

# Children and Armed Conflict

## Recommendations to the Security Council

The Secretary-General's (SG) 2021 annual report ([S/2021/437](#)) on children and armed conflict (CAAC) was released in June. The report includes information on three additional 'situations of concern.' This month's update will spotlight these situations and provide recommendations for the Security Council towards the protection of children in these contexts.

### BURKINA FASO

The United Nations verified 171 grave violations against children in 2020, mostly occurring in the East, Central North, and Sahel regions of Burkina Faso. These include the recruitment and use of four boys by unidentified perpetrators in the Sahel region, the killing and maiming of at least 54 children (27 boys, 26 girls, 1 sex unknown), and the abduction of 22 children (14 boys, 8 girls). The UN was able to verify three cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children. A total of 80 attacks on schools (70) and hospitals (10) were verified, as well as eight incidents of denial of humanitarian access. Violations were attributed to the Group to Support Islam and Muslims (JNIM), the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Burkina Faso's Defence and Security Forces, *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie*, and unidentified perpetrators. The report also found that 10 boys had been detained in Ouagadougou since 2018 for alleged association with armed groups, and one boy was released and placed in a transit center. The Government of Burkina Faso has developed a [handover protocol](#) with the UN for the transfer of children allegedly associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors, which is awaiting final [adoption](#). On June 5, an attack on the village of Solhan by a non-state armed group resulted in the deaths of more than [130](#) civilians, including many children. **The Security Council should:**

- Demand that all parties **uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law (IHRL)**; call on all parties to **engage with the UN to end and prevent grave violations** against children; and **urge accountability for all perpetrators**;
- Remind all parties that children affected by armed conflict **should be treated primarily as victims**, including those actually or allegedly associated with groups designated as terrorist or those who may have committed crimes; **their reintegration should be prioritized** in line with international juvenile justice standards, and detention should only be used as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate time;
- Call on the Government to **release children detained for their actual or alleged association with armed groups, and to swiftly and fully implement the handover protocol** jointly developed with the UN;
- Demand that all parties **immediately cease attacks or threats against schools, hospitals, and their personnel**; and urge the Government to ensure attacks on these institutions and their personnel are investigated and those responsible duly prosecuted.

### CAMEROON

In 2020, the UN verified 285 grave violations against children, occurring in the North-West, South-West, and Far North regions of Cameroon. During the reporting period, the UN verified the recruitment and use of 15 children (10 boys, 5 girls) by Boko Haram-affiliated or splinter groups in the Far North. At least 165 children (87 boys, 66 girls, 12 sex unknown) were killed or maimed in the Far North (97), South-West (35), and North-West (33) as a result of gunshots, suicide attacks, and explosive remnants of war, and 68 children (32 boys, 26 girls, 10 sex unknown) were abducted. One attempted rape by an unidentified perpetrator was verified in the North-West. Perpetrators remained unidentified for most (22) of the 26 verified attacks on schools (20) and hospitals (6), as well as for eight documented incidents of denial of humanitarian access. The UN verified 19 incidents of the military use of schools by the Cameroon Armed Forces, and two incidents of denial of humanitarian access were attributed to the Cameroon Armed Forces. The report also found that 16 boys, including 11 in the South-West and three in the North-West, had been detained by security forces on national security-related charges, and the UN could not establish their status by the end of the reporting period. Recent [research](#) by Plan International found that adolescent girls in North-West and South-West Cameroon faced increased vulnerabilities as a result of the armed conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic, and desired action to prevent sexual and gender-based violence and attacks on schools and, ultimately, peace and an end to the conflict. **The Security Council should:**

## Monthly Update: July 2021

### 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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## CAMEROON (cont'd)

- Demand that all parties **uphold their obligations under IHL and IHRL**; call on all parties to **engage with the UN to end and prevent grave violations** against children; and **urge accountability for all perpetrators**;
- Call on the Government to **release children detained for their actual or alleged association with armed groups, and to swiftly develop, endorse, and implement a handover protocol** for the transfer of children allegedly associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors; recalling that **children should be treated primarily as victims**, that their reintegration should be prioritized in line with international juvenile justice standards, and that detention should only be used as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate time and children should be separated from adult detainees;
- Demand that all parties **immediately cease attacks or threats against schools, hospitals, and their personnel**; and urge the Government to ensure attacks on these institutions and their personnel are investigated and those responsible duly prosecuted;
- Urge all parties to allow full, safe, and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance to civilians, including children, and to **urgently 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 [Practical Guidance for Mediators](#).

