

Children and Armed Conflict

Recommendations to the Security Council

Monthly Update:
January 2023

IRAQ

Da'esh (formerly referred to as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant) is listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's (SG) latest annual report ([S/2022/493](#)) on children and armed conflict (CAAC) for all five "trigger" violations against children, and the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) are listed for child recruitment and use. In January, the SG is expected to report on UNAMI, pursuant to SCR 2631 (2022). According to the SG's September report ([S/2022/714](#)), the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) verified 63 grave violations against children in Iraq between April 1 and August 31. Violations included the killing and maiming of 25 children (21 boys, four girls), the recruitment and use of 24 children (14 boys, 10 girls), five abductions (three boys, two girls), one incident of rape and other forms of sexual violence, and eight incidents of the denial of humanitarian access. The majority of civilian casualties documented by UNAMI during this period were caused by small arms fire, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), shelling, and explosive remnants of war (ERW). [Displacement](#) and [lack of civil documentation](#) continue to be widely reported as barriers to children's access to basic services, including education. The provision of specialized services for conflict-affected children remains critical, including for [Yazidi](#) children and children [returned](#) from Al Hol camp. **The Security Council should:**

- Call on the Government to **strengthen the national child protection framework**, including by prioritizing the adoption and swift implementation of the draft action plan to end and prevent child recruitment and use by the PMF; acknowledge the Government's efforts to repatriate children held in Northeast Syria and encourage them to continue to do so, following a rights-based approach, in accordance with their duty under international law;
- Urge the Government to intensify efforts to **remove administrative barriers hindering the delivery of humanitarian aid to civilians**, including children, and to issue identification documents to allow all children to access public assistance and basic services, including education;
- Call on the Government to implement international legal instruments on IEDs, landmines, and other ERW, and to promote mine clearance and mine risk education; urge all parties to **avoid the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas**;
- Recall that **all children allegedly associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAG) should be treated primarily as victims**, including those allegedly associated with armed groups designated as terrorist by the UN and those who may have committed crimes, their reintegration should be prioritized, and detention should only be used as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate time;
- Call on the Government to **endorse the Paris Principles and Commitments and encourage the development and signing of a handover protocol** to facilitate the release of children to child protection actors for reintegration and other support services; urge donors to provide long-term, predictable funding for reintegration;
- Encourage the Government to **implement its commitments under the Safe Schools Declaration and take concrete measures to avoid military use of schools**, pursuant to SCR 2601 (2021), and ensure accountability and redress for attacks on education.

The **United States** is the lead country on Iraq.

SYRIA

Six parties to conflict are listed for grave violations in the annexes of the SG's 2022 annual report on CAAC. The Syrian armed opposition groups (formerly known as the Free Syrian Army) are now listed as the opposition Syrian National Army, including Ahrar al-Sham and Army of Islam, to reflect the composition of these groups. In January, the six-month extension of the authorization of the cross-border mechanism for delivering humanitarian aid into Northwest Syria is expected to be confirmed per a separate resolution, pursuant to SCR 2642 (2022). The Council will also receive its monthly briefings on the humanitarian situation, political process, and use of chemical weapons in Syria. A cholera outbreak was declared on September 10, and according to OCHA, at least one out of every five suspected cases is a [child](#) under five years of age. Despite increased repatriations of women and children in recent months, more than [42,400](#) foreigners remain in camps and prisons in Northeast Syria, approximately [7,000](#) of whom are children. In November, [two](#) girls were found brutally murdered

Situations involving parties listed for grave violations against children:

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

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SYRIA (cont'd)

in Al Hol camp, raising [concerns](#) about rising levels of violence against women and girls in the camp. Intensified military action in parts of Northern Syria in early December sparked [fears](#) of renewed escalation, exacerbating an already [dire](#) humanitarian situation. A recent report by World Vision found an alarming [rise](#) in rates of suicide and suicidal ideation among women and children in Northwest Syria, where many are heavily dependent on cross-border humanitarian aid. **The Security Council should:**

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

At the time of writing, the new lead countries on Syria have not yet been confirmed.

Recommendations to the Working Group

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

NGO RESOURCES

Save the Children, [Afghanistan Tops the List of Seven Countries Where Children Were Most in Need in 2022](#), December 20, 2022

Save the Children, ["I Want Peace": Ukraine and a Christmas at War](#), December 19, 2022

Plan International, [Somalia Nears Famine](#), December 14, 2022

Save the Children, [Passage of Global Humanitarian Sanctions Exemption by the UN Security Council](#), December 9, 2022

Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) and the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, [Guidance Note: Supporting Integrated Child Protection and Education Programming in Humanitarian Action](#), December 5, 2022

Presidency of the Security Council for January: Japan

Party to Geneva Conventions I-IV, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the Rome Statute of the ICC, and ILO Convention 182. Has endorsed the Paris Principles and Commitments and the Vancouver Principles. Has not endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration.