

Children and Armed Conflict

Recommendations to the Security Council

Monthly Update:
September 2021

AFGHANISTAN

Four non-state armed groups (NSAGs) are listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's (SG) latest report on children and armed conflict (CAAC) for recruitment and use of children and killing and maiming children. Of these, Taliban forces and affiliated groups are additionally listed for attacks on schools and hospitals and abductions, and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP) is also listed for attacks on schools and hospitals. The Afghan National Army was newly listed in this year's report for killing and maiming children, though at the time of writing, the Afghan National Army has de facto ceased to exist on the ground. In the first half of 2021, child casualties comprised [32](#) percent of all civilian casualties, including the highest number of girl child casualties ever recorded by UNAMA. In September, UNAMA's mandate is up for renewal, pursuant to SCR 2543 (2020). Following the Taliban's takeover of Kabul, the Security Council issued a [press statement](#) calling for an immediate end to all hostilities, for the formation of a new united, inclusive, and representative government through inclusive negotiations, and for respect for international humanitarian law (IHL). UN agencies and humanitarian partners, including [UNICEF](#) and [Save the Children](#), have expressed their [commitment](#) to continue providing for the needs of vulnerable civilians, including children, in Afghanistan. Children were [reportedly](#) among the civilian casualties that resulted from the August 26 attack on Kabul's airport. **The Security Council should:**

- **Demand that all parties, particularly the Taliban and affiliated groups, uphold their obligations under IHL and human rights law (IHRL)**, and ensure full respect for the rights of all Afghans, including women and girls and notably the right of all children to education;
- **Call on the Taliban to fulfill its [promises](#)** to protect civilians, respect human rights, including the rights of women and girls, ensure the safety of UN and civil society actors on the ground, including female staff, and respect their neutrality, impartiality, and independence;
- **Renew UNAMA's child protection mandate** and, in subsequent budget negotiations, ensure allocation of additional resources including for child protection capacity to allow UNAMA to fully and safely deliver on this mandate;
- **Demand immediate, safe, and unimpeded access for the delivery of humanitarian aid** to all civilians in need, including children; ensure counterterrorism measures and sanctions regimes do not impede humanitarian action; and urge Member States including neighboring countries to facilitate safe passage of Afghans who are at risk of harm and to provide emergency funding to ensure the humanitarian response can continue;
- Call for the **protection, rights, well-being, and empowerment of children to be fully incorporated and prioritized in efforts to build inclusive, sustainable peace**, 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](#).

Estonia and Norway are the lead countries on Afghanistan.

LIBYA

Libya is a situation of concern in the SG's 2021 annual report (S/2021/437). The SG expressed concern at the prevalence of killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals in 2020, as well as for recruitment and use and cross-border trafficking from Syria to Libya, and risks of sexual violence against children. In September, UNSMIL's mandate is up for renewal, pursuant to SCR 2542 (2020), which called for the effective deployment of child protection advisers. In July, the Council [welcomed](#) the Second Berlin Conference and the commitment of the participants to the UN-facilitated, Libyan-led, and Libyan-owned political process. The Council also reiterated its grave concern at the "dire situation faced by migrants, refugees, and internally displaced people, including children." UNICEF's midyear report cites [668](#) children (199 girls, 469 boys) had been intercepted at sea and returned to Libya in the first half of 2021, and most of these children were subjected to arbitrary detention in centers run by the Ministry of Interior. **The Security Council should:**

- Urge all parties to uphold their obligations under IHL and IHRL as they **continue to take steps towards the full implementation of the ceasefire agreement**; and call on the interim government to **mitigate the effects of landmines and explosive remnants of war on children**;

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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LIBYA (cont'd)

