

Children and Armed Conflict

Recommendations to the Security Council

Monthly Update:
January 2022

AFGHANISTAN

Four non-state armed groups (NSAGs) are listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's (SG) latest report ([S/2021/437](#)) on children and armed conflict (CAAC) for recruitment and use and killing and maiming of 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. In January, the SG is expected to report to the Council on the implementation of UNAMA's mandate, pursuant to SCR 2596 (2021). The SG's September report ([S/2021/759](#)) emphasized the record high child casualties documented in UNAMA's mid-year protection of civilians report. During the second quarter of 2021, the UN verified 1,179 grave violations against children, including 1,085 children killed or maimed. Children were among the 1,558 civilian casualties documented between July and August due to the Taliban's offensive on provincial capitals. The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is [dire](#), with essential services on the brink of collapse, [reports](#) of targeting of human rights defenders, curtailing of the rights of women and girls, particularly girls' access to education, and the worst food [crisis](#) on record. Briefing the Human Rights Council in December, the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed deep [concern](#) about the "continued risk of recruitment of children by the ISIL-KP, as well as by the de facto authorities, with boys increasingly visible among security forces at checkpoints, as bodyguards, and in combat roles. Children also continue to comprise nearly all of the civilians killed and injured by unexploded ordnance." **The Security Council should:**

- Demand that all parties, particularly the Taliban and affiliated groups, **uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law (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 all parties, particularly the Taliban and affiliated groups, 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;
- Urge all parties to **immediately cease recruiting and using children**, to release those within their ranks, and to treat children allegedly associated with armed forces and armed groups primarily as victims, **prioritizing their reintegration 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;
- Urge Member States to make every effort to **ensure counterterrorism measures and sanctions regimes do not impede humanitarian action**;
- **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](#).

At the time of writing, **Norway** is the lead country on Afghanistan.

LIBYA

Libya is a situation of concern in the SG's 2021 annual report on CAAC. In January, UNSMIL's mandate is up for renewal, pursuant to SCR 2599 (2021), which was a technical renewal of the mandate as set out in SCR 2542 (2020) and paragraph 16 of SCR 2570 (2021). In the SG's August periodic report ([S/2021/752](#)), UNSMIL documented the unlawful detentions of children in Benghazi, who were mainly held at military detention facilities. UNSMIL also documented cases of sexual violence against five girls and has noted that boys continue to be exposed to sexual violence and exploitation in detention centers. The report also documents a surge in arbitrary arrests and abductions since June. In October, UNICEF [expressed](#) concern over the protection risks for migrant and refugee children "held under devastating and inhumane conditions" in detention centers. In a recent [report](#), UNHCR estimates that 10 percent of all migrants in Libya are children, including two percent who are unaccompanied or separated from their parents, guardians, or caretakers. The October report of the independent fact-finding mission on Libya documented [evidence](#) of child recruitment and use, including cross-border recruitment, as well as children detained in harsh conditions, subject to beatings and torture. Some of those detained children had been held arbitrarily since 2016 for their parents' alleged affiliation with ISIL. **The Security Council should:**

- Urge all parties to uphold their obligations under IHL and IHRL, even as they **continue to take steps**

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)

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 (ERW) on children;

- 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, held for their or their family members' actual or alleged association with ISIL or 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. **India** chairs the 1970 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. In January, the Council will receive its monthly briefings on the humanitarian situation, political process, and use of chemical weapons in Syria. On October 20, [four](#) children were confirmed killed, and an additional [six](#) injured in an attack in Idlib. A recent [report](#) by Physicians for Human Rights describes attacks on health care infrastructure and denial of humanitarian access which are severely impacting the right to health in Northern Syria, particularly for women, girls, and individuals living with disabilities. A recently published UN-backed civil society [report](#) found record casualties (2,729) in Syria in 2020 due to mines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), cluster munition remnants, and other ERW. **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.

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

Recommendations to the Working Group

Since January 2021, the Working Group has received the SG's reports on children and armed conflict in Myanmar ([S/2020/1243](#)), Syria ([S/2021/398](#)), Afghanistan ([S/2021/662](#)), Yemen ([S/2021/761](#)), and the Central African Republic ([S/2021/882](#)). For targeted recommendations, see Watchlist's 2021 Monthly CAAC updates from [February](#), [June](#), [September](#), [November](#), and [December](#) respectively.

Presidency of the Security Council for January: Norway

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 Paris Principles and Commitments, the Safe Schools Declaration, and the Vancouver Principles.

NGO RESOURCES

Human Rights Watch, [Some Progress for Children Despite Pandemic's Toll](#), December 17, 2021

Amnesty International, [South Sudan: Survivors Describe Killings, Mass Displacement and Terror amid Fighting in Western Equatoria](#), December 9, 2021

Save the Children, [Darfur: Save the Children Fears Further Violence After 50 People Killed at the Weekend](#), December 8, 2021

Human Rights Watch, [Mozambique: Hundreds of Women, Girls Abducted](#), December 7, 2021

Humanity and Inclusion, [Colombia: Demining Brings Hope Back to Communities](#), December 3, 2021

Norwegian Refugee Council, [Violence Impacts Over 700,000 Children Due to School Closures in Cameroon](#), December 2, 2021

Dallaire Institute on Children, Peace and Security, [Canadian Perspectives on Advancing the Women, Peace and Security and Children and Armed Conflict Agendas in the 21st Century](#), September 2021