

“A Credible List”:

Recommendations for the Secretary-General’s 2023 Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict

Introduction

Since its inception over 25 years ago, the United Nations’ Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) agenda has grown to become one of the most significant, dynamic, and broadly supported multilateral initiatives within the UN system. It provides international policymakers a unique set of tools for promoting the protection of children in armed conflict and addressing grave violations of their rights.

Among these tools is the Secretary-General’s annual report on the situation of children affected by armed conflict (‘annual report’), which has been presented to the Security Council each year since 2000. The main purpose of this report is to draw the attention of UN Member States to grave violations against children and the perpetrators of these violations. With its Resolution 1379 (2001), and subsequent resolutions on children and armed conflict, the Security Council mandated the Secretary-General to include in his annual reports a list of parties to armed conflict that commit the following grave violations against children: recruitment and use; killing and maiming; rape and other forms of sexual violence; attacks on schools and hospitals; and abductions. The Council further strengthened this system in 2005, when it established a unique global Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) to collect and rigorously verify information on the grave violations against children in armed conflict.

The listing mechanism, which draws its evidence base from the MRM, has served as another important tool to ensure the protection of children in armed conflict. It provides a key first step towards accountability by clearly identifying warring parties responsible for grave violations against children in armed conflict. The mechanism also serves as a foundation for the UN to dialogue with warring parties, secure concrete commitments to end and prevent violations through the adoption of UN action plans, and create tangible, positive changes for children affected by war.



About Watchlist

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict strives to end violations against children in armed conflicts and to guarantee their rights. As a global network, Watchlist builds partnerships among local, national, and international nongovernmental organizations, enhancing mutual capacities and strengths. Working together, we strategically collect and disseminate information on violations against children in conflicts in order to influence key decision-makers to create and implement programs and policies that effectively protect children.

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Despite the important progress made, children continue to face the devastating impacts of armed conflict, and grave violations continue to be committed against children with impunity. In 2021, the UN documented nearly 24,000 grave violations against children.¹ More children are living in conflict zones than at any time in the previous two decades.² The rapid expansion of the global counterterrorism agenda threatens to unravel established laws and norms for protecting children's rights, and the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated children's vulnerability to grave violations and other abuses.

In recent years, civil society organizations and UN Member States have raised concerns about the process for determining which perpetrators are included in the report's annexes. They have noted that any politicization of the listing decisions threatens to undermine the report's credibility and weaken its strength as a tool for promoting accountability and compliance with applicable international law and for preventing future violations. Of particular concern are those inconsistencies found between the data on violations that are included in the narrative section of the annual report and the parties listed in its annexes, notable non-listing of some parties, listing of parties for only some described violations, and de-listing of parties who have not yet fully met the criteria as specified by the Secretary-General in 2010.³ In March 2021, a group of internationally respected child rights experts echoed these concerns after undertaking an independent review of the Secretary-General's listing and de-listing decisions

between 2010 and 2020.⁴ Furthermore, gathering and verifying evidence on grave violations frequently involves considerable security risks for those participating in the MRM. When listing and de-listing decisions do not consistently reflect this data, they can undermine these efforts and it can appear as if these risks were taken in vain.⁵

Since 2017, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict ('Watchlist') has published an annual policy note with recommendations for the Secretary-General on parties to armed conflict that have committed grave violations against children and should be listed in the annexes of the forthcoming annual report. Watchlist's annual policy note also makes recommendations on parties that should be further investigated and country situations that should be included as "other situations of concern" in the Secretary-General's annual report.

With this seventh edition of its annual policy note, Watchlist reiterates its call to Secretary-General António Guterres to publish a complete list of perpetrators that is evidence-based and accurately reflects data collected and verified by the MRM, applying the 2010 criteria for listing and de-listing equally and consistently across country situations. Watchlist further calls on the UN, its Member States, and civil society to build on the progress made to protect children in armed conflict by defending and upholding existing protection frameworks, strengthening efforts to prevent conflict, and promoting accountability for and to children.

1 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/76/871-S/2022/493), June 23, 2022, <https://undocs.org/s/2022/493> (accessed January 15, 2023), para. 4.

2 Save the Children, "Stop the War on Children: A Crisis of Recruitment," November 2021, <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/SWOC-5-5th-pp.pdf> (accessed March 13, 2023), p. 3.

3 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/64/742-S/2010/181), April 13, 2010, <https://undocs.org/S/2010/181> (accessed March 18, 2023), paras. 176-180.

4 Eminent Persons Group, "Keeping the Promise: An Independent Review of the UN's Annual List of Perpetrators of Grave Violations against Children, 2010 to 2020," March 2021, <https://watchlist.org/wp-content/uploads/eminent-persons-group-report-final.pdf> (accessed March 13, 2023).

5 Wells, Matt, "The Importance of Being Listed: Why Politics Threaten the Protection of Children in Armed Conflict," June 22, 2021, Inter Press Service News Agency, <https://www.ipsnews.net/2021/06/importance-listed-politics-threaten-protection-children-armed-conflict/> (accessed April 7, 2023).

Methodology

Watchlist conducted a desk review of various publicly available reports for 16 relevant country situations, plus the Lake Chad Basin region, for the period from January 1 to December 31, 2022, to inform the recommendations included in this policy note. These particular country situations were chosen based on the Secretary-General's 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict, focusing on those situations where parties were cited as having committed a considerable number of grave violations against children but were not listed in the report's annexes.

Sources include the Secretary-General's previous annual reports on children and armed conflict; reports from UN agencies, peacekeeping and special political missions, treaty bodies, and commissions of inquiry; and documentation by Watchlist's members and other reputable international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with relevant expertise. In some cases, Watchlist also analyzed credible news media sources. Its review focused on the five grave violations that "trigger" listing: recruitment and use; killing and maiming; rape and other forms of sexual violence; attacks on schools and hospitals; and abductions.

Watchlist's method to arrive at a recommendation for listing is derived from the Security Council's relevant resolutions on children and armed conflict and the Secretary-General's previous annual reports.⁶ While not setting a standard numerical threshold that should necessarily trigger listing, particular attention was

paid to parties responsible for 10 or more verified cases of recruitment and use, rape and other forms of sexual violence, or attacks on schools and hospitals during a single reporting period, and 20 or more cases of killing and maiming or abductions.⁷ In addition to reviewing information on violations committed during the 2022 reporting period, Watchlist considered the number of UN-verified violations committed in 2021 to assess the establishment of patterns or trends. In some cases, Watchlist found that parties were responsible for committing a high number of violations across two consecutive years (2021 and 2022) and recommended listing. In other cases, there was enough information to suggest that parties had committed a high number of violations in 2022 alone to recommend listing.

For some parties mentioned in the body of the Secretary-General's 2022 annual report that were not listed, Watchlist recommends that the UN further investigate to determine whether they should be listed in the 2023 annexes. For these parties, existing evidence of verified violations was concerning but not sufficient to justify recommending listing. If investigation by the UN Country Team is not possible, the UN could send a delegation to the country to independently verify allegations, as per the MRM guidelines.⁸

It should be noted that the information contained in this policy note is not intended to encompass all incidents perpetrated against children in all relevant situations during the reporting period. Rather, it aims to *highlight specific incidents* to support Watchlist's recommendations to list certain parties, add additional violations to parties already listed, or to further investigate certain situations.

⁶ UN Security Council Resolutions 1379 (2001), para. 16; 1882 (2009), para. 3; 1998 (2011), para. 3; 2225 (2015), para. 3.

⁷ Watchlist paid particular attention to reviewing cases where, in the past two years, a party to conflict had committed 10 or more cases of recruitment and use, sexual violence, or attacks on schools and hospitals in a single year, but was not listed in the Secretary-General's 2022 annexes. The number for recruitment and use was chosen in accordance with Security Council Resolution 1379, which requests the Secretary-General to list parties that recruit or use children (i.e., not specifying a pattern). For sexual violence, which is notoriously difficult to document, 10 or more violations were considered cause for particular concern and a likely indication of a pattern. Similarly, regarding attacks on schools and hospitals, where each attack often affects dozens or more children, 10 or more incidents were deemed likely to indicate a pattern. For killing and maiming and abductions, the number of violations indicating a likely pattern was set at 20 or more. However, as indicated in the text above, these figures do not represent a standard numerical threshold; instead, they were analyzed in connection with other contextual information, including the number of violations documented in previous years.

⁸ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG-CAAC), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), "Guidelines: Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on Grave Violations against Children in Situations of Armed Conflict," June 2014, https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/MRM_Guidelines_-_5_June_20141.pdf (accessed March 18, 2023).

Recommendations

On the basis of its review and bearing in mind the limitations described above, Watchlist recommends that the UN Secretary-General:

1. List the following parties that have committed grave violations against children in 2022 in the annexes of his upcoming annual report:
 - a. Central African Republic: *Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation* (3R), as part of the *Coalition des patriotes pour le changement* (CPC) for rape and other forms of sexual violence
 - b. Central African Republic: Government and pro-government forces, including the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic, internal security forces, special mixed security units, other security personnel for rape and other forms of sexual violence
 - c. Democratic Republic of the Congo: Mai-Mai Biloze Bishambuke for recruitment and use
 - d. Democratic Republic of the Congo: *Mouvement du 23 mars* (M23) for killing and maiming
 - e. Israel / Occupied Palestinian Territory: Israeli Government Forces for killing and maiming and attacks on schools and hospitals
 - f. Mali: Islamic State of the Greater Sahara (ISGS) for killing and maiming
 - g. Myanmar: Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guards, for attacks on schools and hospitals
 - h. South Sudan: The South Sudan People's Defense Forces (SSPDF) for attacks on schools and hospitals (the SSPDF was de-listed for this violation in 2022)
 - i. Syria: Russian Government Forces, including the Aerospace Defence Forces of the Russian Federation, and Russian-Supported Syrian Air Forces for killing and maiming
 - j. Ukraine: Russian Government Forces and pro-government forces for killing and maiming and attacks on schools and hospitals
2. Further investigate to determine whether parties should be listed in the annexes:
 - a. Cameroon: Armed separatist groups for attacks on schools and hospitals
 - b. Colombia: *Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia* (AGC) / *Clan del Golfo* for recruitment and use
 - c. Ethiopia: Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) for attacks on schools and hospitals and for rape and other forms of sexual violence
 - d. Ethiopia: Government Forces, for killing and maiming, attacks on schools and hospitals and for rape and other forms of sexual violence
 - e. Israel / Occupied Palestinian Territory: Palestinian armed groups for killing and maiming
 - f. Myanmar: People's Defence Forces (PDF) for attacks on schools and hospitals
 - g. Syria: Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) for killing and maiming
 - h. Syria: Turkish Government Forces for killing and maiming
 - i. Ukraine: Russian Government Forces and pro-government forces for rape and other forms of sexual violence and abductions
 - j. Yemen: Saudi- and Emirati-led Coalition for killing and maiming

Previous policy notes have recommended the addition of countries with emerging conflicts as "other situations of concern" in the narrative of the report and recommended further investigation regarding parties responsible for committing grave violations to determine whether they should be listed in the annexes. In 2022, the Secretary-General announced that Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Ukraine would be included as situations of concern in his 2023 report. Watchlist has no recommendations for additional situations of concern for the 2023 report.

