

UN Security Council: Adoption of Resolution 2143 Upholds Schools as Safe Zones for Children in Armed Conflict

New York City, 7 March 2014 - Today, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution urging all parties in armed conflict around the world to respect and protect schools from attacks and use by armed forces or groups. In situations of armed conflict, schools are often targeted for strategic purposes, such as for training and recruitment, or used as barracks, detention centers, and weapons and ammunition storage.

“Today, the Security Council sent a message that schools are protected zones of peace and not battle grounds,” said Eva Smets, Executive Director of Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict. “This is the first time that the Security Council has provided concrete recommendations to Member States on how to prevent the military use of schools, which puts children at unacceptable risk of physical injury and death and inhibits their right to education.”

Resolution S/RES/2143 (2014) was unanimously adopted by the Security Council at an Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict, hosted by Luxembourg.

The resolution also calls for increased preparedness of the security sector, including mainstreaming child protection issues into military training, standard operating procedures and rules of engagement. General Roméo Dallaire, former force commander of the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Rwanda and founder of the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, an associate member of Watchlist, welcomes this language, “No country has yet developed coherent policies or military doctrine for dealing with child soldiers in the battlefield despite the fact that security forces are often the first point of contact. This resolution is the first to call on Member States to develop guidelines that better equip security forces in the face of a child soldier.”

While Watchlist welcomes this resolution, the organization regrets the lack of references to violations committed by armed non-state actors. “Forty-six out of fifty-five, or eighty-four percent, of actors listed in the Secretary-General’s [12th Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict](#) are non-state armed groups. It is crucial that the Security Council includes these groups when discussing ways to improve the protection of children,” said Smets. “Watchlist has repeatedly called for UN Member States to allow the UN unconditional access to armed non-state actors for the purpose of signing and implementing action plans to end violations against children. We hope to see this language reflected in future resolutions.”

This was one of two Open Debates on Children and Armed Conflict in 2014, a first in the history of the Children and Armed Conflict Agenda at the Security Council. The next Open Debate is expected to occur in the months following the publication of the Secretary-General’s 13th Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict, which will list government forces and armed groups who have committed violations against children between January and December 2013.

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[Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict](#), established in 2001, is an international network of non-government 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.

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