

# Children and Armed Conflict

## Recommendations to the Security Council

Monthly Update:  
July 2022

### SYRIA

Seven parties to conflict are listed for grave violations against children in the annexes of the Secretary-General's (SG) 2021 annual report ([S/2021/437](#)) on children and armed conflict (CAAC). In July, the authorization of the cross-border mechanism for delivering humanitarian aid into Northwest Syria is up for renewal, per SCR 2585 (2021), and the Council will receive its monthly briefings on the humanitarian situation, political process, and use of chemical weapons in Syria. The humanitarian situation in Northwest Syria is the worst it has been since the start of the conflict in 2011, as "[4.4](#) million people, mostly women and children, are trapped in a war zone along the border with [Turkey]," and food insecurity is at a record high. The [SG](#), his [Under-Secretary-General](#) for Humanitarian Affairs, and numerous NGOs operating in Syria have [called](#) on the Council to renew the cross-border mechanism. The UN reported at least [59](#) children have been killed and 82 injured in Northwest Syria to date in 2022. A recent [report](#) by Save the Children describes the daily [violence](#) witnessed by children in Al-Hol camp and its toll on their mental health and well-being. **The Security Council should:**

- **Re-authorize Syria's cross-border mechanism** for a minimum of 12 months to facilitate the delivery of principled humanitarian assistance to children and other civilians in need;
- Demand that all parties **uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law (IHRL)**, taking concrete measures to prevent and, in any case, minimize child casualties, and **call for all perpetrators of grave violations to be held accountable**;
- Urge all listed parties, including Syrian Government Forces, to **develop, sign, and implement action plans to end and prevent violations against children**, and call on the Syrian Democratic Forces to promptly and fully implement their action plan;
- Recall that **children associated with armed groups should be treated primarily as victims**, including those children allegedly associated with groups designated as "terrorist" and those who may have committed crimes; their reintegration should be prioritized; and detention should only be used as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate 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, and undertake individual, rights-based needs assessments; provide reintegration and recovery support in line with international law and standards, prioritizing the child's best interests; and prevent children from becoming stateless.

[Norway and Ireland lead on humanitarian issues in Syria.](#)

### YEMEN

Five parties to conflict are listed in the annexes of the SG's 2021 annual CAAC report for recruiting and using children. Of these, the Houthis are also listed for killing and maiming children and attacks on schools and hospitals. In July, UNMHA's mandate is up for renewal, per SCR 2586 (2021), and the Security Council will receive its monthly briefing on Yemen. In April, parties to the conflict agreed to a two-month [truce](#), which was further [extended](#) in June, and has led to a significant reduction in child casualties. Between February and March, 50 children were killed or wounded, as compared to 18 during the truce, a nearly [65 percent](#) decrease. Children interviewed by Save the Children described the truce's positive impact on their lives and shared [recommendations](#) for future peace talks. Also in April, the Houthis signed an [action plan](#) to end and prevent recruitment and use, killing and maiming, attacks on schools and hospitals, and other grave violations. In May, the Security Council Working Group on CAAC (SCWG-CAAC) adopted its third [conclusions](#) on CAAC in Yemen. **The Security Council should:**

- Call on parties to use the truce as an opportunity to **urgently work towards a comprehensive and inclusive peace process that includes meaningful child participation and protection measures**, pursuant to SCR 2427 (2018) and drawing on the [Practical Guidance for Mediators](#);
- Welcoming the action plan signed between the UN and the Houthis, urge its swift and full implementation, and call on all parties to **fully and swiftly implement their respective action plans and other concrete commitments to end and prevent grave violations against children**, including the Government of Yemen's 2014 action plan to end and prevent recruitment and use and 2018 roadmap as well as the Coalition's 2019 memorandum of understanding and related program of activities; and urge parties to conflict who have not yet done so to sign and implement action plans with the UN 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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## YEMEN (cont'd)

- Urge all parties to **facilitate immediate, safe, and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid** to children and other civilians in need; and call for increased efforts to **identify and remove landmines and unexploded remnants of war** and to **hold perpetrators of all violations and abuses against children accountable**, including through timely, independent, and systematic investigations, and, as appropriate, prosecution and conviction;
- Call on all parties to **swiftly and fully implement the recommendations of the SCWG-CAAC, as elaborated in its third conclusions** on Yemen; support efforts to ensure sustainable financial resources for child protection activities and programs in Yemen, including for the implementation of warring parties' commitments and of the SCWG-CAAC conclusions.