Annex I Countries

Afghanistan

Hizb-i Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP), and the Taliban and affiliated groups, including the Haqqani Network, are listed for recruitment and use of children and for killing and maiming children in the Secretary-General's 2022 report on children and armed conflict. In addition, ISIL-KP and the Taliban are listed for attacks on schools and hospitals, and the Taliban is listed for abductions.

Central African Republic (CAR)

Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC), Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC), and Union pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC) as part of the former Séléka coalition; local defense militias known as the anti-balaka; and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) are listed in the Secretary-General's 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict for recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and rape and other forms of sexual violence. The LRA is also listed for abductions, and the FPRC, MPC, and UPC as part of the former Séléka coalition are also listed for attacks on schools and hospitals. Watchlist recommends the following with regard to the Secretary-General's 2023 annual report on children and armed conflict.

Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation (3R), as part of the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement (CPC)

Recommendation to List – Rape and Other Forms of Sexual Violence

In the Secretary-General's 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict, the UN found 3R responsible for 28 verified cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence in 2021, as well as four additional cases jointly attributed to 3R and anti-balaka.⁹ Furthermore, 3R was the main perpetrator of conflict-related sexual violence in CAR in 2021, according to the Secretary-General's 2022 annual report on conflict-related sexual violence, having been found responsible for 138 cases, including an unspecified number of cases against girls.¹⁰

According to the Secretary-General's October report on CAR, the 3R were found responsible for seven cases of rape and sexual violence against children between June 2 and October 1, 2022.¹¹ Between October 2, 2022, and February 1, 2023, the 3R were responsible for four additional cases of rape and sexual violence against children.¹² During the same reporting period, 13 girls were subjected to sexual slavery by the 3R and Lord's Resistance Army armed groups, and 3R reportedly committed multiple gang rapes, often against vulnerable girls.¹³ It is not clear how many of these cases fall within the 2022 reporting period of the upcoming annual report on children and armed conflict.

⁹ UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/76/871–S/2022/493), June 23, 2022, para. 30.

¹⁰ Report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (S/2022/272), March 29, 2022, <https://undocs.org/S/2022/272> (accessed March 14, 2023), paras. 20–21.

¹¹ Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (CAR) (S/2022/762), October 13, 2022, <https://undocs.org/S/2022/762> (accessed January 20, 2023), para. 69.

¹² Report of the Secretary-General on CAR (S/2023/108), February 16, 2023, <https://undocs.org/S/2023/108> (accessed March 14, 2023), para. 59.

¹³ Ibid., para. 59.

Government and pro-government forces, including the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic, internal security forces, special mixed security units, other security personnel

Recommendation to List – Rape and Other Forms of Sexual Violence

In 2021, the UN found Government and pro-government forces of the Central African Republic responsible for 20 verified cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.¹⁴ This included 13 cases by the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic, six cases by other security personnel, and one case by special mixed security units.

Between October 2, 2021, and October 1, 2022, the UN attributed 25 incidents of conflict-related sexual violence to the national defense and internal security forces and seven to other security personnel.¹⁵ While the ages of the survivors involved were not specified in all cases, at least 11 cases reportedly involved children.¹⁶ In an incident reported by the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in CAR, a young girl was reportedly raped in the context of an anti-rebel offensive launched by “members of the armed forces and Russian allies” in the village of Aigbando in January 2022.¹⁷ Between October 2, 2022, and February 1, 2023, national defense and security forces were reportedly responsible for 15 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, including

cases involving seven girls.¹⁸ It is not clear how many of these cases fall within the 2022 reporting period of the upcoming annual report on children and armed conflict.

Colombia

The Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) dissident groups are listed for recruitment and use in the Secretary-General’s 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict. Watchlist recommends the following with regard to the Secretary-General’s 2023 annual report on children and armed conflict.

Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC) / Clan del Golfo

Recommendation to Further Investigate to Determine if Listing Is Warranted – Recruitment and Use

The Secretary-General’s 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict attributed the recruitment and use of 17 children to AGC in 2021, along with the killing of six children and one case of using a school for military purposes.¹⁹ Similar practices had been documented in previous years, for which Watchlist recommended in its 2022 “Credible List” report to further investigate the AGC to determine if listing was warranted for recruitment and use. The Secretary-General’s most recent report

14 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/76/871–S/2022/493), June 23, 2022, para. 30.

15 Report of the Secretary-General on CAR (S/2022/119), February 16, 2022, para. 67; Report of the Secretary-General on CAR (S/2022/491), June 16, 2022, <https://undocs.org/S/2022/491> (accessed March 14, 2023), para. 62; Report of the Secretary-General on CAR (S/2022/762), October 13, 2022, para. 69.

16 Report of the Secretary-General on CAR (S/2022/762), October 13, 2022, para. 69.

17 Report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in CAR, Yao Agbetse (A/HRC/51/59), August 22, 2022, <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/51/59> (accessed January 20, 2023), para. 48.

18 Report of the Secretary-General on CAR (S/2023/108), February 16, 2023, para. 59.

19 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/76/871–S/2022/493), June 23, 2022, paras. 40–41, 44.

on the situation of children and armed conflict in Colombia attributed 18 cases of recruitment and use of children to AGC between July 1, 2019, and June 30, 2021.²⁰ Allegations against the AGC for this grave violation also took place in 2022.²¹ Research by International Crisis Group (ICG) published in February 2023 cites AGC (referred to as Gulf Clan [Clan del Golfo] in the text) as among armed groups still actively recruiting children and young people, including reportedly recruiting girls for the purpose of sexual exploitation.²² ICG's research describes increasing recruitment trends particularly during the pandemic when young people were unable to attend school or find employment, many of whom are below 25 years old and "a significant number are minors," as well as recruitment of girls "as young as eight or nine" into prostitution networks managed by and serving the armed groups."²³

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

In the Secretary-General's 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict, 12 non-state armed groups (NSAGs) are listed for various grave violations, and the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) are listed for rape and other forms of sexual violence against children. Watchlist recommends the following with regard to the Secretary-General's 2023 annual report on children and armed conflict.

Mai Mai Biloze Bishambuke

Recommendation to List – Recruitment and Use

In the 2022 annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, the Mai-Mai Biloze Bishambuke were reportedly responsible for recruiting 57 children in a previous year who were used by the armed group until their separation in 2021.²⁴ In the Secretary-General's eighth report on the situation of children and armed conflict in DRC, Mai-Mai Biloze Bishambuke were found responsible for 44 cases of new recruitment and use between April 1, 2020, and March 31, 2022, though the breakdown by year was not reported.²⁵ Between September 17 and October 31, 2022, the UN successfully advocated for the release of 47 children from the Mai-Mai groups Biloze Bishambuke and Machine, according to the Secretary-General's November 2022 report on MONUSCO.²⁶

Mouvement du 23 mars (M23)

Recommendation to List – Killing and Maiming

The resurgence of the armed group *Mouvement du 23 mars* (M23) in late 2021 and an escalation in clashes with Government Forces in 2022 has reportedly led to violations against civilians, including the killing or injuring children. According to the Secretary-General's October 2022 report on implementation of the peace, security, and cooperation framework for the DRC and the region, between March 16 and September 15, 2022, M23 were

20 Report of the Secretary-General on the situation of children and armed conflict in Colombia (S/2021/1022), December 8, 2021, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/1022> (accessed April 7, 2023), para. 19.

21 NoticiasRCN, "Clan del Golfo estaría reclutando menores en Antioquia, según Defensoría," February 18, 2022, <https://www.noticiasrcn.com/colombia/clan-del-golfo-esta-reclutando-menores-en-antioquia-segun-defensoria-405874> (accessed April 6, 2023); WRadio, "El Clan del Golfo' estaría instrumentalizando menores en el Atlántico," May 13, 2022, <https://www.wradio.com.co/2022/05/13/el-clan-del-golfo-estaria-instrumentalizando-menores-en-el-atlantico/> (accessed April 6, 2023); Semana, "Liberan a un menor de edad reclutado por el Clan del Golfo en Antioquia," November 11, 2022, <https://www.semana.com/nacion/medellin/articulo/liberan-a-un-menor-de-edad-reclutado-por-el-clan-del-golfo-en-antioquia/202251/> (accessed April 6, 2023).

22 International Crisis Group, "Protecting Colombia's Most Vulnerable on the Road to 'Total Peace,'" February 24, 2023, https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/andes/colombia/98-protecting-colombias-most-vulnerable-road-total-peace#_ftn2 (accessed April 7, 2023).

23 Ibid.

24 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/76/871–S/2022/493), June 23, 2022, para. 54.

25 Report of the Secretary-General on the situation of children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (S/2022/745), October 10, 2022, <https://undocs.org/S/2022/745> (accessed March 14, 2023), para. 26.

26 Report of the Secretary-General on the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) (S/2022/892), November 30, 2022, <https://undocs.org/S/2022/892> (accessed January 19, 2023), para. 63.

reportedly responsible for the deaths of 12 children.²⁷ Throughout 2022, the Secretary-General's periodic reports on MONUSCO documented child casualties attributed to M23. For example, on March 28, one child was wounded by M23 combatants during an attack in Rutshuru territory.²⁸ Between June 17 and September 16, 2022, 12 children were reportedly killed in incidents involving M23 in North Kivu.²⁹ From October 20 to November 18, clashes between M23 and the FARDC resulted in the deaths of 13 children.³⁰ Furthermore, both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch documented attacks carried out by M23 between November 28 and December 1, 2022, which resulted in child casualties.³¹ According to a statement by the spokesperson for the Secretary-General, preliminary investigations by MONUSCO into the attacks on November 29 and 30 found that at least 12 children were among the 131 civilians killed.³² In a January 2023 statement, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict expressed shock at the intensification of violence against children in Eastern DRC, noting that the number of grave violations attributed to M23 "has increased more than twentyfold

over the last year."³³ Allegations have also been raised against M23 for recruiting and using children, as well as for attacking schools and hospitals.³⁴

Iraq

Da'esh (formerly listed as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant) is listed for all five "trigger" violations in the Secretary-General's 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict. The Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) are listed for recruitment and use.

