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## **UN: New Report Holds the Russian Federation Accountable for Violations Against Children and Fails to List Israeli Forces**

*Secretary-General Holds the Russian Federation Accountable in his “List of Shame,” and Excludes Israel Despite Verified Violations Against Children in 2022*

New York, 22 June 2023 – The Secretary-General took a step towards protecting children in armed conflict by listing the Russian armed forces and affiliated groups in his “list of shame,” yet he lost a chance to hold Israeli forces and Palestinian groups accountable for their violations against children, [Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict](#) said today. In his 2023 annual report on children and armed conflict, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres has detailed 24,300 grave violations committed in 2022 against children in armed conflicts around the world and included a list of States and non-State armed groups responsible for such violations.

“The Secretary-General’s inclusion of the Russian Federation as responsible for grave violations against children sends a message that parties to armed conflict must respect their international obligations, and children must always be protected,” said Ezequiel Heffes, Director of Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, a network of international human rights and humanitarian organizations working to increase the protection of children in armed conflict. “Since the onset of the conflict in Ukraine in 2014, children have endured unspeakable acts of violence. This is a crucial step to ensure accountability for these violations,” added Heffes. In 2022, the UN verified that Russian armed forces and affiliated groups killed 136 children and maimed an additional 518. It also confirmed that they carried out 480 attacks on schools and hospitals and abducted 91 children. The UN also found Ukrainian armed forces responsible for the killing and maiming of 255 children and 212 attacks on schools. However, Ukrainian forces were not listed.

In his 2023 report, the Secretary-General also added Haiti and Niger as “situations of concern,” given the gravity and number of violations reported in 2022. The Secretary-General also listed the non-State armed group *Mouvement du 23 mars* (M23), from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for killing and maiming children, rape and other forms of sexual violence, attacks against schools and hospitals, and abduction, the Islamic State of the Greater Sahara (ISGS) for killing and maiming in Burkina Faso, and the Tatmadaw Kyi, now listed as the Myanmar Armed Forces, for attacks on schools and hospitals and abduction of children.

Unfortunately, the listing of parties that have committed grave violations in 2022 included significant omissions. Despite 3,133 verified grave violations in 2022 and the Secretary-General’s statement in last year’s [report](#) that “without meaningful improvement,” both Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups “should be listed” in 2023, they were once again left off the list. In 2022, the UN verified that Israeli forces were responsible for killing 42 children and injuring an additional 933, and for 110 attacks against schools and hospitals. The UN has found Israel responsible for over 6,700 child casualties between 2015 and 2020, yet Israeli forces have never been added to the so-called “list of shame.” In 2022, Palestinian groups were also identified as responsible for several grave violations against children, notably over 100 killing and maiming cases, yet they were not included in the list. “The Secretary-General’s threat to add Israeli forces and Palestinian groups to his ‘list of shame’ created an expectation that they would finally be held accountable,” noted Heffes. “Although the mechanism has proven effective in changing warring parties’ behaviors and strengthening protections for children in other conflicts, by failing to follow through on the

threatened listing with Israel and Palestinian groups, he sends a message that they can continue committing grave violations against children without consequences,” Heffes concluded.

In another notable omission from the annexes, the UN found the South Sudanese People’s Defence Forces (SSPDF) responsible for 30 attacks on schools and hospitals and using 16 schools and hospitals for military purposes – a grave violation for which they were removed from the list last year. Despite these violations, the SSPDF were not re-listed this year for attacks against schools and hospitals.

The Secretary-General’s annual report and its annexed list of perpetrators have served as a unique and largely effective tool for identifying perpetrators and pressuring them to end violations and protect children in times of war. The report’s impact and credibility rely largely on the application of the same standards to all parties across all armed conflicts.

Civil society groups have [expressed concerns](#) about the Secretary-General’s failure to include all parties responsible for child rights violations. In 2021, an independent analysis by a group of international experts [revealed](#) persistent discrepancies in the listing of perpetrators, including at least eight parties to conflict who were found responsible for killing and maiming over 100 children in a single year, yet were not listed. The experts also found double standards in the treatment of State and non-State parties to conflict. “Two years ago, we denounced the tendency to cave into political pressure exerted by those responsible, rather than use the ‘list of shame’ as intended – namely, to induce changes in behavior for the benefit of vulnerable children. It appears that these failures continue,” the group of experts commented on this year’s report. “It is tragic to see the listing mechanism – which could be such a valuable instrument for the protection of children – undermined and weakened by the Office of the Secretary General,” they stated.

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**See also:**

- [Open Letter from 21 Nongovernmental Organizations \(NGOs\) to the UN Secretary-General Calling for a Credible, Evidence-based List of Perpetrators, May 31, 2023](#)
- [“A Credible List”: Recommendations for the Secretary-General’s 2023 Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict, April 2023](#)

*Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict is a New York-based coalition of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that seeks to end violations against children in armed conflict and guarantee their rights. For more information, please visit: <https://watchlist.org/>.*