- Reiterating concern for ongoing grave violations committed against children in Libya, **call on all parties to immediately cease such violations**, including all recruitment and use and cross-border trafficking of children; and **request an update on the deployment of child protection advisers to UNSMIL**, as requested in SCR 2542 (2020);
- Call on the interim government to **end arbitrary detention of migrants and refugees**, in particular children; to release those unlawfully detained; and to immediately put in place measures to prevent torture, sexual violence, or other ill-treatment in detention;
- Call on Member States to **facilitate the voluntary return of their nationals**, including children of their nationals, held for their or their family members' actual or alleged association with ISIL and other armed groups, and to **provide reintegration support in line with international standards and ensuring the best interests of the child**;
- Call for the **protection, rights, well-being, and empowerment of children to be fully incorporated and prioritized in ongoing efforts to build inclusive, sustainable peace**, 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.

Recommendations to the Working Group

In January, 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](#).

AFGHANISTAN

The SG released his fifth report on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan ([S/2021/662](#)), covering January 2019 to December 2020. During the reporting period, the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) verified 6,473 grave violations against children, including 5,770 cases of killing and maiming, which remained the most prevalent violation. The CTFMR also reported an increase in verified recruitment and use of children, as well as elevated numbers of attacks on hospitals and related personnel and continued attacks on schools. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic added additional [challenges](#) to monitoring and reporting and is believed to have increased children's vulnerability to recruitment and use, abduction, and sexual violence. Detention of children on charges related to national security, including for their own or their family members' actual or alleged association with armed groups, is a continuing concern. Rape and sexual violence remain underreported, and accountability is lacking. NSAGs were the predominant perpetrators of grave violations against children during the reporting period. Recognizing that the situation on the ground has changed significantly since this reporting period (see above), the Working Group should ensure that its conclusions are timely and relevant for the effective protection of children in Afghanistan.

The Working Group should:

- **Strongly condemn all grave violations against children in Afghanistan**, especially killing and maiming of children through deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian objects, or the use of explosive objects in populated areas; and urge all relevant parties to **protect civilians and respect the dignity and human rights of all Afghans**, including boys and girls;
- **Call for immediate, concrete steps to hold perpetrators accountable** for violations committed against children, including for rape and sexual violence against children;
- **Remind all relevant parties, particularly the Taliban, that they are bound by all international standards to which Afghanistan has already committed to protect children**, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the Paris Principles and Commitments, and the Safe Schools Declaration;
- Remind all parties that **children associated with armed forces and armed groups should be treated primarily as victims**, including those children actually or allegedly associated with groups designated as terrorist and those children who may have committed crimes; **their reintegration should be prioritized in line with international juvenile justice standards**; and detention of children should only be used as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate time.

Presidency of the Security Council for September: Ireland

Party to Geneva Conventions I-IV, Additional Protocols I-II, 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 signed but not ratified Additional Protocol III to the Geneva Conventions. Has endorsed the Paris Principles and Commitments, the Vancouver Principles, and the Safe Schools Declaration.

NGO RESOURCES

Amnesty International, [Syria: Government Must Lift Deadly Siege of Daraa al-Balad and Allow Humanitarian Aid to Flow](#), August 27, 2021

Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Atrocity Alert No. 267: Afghanistan, Niger and Myanmar \(Burma\)](#), August 25, 2021

War Child, ["If a Child's Mental Health Is Suffering, Food and Shelter Can Only Go So Far,"](#) August 19, 2021

CARE, [Ten Years from Independence and South Sudan Is One of the Deadliest Places to Be an Aid Worker](#), August 16, 2021

Human Rights Watch, [Palestinian Rockets in May Killed Civilians in Israel, Gaza](#), August 12, 2021

Amnesty International, ["I Don't Know If They Realized I Was a Person': Rape and Sexual Violence in the Conflict in Tigray, Ethiopia](#), August 11, 2021

Human Rights Watch, [Niger: Surging Atrocities by Armed Islamist Groups](#), August 11, 2021

Save the Children, [Mozambique: Number of Lone Children Fleeing Conflict in Cabo Delgado Jumps 40 Percent in One Month](#), August 9, 2021