

WATCH LIST ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT



2022
ANNUAL REPORT

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Foreword

- At the time of publishing this report, 1 in 6 children – or about 449 million – live in a conflict affected area worldwide. The ability for girls and boys to enjoy their most basic rights is significantly impacted by the activities of State and non-State parties to armed conflicts. In 2022 alone, the United Nations (UN) verified over 24,000 grave violations against children. These included killing and maiming, sexual violence, use and recruitment, and abductions. Schools and hospitals were destroyed, and humanitarian access was denied. Almost 3,000 children were also detained for actual or alleged association with armed groups. These alarming patterns raise significant concerns about the adherence to international law, in particular international humanitarian and human rights law, by parties to armed conflict, be they States or non-State armed groups.

In this context, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict has persevered in its endeavors to promote the UN's children and armed conflict (CAAC) agenda and safeguard the rights of children affected by war. This report demonstrates the significant efforts Watchlist undertook towards this goal, and how critical these efforts continue to be. Watchlist's advocacy helped influence Security Council resolutions. It also provided timely information on the situation of children affected by the conflict in Ukraine, and published key research pieces on handover protocols and the denial of humanitarian access. The achievements Watchlist made in 2022 are only possible because of the extraordinary commitment of the team, Watchlist's network of peer organizations working around the world to increase the protection of children in armed conflict, and its supporters and allies.

In a period marked by an alarming rise in violations of international law by warring parties, with children especially bearing the brunt of these actions, the endeavors of Watchlist are more necessary than ever to protect children's rights, preserve the integrity of the of the CAAC agenda, and produce enduring policy transformations to protect children caught in the midst of conflicts.

On behalf of Watchlist and its members, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to our partners and donors for their unwavering support in upholding and advancing these objectives. As you read this report and delve into Watchlist's activities, our hope is that you will continue to support us in working towards the essential mission of increasing the rights and protection of children in war.

LYNDSAY HOCKIN
Chair, Watchlist Advisory Board
Representing World Vision
International

FAITH NIMINEH
Vice-Chair, Watchlist
Advisory Board
Representing ChildFund Alliance

EZEQUIEL HEFFES
Director, Watchlist on Children
and Armed Conflict



Advocacy

- In 2022, Watchlist actively advocated for the implementation of the UN’s Children and Armed Conflict agenda, for safeguarding and upholding existing protection frameworks, and for fostering accountability concerning children’s rights.

Implementing the UN’s Children and Armed Conflict Agenda

In January 2022, in an anniversary event commemorating 25 years of the CAAC mandate, Watchlist provided a [reflection](#) on the progress to date and recommendations for three areas where greater attention is needed to strengthen the protection of children in armed conflict: defending and upholding existing protection frameworks; strengthening conflict prevention; and promoting accountability for and to children. Expanding on these reflections, the 20th edition of Dalhousie University’s annual academic journal on children, peace, and security *Allons-y*, published in March 2022, featured a commentary by Watchlist’s director which reflects on the key achievements of the CAAC mandate and current concerns, and makes recommendations for strengthening the protection of children in armed conflict.

In February 2022, Watchlist and Fordham University’s Institute of International Humanitarian Affairs (IIHA) co-hosted the eighth annual policy workshop on children and armed conflict. The event was co-sponsored by the Permanent Missions of Canada and Germany to the

UN. The workshop, convened by Watchlist, took place virtually due to ongoing COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, and brought together UN Member States, UN agencies and offices, civil society organizations, and academia to discuss challenges and priorities for implementing the Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) agenda in 2022. Three working sessions focused on (i) supporting the implementation of the CAAC agenda through the UN Security Council Working Group on CAAC (SCWG-CAAC) and the Group of Friends of CAAC; (ii) protecting children’s education in armed conflict, including through the implementation of the UN Security Council resolution 2601; and (iii) addressing the multiple vulnerabilities that children experience during armed conflict. In July 2022, a summary report of the activity was issued as an UN Security Council document ([S/2022/476](#)).