Mali

The NSAGs Ansar Eddine as part of Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin; Platform, including affiliated groups; and Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad (MNLA) are listed for recruitment and use in the Secretary-General's 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict. Ansar Eddine and the MNLA are also listed for rape and other forms of sexual violence. Watchlist recommends the following with regard to the Secretary-General's 2023 annual report on children and armed conflict.

- 27 Report of the Secretary-General on Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the Region (S/2022/735), October 4, 2022, <https://undocs.org/S/2022/735> (accessed January 19, 2023), para. 31.
- 28 Report of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO (S/2022/503), June 22, 2022, <https://undocs.org/S/2022/503> (accessed March 14, 2023), para. 26; Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "UN Human Rights Chief and Special Adviser on Prevention of Genocide disturbed by increase in violence and hate speech in eastern DRC," June 17, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/06/un-human-rights-chief-and-special-adviser-prevention-genocide-disturbed> (accessed January 18, 2023).
- 29 Report of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO (S/2022/709), September 22, 2022, <https://undocs.org/S/2022/709> (accessed March 14, 2023), paras. 18, 25.
- 30 Report of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO (S/2022/892), November 30, 2022, para. 28.
- 31 Amnesty International, "DRC: M23 armed group must stop killing civilians and respect international law," December 2, 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/12/m23/> (accessed January 19, 2023); Human Rights Watch (HRW), "DR Congo: Atrocities by Rwanda-Backed M23 Rebels," February 6, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/02/06/dr-congo-atrocities-rwanda-backed-m23-rebels> (accessed March 14, 2023).
- 32 Spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General, "Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General – on the DRC," December 9, 2022, https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2022-12-09/statement-attributable-the-spokesperson-for-the-secretary-general-%E2%80%93-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-scroll-down-for-french?_gl=1*15gppwl*_ga*ODkyMzM4NzY2LjE2NzA4Njg3MDk.*_ga_TK9BQL5X7Z*MTY3NDE3NDk3OS4xMC4wLjE2NzQxNzQ5NzkuMC4wLjA (accessed January 19, 2023).
- 33 Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, "Deteriorating Security Situation in Eastern DRC Dramatically Impacts Children," January 23, 2023, <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/2023/01/deteriorating-security-situation-in-eastern-drc-dramatically-impacts-children/> (accessed March 14, 2023).
- 34 UN Security Council, Midterm Report of the Group of Experts on the DRC (S/2022/967), December 16, 2022, <https://undocs.org/S/2022/967> (accessed April 7, 2023), para. 36 and annex 24; Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, "Deteriorating Security Situation in Eastern DRC Dramatically Impacts Children," January 23, 2023.

Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS)

Recommendation to List – Killing and Maiming

According to the Secretary-General's 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict, ISGS killed and maimed 40 children in Mali in 2021.³⁵ The Secretary-General's fourth report on the situation of children and armed conflict in Mali cites ISGS as responsible for 53 verified incidents of killing and maiming of children between April 1, 2020 and March 31, 2022.³⁶ It is unclear how many of these violations fall within the 2022 reporting period of the upcoming annual report. The Secretary-General's periodic reports on MINUSMA attribute 69 grave violations against children to ISGS between January 4, 2022, and January 3, 2023, however, a breakdown by violation was not reported.³⁷ Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have further documented six separate attacks perpetrated by groups affiliated with ISGS in March 2022, with witnesses reporting over 50 child casualties.³⁸ For example, Human Rights Watch documented accounts of two separate attacks carried out on March 28, in which witnesses claim fighters associated with the Islamic State killed 37 boys and three girls.³⁹

Myanmar

In his 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict, the Secretary-General listed the Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces, as well as the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army, Kachin Independence Army, the Karen National Liberation Army, the Karen National Union/ Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council, the Karenni Army, the Shan State Army, and the United Wa State Army, for recruitment and use. The Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces, are also listed for killing and maiming and rape and other forms of sexual violence. Watchlist recommends the following with regard to the Secretary-General's 2023 annual report on children and armed conflict.

Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces

Recommendation to List – Attacks on Schools and Hospitals

In 2021, the UN verified 17 attacks on schools and hospitals by the Tatmadaw.⁴⁰ Multiple accounts of attacks on schools and hospitals and related personnel, as well as cases of military use of schools, were reported in the wake of the February 2021 coup.⁴¹ Evidence indicates that this pattern has not only persisted, but worsened in 2022.⁴²

35 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/76/871-S/2022/493), June 23, 2022, para. 121.

36 Report of the Secretary-General on the situation of children and armed conflict in Mali (S/2022/856), November 15, 2022, <https://undocs.org/S/2022/856> (accessed March 14, 2023), paras. 26-27.

37 Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Mali (S/2022/278), March 30, 2022, <https://undocs.org/S/2022/278>, para. 58; Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Mali (S/2022/446), June 2, 2022, <https://undocs.org/S/2022/446>, para. 56; Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Mali (S/2022/731), October 3, 2022, <https://undocs.org/S/2022/731>, para. 49; Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Mali (S/2023/21), January 6, 2023, <https://undocs.org/S/2023/21>, para. 43.

38 Amnesty International, "Mali: New eye-witness testimony describes killings and mass displacement amid surge in violence in Menaka," June 16, 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/06/174337/> (accessed January 22, 2023); HRW, "Mali: Coordinated Massacres by Islamist Armed Groups," press release, October 27, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/10/27/mali-coordinated-massacres-islamist-armed-groups> (accessed January 22, 2023).

39 HRW, "Mali: Coordinated Massacres by Islamist Armed Groups," press release, October 27, 2022.

40 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/76/871-S/2022/493), June 23, 2022, para. 136.

41 Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, "A Credible List: Recommendations for the Secretary-General's 2022 Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict," April 2022, <https://watchlist.org/publications/a-credible-list-recommendations-for-the-secretary-generals-2022-annual-report-on-children-and-armed-conflict/> (accessed March 20, 2023); See also: Physicians for Human Rights, "Our Health Workers Are Working in Fear": After Myanmar's Military Coup, One Year of Targeted Violence against Health Care, January 2022, <https://phr.org/our-work/resources/one-year-anniversary-of-the-myanmar-coup-detat/> (accessed March 13, 2023).

42 UN Human Rights Council, Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar Since 1 February 2022, A/HRC/52/21, March 2, 2023, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session52/advance-version/A_HRC_52_21_AdvanceEditedVersion.docx (accessed March 21, 2023), para. 61.

In a June 2022 conference room paper, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar reported that the UN had documented 260 attacks on schools and school personnel between February 2021 and March 2022 by the Myanmar military and armed groups.⁴³ Though not specifying how many of these 260 attacks are attributable to the Myanmar military, the Special Rapporteur further states that the “Myanmar military has attacked schools using helicopters, fighter jets, and heavy artillery...the military has also reportedly captured teachers and forced them to serve as guides.”⁴⁴ In addition, the Tatmadaw has occupied schools, including when children were present, and used them as bases for military operations.⁴⁵ In one such incident in February 2022, the Tatmadaw reportedly detained more than 100 children, most aged three to six, at a monastery school in Yinmabin Township, Sagaing Region and held the students for approximately 36 hours.⁴⁶ In a widely publicized incident on September 16, 2022, the Tatmadaw attacked a school in Let Yet Kone, Sagaing Region, killing at least 13 people, including at least six children, and injuring nine other children.⁴⁷ The Secretary-General has strongly condemned the attack.⁴⁸ In another example, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has documented an incident in October 2022

where the military beheaded a schoolteacher in Pauk Township, Magway Region, and hung his head on the gate of the school.⁴⁹ The teacher was reportedly accused of affiliation with the National Unity Government.

In total, according to OHCHR, by November 2022 the UN figures indicated that attacks on schools and school staff across Myanmar had doubled in 2022 as compared with the previous year.⁵⁰ This included 175 incidents, including the beheading and September attack described above, and the UN has deemed the military and affiliated militias as responsible for at least half of these incidents.⁵¹ Furthermore, the use of schools by the Tatmadaw for military purposes has likely increased the vulnerability of schools to attack by anti-military armed groups.

In addition, OHCHR reported that attacks on health care and health care workers continued into 2022, in conjunction with military operations. On October 20, for example, the military conducted an airstrike against a newly opened hospital in Man Yu Gyi village, Sagaing Region, killing one woman and injuring five others.⁵² The report further describes “arbitrary arrests of health care workers and people transporting medical supplies, the obstruction of access to health care through the

43 UN Human Rights Council, “Losing a Generation: How the Military Junta Is Attacking Myanmar’s Children and Stealing Their Future,” conference room paper of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar (A/HRC/50.CRP.1), June 14, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc50crp1-conference-room-paper-special-rapporteur-losing-generation> (accessed March 21, 2023), para. 99.

44 Ibid., para. 100.

45 Ibid., paras. 101-102.

46 Ibid., para. 102.

47 UN Human Rights Council, Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar Since 1 February 2022 (A/HRC/52/21), March 2, 2023, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session52/advance-version/A_HRC_52_21_AdvanceEditedVersion.docx (accessed March 21, 2023), para. 15; “Strongly Condemning Deadly Attack on School in Myanmar, Secretary-General Stresses Children Must Have Safe Place to Learn,” press release, September 20, 2022, <https://press.un.org/en/2022/sgsm21469.doc.htm> (accessed March 21, 2023); HRW, “Myanmar: Events of 2023,” World Report 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/myanmar#e1306f> (accessed March 20, 2023) (accessed March 20, 2023); UNICEF, “At Least 11 Schoolchildren Killed in Myanmar Attack,” September 19, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/least-11-schoolchildren-killed-myanmar-attack> (accessed March 21, 2023).

48 “Strongly Condemning Deadly Attack on School in Myanmar, Secretary-General Stresses Children Must Have Safe Place to Learn,” press release, September 20, 2022.

49 UN Human Rights Council, Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar Since 1 February 2022 (A/HRC/52/21), March 2, 2023, para. 27.

