



For Immediate Release

New UN Report Fails to Apply the Same Standard to All Child Rights Violators

Evidence Shows Saudi- and Emirati-Led Coalition Killed or Seriously Injured 729 Children in Yemen in 2018, Despite Its Promises to Protect Children

(New York, July 30, 2019) – By giving undue praise to perpetrators of grave violations against children, the UN Secretary-General has downplayed the deadly repercussions of war on children, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict said today. In his latest report on children and armed conflict, the Secretary-General omitted the Saudi- and Emirati-led coalition from his ‘list of shame’ for attacking schools and hospitals in Yemen, despite confirming that the coalition committed 15 such attacks in 2018.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres today released his annual report on children and armed conflict. It details grave child rights violations in conflicts around the world in 2018, including Yemen, which has been called the [worst humanitarian crisis](#) in the world. The Saudi- and Emirati-led coalition was responsible for killing and maiming 729 children in Yemen, out of a total of 1,689 child casualties the UN documented in 2018. Despite this high number of casualties, the Secretary-General placed the coalition in a category for those that have “put in place measures [...] aimed at improving the protection of children” for the third consecutive year.

“The Saudi- and Emirati-led coalition has unabatedly continued to violate the rights of children in Yemen, yet is not being held accountable,” said Adrienne Lapar, program director at Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict. “The thousands of children killed or seriously injured by coalition airstrikes deserve justice, not empty promises.”

In recent years, the process for determining which perpetrators are included in the report has become increasingly politicized. In 2016, following intense [political pressure](#) from Saudi Arabia, then-Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon removed the Saudi-led coalition from his list for killing and maiming children in Yemen. In 2017, Secretary-General Guterres included the Saudi-led coalition, but placed it in a new [category](#) for those that had supposedly put in place measures to protect children. In 2018, he again [listed](#) the coalition for killing and maiming children, but ‘delisted’ it for attacks on schools and hospitals, despite the fact that it was responsible for the vast majority of such attacks in 2017.

Other violators were conspicuously missing from the latest ‘list of shame,’ including the Israel forces, which were responsible for 2,812 UN-verified child casualties in Israel/Palestine, in 2018. Also notably absent were any mentions of Cameroon and Ukraine, where attacks on schools and hospitals have prevented thousands of children from accessing education and health care.

“All perpetrators who violate children’s rights need to be held to the same standard, whether they are government security forces, international coalitions, regional forces, or non-state armed groups,” Lapar said. “UN member states need to put aside their political interests and take concrete action to protect children from the effects of war.”

Listing a party is a tool to ‘name and shame’ perpetrators and triggers enhanced monitoring and reporting to inform Security Council action. Parties are only removed from the list after signing and successfully implementing a UN action plan to end violations against children.

Since 2017, the list has been split into two sections: those that have enacted measures to protect children, and those that have not. However, there have been no clear criteria to explain any particular party’s placement. Watchlist and other civil society organizations have [warned](#) that this division and lack of transparency undermine the list’s use as a tool to condemn and hold violators accountable. They have called on the Secretary-General to avoid making such distinctions and instead to identify, condemn, and list all parties that have committed grave violations against children.

For more information, please contact:

Adrienne Lapar, Program Director, Watchlist – adriannel@watchlist.org, +1 516 853 1196

See also:

- [Open Letter to the UN Secretary-General from 21 Nongovernmental Organizations \(NGOs\) Calling for a Credible and Accurate List of Child Rights Violators, May 24, 2019](#)
- [Watchlist’s Recommendations for the UN Secretary-General’s 2019 Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict, May 24, 2019](#)
- [Open Letter from Nine NGOs Urging the Secretary-General to List the Saudi- and Emirati-Led Coalition for Grave Violations in Yemen, February 25, 2019](#)

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict is a New York-based coalition of nongovernmental organizations that seeks to end violations against children in armed conflict and to guarantee their rights. For more information, visit: <https://watchlist.org/>.