In 2022, Watchlist also advocated for the protection of children in armed conflict around the world through its [Children and Armed Conflict Monthly Updates](#). These updates provided recommendations for policymakers to mainstream child protection concerns into action by the UN Security Council, as well as for country-specific conclusions of the SCWG-CAAC. These targeted

recommendations were reflected in 10 Security Council resolutions in 2022, including on specific mandates (e.g. UNSMIL, ATMIS, UNAMA, UNSOM, UNITAMS, MINUSMA, MINUSCA, and MONUSCO). Moreover, Watchlist conducted timely advocacy meetings with UN Security Council members to discuss country-specific CAAC concerns and follow up on recommendations included in Watchlist's CAAC Monthly Updates and other documents. This included meeting with members of the SCWG-CAAC and sharing targeted recommendations for the Working Group's country-specific conclusion negotiations. Furthermore, Watchlist influenced seven country-specific conclusions during the same time-period, including those on Yemen, Colombia, Iraq, the Philippines, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Sudan.

In March 2022, Watchlist published a [briefing note](#) on the situation of children affected by the armed conflict in Ukraine, following Russia's invasion in February. The five-page advocacy document describes the main impacts of armed conflict on children during the first month of the war, highlights key concerns for their protection, and provides recommendations to mitigate further harm. The briefing note was broadly disseminated to Watchlist's listservs, as well as to all members of the UN Security Council and key non-Council Member States. Informed by this research, Watchlist also contributed to the development of the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action's [child protection advocacy messages for Ukraine](#) published in May 2022.

Watchlist's advocacy and outreach encouraged active participation in the 2022 Security Council open debate on CAAC. In July 2022, Watchlist published its annual "[Special Bulletin](#)" ahead of the open debate. The two-page brief recommended that Member States call for increased compliance with international humanitarian, human rights, and refugee law and child protection norms, and strengthen accountability for all grave violations against children; strengthen effective use of existing mechanisms and tools to monitor, report, and respond to grave violations against children; and prioritize the protection of the rights and well-being of children in armed conflict.

In addition to broadly disseminating the document, Watchlist presented its recommendations during a July NGO briefing with the SCWG-CAAC. The recommendations were reflected in many of the 74 interventions made during the 2022 CAAC open debate.

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The work of civil society is incredibly valuable to Member States, both inside and outside of the Security Council. Watchlist, with its expertise, broad outreach and diverse network was a crucial partner for Norway during our tenure in the Security Council and chairmanship of the Working Group on CAAC.

**– H.E. Ambassador Mona Juul,
Permanent Mission of Norway to the United Nations,
New York (2019-2023)**

Promoting Accountability for Grave Violations through a Credible, Accurate List of Perpetrators

The listing and delisting of perpetrators in the Secretary-General's annual CAAC reports represents one of the most influential and powerful tools for promoting accountability for grave violations committed against children in armed conflict. In 2022, Watchlist worked closely with members of its civil society network, UN offices, and other key stakeholders to highlight grave violations against children in conflict and other situations of concern and build support for the objective

and evidence-based listing of those parties to conflict who perpetrate grave violations of child rights in the Secretary-General's annual CAAC reports.

In April 2022, Watchlist published its sixth annual policy note, *"A Credible List": Recommendations for the Secretary-General's 2022 Annual Report on Children in Armed Conflict*, which presented information on grave violations committed against children in 12 countries in 2021 and recommended to the Secretary-General that 10 parties in 8 countries be added to the annexes of the 2022 annual report, listed for additional violations, or investigated further with a view towards possible listing. The policy note also recommended that Ethiopia, Mozambique, Niger, and Ukraine be added as "situations of concern" in the 2022 annual report.

As in previous years, Watchlist led a joint advocacy effort to publish an [open letter](#) to UN Secretary-General António Guterres calling for a complete and evidence-based list of perpetrators in his annual report on children and armed conflict. Including Watchlist, 18 NGOs joined the collective effort, published in May. The letter also called on the Secretary-General to ensure

that parties are only delisted in accordance with the criteria set out in the [2010 Secretary-General's annual CAAC report](#). In the document, the organizations reiterate their disappointment with the significant disparities between evidence presented in the 2020 and 2021 annual reports and the parties listed in its annexes for committing grave violations against children, as this serves to limit the promotion of accountability. The open letter also called upon the Secretary-General to ensure that situations where grave violations against children are occurring are swiftly brought to the attention of the Security Council by including them as "situations of concern." Thirteen statements (representing 69 Member States and a regional delegation) echoed concerns raised in this open letter during the 2022 CAAC open debate.

