

# Children and Armed Conflict

## Recommendations to the Security Council

Monthly Update:  
March 2021

### AFGHANISTAN

The Afghan National Police (ANP), including the Afghan Local Police (ALP), are listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's (SG) 2020 annual report ([S/2020/525](#)) on children and armed conflict (CAAC) for recruitment and use. Four armed groups are each listed for at least two grave violations. In March, the SG is expected to report on UNAMA, pursuant to SCR 2543 (2020). According to the SG's December periodic report ([S/2020/1182](#)), the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) verified 954 grave violations against children in the third quarter of 2020, including 773 child casualties, 119 children recruited and used, and 15 abductions. The CTFMR also documented a fourfold increase in attacks on schools as compared to the previous quarter. Children comprised [30](#) percent of all civilians casualties in Afghanistan in 2020 and accounted for 80 percent of civilian casualties due to explosive remnants of war (ERW). **The Security Council should:**

#### The Security Council should:

- Call on all parties to **uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law (IHRL)**, to take all feasible precautions to avoid — and in any event to minimize — harm to civilians, including children, and to facilitate safe and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance;
- Call on all parties to **immediately cease attacks or threats against schools, hospitals, and their personnel**; and urge the Government to systematically prevent military use of schools and to ensure that attacks on these institutions and their personnel are investigated and those responsible duly prosecuted;
- Call on the Government to **prioritize accountability for perpetrators of grave violations**, and urge Parliament to adopt the Law on Protection of Child Rights (Child Act);
- Urge the Government to **fully implement its 2011 action plan and 2014 roadmap to compliance to end and prevent child recruitment and use by its security forces** and to adopt a standardized referral system for the reintegration of children separated from parties to conflict, rejected from recruitment centers, or released from detention including those detained for alleged or actual association with armed groups designated as “terrorist”;
- Call for the **protection, rights, well-being, and empowerment of children to be fully incorporated and prioritized in ongoing and future efforts to build and sustain peace**, drawing on the [Practical Guidance for Mediators](#); and encourage and facilitate consideration of children's views in these processes where possible and compatible with the child's best interests.

**Estonia and Norway are the lead countries on Afghanistan.**

### COLOMBIA

The *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN) is listed in the annexes of the SG's 2020 annual report on CAAC for recruitment and use. In March, the SG is expected to report on the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, pursuant to SCR 2545 (2020). According to the SG's December periodic report ([S/2020/1301](#)), 83 children and adolescents were forcibly recruited by armed groups between March and September 2020. In addition, 24 children were reportedly killed in attacks on social leaders, human rights defenders, and conflict-affected communities in 2020. **The Security Council should:**

- Demand that all armed groups, in particular the ELN and FARC-EP dissidents, **immediately release all children under 18 from their ranks and end all child recruitment, use, and abductions**;
- Urge the Government to continue **strengthening efforts to prevent the recruitment and use of both Colombian and Venezuelan children**, as well as other grave violations, paying particular attention to the most vulnerable, including girls and indigenous and Afro-Colombian children;
- Call on the Government to **strengthen accountability for perpetrators of attacks against social leaders, human rights defenders, and conflict-affected communities** that result in child casualties;
- Call on all parties to **swiftly and fully implement the Security Council Working Group on CAAC's (SCWG-CAAC) recommendations** elaborated in its fourth [conclusions](#) on the situation of children and armed conflict in Colombia.

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

#### 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!

## SOUTH SUDAN

The South Sudan People's Defense Forces (SSPDF), including Taban Deng-allied SSPDF, and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-in-Opposition (SPLA-IO) are listed for grave violations in the annexes of the SG's 2020 annual report on CAAC. In March, UNMISS's mandate is up for renewal, pursuant to SCR 2512 (2020). The SG's December periodic report ([S/2020/1180](#)) documented grave violations against 23 children (12 girls, 10 boys, 1 unknown sex), a decrease from the previous reporting period. In January, the transitional unity government [announced](#) that it will establish the African Union Hybrid Court to prosecute human rights violations, per Chapter V of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. The SCWG-CAAC is currently negotiating its conclusions on the situation of children and armed conflict in South Sudan. **The Security Council should:**

