

Children and Armed Conflict

Recommendations to the Security Council

Monthly Update:
May 2021

IRAQ

The Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) are listed in the annex of the Secretary-General's (SG) 2020 annual report on children and armed conflict (CAAC) for recruitment and use of children, and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is listed for all five 'trigger' violations. In May, UNAMI's mandate is up for renewal, pursuant to SCR 2522 (2020). In January, UNICEF confirmed [two](#) children were injured in an attack, and one child was killed and her sister wounded after coming into contact with an unexploded remnant of war. The SG's recent report on conflict-related sexual violence ([S/2021/312](#)) highlights continuing challenges faced by children associated with ISIL, such as detention, stigma, displacement, risk of statelessness, and lack of access to identity documents or justice. In March, the Government [passed](#) the Yazidi Survivors Law, providing reparations and assistance to survivors from some minority groups. Watchlist's recent [report](#) found that there is currently no national strategy or legal framework guiding the Government's response to children associated with armed groups, and access to reintegration is often limited and short-term. **The Security Council should:**

- Call on the Government to **intensify efforts to remove administrative barriers hindering the delivery of humanitarian aid to civilians**, including children, and to issue identification documents to allow all children to access public assistance and basic services;
- Urge the Government to **treat children affected by armed conflict primarily as victims and prioritize their reintegration**, including those children formerly or allegedly associated with groups designated as terrorist, taking into account that detention should only be used as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time;
- Encourage the Government to **adopt and implement a handover protocol** to facilitate the release of children to child protection actors for their reintegration;
- **Call on Member States to facilitate the return of their nationals**, including children of their nationals, held for their or their family members' actual or alleged association with ISIL, and to provide reintegration support in line with international standards and ensuring the best interests of the child.

The United States is the lead country on Iraq.

LIBYA

Libya is a situation of concern in the SG's 2020 annual report on CAAC. In May, the SG will report on the implementation of UNSMIL's mandate, pursuant to SCR 2542 (2020), which expanded the mandate to include child protection. The UN documented [10](#) child casualties between August and December 2020. UNSMIL continues to receive reports of sexual violence and abuse, torture, and ill-treatment of women and children in detention centers, particularly of those suspected of having links to ISIL. In March, the interim Government of National Unity was sworn in to lead the country up to the national elections in December 2021. In April, the Council [approved](#) arrangements for a Libyan-led and -owned ceasefire monitoring mechanism. **The Security Council should:**

- Urge all parties to **allow full, safe, and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance to civilians**, including children, and to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL) as they **continue to take steps towards the full implementation of the ceasefire agreement**;
- Call on the interim Government to **end arbitrary detention of migrants and refugees**, in particular children, to release those unlawfully detained, and to put in place measures to prevent torture or other ill-treatment in detention;
- Request an update on the deployment of child protection advisers to UNSMIL, as requested in SCR 2542 (2020);
- Call for the **protection, rights, well-being, and empowerment of children to be fully incorporated and prioritized in ongoing and future peacebuilding efforts**, and encourage and facilitate consideration of children's views in these processes where possible and compatible with their best interests, pursuant to SCR 2427 (2018) and drawing on the [Practical Guidance for Mediators](#).

The United Kingdom is the lead country on Libya.

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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SUDAN

Four non-state armed groups are listed in the annexes of the SG's 2020 annual report on CAAC. In May, the SG is expected to report on the implementation of UNITAMS' mandate, which is up for renewal in June, pursuant to SCR 2524 (2020). Recruitment of UNITAMS' senior child protection adviser is still pending. According to the SG's March report ([S/2021/191](#)), the UN received reports of the mass recruitment of children in Darfur in late 2020 by armed group signatories to the Juba Agreement. The UN verified the recruitment and use of 10 boys by the Sudan Liberation Movement/Transitional Council, the killing and maiming of five boys by the Rapid Support Forces, and rape of two girls – one of whom was raped by an element of the Sudanese Armed Forces. No efforts toward accountability for these incidents were reported. In April, deadly [clashes](#) in West Darfur reportedly left nearly 90 people dead and 190 injured. According to the International Office of Migration (IOM), [237,000](#) have been displaced by conflict in Darfur in 2021, more than four times the 53,000 displaced in all of 2020. **The Security Council should:**

- **Renew UNITAMS' child protection mandate and ensure that adequate resources are allocated and promptly deployed** to allow UNITAMS to fully deliver on this mandate, including monitoring and reporting on grave violations, pursuant to SCR 1612 (2005) and subsequent resolutions on CAAC;
- **Call on the Government to accelerate efforts to implement its National Plan on Protection of Civilians**, to end impunity for perpetrators of grave violations, and to support comprehensive, gender-sensitive, and age-appropriate response for child survivors;
- Urge all listed parties who have not already done so to **engage with the UN to develop, sign, and implement action plans to end and prevent grave violations**, and call on the Government to engage with the UN to develop and implement a national prevention plan on grave violations against children;
- Call for the **protection, rights, well-being, and empowerment of children to be fully incorporated and prioritized in ongoing and future peacebuilding efforts**, encourage and facilitate consideration of children's views in these processes where possible and compatible with their best interests, pursuant to SCR 2427 (2018) and drawing on the [Practical Guidance for Mediators](#);
- Call on all parties to **swiftly and fully implement the recommendations of the SCWG-CAAC elaborated in its sixth conclusions** on children and armed conflict in the Sudan.

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

OPEN DEBATE ON THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT

In May, the Security Council will hold its annual open debate on the protection of civilians (PoC) in armed conflict. **The Security Council and non-Council Member States should:**

- Strengthen the ability of UN peace operations to protect civilians by providing political support and allocating adequate resources to deliver on protection mandates, including dedicated child protection capacity; ensure continuity of PoC and child protection capacity during mission drawdown or transition;
- Call on the SG to ensure a credible and accurate list of perpetrators in the annexes of his annual report on CAAC, consistently applying standards to all perpetrators across all conflicts;
- Pursue accountability for violations of IHL and consistently support international, independent investigative mechanisms in situations of armed conflict with significant civilian casualties, ensuring adequate child rights expertise is included in such mechanisms, and that reports from these mechanisms are made public;
- Call on parties to conflict, including Member States, to avoid the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and to protect civilians, including objects indispensable to their survival.

Recommendations to the Working Group

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 May: China

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; not a party to Additional Protocol III of 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

Action on Armed Violence, [Explosive Violence and Child Displacement](#), April 30, 2021

War Child and World Vision, [The Silent Pandemic: The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Children in Conflict-Affected Countries](#), April 27, 2021

Action on Armed Violence, [The Impact of Explosive Violence on the Sensory Health of Children](#), April 19, 2021

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, ["A Credible List": Recommendations for the Secretary-General's 2021 Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict](#), April 14, 2021

CARE, [Venezuela: Women and Girls at Greatest Risk as Thousands Escape Violence Due to Military Operations in the Border Zone with Colombia](#), April 8, 2021

Human Rights Watch, [Cameroon: Boko Haram Attacks Escalate in Far North](#), April 5, 2021

ActionAid, et al., [Myanmar: INGOs Call for an End to Violence Against Civilians Including Children and Warn of Imminent Humanitarian Crisis](#), April 2, 2021

Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace, and Security, [Allons-Y: Journal of Children, Peace, and Security, Vol. 5](#), March 30, 2021