

Children and Armed Conflict

Recommendations to the Security Council

Monthly Update:
October 2021

COLOMBIA

The *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN) is listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's (SG) 2021 annual report ([S/2021/437](#)) on children and armed conflict (CAAC) for recruitment and use. In October, the mandate of the UN Verification Mission for Colombia is up for renewal, pursuant to SCR 2574 (2021). In May, the Security Council expanded the mission's mandate to include monitoring implementation of sentences handed down by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (*Jurisdicción especial para la paz*), which was established by the 2016 peace agreement. According to the SG's June periodic report ([S/2021/603](#)), the Technical Working Group on Children of the National Reintegration Council has been reactivated and is meeting to address challenges related to security and protection concerns. In his latest annual report on CAAC, the SG called on the Government to allocate adequate resources to implement its national action plan to prevent the recruitment and use of children and sexual violence against children and the "*Súmate por mí*" program to prevent child recruitment and use by armed groups, including in indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. He also expressed concern about the continuing recruitment and use of children by armed groups and the increase in killing and maiming of children; in response, he called for continued demining and risk reduction education and strengthened prevention and response for sexual violence. **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 **take measures to protect children and other civilians during military operations**, including respecting the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution;
- Call on the Government to **strengthen accountability for all grave violations committed against children in armed conflict**, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, and for **attacks against social leaders, human rights defenders, and conflict-affected communities**, particularly those resulting 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.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

Thirteen parties are listed in the annexes of the SG's 2021 annual report on CAAC for grave violations against children, including the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) for rape and other forms of sexual violence. This year, CODECO was newly listed for killing and maiming children and attacks on schools and hospitals, Mai Mai Apa Na Pale was newly listed for recruitment and use and abductions, and Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové was listed for rape and sexual violence (in addition to recruitment and use and killing and maiming, for which it was previously listed). In October, the Council is expected to discuss the SG's latest periodic report on MONUSCO, pursuant to SCR 2556 (2020). According to the SG's June periodic report ([S/2021/587](#)), the UN verified the killing and maiming of 51 children, including 11 girls; 20 incidents of rape or other forms of sexual violence against girls; and the recruitment or use of 133 children, including seven girls. According to UNICEF, [intensified](#) conflict in the eastern provinces in the first half of 2021 deepened protection and gender-based violence risks for children and further limited humanitarian access. DRC was among the country situations with the highest numbers of verified grave violations against children in 2020, according to the SG's latest annual report on CAAC. In his report, the SG commended the Government's efforts to sustainably prevent child recruitment and use by its forces, as well as efforts to hold perpetrators of grave violations accountable, while calling for the aspects of the 2012 action plan relating to sexual violence to be implemented. **The Security Council should:**

- Urge all parties to **immediately cease recruiting and using children**, to release those within their ranks, to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law (IHRL), and if they have not yet done so, engage with the UN to **develop, sign, and implement action plans to end and prevent grave violations**;

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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DRC (cont'd)

- Call on all parties to take immediate and specific steps to **end and prevent rape and other forms of sexual violence against children**, including by ensuring perpetrators are held accountable and that survivors have access to comprehensive, gender-sensitive, and age-appropriate response and protection; **call on the Government to accelerate efforts to implement aspects of its 2012 action plan relating to sexual violence**;
- Call on all parties to **facilitate the safe, timely, and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance** to all children and other civilians in need;
- Call on all parties to **swiftly and fully implement the SCWG-CAAC's recommendations** elaborated in its seventh [conclusions](#) on the situation of children and armed conflict in DRC.

France is the lead country on DRC. Niger chairs the 1533 Sanctions Committee.

SYRIA

Seven parties to conflict are listed for at least one grave violation against children in the annexes of the SG's 2021 annual report on CAAC. Syria was among the situations with the highest numbers of verified grave violations against children in 2020. In October, the Council will receive its monthly briefings on the humanitarian situation, political process, and use of chemical weapons in Syria. In July, the Council adopted SCR 2585 (2021), extending the cross-border delivery of humanitarian aid through the Bab al-Hawa crossing. According to UNICEF, intensified hostilities in Northwest Syria have led to the death or injury of at least [54](#) children since the beginning of July. COVID-19 cases have reportedly [risen](#) considerably in Northern Syria in recent months, and explosive ordnances continue to be a risk for children. A recent [report](#) by Save the Children describes violence and other survival risks faced by children who continue to be held in Northeast Syria for their or their family members' alleged or actual association with ISIL. A September Amnesty International [report](#) documented cases of detention, torture, and other ill-treatment of former Syrian refugees, including children, upon their return to Syria. The SCWG-CAAC received the SG's third report on CAAC in Syria ([S/2021/398](#)) in April. Negotiations were ongoing at the time of writing. **The Security Council should:**

- Demand that all parties **uphold their obligations under IHL and IHRL**, taking concrete measures to prevent and, in any case, minimize child casualties, immediately end and prevent any further abuse against child returnees, and **call for immediate and concrete steps to hold all perpetrators accountable**;
- Urge neighboring and other refugee-hosting countries to **respect their obligations under refugee law, including the principle of non-refoulement**;
- Urge all listed parties, including Syrian Government forces, to **develop and sign action plans to end and prevent violations against children**, and call on the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to promptly and fully implement their action plan;
- Remind all parties that **children associated with 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 period of time;
- **Urge 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, following individual, rights-based needs assessments; provide reintegration support in line with international law and standards, prioritizing the child's best interests; and prevent children from becoming stateless.

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

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 April, 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](#). In August, the Working Group received the SG's fifth report on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan ([S/2021/662](#)). For targeted recommendations, see Watchlist's [September 2021 CAAC Monthly Update](#).

Presidency of the Security Council for October: Kenya

Party to the 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 Vancouver Principles and the Safe Schools Declaration; has not endorsed the Paris Principles and Commitments.

NGO RESOURCES

Human Rights Watch, [Mozambique: ISIS-linked Group Using Child Soldiers](#), September 29, 2021

Plan International, [Protect Our Education: Making Schools in Conflict Safer for Girls](#), September 24, 2021

Save the Children, [Children in South Sudan Say Hunger Is Forcing Them into Child Marriage and Crime](#), September 23, 2021

Amnesty International, [Niger: Increasing Number of Children Killed and Recruited by Armed Groups in Sahel's Tri-Border Area](#), September 12, 2021

Human Rights Watch, [Some Accountability for Attack on Burkina Faso School](#), September 7, 2021

Human Rights Watch, [Explosive Weapons Attacks on Afghanistan Schools Increase](#), September 7, 2021

Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [R2P Monitor, Issue 58](#), September 1, 2021