



UN: Name and Shame All Parties that Violate Children's Rights

Watchlist Urges Secretary-General to Ensure Rights of Children in War-Torn Countries Are Not Forgotten, Even Amid Global Pandemic

New York, April 20, 2020 – The UN Secretary-General should apply the same standards to all warring parties that violate children's rights, said Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict in a [report](#) released today. Watchlist called on the Secretary-General to include six additional government or coalition forces, including Russian air forces in Syria and US-led forces in Afghanistan, and two armed groups in his annual list of child rights violators. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is currently preparing his annual report on children and armed conflict, whose annexes list those parties to conflict that have committed crimes against children.

“Child rights violators shouldn't get a ‘free pass’ because of who they or their friends are,” said Adrienne Lapar, program director for Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, a network of international human rights and humanitarian organizations. “The UN Secretary-General should include all perpetrators in his annual ‘list of shame’ and ensure crimes against children don't go unpunished.”

The 29-page report, [“A Credible List”: Recommendations for the Secretary-General's 2020 Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict](#), provides information on grave violations committed against children in 14 countries in 2019. Drawing on UN-verified information and other credible accounts, the report recommends that 10 parties in nine countries be added to the Secretary-General's ‘list of shame,’ listed for additional violations, or investigated further with a view towards possible listing. It also recommends that the Secretary-General include three new ‘situations of concern’ in the report's narrative.

The report calls for the Secretary-General to resist political pressure and ensure that his list accurately reflects the UN's findings on the ground. For example, Watchlist notes, the United Nations [found](#) that US-led international military forces were responsible for 286 child casualties in Afghanistan in 2018, yet the Secretary-General failed to include them in his previous list. In 2019, US-led international forces were found to be responsible for more than two-thirds (69 percent) of [UN-documented](#) child casualties (211 killed, 130 injured) resulting from pro-Government airstrikes in Afghanistan. In Syria, Russia has denied its direct involvement in airstrikes for years, yet in 2019, independent investigations found evidence of Russia's responsibility for airstrikes that caused child casualties and the destruction of schools and hospitals.

The Secretary-General should also apply the same, existing standards to all parties when deciding which should be removed from his ‘list of shame,’ with no ‘fast-track’ and special treatment of warring parties. The Saudi- and Emirati-led coalition, for example, should remain on the list for killing and maiming children in Yemen, as should the Tatmadaw for recruiting and using children in Myanmar.

Watchlist also urged the United Nations to continue to pay special attention to the needs and rights of children in war-torn countries amid the global COVID-19 pandemic, in a [factsheet](#) also released today. The factsheet highlights how the novel coronavirus COVID-19 is impacting the rights of children in countries affected by armed conflict and hampering humanitarian relief efforts. Ongoing attacks on civilians and protected facilities, including hospitals, in countries such as [Burkina Faso](#) and [Libya](#), further compound existing challenges to combatting the virus.

“Children affected by armed conflict are particularly vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19, as war has left health care and protection systems in shambles,” Lapar said. “Limitations on rights monitoring may leave violations against children unchecked. The UN must remain vigilant of children’s rights concerns, even amid the global pandemic, and ensure that children embroiled in war are not forgotten.”

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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 guarantee their rights. For more information, please visit: <https://watchlist.org/>.