50 Ibid., para. 63.

51 Ibid., para. 63.

52 Ibid., para. 16.

imposition of physical roadblocks, a bureaucratic and discriminatory authorization regime and the confiscation and destruction of medical supplies."⁵³

People's Defence Forces (PDF)

Recommendation to Further Investigate to Determine if Listing Is Warranted – Attacks on Schools and Hospitals

In a June 2022 conference room paper, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar reported that the UN had documented 260 attacks on schools and school personnel between February 2021 and March 2022 by the Myanmar military and armed groups.⁵⁴ Though not specifying how many of these 260 attacks are attributable to each party, the Special Rapporteur explicitly states that "both the military and other armed groups are responsible for attacks on educational facilities, and both have occupied schools, ensuring the politicization and militarization of educational infrastructure."⁵⁵ The same report notes a spike in attacks carried out on government schools at the start of the 2021-2022 school year, "presumably carried out by anti-junta groups and subsided after the [National Unity Government] called for PDFs to avoid attacking educational facilities."⁵⁶ Ethnic armed groups, militias, and PDFs have reportedly also been responsible for attacks on teachers, including for supposed collaboration with the junta, as well as for the military use of schools.⁵⁷

Somalia

In the Secretary-General's 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict, Al-Shabaab is listed for all five "trigger" violations. The Somali Federal Defense and Somali Police Force are each listed for recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and rape and other forms of sexual violence, while the NSAG Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a is listed for recruitment and use.

South Sudan

The South Sudan People's Defense Forces, including Taban Deng-allied South Sudan People's Defense Forces, are listed for recruitment and use, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and abductions in the Secretary-General's 2022 report on children and armed conflict. The Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition - pro-Machar is listed for recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and abductions. Watchlist recommends the following with regard to the Secretary-General's 2023 annual report on children and armed conflict.

The South Sudan People's Defense Forces (SSPDF)

Recommendation to Re-List – Attacks on Schools and Hospitals

In the Secretary-General's 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict, the SSPDF were removed from the annexes for the grave violation of attacks on schools and hospitals.⁵⁸ According to the data presented in the same report, zero cases of verified attacks on schools and hospitals were attributed to SSPDF in 2021, however, 10 cases of the military use of schools and hospitals

⁵³ Ibid., para. 61.

⁵⁴ UN Human Rights Council, "Losing a Generation: How the Military Junta Is Attacking Myanmar's Children and Stealing Their Future," conference room paper of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar (A/HRC/50.CRP.1), June 14, 2022, para. 99.

⁵⁵ Ibid., para. 8.

⁵⁶ Ibid., para. 99.

⁵⁷ Ibid., para. 100-101, 103.

⁵⁸ UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/76/871-S/2022/493), June 23, 2022, para. 305.

were attributed to them.⁵⁹ In 2022, the Secretary-General's periodic reports on the situation in South Sudan document 28 attacks on schools and hospitals perpetrated by Government Forces, including the SSPDF between December 7, 2021, and November 30, 2022, the vast majority of which occurred between September 1 and November 30.⁶⁰ Additionally, the Secretary-General's fourth report on the situation of children and armed conflict in South Sudan attributes three out of the 11 total verified incidents of attacks on schools and hospitals to the SSPDF between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2022.⁶¹ At least one of these incidents occurred in 2022, when SSPDF soldiers looted a primary school in Central Equatoria, destroying the school's fence, removing its roofing sheets, stealing a power generator, and disrupting children's access to education.⁶² In addition, the UN verified 20 incidents of the military use of schools or hospitals during the same reporting period.⁶³

Sudan

Five NSAGs are listed for recruitment and use in the Secretary-General's 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict: Justice and Equality Movement, Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid, Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi, Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction, and Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Malik Agar faction.

Syrian Arab Republic

Da'esh (formerly listed as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant) is listed for all five "trigger" violations in the Secretary-General's 2022 annual report on children and

armed conflict. In addition, the NSAGs Hay'at Tahrir al Sham and the opposition Syrian National Army, including Ahrar al-Sham and Army of Islam are listed for recruitment and use of children and killing and maiming, while the Kurdish People's Protection Units and Women's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ) are listed for recruitment and use. Government Forces, including National Defense Forces and pro-government militias, are listed for recruitment and use, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and attacks on schools and hospitals. Watchlist recommends the following with regard to the Secretary-General's 2023 annual report on children and armed conflict.

Russian Government Forces, including Aerospace Defence Forces of the Russian Federation, and Russian-Backed Syrian Air Forces

Recommendation to List – Killing and Maiming

While the Secretary-General's annual reports on children and armed conflict and reports on the situation of children in armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic do not explicitly cite the involvement of Russian Forces in Syria, credible sources over multiple years, including the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, continue to document evidence of Russian Forces operating in support of Syrian Government Forces.

In 2022, these sources documented the killing and maiming of at least 36 children in connection to the presence of Russian security personnel or Russian aircraft. For example, the UN Commission of Inquiry on the

⁵⁹ Ibid., para. 166.

⁶⁰ Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in South Sudan (S/2022/156), February 25, 2022, <https://undocs.org/S/2022/156> (accessed March 14, 2023), para. 68; Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in South Sudan (S/2022/468), June 9, 2022, <https://undocs.org/S/2022/468> (accessed March 14, 2023), para. 67; Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in South Sudan (S/2022/689), September 13, 2022, <https://undocs.org/S/2022/689> (accessed March 14, 2023), para. 76; Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in South Sudan (S/2022/918), December 7, 2022, <https://undocs.org/S/2022/918> (accessed March 14, 2023), para. 78.

⁶¹ Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation of Children and Armed Conflict in South Sudan (S/2023/99), February 10, 2023, <https://undocs.org/S/2023/99> (accessed March 14, 2023), para. 59.

⁶² Ibid., para. 63.

⁶³ Ibid., para. 64.

Syrian Arab Republic recorded evidence of the presence of Russian fixed-wing aircraft in the affected area at the time of four separate attacks which resulted in the death or injury of 26 children.⁶⁴ For example, on January 1, airstrikes in the middle of the night near Jisr al-Shughour killed a woman and two young girls (seven and two years old) and injured at least 10 others, including 6 children. The Commission of Inquiry obtained flight spotters' reports indicating that at least one Russian fixed-wing aircraft was observed in the affected area at the time of the attack.⁶⁵ A January 3 airstrike on the outskirts of Kafr Takrim injured an eight-year-old boy. At least one Russian fixed-wing aircraft was observed in the area at the time of the attack, according to flight spotters' reports and overflight data.⁶⁶ Both attacks were also documented by the Syrian Network for Human Rights.⁶⁷ On July 22, an airstrike on Idlib attributed to Russian aircraft⁶⁸ resulted in the death and injury of 14 children.⁶⁹ On September 8, at least one Russian fixed-wing aircraft was observed in the affected area at the time of an airstrike on a stone-cutting workshop in Hafsarjah, killing two boys and injuring two other children.⁷⁰

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights documented nine children killed by Russian airstrikes in 2022, as well as one child seriously injured on February 22 after having been run over by a Russian armored vehicle near Deir Ezzor city in Al-Salhiyah area.⁷¹ An additional attack on November 6 reportedly resulted in 8 child casualties with sources implicating the involvement of Russian Forces.⁷²

Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)

Recommendation to Further Investigate to Determine if Listing Is Warranted – Killing and Maiming

Syrian Democratic Forces were found responsible for killing and maiming 55 children in 2021, according to the Secretary-General's 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict.⁷³ In ten separate incidents, the Syrian Network for Human Rights and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights recorded the killing and maiming of 21 children by the SDF in 2022. For example, on February 7, SDF opened fire inside Al Hol camp following an

- 64 UN Commission of Inquiry on Syrian Arab Republic, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syrian Arab Republic (A/HRC/51/45), August 17, 2022, <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/51/45> (accessed January 18, 2023); UN Commission of Inquiry on Syrian Arab Republic, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syrian Arab Republic (A/HRC/52/69), February 7, 2023, <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/52/69> (accessed March 13, 2023).
- 65 UN Commission of Inquiry on Syrian Arab Republic, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syrian Arab Republic (A/HRC/51/45), August 17, 2022, para. 41, Annex IV, paras. 1-5.
- 66 UN Commission of Inquiry on Syrian Arab Republic, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syrian Arab Republic (A/HRC/51/45), August 17, 2022, para. 43, Annex IV, para. 12-15.
- 67 Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), "Russian airstrike targeted a poultry farm in W. Idlib governorate on January 3," January 3, 2022, <https://news.snhr.org/2022/01/03/russian-airstrike-targeted-a-poultry-farm-in-w-idlib-governorate-on-january-3/> (accessed January 17, 2023); SNHR, "Russian forces killed civilians in W. Idlib governorate on January 1," January 1, 2022, <https://news.snhr.org/2022/01/01/russian-forces-killed-civilians-in-w-idlib-governorate-on-january-1/> (accessed January 17, 2023).
- 68 UN Commission of Inquiry on Syrian Arab Republic, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syrian Arab Republic (A/HRC/52/69), February 7, 2023, <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/52/69> (accessed March 13, 2023), para. 35-41; SNHR, "Russian forces committed a massacre, most of whose victims were children, in western Idlib governorate on July 22, 2022," July 22, 2022, <https://news.snhr.org/2022/07/22/russian-forces-committed-a-massacre-most-of-whose-victims-were-children-in-western-idlib-governorate-on-july-22-2022/> (accessed January 17, 2023).
- 69 UN Secretary-General, Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017), 2401 (2018), 2449 (2018), 2504 (2020), 2533 (2020), 2585 (2021) and 2642 (2022) (S/2022/635), August 22, 2022, <https://undocs.org/S/2022/635> (accessed January 22, 2023), Annex I.
- 70 UN Commission of Inquiry on Syrian Arab Republic, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syrian Arab Republic (A/HRC/52/69), February 7, 2023, <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/52/69> (accessed March 13, 2023), para. 35-41.
- 71 Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), "310 children killed in 2022 | Syrian children: uncertain future and blatant violations," December 21, 2022, <https://www.syriahr.com/en/281538/> (accessed January 17, 2023); SOHR, "Russian armoured vehicle runs over woman and injure her baby girl and husband in Deir Ezzor," February 22, 2022, <https://www.syriahr.com/en/240416/> (accessed January 17, 2023).
- 72 HRW, "Syria: Cluster Munitions Used in November 6 Attacks," November 23, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/11/23/syria-cluster-munitions-used-november-6-attacks> (accessed January 17, 2023); HRW, "Maram Camp Resident after Cluster Munition Attack," November 22, 2022, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xu2BuNCLu8Q> (accessed January 17, 2023); SNHR, "Massacre in an area crowded with IDPs, with multiple civilians killed in an attack by Syrian regime/Russian forces, Nov 6," November 7, 2022, <https://news.snhr.org/2022/11/07/massacre-in-an-area-crowded-with-idps-with-multiple-civilians-killed-in-an-attack-by-syrian-regime-russian-forces-nov-6/> (accessed January 17, 2023).
- 73 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/76/871-S/2022/493), June 23, 2022, para. 191.

