extremism, which have resulted in violations of the rights of children. Current operations involve the systematic treatment of children as security threats as opposed to victims, including the detention of children solely on the basis of their real or alleged association with armed groups or forces. Child protection actors share these concerns. Children should not be detained unless they are charged with a recognizable criminal offense, and only in accordance with international law and juvenile justice standards. Their rehabilitation and reintegration and alternatives to detention should be prioritized.

The SG also raised concerns regarding the negative impacts on children of forced displacement as a result of armed conflict. More than 65 million people have fled their homes due to conflict and violence, with children almost half of those affected. Governments must take urgent action to respect the rights of children forcibly displaced as a result of conflict to ensure their protection and access to health and education. The use of explosive weapons in populated areas is a key driver of displacement globally in addition to the killing and maiming of children, destruction of schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian aid from reaching children. In the report, the SG calls upon all parties to conflict to refrain from using explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas, and to consider making a commitment to this effect. Refraining from this practice and addressing it in a political commitment would decrease displacement and significantly heighten the protection of children in conflict.

With a view to the upcoming Open Debate, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict recommends the Security Council and Member States to:

- 1) Call for an accurate and credible listing of perpetrators of the six grave violations, based on impartial evidence-based reporting:**
 - a.** Urge the Secretary-General to ensure impartial and evidence-based listing of perpetrators responsible for grave violations against children and report on all situations of concern to preserve the integrity and credibility of the Children and Armed Conflict agenda of the UN Security Council and to avoid double standards in the application of the listing criteria;

Situations before the Council involving parties listed for grave violations against children:

[Afghanistan](#)

[Central African Republic](#)

[Colombia](#)

[Democratic Republic of the Congo](#)

[Iraq](#)

[Mali](#)

[Myanmar \(Burma\)](#)

[Nigeria](#)

[Philippines](#)

[Somalia](#)

[South Sudan](#)

[Sudan](#)

[Syrian Arab Republic](#)

[Yemen](#)

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2) Call for strengthened monitoring, reporting, and response to child rights violations on the ground:

- a. Maintain and strengthen the capacity of UN peace missions to document and verify child rights violations through allocation of sufficient budgetary resources for child protection capacity; and specifically ensure that child protection expertise is retained, that Child Protection Advisors maintain direct access to senior mission leadership, and that their role as protection actors remains clearly distinct from those of human rights monitors;
- b. Request the Secretary-General to continue to monitor and report, *inter alia*, on the detention of children who are detained for their association with armed forces or groups or other conflict-related abuses; and call on all parties to release all children who have not been charged with a recognizable criminal offense and allow child protection actors regular and unhindered access to all detention facilities for the purpose of age-verification;
- c. Echoing the Secretary-General's recommendation, urge Member States to treat children associated with armed groups, including those engaged in violent extremism, as victims entitled to full protection of their human rights, and urgently put in place alternatives to detention and accountability processes that are consistent with international law and prioritize their successful rehabilitation and reintegration;
- d. Call for full and immediate implementation of Resolution 2286 (2016) regarding attacks on health care, and encourage the Secretary-General to include information on the specific impact on children of attacks on health facilities and health workers in his reporting to the Council;

3) Call for successful implementation of existing UN action plans with armed forces and groups listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's annual reports on children and armed conflict:

- a. Welcome commitments made and urge for full and complete implementation by all Governments of action plans to end and prevent all child recruitment and use by their national security forces signed as a result of the campaign "Children, Not Soldiers" led by the Special-Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF;
- b. Encourage negotiation and implementation of action plans to end violations against children by armed non-state actors;






4) Call for stronger protection of children's rights within UN peacekeeping operations:

- a. Pursuant to Resolution 2242 (2015), welcome the Secretary-General's commitment to prohibit government armed forces listed in the annexes to his children and armed conflict reports from contributing troops to peacekeeping operations until they have adopted, and fully implemented, action plans to end grave violations against children; and furthermore, urge prompt and thorough investigation of all allegations of violations against children committed by UN peacekeepers, including criminal prosecution;
- b. Urge Member States contributing troops and other uniformed and non-uniformed personnel to peacekeeping operations to make comprehensive pre-deployment training on child protection mandatory and include the training for civil and military peacekeepers on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse currently under development by the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support, and allow the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to provide oversight of that training in order to ensure compliance.

PRESIDENCY OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL FOR AUGUST: MALAYSIA

- *Party to the Geneva Convention I - IV, Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol, ILO Convention 182; Has not endorsed the Paris Principles and the Paris Commitments.*

NGO Resources

- An Open Letter to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, June 2016 
- Save the Children, A New Deal for Every Forcibly Displaced Child, May 2016 
- Watchlist, Discussion Paper: A Policy Precluding Listed Government Forces from Contributing Troops to UN Missions, August 2014 
- Save the Children, Explosive Weapons and Grave Violations Against Children, May 2013 
- Watchlist, Discussion Paper: Action Plans to End and Prevent Violations Against Children, April 2013 
- Watchlist, Briefing Note: A Checklist for Mainstreaming, March 2013 

About Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict is a global network of international human rights and humanitarian non-governmental organizations which strives to end violations against children in armed conflicts through local partnerships, reporting and advocacy.

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