The **United Kingdom** is the lead country on Yemen.

## OPEN DEBATE ON CAAC

In July, the Council will hold its annual open debate on CAAC. For targeted recommendations, see Watchlist's [July 2022 Special Bulletin](#).

## 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](#)), CAR ([S/2021/882](#)), and Iraq ([S/2022/46](#)). For targeted recommendations, see Watchlist's Monthly CAAC updates from [February 2021](#), [June 2021](#), [September 2021](#), [December 2021](#), and [March 2022](#), respectively.

## SOMALIA

In May, the SG released his sixth report ([S/2022/397](#)) on CAAC in Somalia, covering the period from October 2019 to September 2021. During this time, the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) verified 8,042 grave violations against 6,501 children (5,108 boys, 1,393 girls). Al-Shabaab was found responsible for the majority (67 percent) of these violations. Government security forces, including the Somali National Army and the Somali Police Force, as well as regional forces, also continued to commit grave violations. Recruitment and use (2,852), abduction (2,502), and killing and maiming (1,857) accounted for 90 percent of the total verified violations. Rape and other forms of sexual violence continued to be reported at high levels and frequently occurred in internal displacement camps or in the context of abduction and forced marriage. Accountability remained low for such violations, and the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the handover of children were implemented inconsistently. Little progress was made to strengthen legal protections for children; rather, attempts were made to weaken draft legislation pertaining to child protection, such as lowering the age of majority from 18 to 15 in the third draft of the revised Constitution, a pending bill weakening protections for children from sexual violence and child marriage, and no progress on adoption of the Child Rights Bill. **The Working Group should:**

- Strongly condemn the staggering numbers of violations and abuses committed against children in Somalia, and **demand that all parties fully uphold their obligations under IHL and IHRL, immediately cease all abductions and recruitment and use of children, and release all children within their ranks;**
- Call on the Federal Government of Somalia to **strengthen accountability for all grave violations committed against children**, to enact the Child Rights Bill, to adopt the original 2018 Sexual Offences Bill, to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child's Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OPAC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, to **treat children allegedly associated with armed forces or groups primarily as victims**, in line with the Paris Principles and Commitments, and adopt age verification guidelines;
- Encourage the Federal Government to **implement its commitments under the Safe Schools Declaration**, developing comprehensive risk assessments and risk reduction strategies to prevent and respond to attacks, including child recruitment and sexual violence at, or on the way to or from, school;
- Urge the Federal Government to **fully implement its 2012 action plans on recruitment and use and killing and maiming, as well as its 2019 roadmap**; to swiftly engage with the UN to strengthen its commitments to end and prevent rape and other forms of sexual violence against children; and to **consistently comply with its 2014 SOP** on the handover of children to civilian child protection actors;
- Emphasize the **need to allocate and swiftly deploy sufficient resources to allow UNSOM to fully deliver on its child protection mandate.**

## Presidency of the Security Council for July: Brazil

*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

Amnesty International, ["Children": The Attack on the Donetsk Regional Academic Drama Theatre in Mariupol, Ukraine](#), June 30, 2022

All Survivors Project, [Laying Down Arms Reclaiming Souls: Sexual Violence against Men and Boys in the Context of the Armed Conflict in Colombia](#), June 28, 2022

Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Expert Voices on Atrocity Prevention Episode 12: Adrienne Lapar](#), June 21, 2022

Save the Children, [New Declaration to Better Protect Children in Conflict Is a 'Milestone Achievement'](#), June 17, 2022

Norwegian Refugee Council, [Mali: Insecurity and Lack of Funding Force Over Half a Million Children Out of School](#), June 16, 2022

Save the Children, [Trapped: The Impact of 15 Years of Blockade on the Mental Health of Gaza's Children](#), June 15, 2022

Watchlist and Fordham University, [Denial of Humanitarian Access for Children: Legal, Policy, and Operational Challenges](#), June 13, 2022

Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, [Education Under Attack 2022](#), June 1, 2022