

Children and Armed Conflict

Recommendations to the Security Council

Monthly Update:
July 2023

ISRAEL / OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory is a situation of concern in the Secretary-General's (SG) 2023 annual report ([S/2023/363](#)) on children and armed conflict (CAAC). In July, the Security Council is expected to receive its quarterly briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. In the SG's latest annual report on CAAC, published in June, the UN found Israeli Forces responsible for killing 42 children and injuring 933 children, 110 attacks on schools and hospitals, the recruitment and use of three children as human shields, and 1,863 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access. The UN also verified over 100 grave violations by Palestinian armed groups, in particular the Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades. Neither Israeli Forces nor Palestinian armed groups were listed in the annexes for grave violations, despite a statement by the SG in his 2022 report, that "without meaningful improvement," both Israeli Forces and Palestinian armed groups "should be listed" in 2023. According to a recent Amnesty International [report](#), the Israeli military offensive on the Gaza Strip from May 9 reportedly resulted in the death of 11 Palestinian civilians, including four children, while rockets fired by Palestinian armed groups reportedly resulted in the death of two Israeli civilians and three Palestinian civilians, including two children. **The Security Council should:**

- Call on all parties to **uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law (IHRL)**, taking all feasible precautions to avoid, and in any event minimize, harm to civilians and civilian objects, including objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, as per SCR 2573 (2021), and to adopt and implement clear, time-bound commitments with the UN to protect children;
- Call for an **immediate cessation of attacks on schools, health facilities, and protected personnel**, and call on all parties to refrain from the **military use of such facilities** and to ensure that attacks on these institutions and related protected personnel are investigated and that perpetrators are duly prosecuted;
- Call on the Government of Israel to put in place preventive and protective measures to **end and prevent any excessive use of force against children**, and reiterate that security forces must exercise maximum restraint and use lethal force only when it is strictly unavoidable in order to protect life;
- Call on the Government of Israel to ensure Palestinian children's access to humanitarian assistance, including essential health care by promptly granting travel permits, and to continue to engage with the UN on concrete measure to facilitate the issuance of permits;
- Urge the **SG to list all perpetrators responsible for committing patterns of grave violations against children** in the annexes to his annual reports on CAAC, in accordance with SCR 1379 (2001) and subsequent resolutions on CAAC.

There is no designated lead country on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

SYRIA

Five parties to conflict are listed for grave violations in the annexes of the SG's 2023 annual report on CAAC. In July, the authorization of the cross-border mechanism for delivering humanitarian aid into Northwest Syria is up for renewal, per SCR 2672 (2023). Two devastating [earthquakes](#) on February 6, 2023, along with thousands of aftershocks, exacerbated existing child protection concerns from 12 years of ongoing conflict in Syria, causing further damage to civilian infrastructure such as water and sewage, health care, and schools. In a June open [letter](#), 31 Syrian and international NGOs called on the Security Council to renew the authorization of the cross-border mechanism for a minimum of 12 months. **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 IHL and 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 and the opposition Syrian National Army, including Ahrar al-Sham and Jaysh al-Islam, 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;

Situations involving parties listed for grave violations against children:

Afghanistan
Burkina Faso
Central African Republic
Colombia
Democratic Republic of Congo
Iraq
Lake Chad Basin
Mali
Myanmar
Philippines
Somalia
South Sudan
Sudan
Syria
Ukraine
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!

WATCH LIST ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

SYRIA (cont'd)

- Recall that **all children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAG) should be treated primarily as victims**, including those allegedly associated with armed groups designated as terrorist by the UN 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; call on all parties to facilitate meaningful and systematic access to children deprived of liberty for UN and other independent monitors;
- Urge Member States to facilitate the return of their nationals, including children of their nationals**, held for their or their family members' real or perceived association with ISIL, and undertake individual, rights-based needs assessments, consistent with principles of non-refoulement; provide reintegration and recovery support in line with international law and standards, prioritizing the child's best interests; and prevent children from becoming stateless.

Brazil and Switzerland are the lead countries on humanitarian issues in Syria.

YEMEN

Four parties to conflict are listed in the annexes of the SG's 2023 annual report on CAAC for recruiting and using children. Of these, the Houthis (who call themselves Ansar Allah) are also listed for killing and maiming children and attacks on schools and hospitals. The Security Council receives a monthly briefing on Yemen. A recent new Integrated Phase Classification [analysis](#) on Yemen warned that, despite improvements, Yemen remains one of the most food insecure countries globally, due to the impact of conflict and economic decline, and in 2023, nearly half a million children will be acutely malnourished. According to UNMHA, children represented [43](#) percent of civilian landmine casualties in Hudaydah in May. **The Security Council should:**

- Call on parties 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](#);
- 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 the 2018 roadmap, the Coalition's 2019 memorandum of understanding and related program of activities, and the Houthi's 2022 [action plan](#); call on the Security Belt Forces to continue to participate in activities under the Government's 2018 roadmap; and urge all parties to conflict who have not yet done so to sign and implement action plans with the UN to end and prevent grave violations;
- 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 CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

On July 5, the Council will hold its annual open debate on CAAC. For targeted recommendations see Watchlist's [July 2023 Special Update](#).

Recommendations to the Working Group

The Working Group continues to negotiate conclusions in response to the following reports of the SG on children and armed conflict: Myanmar ([S/2020/1243](#)), Syria ([S/2021/398](#)), Afghanistan ([S/2021/662](#)), Somalia ([S/2022/397](#)), Nigeria ([S/2022/596](#)), and Mali ([S/2022/856](#)). For targeted recommendations, see Watchlist's Monthly CAAC updates from [February 2021](#), [June 2021](#), [September 2021](#), [July 2022](#), [October 2022](#), and [February 2023](#), respectively.

Presidency of the Security Council for July: United Kingdom

Party to 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

Save the Children, [DRC Remains Epicenter of Child Suffering in War as Country Tops World List of Grave Violations Against Children](#), June 27, 2023

World Vision, [We Must Be Accountable to Ukraine's Children: An Open Statement in Advance of the UN Secretary-General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict](#), June 18, 2023

Human Rights Watch, [Burkina Faso: Upsurge in Atrocities by Islamist Armed Groups](#), June 15, 2023

Save the Children, ["If I Had a Magic Wand, I Would Make Sudan a Much Better Place": Distressing Experience of Children Revealed in Drawings After Two Months of Violence](#), June 15, 2023

Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, et al., [Unprotected – Special Edition: Analysis of Funding for Child Protection in Armed Conflict in 2021 and 2022](#), June 5, 2023

Amnesty International, [Iraq: Authorities Must Act to Reveal Fate of 643 Men and Boys Abducted by Government-Linked Militias](#), June 5, 2023

Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition, [Ignoring Red Lines: Violence Against Health Care in Conflict 2022](#), June 1, 2023