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## **New UN Report Fails to Hold Saudi/Emirati Coalition Accountable for Abuses in Yemen**

*UN Secretary-General Removes the Saudi- and Emirati-led Coalition From 'List of Shame,' Despite Continued Child Casualties*

*New York, June 15, 2020* – By absolving the Saudi- and Emirati-led coalition of any responsibility for killing and maiming children in Yemen, the UN Secretary-General has left children vulnerable to further attacks and seriously undermined an important accountability mechanism, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict said. In a report issued today, the Secretary-General removed the Saudi- and Emirati-led coalition from his 'list of shame,' despite UN-verified evidence the coalition killed or maimed 222 children in Yemen in 2019.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres today released his annual report on children and armed conflict to the Security Council. It details grave child rights violations in 2019 in armed conflicts around the world, including Yemen. The Saudi- and Emirati-led coalition was found responsible for the second-highest number of all UN-verified child casualties in Yemen in 2019. In addition, the coalition carried out four attacks on schools and hospitals – a violation for which it was delisted in 2018, despite being found responsible for 77 percent of all such attacks documented by the UN in 2017.

“By removing the Saudi- and Emirati-led coalition from his ‘list of shame,’ the Secretary-General sends the message that powerful actors can get away with killing children,” said Adrienne Lapar, director of Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict. “There needs to be an independent, objective, transparent assessment of the process leading to the decision to delist the coalition, to ensure that all violators are held to the same standard, no matter who they or their friends are.”

The process for determining which perpetrators are included in the report has become increasingly politicized in recent years. 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 put the coalition back on the list, but placed it in a new category for those that had supposedly put in place measures to protect children.

The Secretary-General also wrongly removed the Myanmar Armed Forces, known as the Tatmadaw, from his ‘list of shame’ for recruiting and using children, even though they continue to commit such violations. While incidents of child recruitment have decreased, the UN found that the Tatmadaw recruited eight children and [used](#) 197 in functions such as camp maintenance, brick carrying, and rice paddy harvesting. The Tatmadaw remains listed for killing and maiming children and rape and other forms of sexual violence.

“Whether they are used as combatants, porters, cooks, or in other roles, children in these circumstances are exposed to horrible violence and trauma,” said Lapar. “By removing the Tatmadaw from his ‘list of shame’ while it continues to use children in its ranks, the Secretary-General is downplaying the severity of these practices and leaving children exposed to harm.”

Other violators were conspicuously missing from this year’s ‘list of shame,’ including US-led international forces in Afghanistan, which the UN found were responsible for 248 child casualties in 2019, and Israeli forces, which

were found responsible for 1,525 child casualties (29 killed, 1,496 maimed). Also absent was any mention of Russian involvement in the Syrian war, despite evidence from an international [inquiry](#) on crimes in Syria and independent investigations by the [New York Times](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), and [Amnesty International](#) tying Russian forces to the killing and maiming of children and destruction of health care facilities in 2019.

The Secretary-General stated that Burkina Faso and Cameroon will be designated going forward as ‘situations of concern,’ given the gravity and number of violations reported in 2019, but did not elaborate on these situations in his report.

The listing of child rights violators is a tool to ‘name and shame’ perpetrators and pressure them to comply with international law and protect children in conflict. It also triggers enhanced monitoring and reporting by the UN, in order to inform Security Council action. According to the UN’s [criteria](#), parties should only be removed from the list after implementing a UN action plan to end violations against children. Since 2017, the Secretary-General’s list has been divided into two sections: those offenders that have taken steps to protect children, and those that have not. The Secretary-General has yet to provide clear criteria explaining what is sufficient to move a party from one section to another.

Watchlist and other civil society organizations have warned that this division and lack of transparency undermine the list’s power to influence parties’ behavior and protect children. They have [called](#) on the Secretary-General to identify, condemn, and name all parties that have committed grave violations against children, in a single list, and to ensure that violators are listed and delisted according to the formal criteria without distinction.

**For more information please contact:**

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**See also:**

- [Watchlist’s Recommendations for the UN Secretary-General’s 2020 Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict, April 20, 2020](#)
- [Open Letter from Eight NGOs Urging the Secretary-General to Hold the Saudi/Emirati-led Coalition Responsible for Attacks against Healthcare in Yemen, May 15, 2020](#)
- [Open Letter to the UN Secretary-General from 20 Nongovernmental Organizations \(NGOs\) Calling for a Credible and Accurate List of Child Rights Violators, May 11, 2020](#)

*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/>.*