

Children and Armed Conflict

Recommendations to the Security Council

Monthly Update:
March 2020

AFGHANISTAN

The Afghan National Police (ANP), including the Afghan Local Police (ALP), are listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's (SG) 2019 report on children and armed conflict for recruitment and use. Four armed groups are listed for recruitment and use and killing and maiming of children. Of these, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP) is also listed for attacks on schools and hospitals, and the Taliban for attacks on schools and hospitals and abductions. In March, the SG will report on the situation in Afghanistan, pursuant to SCR 2489 (2019). According to UNAMA, more than **3,000** children were killed or injured in Afghanistan in 2019. This represents a three percent increase from 2018, with casualties **attributed** to suicide and complex attacks by the Taliban, attacks by the Taliban during the presidential election, continuing aerial attacks by Government and international forces, and explosive remnants of war (ERW). Humanitarian workers report a significant increase in aerial missions run by the Afghan Air Force and international military forces over the past year, elevating operational risks to reach the most vulnerable children. On February 29, the United States and the Taliban **signed** a peace agreement, following a week-long "reduction in violence." **The Security Council should:**

- **Strongly condemn all grave violations, especially killing and maiming of children** through deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian objects, or the use of aerial strikes or explosive objects in populated areas, and **urge all parties to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law;**
- Urge the Government of Afghanistan to **swiftly and fully implement its 2011 action plan and 2014 roadmap to end and prevent child recruitment and use** by its security forces, and intensify efforts to end and prevent recruitment and use by the ANP, ALP, and Afghan Territorial Forces;
- Urge the Government to **uphold its commitments under the Safe Schools Declaration** and ensure full implementation of the Guidelines on Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict;
- Remind all parties that children should be considered primarily as victims, entitled to full protection of their rights, and **urge the Government to develop and prioritize alternatives to detention** whenever possible, ensuring the best interests of the child, in accordance with juvenile justice standards;
- **Call for the protection, rights, well-being, and empowerment of children affected by armed conflict to be fully incorporated and prioritized in ongoing and future efforts to build and sustain peace;** and encourage and facilitate consideration of the views of children in these processes where possible and compatible with best interests of the child.

Germany and Indonesia are the lead countries on Afghanistan.

MALI

Three armed groups are listed in the annexes of the SG's 2019 annual report on children and armed conflict for recruitment and use, and rape and other forms of sexual violence; and the Platform, including affiliated groups, is listed for recruitment and use. In March, the SG will report on the implementation of MINUSMA's mandate, pursuant to SCR 2480 (2019). In his latest report ([S/2019/983](#)), the SG reported 142 grave violations committed against 105 children as well as continued attacks on schools in northern Mali. According to a recent report by Human Rights Watch, lack of robust accountability against armed group leaders has **emboldened** armed groups to commit further abuses against civilians, including children, in central Mali. An estimated 1,113 schools remain **closed** due to insecurity, impacting education for approximately 333,900 children. **The Security Council should:**

- Strongly condemn escalating violence in central Mali resulting in grave violations against children, and **urge all parties to uphold their obligations** under IHL and human rights law;
- Urge the CMA to **fully implement its action plan** to end and prevent recruitment and use and sexual violence against children, and allow the UN the necessary access to monitor its progress on implementation;
- Urge the Government of Mali to reinforce efforts to **strengthen accountability for perpetrators of grave violations against children**, including by timely and impartial investigations and prosecutions; and **encourage international partners to continue technical and financial support to bolster the capacity of the Malian judiciary and Specialized Judicial Unit;**

Situations involving parties listed for grave violations against children:

Afghanistan
Central African Republic
Colombia
Democratic Republic of Congo
Iraq
Mali
Myanmar
Somalia
South Sudan
Sudan
Syria
Yemen

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MALI (cont'd)

- Call on all Government and international actors engaged in counterterrorism measures to **ensure that counterterrorism operations fully uphold obligations under IHL and human rights law**, and urge full and consistent **compliance with the 2013 handover protocol for children captured during military operations** to child protection actors;
- Call upon all parties to **immediately cease attacks on schools and education personnel** and urge the Government to continue to uphold its obligations under the Safe Schools Declaration.