The Secretary-General's 2022 annual report on CAAC ([S/2022/493](#)) reflects four of Watchlist's recommendations in the inclusion of dissident groups of the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo* (FARC-EP) in his "list of shame" for recruiting and using children, as well as the addition of Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Ukraine as "situations of concern" with immediate effect.

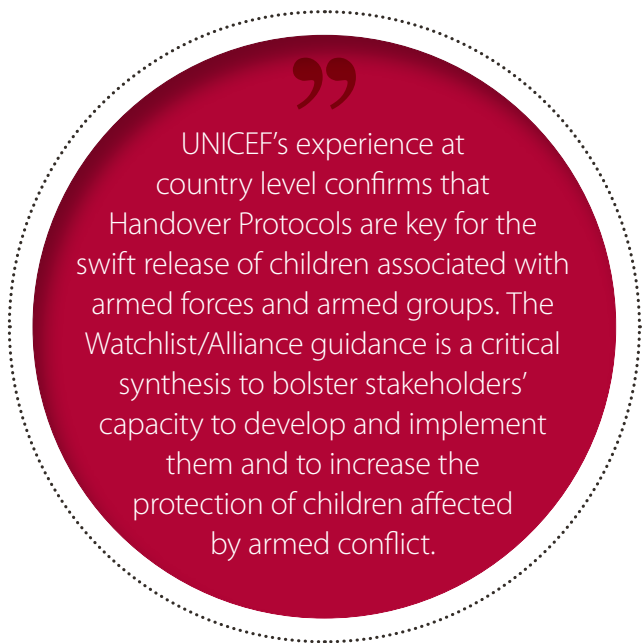


Research

- In 2022, Watchlist conducted targeted research on contemporary challenges facing children in armed conflict, including on detention and the denial of humanitarian access. It also disseminated its research to influence policymakers to address these issues.

In March 2022, Watchlist, with the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, published an [operational guidance](#) on negotiating and implementing handover protocols. Handover protocols are agreements by governments or armed groups to swiftly transfer children associated with armed forces or armed groups (CAAFAG) in their custody, or whom they have encountered, to child protection actors for appropriate support services, including, but not limited to, reintegration assistance. Handover protocols are an explicit recognition by states and, at times, armed groups, that CAAFAG are first and foremost victims of grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, and they offer CAAFAG a safe avenue to leave armed forces and armed groups and receive the care, protection, and reintegration support they need. Building on Watchlist's previous research on [handover protocols](#) and the

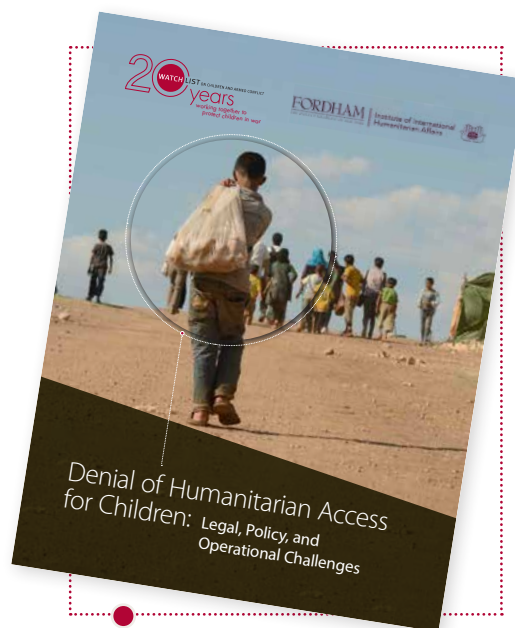
[treatment of children](#) formerly associated with armed groups in Iraq, the 67-page guidance aims to support the signing and implementation of handover protocols. It provides child protection actors with good practices, lessons learned, and other useful information on previous and ongoing negotiations and implementation processes in various countries. It seeks to support child protection actors to initiate and strategically navigate handover protocol negotiations, to promote the release of CAAFAG in detention and improve standards for their prosecution, to strengthen the implementation of existing handover agreements, and to safeguard children at every stage of handover. Translations of this guidance into [Arabic](#) and [French](#) were published in October. The lessons contained in the Operational Guidance were widely shared throughout 2022 in a series of [webinars](#), panel discussions, and closed advocacy discussions.



**– Ms. Brigid Kennedy Pfister,
Sr. Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF**

In addition to its research and advocacy on the detention of children in armed conflict and handover protocols, Watchlist conducted research on the denial of humanitarian access for children in armed conflict.