altercation, killing one child, and injuring two others.⁷⁴ On August 3, the Syrian Network for Human Rights documented the SDF firing several missiles on Izaz city in Aleppo, hitting the perimeter of an elementary school and wounding five civilians, including three children.⁷⁵ The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights documented the killing of a total of 13 children by the SDF in 2022.⁷⁶

Turkish Government Forces

Recommendation to Further Investigate to Determine if Listing Is Warranted – Killing and Maiming

The UN attributed two incidents of killing and maiming of children to Turkish Armed Forces operations and an additional four incidents to “border area fire from Türkiye” in the 2022 annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.⁷⁷ The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic and NGOs, in particular, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, documented multiple incidents involving Turkish Forces in 2022,

reportedly resulting in at least 38 child casualties. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic noted higher levels of civilian casualties particularly in July, August, and November, “coinciding with the beginning of the Turkish Operation Claw-Sword.”⁷⁸

For example, on February 8, 2022, multiple locations were shelled in Ayn al-Arab in Aleppo governorate, resulting in three child casualties. Commission of Inquiry analysis of the incident indicated that 120 mm unguided mortar ammunition was used and that the shelling may have been fired from Türkiye, and the Ministry of Defense of Türkiye announced that it had launched an attack that same day.⁷⁹ On August 6, 2022, a Turkish-manufactured missile launched from a drone killed two boys aged 15 and 17, as well as one other civilian man.⁸⁰ On August 16, Turkish shelling impacted multiple locations in Ayn al-Arab and surrounding villages, including in the courtyard of a hospital, resulting in the death of a teenage boy and injury of a two-year-old boy.⁸¹ On August 18, a drone reported to be Turkish⁸² hit a girls’ education center near Al-Hasakah, killing five girls and injuring another 10 girls.⁸³

74 SNHR, “Syrian Democratic Forces shot and killed a child and wounded several other civilians at al Hol Camp in Hasaka suburbs on February 7,” February 9, 2022, <https://news.snhr.org/2022/02/09/syrian-democratic-forces-shot-and-killed-a-child-and-wounded-several-other-civilians-at-al-hol-camp-in-hasaka-suburbs-on-february-7/> (accessed January 17, 2023).

75 SNHR, “School damaged in Syrian Democratic Forces’ bombing of Izaz city in Aleppo on August 3,” August 4, 2022, <https://news.snhr.org/2022/08/04/school-damaged-in-syrian-democratic-forces-bombing-of-izaz-city-in-aleppo-on-august-3/> (accessed January 17, 2023).

76 SOHR, “310 children killed in 2022 | Syrian children: uncertain future and blatant violations,” December 21, 2022, <https://www.syriahr.com/en/281538/> (accessed January 17, 2023).

77 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/76/871–S/2022/493), June 23, 2022, para. 191.

78 UN Commission of Inquiry on Syrian Arab Republic, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syrian Arab Republic (A/HRC/52/69), February 7, 2023, para. 105.

79 UN Commission of Inquiry on Syrian Arab Republic, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syrian Arab Republic (A/HRC/51/45), August 17, 2022, Annex IV, paras. 52–54, footnote 10.

80 UN Commission of Inquiry on Syrian Arab Republic, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syrian Arab Republic (A/HRC/52/69), February 7, 2023, para. 110.

81 Ibid., para. 111.

82 International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch Database, Syria, August 2022, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database> (accessed January 17, 2023); ANF News, “Names of four girls killed in Turkish attack on UN-sponsored education centre in Heseke,” August 20, 2022, <https://anfenglishmobile.com/kurdistan/names-of-four-girls-killed-in-turkish-attack-on-un-sponsored-education-centre-in-heseke-61976> (accessed January 17, 2023); SOHR, “Fifth child dies due to Turkish drone targeting ‘Girl’s School’ in Al-Hasakah,” September 5, 2022, <https://www.syriahr.com/en/266246/> (accessed January 17, 2023).

83 UN Secretary-General, Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017), 2401 (2018), 2449 (2018), 2504 (2020), 2533 (2020), 2585 (2021) and 2642 (2022), (S/2022/775), October 19, 2022, <https://undocs.org/S/2022/775> (accessed January 22, 2023), Annex I.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported 10 further incidents involving Turkish forces that led to child casualties in 2022,⁸⁴ and a total of 13 children killed in attacks by Turkish forces in 2022.⁸⁵

Yemen

Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, the Houthis (who call themselves Ansar Allah), pro-government militias, including the Salafists and popular committees, and Security Belt Forces are listed for recruitment and use in the Secretary-General's 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict. In addition, the Houthis are listed for killing and maiming and attacks on schools and hospitals. Watchlist recommends the following with regard to the Secretary-General's 2023 annual report on children and armed conflict.

Saudi- and Emirati-led Coalition

Recommendation to Further Investigate to Determine if Re-Listing Is Warranted – Killing and Maiming

In the Secretary-General's 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict, the Saudi- and Emirati-led Coalition (referred to as the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen), were found responsible for the killing and maiming of 100 children in 2021.⁸⁶ By mid-January 2022, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights had recorded 839 airstrikes by the Coalition, including one strike on Sanaa in which one child was killed and another child injured.⁸⁷ Additional Coalition airstrikes in late January 2022, reportedly resulted in at least five additional child casualties.⁸⁸ The NGO Mwatana for Human Rights documented a total of 28 airstrikes by the Coalition in 2022, which reportedly resulted in 14 children killed and another 19 children injured.⁸⁹

- 84 See for example: SOHR, "Turkish attacks injure children in Aleppo," February 15, 2022, <https://www.syriahr.com/en/239541/> (accessed January 17, 2023); SOHR, "Turkish armoured vehicle runs over displaced baby girl on outskirts of Afrin," March 29, 2022, <https://www.syriahr.com/en/244812/> (accessed January 17, 2023); SOHR, "Civilian killed and three others, including children, injured in Ain Issa countryside," July 4, 2022, <https://www.syriahr.com/en/258322/> (accessed January 17, 2023); SOHR, "Child killed and civilians and two regime soldiers injured by Turkish massive shelling on 25 areas in Al-Qamishli countryside," August 9, 2022, <https://www.syriahr.com/en/262911/> (accessed January 17, 2023); SOHR, "Little girl killed by Turkish shelling on village in northern Aleppo countryside," August 20, 2022, <https://www.syriahr.com/en/264241/> (accessed January 17, 2023); SOHR, "Turkish shells kill two children and cause significant damage in Al-Hasakah countryside," September 27, 2022, <https://www.syriahr.com/en/269253/> (accessed January 17, 2023); SOHR, "Turkish forces target vehicle in Al-Qamishli killing two and injuring three including children," November 6, 2022, <https://www.syriahr.com/en/275112/> (accessed January 17, 2023); SOHR, "Military vehicle runs over woman and child in Al-Atareb, while security forces intervene to protect Turkish soldiers," December 5, 2022, <https://www.syriahr.com/en/279001/> (accessed January 17, 2023); SOHR, "Three civilians killed including child in Turkish drone attack on car in Al-Raqqa," December 17, 2022, <https://www.syriahr.com/en/280644/> (accessed January 17, 2023).
- 85 SOHR, "310 children killed in 2022 | Syrian children: uncertain future and blatant violations," December 21, 2022, <https://www.syriahr.com/en/281538/> (accessed January 17, 2023).
- 86 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/76/871-S/2022/493), June 23, 2022, para. 208.
- 87 OHCHR, "Press briefing note on Yemen," January 18, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2022/01/press-briefing-notes-yemen> (accessed January 18, 2023).
- 88 HRW, "Yemen: Latest Round of Saudi-UAE-Led Attacks Targets Civilians, April 18, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/04/18/yemen-latest-round-saudi-uae-led-attacks-targets-civilians> (accessed December 30, 2022); International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch Database, Yemen, January 2022, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database> (accessed December 30, 2022); Amnesty International, "Yemen: US-Made Weapon Used in Air Strike that Killed Scores in Escalation of Saudi-Led Coalition Attacks," <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/01/yemen-us-made-weapon-used-in-air-strike-that-killed-scores-in-escalation-of-saudi-led-coalition-attacks/> (accessed December 30, 2022).
- 89 Mwatana for Human Rights, "A Dark Year Despite the Truce: Press Briefing on the Human Rights Situation in Yemen in 2022," January 2023, <https://mwatana.org/en/annualbreif2022/> (accessed April 7, 2023).

Annex II Countries

Burkina Faso

Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) is listed for recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and abductions in the Secretary-General's 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict.

The Lake Chad Basin

Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups, including Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad and Islamic State West Africa Province, are currently listed for abductions.

Nigeria

Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups, including Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad and Islamic State West Africa Province, are currently listed for all five "trigger" violations.

The Philippines

The Abu Sayyaf Group, Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, and New People's Army are currently listed for recruitment and use.

Countries in the Report/ Parties Not Yet Listed

The Secretary-General's 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict further includes information on the situation of children in Cameroon, India, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Lebanon, Libya, and Pakistan. However, no parties to these conflicts were listed in the annexes to the report. In the same report, the Secretary-General stated that three situations of concern (Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Ukraine) would be added with immediate effect, citing the gravity and number of violations of international law against civilians, including children. This follows Watchlist's 2022 recommendations that the Secretary-General bring these situations to the attention of the Security Council by designating them as "other situations of concern." The Secretary-General additionally called for enhanced monitoring capacity in the Central Sahel region. Watchlist makes the following recommendations with regard to these other situations of concern.

Cameroon

Armed Separatist Groups

Recommendation to Further Investigate to Determine if Listing Is Warranted – Attacks on Schools and Hospitals

In 2022, the conflict between armed separatist groups and the Government of Cameroon continued, with reports claiming that the separatists attacked students,

teachers, and schools.⁹⁰ In the Secretary-General's 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict, the UN verified 22 attacks on schools and hospitals in 2021, of which 16 were attributed to "unidentified armed groups."⁹¹ Watchlist recommended in its 2022 "Credible List" report to investigate to determine if listing was warranted for attacks on schools and hospitals.

