

Children and Armed Conflict

Recommendations to the Security Council

Monthly Update:
March 2022

AFGHANISTAN

The Haqqani Network, Hizb-i Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP), and Taliban forces and affiliated groups are each 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 ISIL-KP is also listed for attacks on schools and hospitals. In March, UNAMA's mandate is up for renewal, pursuant to SCR 2596 (2021). From January to November 2021, children made up [29](#) percent (2,150 children) of all civilian casualties in Afghanistan, most occurring prior to August 15, when military operations between the Taliban and Afghan national security forces ceased. After August 15, children comprised nearly all civilian casualties from explosive remnants of war (ERW) and were disproportionately harmed during improvised explosive device (IED) attacks. The SG's January report on Afghanistan ([S/2022/64](#)) highlights acute concerns over children's heightened vulnerability to exploitation and abuse due to the economic crisis, including child labor, early marriage, and recruitment and use. Since August 15, the UN has received reports of children still in the ranks of the de facto authorities, as well as attempted child recruitment and use by ISIL-KP. **The Security Council should:**

- **Renew UNAMA's child protection mandate**, ensuring continuation of all its functions related to child protection, including monitoring and reporting on grave violations, as well as engagement with parties to undertake specific commitments and measures to end and prevent violations and abuses against children; **allocate sufficient resources to allow UNAMA to fully and safely deliver on this mandate;**
- Call for **perpetrators of all grave violations against children to be held accountable;**
- Urge all parties to **avoid the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas (EWIPA); and allocate resources to the UN Country Team to protect civilians, including children, from the threats posed by landmines, ERW, and IEDs**, including mine clearance and risk education, particularly near and along routes to and from schools and educational facilities;
- 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;** detention of children should only be used as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate time;
- Call on the de facto authorities to **abide by Afghanistan's international commitments to child protection**, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child's (CRC) definition of any person under the age of 18 as a child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the Paris Principles and Commitments, the Safe Schools Declaration, and international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law (IHRL), as appropriate;
- Make every effort to **ensure counterterrorism measures and sanctions regimes do not impede humanitarian action.**

[Norway](#) is the lead country on Afghanistan.

SOUTH SUDAN

The South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF), including Taban Deng-allied SSPDF, are listed in the annexes of the SG's 2021 annual report on CAAC for all five trigger violations. The Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition – pro-Machar (SPLA-IO) is listed for recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and abduction. In March, UNMISS' mandate is up for renewal, pursuant to SCR 2567 (2021). According to the SG's December report on South Sudan ([S/2021/1015](#)), the UN verified the recruitment and use of 56 children (54 boys, 2 girls), the killing and maiming of nine children (seven boys, two girls), rape and sexual violence against two girls, the abduction of three girls, and one attack on a hospital between September and December 2021. **The Security Council should:**

- **Renew UNMISS's child protection mandate**, maintaining its child protection capacity, and, in subsequent budget negotiations, ensure distinct budget lines for child protection;
- Urge the Government and parties that have endorsed the 2020 Comprehensive Action Plan to **fully and swiftly implement their commitments;** urge all parties to **immediately cease all grave violations against children**, and release and hand over to child protection actors all children from their ranks;
- Call on the Government to **prioritize the reintegration of formerly associated children**, to ensure that disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) processes and security sector reform fully take

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

For resolution language on Children and Armed Conflict, download the Children and Armed Conflict smartphone app from Watchlist, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland, available on iPhone, iPad, Android, and the web!



SOUTH SUDAN (cont'd)

into account the specific needs of children, and to endorse the Paris Principles and the Vancouver Principles;

- Call on all parties to **take immediate and specific steps to end and prevent rape and other forms of sexual violence** against children, and to ensure perpetrators are held accountable and survivors have access to comprehensive, gender-sensitive, and age-appropriate response and protection;
- **Urge the Government to end impunity** through timely and impartial investigation and, where appropriate, prosecution, and follow through on commitments to establish the Hybrid Court;
- Urge the Government to **immediately evacuate military personnel from schools' premises, to re-introduce legislation to prohibit the occupation of schools or hospitals** by the armed forces, and to **take all appropriate measures to mitigate disruption of education due to insecurity**.

