

# Children and Armed Conflict

## Recommendations to the Security Council

Monthly Update:  
June 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 (CAC) 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 June, the SG will report on the situation in Afghanistan, pursuant to SCR 2489 (2019). On May 12, an armed attack on the maternity ward of Dasht-e-Barchi hospital in Kabul reportedly left [24](#) civilians dead, mostly female patients, and 16 others injured, including children and newborn babies. The Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) is currently verifying the grave violations committed against children. UNAMA has expressed deep [concern](#) at "the striking deterioration of parties' respect for international humanitarian law, demonstrated by the recent shocking attacks on healthcare facilities and threats to healthcare workers, failures to take all feasible precautions in conducting airstrikes, and the use of large amounts of explosives in civilian-populated areas." **The Security Council should:**

- **Strongly condemn all grave violations**, especially killing and maiming children through deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian objects, including healthcare facilities and personnel, or the use of aerial strikes and explosive objects in populated areas; **urge all parties to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL);**
- 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; to intensify efforts to end and prevent recruitment and use by the ANP and ALP; and to adopt a standardized referral system for the reintegration of children separated from parties to conflict, released from detention, or rejected from recruitment centers;
- 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 children's views in these processes where possible and compatible with the best interests of the child.

**Germany and Indonesia are the lead countries on Afghanistan.**

### DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

Fifteen parties are listed for grave violations in the annexes of the SG's 2019 annual report on CAC, including the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) for rape and other forms of sexual violence. In June, the SG is expected to report on the implementation of MONUSCO's mandate, pursuant to SCR 2502 (2020). According to the March periodic report ([S/2020/214](#)), 122 grave violations against children were verified in December 2019 and January 2020. During the same period, 82 children (12 girls and 70 boys) escaped or were separated from armed groups, and three children were killed and seven maimed in crossfire during military operations. MONUSCO continues to negotiate the release of children from armed groups and, to date, has secured commitments to end child recruitment by 29 commanders of armed groups, factions, and militias. Rape and other forms of sexual violence continue to be a concern. Girls were reported among the 41 cases of rape attributed to the FARDC and 101 cases attributed to armed assailants in Ituri between September 2018 and September 2019. According to [UNICEF](#), the COVID-19 pandemic has left children at heightened risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence, and some containment measures do not adequately account for gender-specific needs and vulnerability. **The Security Council should:**

- **Urge the Government to sustain the gains of its completed action plan on recruitment and use, and fully implement its action plan on sexual violence** against children; support the CTFMR's engagement with non-State armed groups, including to negotiate action plans as per SCR 1612 (2005) and subsequent resolutions on CAC;

### 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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## DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (cont'd)

- **Urge the Government to ensure swift and full implementation of the Congolese National Police's (PNC) action plan to prevent and end conflict-related sexual violence** adopted in November 2019, and to prioritize criminal investigations and prosecutions, including cases involving child survivors;
- **Ensure child protection functions, including monitoring and reporting on grave violations, are preserved in light of measures to contain the spread of COVID-19**, and that the Child Protection Adviser (CPA) continues to have direct access to senior mission leadership and political and operational space to engage with all parties to conflict, including non-State armed groups;
- **Ensure child protection functions are preserved and adequately funded in MONUSCO's transition and drawdown strategies**, and that future withdrawal decisions are guided by clear benchmarks and indicators of tangible progress in protection, stabilization, structural changes in governance, and security.

**France is the lead country on DRC.**

## MALI

Three armed groups are listed in the annexes of the SG's 2019 annual report on CAC for recruitment and use, and rape and other forms of sexual violence; and the Platform, including affiliated groups, is listed for recruitment and use. MINUSMA's mandate is up for renewal in June, pursuant to SCR 2480 (2019). According to the SG's latest period report to the Council ([S/2020/223](#)), the UN documented 174 grave violations against children – including recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and attacks on schools and education personnel – between December 2019 and March 2020. Humanitarian access continues to be a challenge in northern and central Mali. On February 14, an ethnic militia [attack](#) on the village of Ogossagou resulted in the deaths of 36 civilians, including five children. The latest midterm report of the Panel of Experts ([S/2020/158](#)), established pursuant to SCR 2374 (2017), included no new information on violations of the rights of the child and sexual violence, as previous reports of the expert panel have done. **The Security Council should:**

- **Renew MINUSMA's child protection mandate**, preserving the existing capacity of the Child Protection Unit, and ensuring the CPA's direct access to senior mission leadership and political and operational space to engage with all parties to conflict, including non-State armed groups; ensure distinct budget lines for child protection;
- **Urge the Coalition des Mouvements de l'Azawad (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 progress on implementation; **urge the Platform to adopt and implement an action plan to end and prevent recruitment and use of children** and release all children in their ranks;
- **Urge the Government of Mali to reinforce efforts to strengthen accountability for perpetrators of grave violations**, including 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;
- Call on all Government and international actors to **ensure that counterterrorism operations fully uphold obligations under IHL and IHRL**, and strengthen the Civil-Military Coordination mechanism by establishing specific roles and responsibilities, and **urge full and consistent compliance with the 2013 handover protocol** for children captured during military operations to child protection actors;
- Call on 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.**

## OPEN DEBATE ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

In June, the Security Council will hold its annual open debate on children and armed conflict under France's presidency. Watchlist will issue a Special Bulletin with detailed recommendations prior to the open debate.

### 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](#). In March, the Working Group received the SG's [fifth](#) report on children and armed conflict in **Somalia**. For targeted recommendations, see Watchlist's [May 2020 CAC Monthly Update](#).

### Presidency of the Security Council for June: France

*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, the Vancouver Principles, and the Safe Schools Declaration.*

## NGO RESOURCES

World Vision, [How Do We Protect Children Caught Up in War and a Pandemic?](#), May 29, 2020

Human Rights Watch, [Stop Backsliding on the Use of Child Soldiers](#), May 27, 2020

Human Rights Watch, ["Their War Against Education": Armed Group Attacks on Teachers, Students, and Schools in Burkina Faso](#), May 26, 2020

Mwatana for Human Rights, et al., [Joint Letter to the Secretary-General on Attacks Against Health Care in Yemen](#), May 15, 2020

Human Rights Watch, [Detained Children Left Out of COVID-19 Response](#), May 14, 2020

Amnesty International, ['Nowhere is Safe for Us': Unlawful Attacks and Mass Displacement in North-West Syria](#), May 11, 2020

Save the Children, [A Children's Crisis: Update on Al Hol camp and COVID-19 concerns](#), May 11, 2020