

Children and Armed Conflict

Recommendations to the Security Council

Monthly Update:
July 2020

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR)

Three parties to conflict are listed in the Secretary-General's (SG) 2020 annual report ([S/2020/525](#)) on children and armed conflict (CAC) for recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and rape and other forms of sexual violence. The Lord's Resistance Army is also listed for abduction, and the former Séléka coalition and associated groups are also listed for attacks on schools and hospitals. In July, the CAR sanctions regime is set to expire, pursuant to SCR 2507 (2020). The Council is also expected to review the mandate of the Panel of Experts, which expires in August. According to the SG's June report ([S/2020/545](#)) on MINUSCA, 64 girls and 122 boys were separated from armed groups and entered reintegration programs from mid-February to mid-June. On June 22, Under-Secretary-General (USG) Jean-Pierre Lacroix [briefed](#) the Council, expressing concern at recent spikes in violence and violations of the 2019 Political Agreement by some armed groups. The Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict (SCWG-CAAC) published its fourth [conclusions](#) on the situation of children in CAR in April. **The Security Council should:**

- **Welcome the adoption of the Child Protection Code** of February 2020, promulgated by the President in June 2020, and call on the Government **to pursue accountability for perpetrators of all grave violations against children**, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, through impartial investigations and prosecution, and support gender-sensitive and age-appropriate recovery and protection for survivors of sexual violence;
- Urge the *Mouvement Patriotique pour la Centrafrique* (MPC), the *Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique* (FPRC), and *l'Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique* (UPC) to **fully and swiftly implement their respective action plans to end and prevent grave violations** and release all children still in their ranks; further call upon all other listed parties to develop and sign action plans, issue Command Directives prohibiting all grave violations, and release any associated children to appropriate child protection actors;
- **Condemn all attacks on protected healthcare and humanitarian personnel**, and demand all parties immediately cease such attacks, and allow safe and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance and services to all children and other civilians in need;
- **Call on all parties to swiftly and fully implement the SCWG-CAAC's recommendations** elaborated in its fourth conclusions on CAR.

France is the lead country on CAR, and Niger chairs the 2127 Sanctions Committee.

SYRIA

Government forces, including the National Defense Forces and pro-Government militias, and six armed groups are currently listed in the annexes of the SG's annual report on CAC for at least one grave violation. Government forces and pro-government forces were found responsible for the highest number of verified attacks on schools and hospitals (226) of any warring party in 2019 according to the SG's 2020 annual report. In July, the Council is expected to receive monthly briefings on the humanitarian situation, political process, and use of chemical weapons in Syria, respectively. Authorization of border crossings for humanitarian assistance expires on July 10, pursuant to SCR 2504 (2020). On June 22, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights called for urgent action for nearly [58,000](#) children who remain confined in displacement camps in northeast Syria, given severe limitations on humanitarian access and added risks of COVID-19. In a recent open letter, 20 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) [highlighted](#) crucial gaps in healthcare in northwest and northeast Syria, which severely limit capacity to prevent or respond to the spread of COVID-19, and called for renewal of the cross-border mechanism. **The Security Council should:**

- **Strongly condemn all violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL)** in Syria, and **call for perpetrators to be held accountable**, in particular for violations against children and those that may constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity;
- Demand that all parties **allow safe, timely, and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid** and services to children and other civilians in need; **renew cross-border access to northwest Syria for a period of 12 months and re-authorize UN access to northeast Syria through the Al-Yarubiyah border crossing**; Remind parties that all children, including those suspected of association with armed groups, are entitled to special care and protection under international law, and **should be treated primarily as victims**, and detention should be used only as a last resort;
- **Call on countries of origin to safely repatriate foreign children and their families**, following individual

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!

SYRIA (cont'd)

rights-based needs assessments, for the purposes of prosecution, rehabilitation, and/or reintegration, as appropriate, in line with international law and standards, prioritizing the best interests of the child;

- **Call on the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to promptly and fully implement their action plan**, and urge other listed parties to **develop and sign action plans to end and prevent violations** against children.