## LAKE CHAD BASIN

The SG's latest annual report on CAAC (S/2021/437) includes a section on the Lake Chad Basin region, covering incidents in the Far North region of Cameroon, Lac Province in Chad, Diffa region in Niger, and North-East Nigeria. Violations in Cameroon and Nigeria are further covered in the respective country sections of the SG's report. During 2020, the UN verified 762 grave violations against 685 children (382 boys, 260 girls, 43 sex unknown). Boko Haram, including affiliated and splinter groups, were found responsible for recruiting and using 73 children in Chad and Niger. The Governments of Chad and Niger detained 21 children for alleged association with armed groups. At least 59 children (23 boys, 10 girls, 26 sex unknown) were killed and maimed, and 188 children (95 boys, 85 girls, 8 sex unknown) were abducted. The whereabouts of most of the abducted children are unknown, although four children escaped and an additional nine were rescued by the Chadian National Army. The UN also verified sexual violence against 23 girls, all attributed to Boko Haram, including unidentified affiliated or splinter groups. One school and six hospitals were attacked in Niger. Boko Haram, including unidentified affiliated or splinter groups, were found responsible for almost all verified grave violations, though one case of maiming was attributed to the Niger Armed Forces, and the perpetrators of the 39 abductions in Chad could not be identified. **The Security Council should:**

- **Demand that all parties uphold their obligations under IHL and IHRL**, taking all feasible precautions to avoid, and in any event minimize, harm to civilians and civilian objects in the course of their operations;
- **Call for all perpetrators of grave violations to be held accountable**, including for rape and sexual violence against children, and for child survivors to be provided with **comprehensive, age-appropriate, and gender-sensitive response and protection services**;
- Remind all parties that children affected by armed conflict **should be treated primarily as victims**, including those actually or allegedly associated with groups designated as terrorist or those who may have committed crimes; **their reintegration should be prioritized** in line with international juvenile justice standards, and detention should only be used as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate time;
- Call for the **release of all children detained for actual or alleged association with armed groups, in line with applicable handover protocols** in Chad (2014) and Niger (2017), and encourage continued implementation of these protocols; call on the Governments of Cameroon and Nigeria to develop, endorse, and implement their own handover protocols.

## 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](#). In May, the Working Group received the SG's third report on children and armed conflict in Syria ([S/2021/398](#)). For targeted recommendations, see [Watchlist's June 2021 CAAC Monthly Update](#).

## Presidency of the Security Council for July: France

*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, [Afghanistan: Children Detained, Tortured for Insurgent Links](#), June 22, 2021

Eminent Persons Group, [Statement in Response to the Secretary-General's Annual Report](#), June 22, 2021

International Rescue Committee, [New IRC Syria Data Emphasizes Deteriorating Situation as UNSC Cross-Border Aid Vote Nears](#), June 21, 2021

Save the Children, [Saudi-led Coalition Gets a Free Pass to Destroy Children's Lives in Yemen Yet Again](#), June 21, 2021

Plan International, Save the Children, World Vision, [Joint Briefing Note on the Situation Facing Children in Northern Mozambique](#), June 19, 2021

Human Rights Watch, [Foreign ISIS Suspects, Families: Why a Single "R" Word Matters at the UN](#), June 17, 2021

Save the Children, [Myanmar: More Than 100 Attacks on Schools in May](#), June 10, 2021

Save the Children, [At Least 51 Children Kidnapped in Cabo Delgado over Past 12 Months](#), June 8, 2021