Evidence suggests that similar patterns continued in 2022. Human Rights Watch documented various incidents of attacks on schools and hospitals by armed separatist groups in North-West and South-West Cameroon in 2022. For example, on June 12, 2022, separatist fighters reportedly physically assaulted, threatened, and humiliated 11 students who were walking to a high school in Buea, South-West region.⁹² On that occasion, fighters also allegedly shot one of the students and seized or destroyed their school materials.⁹³ On January 19, 2022, separatist fighters also reportedly attacked the government high school in Weh and abducted five teachers.⁹⁴ According to the same source, they also injured two students "for not complying with a school boycott and for not contributing financially to their struggle for independence."⁹⁵ The teachers would be later released following a ransom payment. On February 11, Human Rights Watch reported that separatist fighters set fire to three dormitories of a boarding secondary school in Okoyong, South-West Region, and on April 5, separatists also stormed the campus of a university located in the North-West region, shooting in the air.⁹⁶ On April 7, armed separatists reportedly kidnapped

90 Human Rights Watch, "Cameroon: Events of 2023," World Report 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/cameroon> (accessed April 6, 2023).

91 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/76/871-S/2022/493), June 23, 2022, para. 237.

92 Human Rights Watch, "Cameroon: Events of 2023," World Report 2023.

93 Ibid.

94 Ibid.

95 Ibid.

96 Ibid.

33 seminary students in Bachuo-Ntai, South-West region.⁹⁷ Human Rights Watch also reported that, on June 10, suspected separatist fighters burned down a hospital in Mamfe, South-West region.⁹⁸ In a situation report published in May 2022, OCHA noted that “different attacks against educational facilities, personnel, and school children” had taken place, resulting in one teacher being killed, one school principal abducted, and one school facility set on fire by unidentified men.⁹⁹ The International Crisis Group also reported that “anglophone separatists” imposed a lockdown in North-West and South-West Cameroon in September 2022 to “delay start of school year until at least” October 1, which is the anniversary of the self-proclaimed Ambazonia Republic.¹⁰⁰

Watchlist recommends that the UN further investigate and verify these incidents, including by identifying which armed separatist groups were responsible, and determine if such groups should be listed in the annexes.

Ethiopia

In 2022, the Secretary-General added Ethiopia as a situation of concern with immediate effect, highlighting the gravity of clashes that took place in 2021 between the Ethiopian National Defence and Federal Police Forces, the Tigray People’s Liberation Front, and other parties, as well as “the killing and maiming of children, rape and other forces of sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, abductions, and the denial of humanitarian access.”¹⁰¹

Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF)

Recommendation to Further Investigate to Determine if Listing Is Warranted – Rape and Other Forms of Sexual Violence

The UN International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, in its report published in September 2022, documented evidence that Tigrayan forces committed acts of rape and sexual violence against women and girls when they took control of parts of Amhara from August 2021.¹⁰² The Commission has also added that the TPLF committed acts of rape and sexual violence against Eritrean refugees, including a child, when they were fleeing their camp in 2022.¹⁰³

Recommendation to Further Investigate to Determine if Listing Is Warranted – Attacks on Schools and Hospitals

There have been allegations that the TPLF has attacked schools and hospitals in 2022. In March 2022, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights provided an update on the situation in Ethiopia, sharing that the Ministry of Health had reported “at least 36 hospitals and over 2,100 other health facilities were partially or completely destroyed by the Tigrayan forces, and subjected to looting,” between November 2021 and February 2022.¹⁰⁴ Other civil society and news sources collected by Insecurity Insight have indicated that this non-state actor was reportedly responsible for setting a health center on fire in October 2022¹⁰⁵ and that TPLF forces were also

97 Human Rights Watch, “Cameroon: Separatist Abuses in Anglophone Regions,” June 27, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/06/27/cameroon-separatist-abuses-anglophone-regions> (accessed April 6, 2023).

98 Ibid.

99 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), “Cameroon Situation Report,” March 15, 2023, https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/cameroon/?_gl=1%2a10d9mbr%2a_ga%2aMzYxMzYxMzc5LjE2ODA3OTczNjI.%2a_ga_E60ZNX2F68%2aMTY4MDC5NzMi4xLjEuMTY4MDgwMDg5Ny42MC4wLjA.n%20%7C%20Situation%20Reports%20%28unocha.org%29 (accessed April 6, 2023).

100 International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch Database, Cameroon, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database> (accessed April 6, 2023).

101 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/76/871–S/2022/493), June 23, 2022, para. 312.

102 Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (A/HRC/51/46), September 19, 2022, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/regularsession/session51/2022-09-19/A_HRC_51_46_AdvanceUneditedVersion.docx (accessed December 29, 2022), para. 64.

103 Ibid., para. 65.

104 UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Oral Update on the situation of human rights in the Tigray region of Ethiopia and on progress made in the context of the Joint Investigation,” March 7, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/03/oral-update-situation-human-rights-tigray-region-ethiopia-and-progress-made?LangID=E&NewsID=28220> (accessed April 6, 2023).

105 Insecurity Insight, “Attacks on Health Care Bi-Monthly News Brief, 05-18 October 2022,” <https://insecurityinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/30.-05-18-October-2022-Attacks-on-Health-Care-Bi-Monthly-News-Brief-1.pdf> (accessed April 6, 2023).

allegedly behind looting and destroying an unspecified number of health facilities in North Gondar during that same month.¹⁰⁶ The same source has reported that in October 2022, a Red Cross ambulance driver and the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) soldiers being transported were stopped and killed by the TPLF.¹⁰⁷

Ethiopian Government Forces

Recommendation to Further Investigate to Determine if Listing Is Warranted – Killing and Maiming

Credible sources have reported that children have been killed and maimed in 2022 as a result of air strikes by the Ethiopian Government Forces, in particular the ENDF. On January 5, UNHCR confirmed that three refugees, including two children, were killed and four were injured in an air strike on the Mai Aini refugee camp in northern Tigray.¹⁰⁸ A few days later, on January 7, an air strike on an IDP camp in Dedebeit resulted in the killing of children,¹⁰⁹ which the UN International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia deemed to be a violation of international law.¹¹⁰

Recommendation to Further Investigate to Determine if Listing Is Warranted – Rape and Other Forms of Sexual Violence

The UN International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, which examined cases since November 2020, noted in its report published in

September 2022 that more than 1,000 Tigrayan women and girls have been subjected to rape and sexual violence while the ENDF was in control of the region.¹¹¹ According to the Commission, survivors implicated the ENDF and other Government Forces. Furthermore, it noted that it has received "credible information indicating that rape and sexual violence continue, including in Western Tigray,"¹¹² and that rapes of Tigrayan women and girls were "often accompanied by other forms of violence designed to humiliate them."¹¹³

Recommendation to Further Investigate to Determine if Listing Is Warranted – Attacks on Schools and Hospitals

There have been allegations of attacks on schools and hospitals by the Ethiopian Government Forces in 2022, in particular as a result of airstrikes. The UN International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia reported that on January 7, 2022, the ENDF conducted drone strikes against an IDP camp, first against the main school building in the compound, which was full of displaced people, killing most of its inhabitants.¹¹⁴ The Commission found "reasonable grounds to believe that there were no soldiers or military equipment in or near the camp on the day of the attack."¹¹⁵

106 Insecurity Insight, "Attacks on Health Care Bi-Monthly News Brief, 19 October-01 November 2022," <https://insecurityinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/31.-19-October-01-November-2022-Attacks-on-Health-News-Brief.pdf> (accessed April 6, 2023).

107 Ibid.

108 OCHA, "Northern Ethiopia Humanitarian Update Situation Report," January 13, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-northern-ethiopia-humanitarian-update-situation-report-13-january-2022> (accessed April 6, 2023).

109 Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (A/HRC/51/46), September 19, 2022, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/regularsession/session51/2022-09-19/A_HRC_51_46_AdvanceUneditedVersion.docx (accessed December 29, 2022), para. 48.

110 Ibid., para. 94.

111 Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (A/HRC/51/46), September 19, 2022, para. 57.

112 Ibid., para. 57.

113 Ibid., para. 59.

114 Ibid., para. 48.

115 Ibid., para. 54.

Israel / Occupied Palestinian Territory

Israeli Government Forces

Recommendation to List – Killing and Maiming

In the latest annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, the UN found Israeli Forces responsible for killing 78 children and maiming 982 children in 2021.¹¹⁶ In the same report, the Secretary-General noted “substantial air strikes by the Israeli armed forces, resulting in a significant increase the number of cases of violence against children,” due to the May 2021 escalation of violence. He further stated that “should the situation repeat itself in 2022, without meaningful improvement, Israel should be listed.”¹¹⁷ Between 2015 and 2020, the UN attributed over 6,700 child casualties to Israeli Forces,¹¹⁸ yet they have never been listed.

In 2022, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) recorded 43 Palestinian children killed and 1,051 children injured by Israeli Forces.¹¹⁹ Many of these child casualties occurred in the context of demonstrations, clashes, security operations, attacks, alleged attacks against Israelis, and other

incidents.¹²⁰ For example, on April 15, Israeli Security Forces injured around 180 Palestinians, including at least 27 children during tensions at Al Aqsa Mosque compound.¹²¹ In relation to this incident, a spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights called the Israeli Security Forces’ use of force “widespread, unnecessary, and indiscriminate,” and noted that a number of Palestinians, including children, “who did not appear to pose any threat to Israeli Security Forces in any manner, were beaten with batons or shot with sponge-tipped bullets from close range.”¹²² According to OCHA, as of December 19, Israeli Forces had killed a total of 16 children in search-and-arrest operations in 2022.¹²³ Children were also among those killed and injured during the three-day escalation of violence in Gaza in August, including 17 Palestinian children killed and 151 injured.¹²⁴

Briefing the UN Security Council on behalf of the Secretary-General in December 2022, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process expressed deep concern over the high level of violence witnessed in the months prior, including the “highest numbers of fatalities in years,” including 44 Palestinian children and one Israeli child.¹²⁵ In fact, 2022 was the deadliest year

116 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/76/871–S/2022/493), June 23, 2022, paras. 87–88.

117 Ibid., para. 303.

118 Annual reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, 2016–2021, available at: <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/virtual-library/>.

119 OCHA in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, “Data on casualties,” <https://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties> (accessed March 20, 2023).

120 UN Security Council, UN Security Council Briefing on the Situation in the Middle East, Reporting on UNSCR 2334 (as Delivered by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Mr. Tor Wennesland), March 22, 2022, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/PRO/N22/295/64/PDF/N2229564.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed March 20, 2023); UN Security Council, UN Security Council Briefing on the Situation in the Middle East, Reporting on UNSCR 2334 (as Delivered by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Mr. Tor Wennesland), June 27, 2022, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/PRO/N22/402/34/PDF/N2240234.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed March 20, 2023); UN Security Council, UN Security Council Briefing on the Situation in the Middle East, Reporting on UNSCR 2334 (as Delivered by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Mr. Tor Wennesland), September 28, 2022, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/PRO/N22/603/88/PDF/N2260388.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed March 20, 2023); UN Security Council, UN Security Council Briefing on the Situation in the Middle East, Reporting on UNSCR 2334 (as Delivered by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Mr. Tor Wennesland), December 19, 2022, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/PRO/N22/758/43/PDF/N2275843.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed March 20, 2023).