- **Renew UNMISS's child protection mandate**, as implemented by a stand-alone Child Protection Section that continues to be well-resourced and has the political and operational space to engage with all parties to conflict on child protection; in subsequent budget negotiations, ensure distinct budget lines for child protection in order to allow UNMISS to effectively deliver on this mandate;
- Urge all parties to **swiftly and fully implement the January 2020 Comprehensive Action Plan to end and prevent all grave violations** against children, immediately cease recruiting and using children, and release and hand over to child protection actors all children from their ranks; and **call on the Government to endorse the Vancouver Principles and Paris Principles**;
- Call on all parties to **take immediate and specific steps to end and prevent rape and other forms of sexual violence** against children, and to ensure perpetrators are held accountable and survivors have access to comprehensive, gender-sensitive, and age-appropriate response and protection;
- **Urge the Government to end impunity** through timely and impartial investigation and, where appropriate, prosecution, and follow through on commitments to establish the Hybrid Court.

**The United States is the lead country on South Sudan.**

## SYRIA

Seven parties to conflict are each currently listed for at least one grave violation in the annexes of the SG's 2020 annual report on CAAC. In March, the Council will receive monthly briefings on the humanitarian situation, political process, and use of chemical weapons in Syria, respectively. March 15 will mark 10 years since the start of the armed conflict. One in three Syrian schools have been destroyed, damaged, or are currently being used for military purposes, and [52](#) attacks on education facilities and personnel were confirmed last year. According to UNICEF, at least [22](#) children were reportedly killed in January. In February, a group of UN human rights experts [called](#) on countries to urgently repatriate their nationals from Al-Hol and Roj camps, expressing serious concern at the deteriorating humanitarian situation and increased [violence](#) in the camps. **The Security Council should:**

- **Urgently work to identify solutions to restore access lost through closed UN border crossing points and renew SCR 2533 (2020)** to re-authorize Syria's cross-border mechanism to facilitate pandemic response and the delivery of principled humanitarian assistance to children and other civilians in need;
- Call on all parties to **immediately cease attacks or threats against schools, hospitals, and their personnel**; and urge the Government to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration and to ensure that attacks on these institutions and their personnel are investigated and those responsible duly prosecuted;
- Call on countries to **safely repatriate their child nationals 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 child's best interests, and prevent children from becoming stateless;
- Urge all listed parties, including Government forces, 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.

**Norway and Ireland are the lead countries on the humanitarian situation in Syria.**

## Recommendations to the Working Group

In December, the Working Group received the SG's third report on children and armed conflict in South Sudan ([S/2020/1205](#)). For targeted recommendations, see [Watchlist's January 2021 CAAC Monthly Update](#). In February, the Working Group received the SG's sixth report on children and armed conflict in Myanmar ([S/2020/1243](#)). For targeted recommendations, see [Watchlist's February 2021 CAAC Monthly Update](#).

## Presidency of the Security Council for March: United States

*Party to Geneva Conventions I-IV, Additional Protocol III, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and ILO Convention 182; has not ratified Additional Protocols I-II of the Geneva Conventions, the Rome Statute of the ICC, nor the CRC. Has not endorsed the Paris Principles and Commitments, the Vancouver Principles, nor the Safe Schools Declaration.*

## NGO RESOURCES

Action on Armed Violence, [Childhood Under Attack: A Timeline of Explosive Weapon Harm](#), February 25, 2021

Save the Children, [Weapon of War: Sexual Violence against Children in Conflict](#), February 18, 2021

Plan International, [How the Specific Needs of Girls Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups Should Be Better Taken into Consideration](#), February 12, 2021

Women's Refugee Commission, [Addressing Sexual Violence against Men, Boys, and LGBTIQ+ Persons in Humanitarian Settings: A Field-Friendly Guidance Note by Sector](#), February 10, 2021

Danish Refugee Council, [Focus Group Discussion Report: Child Protection Needs in South-West Cameroon](#), February 8, 2021

Human Rights Watch, [Uganda: First ICC Conviction of an LRA Leader](#), February 4, 2021

Save the Children, [An End to US Participation in the War in Yemen: A Critical Step to Saving Children's Lives](#), February 4, 2021

World Vision, et al., [Counting Pennies 2: Analysis of Official Development Assistance to End Violence against Children](#), February 3, 2021