Belgium and Germany lead on humanitarian issues in Syria.

YEMEN

Government forces, including Yemeni armed forces, and four non-State armed groups are listed for violations in the annexes of the SG's 2020 annual report on CAC. In a widely criticized decision, the SG removed the Saudi-led coalition from the annexes of his latest report for killing and maiming children, despite UN-verified evidence of the coalition's responsibility for 222 child casualties in 2019. NGOs have [urged](#) the SG to reconsider his decision and to consistently apply existing [criteria](#) for listing and de-listing. On June 15, two airstrikes in northern Yemen reportedly [killed](#) 13 people, including at least four children. UNMHA's mandate expires in July, pursuant to SCR 2505 (2020). According to OCHA, more than [30](#) core UN humanitarian programs in Yemen have been downsized or closed since mid-April, leaving 24 million people in need of humanitarian assistance extremely vulnerable. In June, UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths condemned military [escalation](#) across Yemen, claiming that it goes against the spirit of ongoing UN-facilitated negotiation and impedes efforts to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak. **The Security Council should:**

- **Strongly condemn the continuing violence**, including grave violations against children; **urge parties to commit to a full cessation of hostilities and work towards a comprehensive and inclusive peace process** that includes meaningful child participation and protection measures, pursuant to SCR 2427 (2018) and drawing on the 2020 [Practical Guidance for Mediators](#);
- Demand that all parties immediately **cease indiscriminate attacks, and attacks on hospitals, education facilities, and other protected civilian infrastructure** in violation of IHL, and **allow safe, unimpeded delivery of principled humanitarian aid** to all civilians in need, including children;
- Call upon the Government of Yemen to **implement fully and without delay the December 2018 roadmap aimed at revitalizing its action plan** to end and prevent child recruitment and use, immediately release all children within its ranks, and prioritize the establishment of age assessment mechanisms; **urge all other listed parties to sign and implement timebound action plans** to end and prevent grave violations;
- **Call for an impartial, transparent, and objective assessment of how the SG applied the criteria for de-listing** as set forth in the 2010 annual report ([A/73/907-S/2010/181](#)), pursuant to SCR 1882 (2009), in his recent decision to remove the Saudi-led coalition.

The **United Kingdom** is the lead country on Yemen, and **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines** chairs the 2140 Sanctions Committee.

OPEN DEBATE ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT

In July, the Security Council will hold its annual open debate on sexual violence in conflict, under the item of Women, Peace and Security. **The Security Council and other UN Member States should:**

- **Ensure adequate resources and funding** to support comprehensive, gender-sensitive, and age-appropriate recovery and protection for survivors of sexual violence;
- **Encourage the UN to continue to strengthen monitoring, reporting, and response** to sexual violence against children and its linkages to other grave violations; information disaggregated by gender should be made available to inform strategies to prevent sexual and gender-based violence and provide appropriate response services;
- **Demand accountability for sexual violence in conflict**, including in cases involving child survivors;
- **Ensure adequate financial, political, and operational support for dedicated child protection and gender experts** are prioritized in UN missions.

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 July: Germany

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

Human Rights Watch, [Record Number of Countries on US Child Soldier Blacklist](#), June 29, 2020

World Vision, [A Decade Forgotten: Protecting Children in Conflict](#), June 26, 2020

World Vision, [COVID-19 and Urgent Need for Child-Sensitive Social Protection](#), June 24, 2020

Amnesty International, [UN: Children Must Never Be a Political Bargaining Chip](#), June 23, 2020

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict et al., [Open Letter to the Secretary-General on the 2020 Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict](#), June 22, 2020

Save the Children, [Myanmar: Conflict Leads to Six-Fold Increase in Killing and Maiming in First Three Months of This Year](#), June 22, 2020

Plan International, [Adolescent Girls in Crisis: Voices from the Sahel](#), June 18, 2020

Terre des Hommes, [How Are Children in Detention Affected by COVID-19?](#), June 8, 2020

Amnesty International, ['We Dried Our Tears': Addressing the Toll on Children of Northeast Nigeria's Conflict](#), May 27, 2020