The **United States** is the lead country on South Sudan.

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](#)), the Central African Republic ([S/2021/882](#)), and Colombia ([S/2021/1022](#)). For targeted recommendations, see Watchlist's 2021 Monthly CAAC updates from [February](#), [June](#), [September](#), [November](#), [December](#), and [February](#), respectively.

IRAQ

In January, the SG released his fourth report on the situation of children and armed conflict in Iraq ([S/2022/46](#)), covering August 2019 to June 2021. During this period, the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) verified 317 grave violations against 254 children (195 boys, 51 girls, eight unknown sex), a significant decrease from the previous reporting period. Killing and maiming remained the grave violation with the highest number of verified incidents, with 67 percent of child casualties caused by ERW and IEDs. Da'esh (formerly referred to as ISIL) was found responsible for the most violations, followed by Iraqi security forces and Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). Very few cases of recruitment and use, rape and sexual violence, and attacks on schools and hospitals were verified. Most incidents of denial of humanitarian access were attributed to Iraqi security forces (52) and PMF (9), many due to bureaucratic restrictions. Of serious [concern](#), 1,091 children were detained on national security-related charges, including alleged association with armed groups, representing a significant increase. The CTFMR also verified the military use of 45 schools, all attributed to the Iraqi Police, Iraqi Army, PMF, and the Peshmerga. **The Working Group should:**

- Welcoming the decrease in grave violations committed against children in Iraq, **strongly condemn continuing violations and abuses of children's rights**;
- Call on the Government to **strengthen the national child protection framework**, including by swiftly adopting and implementing the draft action plan to end and prevent recruitment and use of children by the PMF, adopting the bill on the protection of children in Iraq, and establishing a minimum age of criminal responsibility in line with the principles of the CRC;
- Urge the Government to intensify efforts to **remove administrative barriers hindering the delivery of humanitarian aid to civilians**, including children; to issue identification documents to allow all children to access public assistance and basic services; to implement international legal instruments on IEDs, landmines, and other ERW; and to promote mine clearance and mine risk education;
- Recalling that **children should be treated primarily as victims**, including children formerly or allegedly associated with armed groups designated as terrorist, their reintegration should be prioritized, and detention should only be used as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate time, call on the Government to **endorse the Paris Principles and Commitments**, and **encourage the adoption and implementation of a handover protocol** to facilitate the release of children to child protection actors for reintegration and other support services;
- Encourage the Government to **implement its commitments under the Safe Schools Declaration** and **take concrete measures to mitigate and avoid military use of schools**, pursuant to SCR 2601 (2021), ensuring accountability and redress for attacks on education.

Presidency of the Security Council for March: United Arab Emirates

Party to the Geneva Conventions I-IV, Additional Protocols I and II, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and ILO Convention 182. Not a party to the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict, nor the Rome Statute of the ICC. Has not endorsed the Paris Principles and Commitments, the Safe Schools Declaration, nor the Vancouver Principles.

NGO RESOURCES

Amnesty International, [Ukraine: Cluster Munitions Kill Child and Two Other Civilians Taking Shelter at a Preschool](#), February 27, 2022

World Vision, [Ukraine Crisis Humanitarian Needs Grow with Children at Heightened Risk of Trauma and Exploitation](#), February 27, 2022

Norwegian Refugee Council, [Central Sahel: New Report Finds Over Half of Children Feel Unsafe at School](#), February 16, 2022

Human Rights Watch, [Nigeria's Kano State Needs a Child Protection Law](#), February 15, 2022

Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, Plan International, [CAAFAG Programme Development Toolkit](#), February 11, 2022

Save the Children, [Somalia: Calls for Justice as Four Children Sentenced to Death Over Involvement with Armed Groups](#), February 11, 2022

ChildFund Alliance, [Statement of ChildFund Alliance: First Regular Session of the UNICEF Executive Board](#), February 8-11, 2022

Human Rights Watch, [UN: High Risks in Conflicts for Children with Disabilities](#), February 2, 2022