

Children and Armed Conflict

Recommendations to the Security Council

Monthly Update:
May 2020

IRAQ

The Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) are listed in the Secretary-General's (SG) most recent annual report on children and armed conflict (CAAC) for recruitment and use of children, and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is listed for all five 'trigger' violations. UNAMI's mandate is set to expire in May, pursuant to SCR 2470 (2019). In January, the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict received the SG's third report on the situation of children in Iraq ([S/2019/984](#)). Negotiations on Working Group conclusions were ongoing at the time of writing. The SG's February report on UNAMI ([S/2020/140](#)) did not include any additional information on grave violations against children verified during the reporting period. Following her visit in February, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs) [expressed](#) concern about the situation of IDP children who are "traumatized by violence [and] deprived of education and opportunities." Efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 have drastically increased administrative barriers to movements, hampering access for health and humanitarian workers, despite assurances from the national Government. **The Security Council should:**

- **Renew UNAMI's child protection mandate**, and ensure sufficient budgetary and operational capacity to allow UNAMI to effectively deliver on this mandate, including through monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children and engaging with listed parties to end violations;
- **Call for continued efforts to hold perpetrators accountable for grave violations**, in particular those which may constitute genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes; and **urge all parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law (IHRL)**;
- **Further urge the Government to remove administrative barriers hindering the delivery of humanitarian aid to children**, other civilians in need, without discrimination, **including the issuing of identity documents**;
- **Remind all parties that children – including those with actual or alleged association with ISIL and other armed groups – 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 on all Member States to facilitate the return of their child nationals held in Iraq for actual or alleged association with ISIL**; provide reintegration support in line with international standards and ensuring the best interests of the child.

The **United States** is the lead country on Iraq.

LIBYA

Libya is a situation of concern in the SG's 2019 annual CAAC report. In May, the SG is expected to report on the implementation of UNSMIL's mandate, pursuant to SCR 2486 (2019). Following a closed video-conference meeting on March 26, the Council expressed concern about the significant escalation of hostilities in Libya, as well as the possible impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Council members [called](#) on parties to conflict to immediately cease hostilities and to ensure unhindered humanitarian access throughout the country. As of April 20, there were [51](#) confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Libya, including one death. Heavy fighting continues to impact civilians and civilian infrastructure, including the Al Khadra hospital in Tripoli – assigned to receive COVID-19 cases – which was struck by shelling three times between April 6 and 10. On April 20, UNSMIL [expressed](#) grave concern at the deteriorating humanitarian situation and increased indiscriminate shelling on populated areas leading to displacement and civilian casualties, including of children. Migrant and refugee children continue to face protection risks – including those among [3,200](#) returned to Libya in 2020 who are unaccounted for but feared to be in unofficial detention centers or handed over to smugglers. Insecurity continues to pose significant challenges to the UN's ability to verify grave violations against children. **The Security Council should:**

- **Strongly condemn and call for an immediate end to all indiscriminate attacks and attacks on civilian infrastructure**, including health facilities and schools – which may amount to war crimes – and demand that all parties uphold their obligations under IHL and IHRL;
- **Request the SG to include information on children and armed conflict in his briefings** and reports to the Council, and to **further investigate to determine if parties to conflict in Libya should be listed for grave violations** in his upcoming annual CAAC report;

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

For resolution language on Children and Armed Conflict, download the Children and Armed Conflict smartphone app from Watchlist, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland, available on iPhone, iPad, Android, and the web!

LIBYA (cont'd)

- Urge all parties to **allow safe and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance** to children and other civilians in need;
- **Call on the Government to end arbitrary detention of migrants and refugees**, in particular children; to release those who are unlawfully deprived of their liberty; and to put in place measures to prevent torture or other ill-treatment in detention.

The **United Kingdom** is the lead country on Libya, and **Germany** chairs the 1970 Sanctions Committee.

Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

In May, the UN Security Council is scheduled to hold its annual open debate on the protection of civilians (PoC) in armed conflict. The Council will receive the SG's annual report on PoC. **The Security Council and non-Council Member States should:**

- Strengthen the ability of UN peace operations to protect civilians by providing political support to these missions and ensuring they have adequate resources and capabilities to deliver on protection mandates, including dedicated child protection capacity; ensure continuity of PoC and child protection capacity during downsizing, consolidation, or transitions from peace operations to political missions;
- Call on the SG to ensure a credible and accurate list of perpetrators in the annexes of his annual report on CAAC, including listing parties responsible for attacks on schools and hospitals as required by SCR 1998 (2011) and for other trigger violations;
- Pursue accountability for violations of IHL and, in order to deter future violations, consistently support international, independent investigative mechanisms in situations of armed conflict where there are significant civilian casualties, ensuring adequate child rights expertise are included in such mechanisms, and that reports from these mechanisms are made public.

Recommendations to the Working Group

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

SOMALIA

In March, the Working Group received the SG's fifth report on children and armed conflict in Somalia ([S/2020/174](#)). Between August 1, 2016 and September 30, 2019, the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) verified 14,856 violations against 12,551 children. Al-Shabaab was identified as the main perpetrator of most of the verified violations, including recruitment and use, killing and maiming, attacks on schools and hospitals, abductions, and denial of humanitarian access. Somali security forces were the main perpetrators of rape and other forms of sexual violence verified during the reporting period. In the SG's 2019 annual report on CAAC, Somalia was the country situation with the highest number of verified grave violations. **The Working Group should:**

- **Strongly condemn all grave violations committed against children in Somalia**, in particular the alarming numbers of children recruited, used, and abducted; and **urge all parties to uphold their obligations under IHL and IHRL**;
- Welcome the drafting of the national strategy aimed at preventing child recruitment and facilitating release and reintegration of children associated with armed groups; as well as the national strategy on victims' assistance; and **urge the Government of Somalia to continue screening troops integrating into the Somali National Army for any children in their ranks**;
- Call on the Government of Somalia to swiftly adopt the Sexual Offences Bill, to **finalize and adopt the Child Rights Bill, to criminalize the six grave violations** against children, and to ratify the Optional Protocol of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OPAC) and incorporate its provisions into national law;
- **Urge the Government to fully implement its 2012 action plans and subsequent 2019 roadmap** on recruitment and use and killing and maiming; and **to consistently comply with its 2014 Standard Operating Procedures for the reception and handover of children associated with armed groups**, including the 72-hour limit on detaining children before handing them over to child protection actors; and to uphold the Paris Principles and Commitments.

Presidency of the Security Council for May: Estonia

Party to Geneva Conventions I-IV, Additional Protocols I-III, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the Rome Statute of the ICC, and ILO Convention 182; has endorsed the Paris Principles and Commitments and the Vancouver Principles. In April 2020, Estonia became the 103rd country to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration.

NGO RESOURCES

Save the Children, [After Tear Gas Use Against West Bank Students Doubles, Coronavirus Restrictions See Incidents Drop to Zero](#), April 29, 2020

Defence for Children International, [The Impact of COVID-19 on Children's Rights](#), April 27, 2020

World Vision, [COVID-19 and Child Protection in Fragile and Humanitarian Contexts](#), April 20, 2020

Human Rights Watch, [The UN's Timid Response to War Crimes Against Children](#), April 10, 2020

Human Rights Watch, [COVID-19's Devastating Impact on Children](#), April 9, 2020

Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, [Allons-Y: Journal of Children, Peace, and Security, Vol. 4](#), March 2020