Together with Fordham University's IIHA, Watchlist developed a joint policy paper, published in June 2022. *Denial of Humanitarian Access for Children: Legal, Policy, and Operational Challenges* examines the international legal framework on denial of humanitarian access as it applies to children; the impact of counterterrorism measures, sanctions regimes, and donor conditionality clauses affecting humanitarian access for children; the various forms of denial of humanitarian access and their consequences on children, including emerging obstacles such as the COVID-19 pandemic; the challenges of monitoring and reporting on the denial of humanitarian access in the context of the UN's CAAC mandate; and the potential risks and opportunities of making the denial of humanitarian access a trigger for listing perpetrators in the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict. The paper concludes with a series of recommendations directed to the UN and its Member States, donors, and the humanitarian community, to influence normative and policy change. The policy paper was widely disseminated across Watchlist's website, listservs, and social media platforms as well as to IIHA's wide network of humanitarian practitioner-alumni.





Partnerships

- Since its inception, Watchlist has worked in partnership with local civil society organizations in conflict-affected countries. It is through this collaboration that Watchlist is better able to advocate for children living in situations of armed conflict, while also supporting grassroots efforts to monitor, report, and respond to grave violations against children.

Support to Local Civil Society Organizations

Watchlist's long-time partner in Colombia, the Coalition against the involvement of boys, girls, and youth in armed conflict in Colombia (COALICO), represents civil society as the only permanent national NGO representative on the Country Task Force for Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) and plays a vital role in advancing the protection of children's rights in the Colombian armed conflict. Watchlist continues to share information about relevant developments in the Security Council and the SCWG-CAAC and develop joint advocacy initiatives with COALICO. In February 2022, Watchlist worked with COALICO to develop recommendations for the SCWG-CAAC ahead of negotiations of conclusions on the situation of children affected by armed conflict in Colombia. The recommendations were published in Watchlist's [February 2022 CAAC Monthly Update](#) and broadly disseminated to Security Council members.

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The partnership with Watchlist has been instrumental in ensuring that our voice is heard by national authorities and international organizations. Thanks to this collaboration, we have been able to effectively promote, defend, and protect the rights of children in Colombia who have suffered from the armed conflict and organized violence.

– Ms. Hilda Beatriz Molano Casas,
COALICO, Colombia

Joint Advocacy Initiatives

In January 2022, Watchlist joined 35 organizations in an [open letter](#) to President Biden, urging the US to ban landmines and pave a path towards joining the Mine Ban Treaty. Landmines are victim-activated, disproportionately affect children, and cannot distinguish between the footstep of a combatant or a civilian, rendering their use incapable of abiding by international humanitarian law.

In May 2022, Watchlist joined 22 NGOs in a [joint statement](#) released ahead of the Security Council open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The statement calls on the UN Security Council, Member States, and other entities within the UN to strengthen compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law, end impunity, prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence, end and prevent grave violations committed against children, engage civil society, and consolidate the role of protection at the heart of UN peace operations. In addition, Watchlist co-sponsored a side event during Protection of Civilians week on urban warfare and its consequences for children with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Permanent Mission of Norway, and Save the Children.

In June 2022, Watchlist co-sponsored a side [event](#) to the 15th session of the Conference of States Parties (CoSP) to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) with Human Rights Watch, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, and the International Disability Alliance, among others. The event focused on protecting the rights of children with disabilities in armed conflict and provided an opportunity to follow up on discussions from Watchlist's February policy workshop on CAAC.

In July 2022, Watchlist was [among over 130](#) local, national, and international groups and organizations that publicly supported a letter from 22 US lawmakers

to the US State Department regarding the Israeli government's criminalization of six Palestinian human rights organizations. The letter expressed concerns about the lack of evidence to support the Israeli Government's decision and urged US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken to speak out against efforts to undermine civil society and the necessary work of humanitarian organizations, noting that "[c]ounter-terrorism legislation must not be applied to legitimate human rights and humanitarian activities."

Institutional Learning and Advocacy

Throughout the year, Watchlist worked with civil society partners to exchange lessons learned and best practices in an effort to further mainstream child protection concerns and educate broader policy audiences on CAAC.