France is the lead country on Mali.

SOUTH SUDAN

The South Sudan People's Defense Forces (SSPDF), including Taban Deng-allied SSPDF, and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-in-Opposition (SPLA-IO) are listed for grave violations in the annexes of the SG's 2019 annual report. The SSPDF are the only government forces listed for all five 'trigger' violations. In March, UNMISS's mandate is up for renewal, pursuant to SCR 2459 (2019). In the SG's latest report ([S/2019/936](#)), the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) verified 44 grave violations, including recruitment and use, killing and maiming, rape and sexual violence, and abduction, as well as two incidents of military use of schools. In February, the SPLA-IO [released](#) 78 women and 50 children who had been abducted in 2018 and subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence. On February 7, the Government of South Sudan [signed](#) a comprehensive action plan to end and prevent all six grave violations against children. Ahead of the February 22 deadline to form a unity government, the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan [reported](#) a deliberate policy of preventing humanitarian aid from reaching civilians by different parties to conflict as well as recruitment and use of children and pervasive sexual violence. **The Security Council should:**

- **Renew UNMISS's child protection mandate**, ensuring that Child Protection Advisors (CPAs) continue to have direct access to senior mission leadership and the political and operational space to engage with all parties to conflict for the protection of children; in subsequent budget negotiations, **ensure distinct budget lines for child protection in order to allow UNMISS to effectively deliver on its CAAC mandate**;
- **Welcome the signing of the comprehensive action plan to end and prevent all six grave violations** and urge all parties to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) to ensure its swift and full implementation;
- Call on the Government to **cease attacks on and military use of schools** and fully comply with its obligations under the Safe Schools Declaration;
- Demand that all parties **allow safe and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance** to children and civilians in need, in compliance with IHL;
- **Request an update from the Government on accountability for sexual violence and other conflict-related crimes, per Chapter V of the R-ARCSS**, including steps to establish a hybrid court with the African Union and special units within the national justice system to investigate and prosecute these crimes.

The United States is the lead country on South Sudan.

Recommendations to the Working Group

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR)

In October, the Working Group received the SG's [fourth](#) report on children and armed conflict in CAR. For targeted recommendations, see Watchlist's [January 2020 CAC Monthly Update](#).

COLOMBIA

In January, the Working Group received the SG's [fourth](#) report on children and armed conflict in Colombia. For targeted recommendations, see Watchlist's [February 2020 CAC Monthly Update](#).

IRAQ

In January, the Working Group received the SG's [third](#) report on children and armed conflict in Iraq. For targeted recommendations, see Watchlist's [February 2020 CAAC Monthly Update](#).

Presidency of the Security Council for March: China

Party to Geneva Conventions I-IV, Additional Protocols I and II, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and ILO Convention 182; not a party to Additional Protocol III of the Geneva Conventions or the Rome Statute of the ICC; has endorsed the Paris Principles and Commitments, has not endorsed the Vancouver Principles or the Safe Schools Declaration.

NGO RESOURCES

Save the Children, [Syria: Children Dying in Freezing Conditions in Camps as More than a Quarter of Idlib Displaced](#), Feb. 18, 2020

Norwegian Refugee Council et al., [Aid Organizations in Yemen are Extremely Concerned About High Numbers of Civilian Casualties in Recent Military Escalation](#), Feb. 17, 2020

Save the Children, [Stop the War on Children: Gender Matters](#), Feb. 13, 2020

World Vision International, [Red Hand Day: How Can We Best Help Girl Child Soldiers?](#), Feb. 11, 2020

Refugees International, [Burkina Faso and the Sahel's New Frontline: Responding to the World's Fastest Growing Displacement Crisis](#), Feb. 11, 2020

Amnesty International, [Cameroon: Rise in Killings in Anglophone Regions Ahead of Parliamentary Elections](#), Feb. 6, 2020

ChildFund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children, and Terre des Hommes Foundation, [U.S. Landmine Policy Endangers Children](#), Feb. 6, 2020

Child Rights International Network and Redress, [Litigating Peacekeeper Child Sexual Abuse](#), Jan. 23, 2020