

# Children and Armed Conflict

## Recommendations to the Security Council

Monthly Update:  
October 2020

### SYRIA

Government forces, including the National Defense Forces and pro-Government militias, and six armed groups are each currently listed for at least one grave violation in the annexes of the Secretary-General's (SG) 2020 annual report on children and armed conflict (CAAC). In October, the Council will receive monthly briefings on the humanitarian situation, political process, and use of chemical weapons in Syria, respectively. In July, the Council adopted SCR 2533 (2020) further restricting cross-border aid delivery to a single crossing point. Briefing the Council in September, Under-Secretary-General (USG) for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock [cited](#) local reports that COVID-19's spread may be much broader than official numbers suggest, with others reporting a [ten-fold](#) spike in cases in the last month alone. Between August 6 and 10, [eight](#) children under five years old died in Al-Hol camp, where nearly [40,000](#) children remain stranded, facing further restrictions on access to basic health, nutrition, and education services due to the pandemic. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria released its latest report ([A/HRC/45/31](#)), documenting patterns of gross human rights abuses by nearly all warring parties, including those that would constitute grave violations against children. **The Security Council should:**

- **Strongly condemn all violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL)** in Syria, and **call for all perpetrators to be held accountable**, in particular for violations against children and actions that may constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity;
- Demand that all parties **allow safe, timely, and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid** and health services to children and other civilians in need; urgently authorize access through recently closed border crossing points Bab al-Salam and Al-Yarubiyah in order to facilitate pandemic response and the delivery of humanitarian assistance;
- Remind all parties that all children, including those actually or allegedly associated 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 rights-based needs assessments, for the purpose of reintegration, as appropriate, in line with international law and standards, prioritizing the best interests of the child;
- Urge all listed parties to **develop and sign action plans to end and prevent violations** against children, and **call on the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to continue to promptly and fully implement their action plan.**

**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 against children in the annexes of the SG's 2020 annual report on CAAC. In October, the Council will receive its monthly briefing on UNMHA, pursuant to SCR 2534 (2020). Briefing the Council in September, USG for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock [recalled](#) the increasing risk of famine, described continuing [obstacles](#) to humanitarian access, and warned that deepening cuts to aid programming would be "a death sentence for many families." In September, the UN Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts (GEE) on Yemen released its [third](#) report, in which it concludes that warring parties have committed acts that may amount to war crimes, including recruiting and using children under the age of 15 in active hostilities and indiscriminate attacks. The GEE also expressed concern at the de-listing of the Saudi - and Emirati-led coalition from the SG's annual report annexes in June, and [emphasized](#) "the need for the even application across all parties to the conflict in Yemen of the criteria defined by the UN Secretary-General in 2010 for the listing/de-listing process." **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 hostilities to respond to the pandemic per SCR 2532 (2020), stop attacks on hospitals, education facilities, and other protected civilian infrastructure**, and **allow safe, unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid** to children and other civilians in need;

**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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## YEMEN (cont'd)

- As recommended by the GEE, **refer the situation in Yemen to the International Criminal Court** to ensure accountability for acts that may amount to war crimes, including recruitment and use of children below 15 in active hostilities; invite the GEE to brief the Council on its report;
- 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, which includes meaningful consultation with civil society and other stakeholders, 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- and Emirati-led coalition.

The **United Kingdom** is the lead country on Yemen.

## Recommendations to the Working Group

In July, the Working Group received the SG's [second](#) report on children and armed conflict in **Nigeria** and the SG's [sixth](#) report on children and armed conflict in **Sudan**. For targeted recommendations, see [Watchlist's August 2020 CAAC Monthly Update](#).

## PHILIPPINES

In August, the Working Group received the SG's fifth report ([S/2020/777](#)) on children and armed conflict in the Philippines, covering the period from January 2017 to December 2019. During this period, the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) verified 331 grave violations, impacting 233 children (121 boys, 96 girls, 16 of unknown gender), and the detention of 51 children (23 girls, 28 boys) by Government Forces. Killing and maiming was the predominant violation verified during the period. Despite improvements in the legal framework to protect children, in all 35 cases of children detained in 2019, the national protocols and standards for treatment of children were not respected. Attacks against schools, hospitals, and their personnel (98) increased compared to the previous reporting period ([32](#)), with the majority of verified incidents taking place in the context of the Marawi siege. UNICEF has expressed [concerns](#) about serious threats made by Government Security Forces and paramilitary groups against teachers and schools in indigenous peoples' communities. Access constraints, security restraints, restricted freedom of movement under martial law, and lack of dedicated capacity all impacted the ability of the CTFMR to verify grave violations. **The Working Group should:**

- Urge all listed parties to **immediately end the recruitment and use of children**, release those within their ranks, and if they have not yet done so, engage with the UN to develop and implement action plans to end and prevent all six grave violations;
- Welcoming the passing of the Special Protection of Children in Situations of Armed Conflict Act (Republic Act No. 11188), express grave concern that its protocols and protection standards have not been fully implemented, particularly regarding the treatment of children affected by the armed conflict primarily as victims and ensuring their swift handover to civilian child protection authorities, and **urge the Government to take immediate steps to ensure these standards are fully and consistently implemented**;
- Urge all parties to **immediately end attacks against schools, hospitals, and protected personnel, and to uphold their obligations under IHL and IHRL**; further call on the Government to end the military use of schools, cease all threats against learning centers and education personnel, and **endorse and implement the Safe Schools Declaration**;
- Urge all parties to facilitate the **safe, unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance** to all children and other civilians in need;
- Call on the Government to **end impunity for grave violations committed against children, including rape and other forms of sexual violence against children**, ensure independent investigation and prosecution in accordance with Republic Act No. 11188, and provide comprehensive, gender-sensitive, and age-appropriate response and protection for child survivors of sexual violence.

## Presidency of the Security Council for October: Russian Federation

*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; has not ratified Additional Protocol III to the Geneva Conventions, nor the Rome Statute of the ICC; has endorsed the Paris Principles and Commitments, has not endorsed the Vancouver Principles, nor the Safe Schools Declaration.*

## NGO RESOURCES

Save the Children, [Over 21,000 People Killed Since UN Global Ceasefire Resolution](#), September 24, 2020

Amnesty International, [Open Letter on Addressing the Toll of Northeast Nigeria's Conflict on Children](#), September 15, 2020

Save the Children, [The Hidden Impact of COVID-19 on Children: A Global Research Series](#), September 10, 2020

Save the Children, [Myanmar: "Killing of Two Young Children in Rakhine State is Utterly Unacceptable,"](#) September 9, 2020

Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, [Supporting Safe Education in the Central Sahel](#), September 8, 2020