

Children and Armed Conflict

Recommendations to the Security Council

Monthly Update:
October 2023

COLOMBIA

Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) dissident groups and *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN) are listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's (SG) 2023 annual report (S/2023/363) on children and armed conflict (CAAC) for recruiting and using children in Colombia. In October, the mandate of the UN's Verification Mission is up for renewal, per SCR 2655 (2022). According to the SG's July report on the Verification Mission (S/2023/477), the Investigation and Accusation Unit of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace reported a "48 percent reduction in confrontations between illegal armed groups and the public security forces between January and 30 April, compared with the same period in 2022." However, the Unit also reported an increase of child recruitment and use in the first four months of 2023. The SG's report also noted that the National Reintegration Council's technical working group on children resumed implementation of the action plan for the program "A different path of life," and is working on the inclusion of a child protection approach within the comprehensive reintegration program. **The Security Council should:**

- Demand that all armed groups, in particular the ELN and FARC-EP dissidents, **immediately release all children under 18 from their ranks and prevent and end all child recruitment, use, and abductions, as well as other grave violations;**
- Call on the Government to **include child protection in peace discussions** with the ELN and the FARC-EP dissident groups, including ceasefires, and to enable the UN to engage with listed armed groups to develop action plans to end and prevent grave violations against children;
- Encourage the Government to continue **strengthening efforts to prevent the recruitment and use of Colombian, Venezuelan, and refugee and migrant children**, as well as other grave violations, paying particular attention to the most vulnerable, including girls and indigenous and Afro-Colombian children, and noting vulnerability to recruitment at informal border crossings;
- Call on all parties to **cease attacks and threats of attack on schools and education personnel**, as well as to refrain from the military use of schools and educational facilities; and encourage the Government to **implement commitments made under the Safe Schools Declaration**, which it has endorsed;
- Call on all parties to **swiftly and fully implement the recommendations of the SCWG-CAAC, as elaborated in its fifth conclusions** on Colombia.

The **United Kingdom** is the Security Council penholder on Colombia.

HAITI

In his 2023 annual report on CAAC, the SG added Haiti as a situation of concern with immediate effect, citing the gravity and number of violations between September 2022 and March 2023, including recruitment and use, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, abduction, and denial of humanitarian access. In October, the SG is expected to report on BINUH, pursuant to SCR 2692 (2023), and the sanctions measures set out in SCR 2653 (2022) will be up for renewal. In August, escalating violence in Port-au-Prince reportedly led to forced displacement, "exposing children and their families to several protection risks," while lack of funding to the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan is limiting response capacities. **The Security Council should:**

- **Strongly condemn all human rights violations and abuses committed against children** in Haiti;
- Ensure that any authorization of an international force, as requested by the Haitian authorities and the SG, includes **robust mechanisms for safeguarding the rights of local populations and providing accessible and effective remedies for victims**, including for sexual exploitation and abuse;
- Ensure that any such force **prioritizes and mainstreams the protection of children** during all operations and operational planning; supports the release and recovery of children from armed gangs and their immediate handover to civilian child protection actors; provides protection to and facilitates access for child protection actors; and shares with the UN Working Group on CAAC in Haiti information on grave violations against children that the force may witness;

Situations involving parties listed for grave violations against children:

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

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 WATCH LIST ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

HAITI (cont'd)

- Ensure that all troop- and/or police-contributing countries are **adequately equipped and trained regarding their responsibilities under international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law (IHRL)**, including the protection of civilians, respect for human rights, and addressing gender-based violence and violations and abuses against children;
- Call for **the safe, unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance** to affected populations, including children;
- Urge donors to swiftly mobilize additional funds to **support the humanitarian response** in Haiti, including resources for child protection.

The **United States** and **Ecuador** are the Security Council co-penholders on Haiti.

SOMALIA

Al-Shabaab is listed in the annexes of the SG's latest annual report on CAAC for all five 'trigger' violations, and *Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a* (ASWJ) is listed for recruitment and use. The Somali Federal Defence and Somali Police Forces are each listed for recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and rape and other forms of sexual violence. In October, the SG is expected to report on the implementation of the UNSOM and ATMIS mandates, pursuant to SCR 2657 (2022) and 2687 (2023), respectively. In the first half of 2023, child protection partners **reported** "a significant rise in the loss of children's lives and the enduring of physical and psychological traumas" due to ongoing conflict. Between February and May, the UN verified **482** grave violations against children, including 139 children recruited and used, 145 abductions, 122 children killed (43) and maimed (79), 50 incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence, 12 attacks on schools, 10 attacks on hospitals, and four incidents of denial of humanitarian access. **The Security Council should:**

- Demand that all parties **fully uphold their obligations under IHL and IHRL**, immediately cease all grave violations against children, and release all children within their ranks and hand them over to civilian child protection actors;
- Call on the Federal Government of Somalia to **strengthen accountability for all grave violations committed against children, to treat children allegedly associated with armed forces or groups primarily as victims**, in line with the Paris Principles and Commitments;
- Urge the Federal Government to **fully implement its 2012 action plans** on recruitment and use and killing and maiming, as well as its 2019 roadmap; to **swiftly engage with the UN to strengthen its commitments to end and prevent rape and other forms of sexual violence** against children; and to **consistently apply the 2014 Standard Operating Procedures for the reception and handover of children separated from armed groups to civilian child protection actors; and to swiftly implement the age verification guidelines and its standardized checklist** endorsed by the Federal Government in July 2023;
- Encourage the Federal Government to **implement its commitments under the Safe Schools Declaration**, developing comprehensive risk assessments and risk reduction strategies to prevent and respond to attacks, including child recruitment and sexual violence at, or on the way to or from, school;
- Emphasize the need to **allocate and swiftly deploy sufficient resources to allow UNSOM to fully deliver on its child protection mandate**; and underline the need to prioritize child protection during ongoing and future military operations in Somalia in light of the phased drawdown of ATMIS.

The **United Kingdom** is the Security Council penholder on Somalia.

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 Mali ([S/2022/856](#)). For targeted recommendations, see Watchlist's Monthly CAAC updates from [February 2021](#), [June 2021](#), [September 2021](#), [July 2022](#), and [February 2023](#), respectively.

Presidency of the Security Council for October: Brazil

Party to Geneva Conventions I-IV, Additional Protocols I-III, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the Rome Statute of the ICC, and ILO Convention 182. Has endorsed the Paris Principles and Commitments, the Safe Schools Declaration, and the Vancouver Principles.

NGO RESOURCES

Impact Initiatives and Save the Children, [Experiences, Needs, and Aspirations of Children, Adolescents, and Caregivers Displaced from Ukraine](#), September 20, 2023

CARE, et al., [As the Sudan Crisis Deepens, INGOs Warn of the Cost of Inaction, and Call for Immediate Funding, Access, and Protection for Civilians and Aid Workers](#), September 19, 2023

Save the Children, [2023 Marks the Deadliest Year on Record for Children in the Occupied West Bank](#), September 18, 2023

Human Rights Watch, [Cluster Munitions: New Use, Transfers Challenge Total Ban](#), September 5, 2023