In commemoration of the International Day against the Use of Child Soldiers (Red Hand Day), Watchlist designed and facilitated a five-day social media campaign for Red Hand Day, titled #RaiseYourRed. Led by Watchlist and its network of civil society partners, the campaign aimed to educate the broader public on the recruitment and use of children and Red Hand Day, and challenges that remain to ending the recruitment and use of child soldiers. The campaign served as a call to unite the global community to end the recruitment and use of children.

In 2022, Watchlist continued to provide a training tool for Security Council members, CAAC experts, and other stakeholders through its innovative [smartphone application](#). The CAAC application, originally launched in 2013 and substantially updated in 2016 and again in 2020, serves as a comprehensive tool with easy-to-access information on CAAC-related topics. Watchlist updated the app with information from the Secretary-General's 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict.



Organizational Update

- As a global network of human rights and humanitarian organizations, Watchlist strives to end and prevent grave violations against children in war.

An Advisory Board comprised of five distinguished NGOs in the child rights field continued to provide guidance and supervision to support Watchlist in achieving its programmatic goals. The Advisory Board – ChildFund Alliance, Human Rights Watch, Save the Children, War Child, and World Vision International – shares responsibility for overseeing Watchlist’s staff, programs, fundraising, and finances.

Watchlist’s network is also fueled by nine Associate Members who share a wealth of knowledge and expertise on children’s rights.

Watchlist was immensely grateful for the support of several donors, especially for the funding it received in 2022 from the Governments of Australia, Germany, Luxembourg, and Switzerland, as well as sub-grants from Save the Children Norway and Save the Children Sweden. Watchlist also expresses its heartfelt thanks to individual donors who continue to value its mission and contribute financial support.

The united support of our partners, funders, and network members, together with the generosity of individual donors, allows Watchlist to strive towards a world where all children are protected, and their rights are fully realized.

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Watchlist has been an invaluable partner that the Dallaire Institute has relied upon for knowledge on the UN mandate on Children and Armed Conflict to inform our programmes. The willingness to collaborate, share, and learn with each other is unique and cherished deeply.

**– Dr. Shelly Whitman,
Executive Director, the Dallaire Institute
for Children, Peace, and Security**

Financials

	1/1/2021 through 12/31/2021	1/1/2022 through 12/31/2022
REVENUE		
Donations		\$ 72,364.00
Government Grant Revenue	\$ 416,799.76	\$ 43,229.00
Grant Revenue - Other	\$ 185,110.97	\$ 96,887.00
Transfers between projects		\$ 2,600.00
TOTAL FOR REVENUE	\$ 601,910.73	\$ 215,080.00
EXPENSE		
Personnel Related Expense		
Gross Payroll Expense	\$ 220,535.41	\$ 201,144.00
Payroll Fees	\$ 3,540.00	\$ 3,600.00
Payroll Taxes	\$ 17,698.18	\$ 21,875.00
Benefits	\$ 24,555.07	\$ 18,792.00
Total Personnel Related Expenses	\$ 266,328.66	\$ 245,411.00
Non-Personnel Related Expenses		
Printing	\$ 21.05	\$ 839.00
Rent & Occupancy	\$ 23,192.30	\$ 23,444.00
Telephone Expense	\$ 1,805.42	\$ 776.00
Office Supplies	\$ 430.62	\$ 148.00
Donations Out	\$ 42,148.00	\$ 29,000.00
Equip Purchase Under \$5,000	\$ -	\$ 47.00
Program Related Supplies	\$ -	\$ 407.00
Sub Contractors - PC	\$ 102,849.92	\$ 64,761.00
Dues and Subscriptions	\$ 247.99	\$ 261.00
Media, Website, and Programming Expense	\$ 4,021.62	\$ 2,231.00
Travel Expense	\$ 213.64	\$ 263.00
Meals/Entertainment Non-Travel	\$ 567.07	\$ 1,380.00
Postage/Delivery	\$ 37.70	\$ -
Conferences and Meetings	\$ 150.00	\$ (150.00)
Total Non-Personnel Related Expenses	\$ 175,685.33	\$ 123,407.00
Fees		
Administrative Fees	\$ 57,918.45	\$ 25,622.00
Annual Fee Expense	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00
Bank Fees	\$ 638.10	\$ 662.00
Total Fees	\$ 60,056.55	\$ 27,784.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 502,070.54	\$ 396,601
Changes in Net Asset	\$ 99,840.19	\$ (181,522.00)

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