121 OHCHR, “Press briefing note on Israel/OPT,” April 22, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2022/04/israel-opt> (accessed January 18, 2023).

122 Ibid.

123 OCHA, “Protection of Civilians Report | 6–19 December 2022,” December 22, 2022, <https://www.ochaopt.org/poc/6-19-december-2022> (accessed January 22, 2023).

124 UN Security Council, UN Security Council Briefing on the Situation in the Middle East, Reporting on UNSCR 2334 (as Delivered by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Mr. Tor Wennesland), September 28, 2022.

125 UN Security Council, UN Security Council Briefing on the Situation in the Middle East, Reporting on UNSCR 2334 (as Delivered by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Mr. Tor Wennesland), December 19, 2022.

for Palestinians in the West Bank since the UN began systematically monitoring fatalities in 2005,¹²⁶ and the deadliest year for children in more than 15 years.¹²⁷

Watchlist has recommended that the Secretary-General list Israeli Government Forces for killing and maiming children each year since 2017.¹²⁸

Recommendation to List – Attacks on Schools and Hospitals

In the latest annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, the UN found Israeli forces responsible for 128 attacks on schools and hospitals in 2021, continuing a pattern of such attacks documented in previous years (26 in 2020, 201 in 2019).¹²⁹ Evidence suggests that this pattern of attacking schools and hospitals continued in 2022, with at least 11 individual incidents documented by OCHA in which schools, hospitals, or related personnel were impacted due to actions taken by Israeli Forces. For example, on January 18, 2022, Israeli Forces raided a school in Deir Nidham village, physically assaulted and arrested two 17-year-old students, and reportedly damaged school windows, chairs, and tables during physical confrontations between school staff, students, and Israeli Forces. Classes were then suspended for the remainder of the day, affecting over 210 students.¹³⁰ In the context of demonstrations in February in Beita, two Palestinian first aid responders were shot and injured by live ammunition and rubber-coated metal bullets and two ambulances sustained damage.¹³¹ In another incident on October

13, Israeli Forces fired tear gas canisters near a school, resulting in the hospitalization of three children and the cancellation of classes for the rest of the day, impacting over 270 students.¹³²

Palestinian Armed Groups

Recommendation to Further Investigate to Determine if Listing Is Warranted – Killing and Maiming

In his 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict, the Secretary-General found Palestinian armed groups responsible for killing eight children and maiming 46 children.¹³³ In the same report, the Secretary-General noted "substantial rocket strikes by the Palestinian armed groups, especially in May 2021, resulting in a significant increase in the number of cases of violence against children," and stated that "[i]f the high number of violations against children were to be repeated in 2022, without meaningful improvement, Palestinian armed groups, including Hamas' al-Qassam Brigades and Palestinian Islamic Jihad's al-Quds Brigades, should be listed."¹³⁴

According to data collected by OCHA, one Israeli boy was killed and eight Israeli children were injured by Palestinians in 2022 (the perpetrators were not specified as an armed group in the data).¹³⁵ Between December 10, 2021, and March 18, 2022, the Secretary-General reported one Israeli child had been injured "by Palestinians in

126 UNICEF, Humanitarian Situation Report No. 3: Reporting Period 1 January to 31 December 2022, March 15, 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/media/137406/file/State-of-Palestine-Humanitarian-SitRep-December-2022.pdf> (accessed April 7, 2023).

127 Save the Children, "2022 Becomes the Deadliest Year for Palestinian Children in the West Bank in Over 15 Years," November 23, 2022, <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/2022-becomes-deadliest-year-palestinian-children-west-bank-over-15-years-save-children> (accessed April 7, 2023).

128 See Watchlist Credible List Reports from 2017-2022, <https://watchlist.org/resources/reports/>.

129 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/76/871-S/2022/493), June 23, 2022, para. 78; See also: the Secretary-General's annual reports on children and armed conflict from 2021 (S/2021/437) and 2020 (S/2020/525).

130 OCHA, "Protection of Civilians Report | 11-24 January 2022," January 27, 2022, <https://www.ochaopt.org/poc/11-24-january-2022> (accessed January 22, 2023).

131 OCHA, "Protection of Civilians Report | 8-21 February 2022," February 28, 2022, <https://www.ochaopt.org/poc/8-21-february-2022> (accessed January 22, 2023).

132 OCHA, "Protection of Civilians Report | 11-24 October 2022," November 1, 2022, <https://www.ochaopt.org/poc/11-24-october-2022> (accessed January 22, 2023).

133 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/76/871-S/2022/493), June 23, 2022, paras. 87-88.

134 Ibid., para. 302.

135 OCHA in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, "Data on casualties," <https://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties> (accessed March 20, 2023).

clashes, the throwing of Molotov cocktails, attacks, and other incidents."¹³⁶ During the August escalation in Gaza, the Secretary-General reported nine Israeli children were "lightly injured."¹³⁷ In addition to these Israeli children, Defence for Children International Palestine documented the killing of five Palestinian children due to rockets misfired by a Palestinian armed group during the August violence.¹³⁸

Ukraine

In his 2022 report, the Secretary-General acknowledged cases of violations against civilians, including children, as a result of "the high intensity of this conflict."¹³⁹

Russian Government Forces and pro-government forces

Recommendation to List – Killing and Maiming

From February 2022 to January 2023, OHCHR recorded the killing of a total of 429 children, and the injury of 808 children.¹⁴⁰ Though a specific perpetrator for these casualties is not specified by OHCHR, several credible sources have attributed multiple cases of killing and maiming of children to Russian Government and pro-government forces since the Russian invasion in February

2022. Watchlist has identified reports of several incidents in which more than 100 children were killed or maimed, noting that the actual number is likely to be higher.

For example, Amnesty International reported that on February 25, 2022, a preschool in northeastern Ukraine was hit with cluster munitions while civilians were taking shelter inside, killing three of them, including a child and wounding another child.¹⁴¹ Amnesty also reported that a series of attacks launched by Russian or pro-Russian forces on March 1 and 2, 2022, resulted in the killing of two children, aged four and 12-years-old.¹⁴² On March 3, 2022, Russian aircraft reportedly dropped unguided bombs in the center of Chernihiv, killing at least 47 civilians and wounding another 32. Local sources reported that children were among those wounded.¹⁴³ Attacks on Biloruskyi Lane, also on March 3, reportedly resulted in the killing of a 14-year-old child.¹⁴⁴ Amnesty International also documented that Russian Forces shot and killed a 15-year-old boy on the evening of March 3.¹⁴⁵ On March 4, Russian soldiers reportedly fired at a civilian car, wounding a nine-year-old child.¹⁴⁶ Human Rights Watch also documented information of another nine-year-old girl who was reportedly shot in the shoulder while trying to run away from Russian Forces in Bucha in March 2022.¹⁴⁷ Other reports from the same location also found that Russian Forces opened fire against a civilian car on March 5, killing all four passengers, which included

136 UN Security Council, UN Security Council Briefing on the Situation in the Middle East, Reporting on UNSCR 2334 (as Delivered by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Mr. Tor Wennesland), September 28, 2022.

137 Ibid.

138 Defence for Children International - Palestine (DCI-P), "Year-in-review: A deadly year for Palestinian children," December 23, 2022, https://www.dci-palestine.org/year_in_review_2022 (accessed January 19, 2023).

139 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/76/871-S/2022/493), June 23, 2022, para. 313.

140 OHCHR, "Ukraine: civilian casualty update 3 January 2023," January 3, 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2023/01/ukraine-civilian-casualty-update-3-january-2023> (accessed January 18, 2023).

141 Amnesty International, "Cluster Munitions Kill Child and Two Other Civilians Taking Shelter at a Preschool in Ukraine," February 27, 2022, <https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/cluster-munitions-kill-child-and-two-other-civilians-taking-shelter-at-a-preschool-in-ukraine/> (accessed January 4, 2023).

142 Amnesty International, "'He's Not Coming Back': War Crimes in Northwest Areas of Kyiv Oblast," May 6, 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/EUR5055612022ENGLISH.pdf> (accessed April 6, 2023), p. 25-26.

143 HRW, "Ukraine: Russian Strikes Killed Scores of Civilians in Chernihiv," June 10, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/06/10/ukraine-russian-strikes-killed-scores-civilians-chernihiv> (accessed January 12, 2023).

144 Ibid.

145 Amnesty International, "'He's Not Coming Back': War Crimes in Northwest Areas of Kyiv Oblast," May 6, 2022, p. 13.

146 Froliak, Masha, Yousur Al-Hlou, Haley Willis, et al. "Their Final Moments: Victims of a Russian Atrocity in Bucha," The New York Times, December 21, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/12/21/world/europe/bucha-ukraine-massacre-victims.html> (accessed January 12, 2023).

147 HRW, "Ukraine: Russian Forces' Trail of Death in Bucha," April 21, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/04/21/ukraine-russian-forces-trail-death-bucha> (accessed January 13, 2023).

a 14-year-old child.¹⁴⁸ Similar cases were found by other organizations. For example, OHCHR has noted that on March 9, 2022, Russian soldiers opened fire on a civilian car, injuring a 16-year-old girl and killing a 12-year-old boy.¹⁴⁹ Amnesty International has also reported cases of Russian forces firing against civilian cars and wounding children.¹⁵⁰

OHCHR has also documented three children killed by Russian Forces due to the use of cluster munitions in March 2022¹⁵¹ and the death of an eighteen-year-old man and 17-year-old twin boys in Mokhnatyn village on March 22 after being shot by Russian Forces. The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine also found in November 2022, that missile strikes from Russia killed at least eight civilians, including one girl, and injured seven children, in the city and region of Kyiv. Furthermore, it reported that a two-day-old baby boy was killed, and two doctors were injured by a rocket that hit a hospital in the region of Zaporizhzhia.¹⁵²

Recommendation to Further Investigate to Determine if Listing Is Warranted – Rape and Other Forms of Sexual Violence

The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine documented cases of sexual and gender-based violence by Russian Forces against women, men, and girls, aged from four to 82 years old.¹⁵³ According to the Commission, these forces committed sexual violence in two situations: during house searches and against victims they had confined.¹⁵⁴ The Commission is also investigating two cases of repeated rape of an adolescent girl over a three-month period in Kharkiv Province, allegedly by a soldier of the Russian armed forces.¹⁵⁵ Civil society and news sources collected by Insecurity Insight have also reported girls being raped in Kherson city and Vorzel town (Bucha) in March 2022,¹⁵⁶ and in Irpin Town (Kyiv Oblast), in April 2022.¹⁵⁷

Recommendation to List – Attacks on Schools and Hospitals

OHCHR has estimated that over 3,000 educational institutions and more than 600 medical facilities have been damaged or destroyed in the conflict in Ukraine, mostly as a result of the use of explosive weapons

148 Froliak, Masha, Yousur Al-Hlou, Haley Willis, et al. "Their Final Moments: Victims of a Russian Atrocity in Bucha," The New York Times, December 21, 2022.

