

PRESS RELEASE

UN Should Exclude DRC Armed Forces from Peacekeeping Mission in CAR

New York, August 19, 2014 – Today, the UN Security Council will hold consultations on the preparations for the September 15th deployment of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict is concerned that the recent decision by the UN to allow a battalion of Congolese armed forces (Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo – FARDC) to serve as peacekeepers in MINUSCA could undermine efforts to end grave violations against children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well the reputation of MINUSCA. The FARDC battalion is currently serving with the African Union Mission in the Central African Republic.

For [almost 10 years](#), the FARDC have been listed in the UN Secretary-General’s annual reports on children and armed conflict for grave violations committed against children, including recruitment and use of child soldiers and rape and other forms of sexual violence.

“The protection of civilians, including of children, in the Central African Republic is a matter of priority. However, the inclusion of DRC armed forces – blacklisted by the UN for using child soldiers and raping children – is unacceptable,” said Lisa Sherman-Nikolaus, Advocacy Officer at Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict. “It sends the message that forces who perpetrate grave violations against children are not held to account, and can even serve within a UN mission.”

The FARDC are set to only be temporarily included into MINUSCA from September 15th until the beginning of 2015 due to the significant need for support to the security sector in their home country. For nearly 15 years, the UN has operated a large peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Currently, the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) has approximately 22,000 uniformed personnel, including military and police, from around the world on the ground.

“The UN has made great strides in elevating human rights and child protection concerns into its peacekeeping operations, and it must put its principles into practice,” said Sherman-Nikolaus. “Peacekeepers are charged with protecting the most vulnerable, and as such, they must be held to the highest standards.”

In 2012, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo signed an action plan with the UN to end grave violations against children. Progress has been made, including improved access of child protection agencies to military facilities for the purposes of identifying and releasing children, but challenges still remain. Additional measures to end and prevent recruitment, such as age verification mechanisms, and to fight impunity for crimes against children including sexual violence, need to be



strengthened. The FARDC remain a listed party in the [Secretary-General's 13th Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict, published July 1st](#). The FARDC are also listed for rape and other forms of

sexual violence in the [Secretary-General's Annual Report on Sexual Violence in Conflict, published March 13th](#).

“Any force listed for grave violations against children should be banned from contributing to peacekeeping missions until the UN Secretary-General has certified full implementation of their action plan,” said Sherman-Nikolaus. “This could provide an incentive to end violations against children at home and demonstrate compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law regarding children.”

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Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, established in 2001, is an international network of human rights and humanitarian 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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