149 OHCHR, "Killings of Civilians: Summary Executions and Attacks on Individual Civilians in Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy Regions in the Context of the Russian Federation's Armed Attack Against Ukraine," December 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/2022-12-07-OHCHR-Thematic-Report-Killings-EN.pdf> (accessed January 17, 2023), para. 119.

150 Amnesty International, "'He's Not Coming Back': War Crimes in Northwest Areas of Kyiv Oblast," May 6, 2022, p. 17.

151 OHCHR, "The situation of human rights in Ukraine in the context of the armed attack by the Russian Federation, 24 February to 15 May 2022," June 29, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ua/2022-06-29/2022-06-UkraineArmedAttack-EN.pdf> (accessed January 19, 2023), para. 28.

152 OHCHR, "Missile strikes on Ukraine and alleged POW executions underscore why international law must be respected - UN Human Rights Chief," Press release, November 25, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/11/missile-strikes-ukraine-and-alleged-pow-executions-underscore-why> (accessed January 18, 2023).

153 OHCHR, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine (A/77/533), October 18, 2022, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/637/72/PDF/N2263772.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed April 7, 2023), para. 88.

154 OHCHR, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine (A/HRC/52/62), March 15, 2023, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/coiukraine/A_HRC_52_62_AUV_EN.pdf (accessed April 7, 2023), para. 78.

155 OHCHR, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine (A/77/533), October 18, 2022, para. 96.

156 Insecurity Insight, "Sexual Violence and the Ukraine Conflict," April 2022, <https://insecurityinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Ukraine-Rape-As-A-Weapon-of-War-April-2022.pdf> (accessed April 6, 2023).

157 Ibid.

in populated areas.¹⁵⁸ Several credible sources have attributed attacks against schools and hospitals to Russian Government Forces and pro-government forces.

For example, in February 2022, Human Rights Watch reported that a Russian ballistic missile carrying a cluster munition struck outside a hospital in Vuhledar, killing civilians and injuring six healthcare workers, damaging the hospital, an ambulance, and civilian vehicles.¹⁵⁹ Also in February, a Ukrainian oncology center was left in flames after Russian Forces opened fire on the building in Melitopol.¹⁶⁰ Civil society and news sources collected by Insecurity Insight reported that in March 2022, hospitals in Lysychansk and Popasna were damaged as a result of Russian Forces' shelling.¹⁶¹ Also in March, Russian Forces attacked a hospital complex in Mariupol, wounding civilians and medical staff¹⁶² and the Zhytomyr City Hospital, which was damaged in a Russian air strike.¹⁶³ In April 2022, sources collected by Insecurity Insight allege that artillery fire by Russian Forces hit and damaged the Balakliia District Hospital, resulting in 70 patients and medical staff being evacuated from the facility.¹⁶⁴ News reports have also alleged that in November 2022, Russian Forces attacked a hospital in Vilniansk in Zaporizhzhia Oblast, killing a newborn baby.¹⁶⁵

Russian Forces have also reportedly attacked schools and other educational facilities, according to the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA); this particularly took place in the context of Russian Forces shelling and firing missiles on Ukrainian cities.¹⁶⁶ Amnesty International documented incidents in February 2022 in which a missile damaged a school in Mariupol, blowing in windows and pockmarking the walls with metal fragments and an explosive weapon hit a kindergarten in Chernihiv.¹⁶⁷ Also in February 2022, a preschool in northeastern Ukraine was hit with a cluster munition while civilians took shelter inside, killing a child and wounding another child.¹⁶⁸ Amnesty International claimed that the attack appears "to have been carried out by Russian Forces, which were operating nearby."¹⁶⁹ In March 2022, at least three schools in Kharkiv were also reportedly hit by Russian military strikes,¹⁷⁰ and more than 60 people were feared dead after a Russian bomb reportedly flattened a school being used as a shelter.¹⁷¹ Educators have also allegedly been abducted or detained for resisting the adoption of Russian curriculum.¹⁷²

158 OHCHR, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine (A/HRC/52/62), March 15, 2023, para. 26.

159 HRW, "Ukraine: Russian Cluster Munition Hits Hospital," February 25, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/02/25/ukraine-russian-cluster-munition-hits-hospital> (accessed January 4, 2023).

160 Thrower, Antony, "Ukrainian cancer centre left in flames as hospital site attacked by Russians," February 25, 2022, <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/ukrainian-cancer-centre-left-flames-26333948> (accessed January 4, 2023).

161 Insecurity Insight, "Violence Against or Obstruction of Health Care in Ukraine, 3-12 March," March 2022, <https://insecurityinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Violence-Against-or-Obstruction-of-Health-Care-in-Ukraine-03-12-March-2022.pdf> (accessed April 6, 2023).

162 HRW, "Ukraine: Ensure Safe Passage, Aid for Mariupol Civilians," March 21, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/21/ukraine-ensure-safe-passage-aid-mariupol-civilians> (accessed January 4, 2023).

163 Insecurity Insight, "Violence Against or Obstruction of Health Care in Ukraine, 3-12 March," March 2022.

164 Ibid.

165 Drozd, Yulia and Guy Davies, "Newborn killed in missile strike on Ukrainian maternity ward," ABC News, November 23, 2022, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/newborn-killed-after-missile-strikes-ukraine-maternity-ward/story?id=93847505> (accessed January 12, 2023).

166 Global Coalition for the Protection of Education in Armed Conflict (GCPEA), "Attacks on Education and Military Use of Schools of Education in Ukraine in 2022," February 2023, <https://protectingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/GCPEA-Attacks-on-Education-and-Military-Use-in-Ukraine.pdf> (accessed March 22, 2023), p. 3.

167 Amnesty International, "Cluster Munitions Kill Child and Two Other Civilians Taking Shelter at a Preschool in Ukraine," February 27, 2022, <https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/cluster-munitions-kill-child-and-two-other-civilians-taking-shelter-at-a-preschool-in-ukraine/> (accessed January 4, 2023).

168 Ibid.

169 Ibid.

170 Mezzofiore, Gianluca, Katie Polglase, and Paul P. Murphy, "Russia sends a message to all of Ukraine by hitting these civilian areas in this city," CNN, March 3, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/03/europe/ukraine-kharkiv-civilian-strikes-intl-cmd/index.html> (accessed January 4, 2023).

171 Becatoros, Elena and Jon Gambrel, "More than 60 feared dead in bombing of Ukrainian school," May 8, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-politics-business-kharkiv-moscow-65f9cf07670ad6021b9dbe35220f3bde> (accessed January 12, 2023).

172 GCPEA, "Attacks on Education and Military Use of Schools of Education in Ukraine in 2022," February 2023, p. 4.

Recommendation to Further Investigate to Determine if Listing Is Warranted – Abductions

The MRM Field Manual defines the grave violation of abduction to include "the unlawful removal, seizure, capture, apprehension, taking or enforced disappearance of a child either temporarily or permanently for the purpose of any form of exploitation of the child. This includes, but is not limited to, recruitment in armed forces or groups, participation in hostilities, sexual exploitation or abuse, forced labor, hostage-taking and indoctrination."¹⁷³

Cases of Russian Forces deporting children from Ukrainian occupied territories to the Russian Federation have been documented by the UN Commission of Inquiry, which has concluded that these "violate international humanitarian law, and amount to a war crime."¹⁷⁴ The Pre-Trial Chamber II of the International Criminal Court (ICC) also issued warrants of arrest for Mr. Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, and Ms. Maria Lvova-Belova, Commissioner for Children's Rights in the Office of the President of the Russian

Federation. The Pre-Trial Chamber II considered, based on information shared by the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC, that there are reasonable grounds to believe that each suspect "bears responsibility for the war crime of unlawful deportation and that of unlawful transfer of population from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation, in prejudice of Ukrainian children."¹⁷⁵ The Humanitarian Research Lab of the Yale School of Public Health published a report in February 2023, also sharing similar information, noting that Commissioner Lvova-Belova had claimed in the summer of 2022 that 350 "orphans" from Ukraine had been adopted from Russia occupied Donetsk and Luhansk, and "over a thousand" were awaiting adoption.¹⁷⁶ Cases were also reported by Amnesty International in November 2022,¹⁷⁷ and Human Rights Watch in March 2023.¹⁷⁸

Watchlist recommends that the Secretary-General further investigate and verify these deportations to determine if these actions amount to the grave violation of abductions as defined by the MRM Field Manual and warrant listing of Russian Government Forces in the annexes.

173 UN Monitoring and Reporting Field Manual, https://www.mrmtools.org/files/MRM_Field_5_June_2014.pdf (accessed March 22, 2023), p. 9; See also UN Monitoring and Reporting Field Manual, "Annex III: Abduction and Detention Clarification," https://www.mrmtools.org/files/MRM_Field_Manual_Annexes.pdf (accessed March 22, 2023).

174 OHCHR, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine (A/HRC/52/62). March 15, 2023, para. 102.

175 International Criminal Court (ICC), "Situation in Ukraine: ICC judges issue arrest warrants against Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin and Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova," March 17, 2023, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-ukraine-icc-judges-issue-arrest-warrants-against-vladimir-vladimirovich-putin-and> (accessed April 6, 2023).

176 Conflict Observatory, "Russia's Systematic Program for the Re-education and Adoption of Ukraine's Children," February 14, 2023, <https://hub.conflictobservatory.org/portal/sharing/rest/content/items/97f919ccfe524d31a241b53ca44076b8/data> (accessed April 6, 2023), p. 10.

177 Amnesty International, "Ukraine: 'Like A Prison Convoy': Russia's Unlawful Transfer And Abuse of Civilians In Ukraine During 'Filtration,'" November 10, 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur50/6136/2022/en/> (accessed April 7, 2023), pp. 26-28.

178 HRW, "'We Must Provide a Family, Not Rebuild Orphanages': The Consequences of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine for Children in Ukrainian Residential Institutions," March 2023, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2023/03/crd_ukraine0323web.pdf (accessed April 7, 2023), pp. 22-29.

