

# Children and Armed Conflict

## Recommendations to the Security Council

Monthly Update:  
March 2024

### Afghanistan

*Hizb-i Islami of Gulbuddin*, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-KP), and Taliban forces and affiliated groups, including the Haqqani network, are each listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's (SG) 2023 annual report ([S/2023/363](#)) on children and armed conflict (CAAC) for grave violations against children. UNAMA's mandate is up for renewal in March, per SCR 2678 (2023). According to the SG's December report on Afghanistan ([S/2023/941](#)), the UN documented "at least 400 grave violations" against children between July and September 2023. The most prominent violations were incidents of the denial of humanitarian access, killing and maiming, and recruitment and use. Children continue to be particularly vulnerable to harm from explosive remnants of war (ERW) and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which were the primary cause of civilian casualties during the reporting period, including at least 53 children. **The Security Council should:**

- Demand that all parties in Afghanistan **fully uphold their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law (IHRL)**;
- Call on the de facto authorities to **abide by Afghanistan's national and international commitments to protect children**, including the definition of a child as any individual under 18 years, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the Paris Principles and Commitments, and the Safe Schools Declaration;
- Reiterate its call on the de facto authorities to **swiftly reverse the policies and practices restricting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Afghan women and girls**, including related to their access to education, employment, freedom of movement, and women's full, equal and meaningful participation in public life, pursuant to SCR 2681 (2023);
- Reiterate its **demand that all parties allow full, rapid, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access consistent with international law for all humanitarian personnel**, including women, for UN agencies, international and national non-governmental organizations, and for other humanitarian actors, and to **allow women and girls safe access to humanitarian assistance and basic services**;
- **Renew UNAMA's child protection mandate and ensure allocation of sufficient resources to the UN Country Team to strengthen capacities to deliver on its child protection mandate**, including for monitoring and engagement with parties to end and prevent grave violations, and to **address threats posed by landmines, ERW, and IEDs**.

**Japan** is the Security Council penholder on Afghanistan.

### Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

Fifteen non-State armed groups (NSAGs) are listed in the annexes of the SG's 2023 annual report on CAAC for various grave violations against children, and the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) are listed for rape and other forms of sexual violence. In March, the SG is expected to report on the implementation of MONUSCO's mandate, pursuant to SCR 2717 (2023). According to the SG's November report on MONUSCO ([S/2023/932](#)), between September and October, the UN verified 156 grave violations, including recruitment and use of 72 children (66 boys, 6 girls). In Ituri, in September, eight ADF members were convicted on appeal for the war crime of recruitment of children, among other crimes. The UN confirmed the killing of 32 children and two adults following an October attack on a primary school in Kisangani, Tshopo Province. The recruitment and use of children in Ituri saw a **20** percent increase in the last quarter of 2023. Since the ceasefire between the FARDC and M23 **expired** in December, armed clashes have intensified in eastern DRC, leading to mass **displacement** and heightened **humanitarian needs**, including for children. Children continue to be at risk of recruitment and use and **sexual violence**, children have been **reported** among the civilians receiving medical treatment for war-related injuries, health care facilities have also reportedly been caught in crossfire, and difficulties accessing conflict areas present **challenges** to delivery humanitarian **aid** and protection services for children, as well as documentation and verification of grave violations. **The Security Council should:**

- Demand that all parties **uphold their obligations under IHL and IHRL**, and call for all armed groups to **immediately cease recruiting and using children, release those within their ranks**, and, if they have not yet done so, engage with the UN to **develop and implement concrete commitments to end and prevent grave violations against children**, including action plans where relevant;
- Call on all parties to **immediately cease attacks and threats of attack on educational and health**

**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

## DRC (cont'd)

facilities and personnel, as well as to refrain from the military use of schools, and to **allow and facilitate the safe, unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance** to affected populations, especially children, including by respecting agreements on humanitarian access corridors; and respect and protect humanitarian personnel, assets, and infrastructure;

- Encourage the Government to **continue its cooperation with the UN on screening and age verification to prevent the recruitment of children**, call for age verification to be implemented at the territorial level, and encourage continued efforts to **hold perpetrators of grave violations accountable**;
- Call on all parties to take immediate and specific steps to end and prevent rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, including by ensuring that survivors have access to comprehensive, gender-sensitive, and age-appropriate response and protection, and call on the Government to **accelerate efforts to implement aspects of its 2012 action plan relating to sexual violence** and the Joint Communique signed with the UN to fight sexual violence in conflict.

**France** is the Security Council penholder on DRC.

## South Sudan

The South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition – pro-Machar (SPLA-IO) are listed in the annexes of the SG 2023 annual report on CAAC for committing grave violations against children. In March, UNMISS' mandate is up for renewal, per SCR 2677 (2023). According to the SG's December report ([S/2023/976](#)), the UN verified 28 grave violations between September and November 2023, including the recruitment and use of 20 boys by the SPLA-IO (14) and SSPDF (6), the killing and maiming of six children, one case of rape, and one abduction. In February, the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan described violence and gross human rights violations continuing "with impunity, with women and children being the main target of these crimes," including abduction and sexual violence. In 2023, South Sudan remained one of the deadliest places to be an aid worker, with 34 aid workers killed during the year. Recruitment and use of children, the military occupation of schools, killing and maiming of children from ERW, and a persistent environment of impunity all remain concerns for children, and these risks may become exacerbated in the lead up to South Sudan's first national election scheduled for December 2024. The conflict in Sudan has also led to increased numbers of refugees and returnees crossing into South Sudan, including over [200,000](#) children between April and November 2023. A spike in violence in Abyei in January and February has also led to the deaths of at least [three](#) children and injury of two. **The Security Council should:**

- **Renew UNMISS's child protection mandate**, maintaining its child protection capacity, and, in subsequent budget negotiations, ensure distinct budget lines for child protection;
- Urge the Government and parties that have endorsed the 2020 Comprehensive Action Plan to **fully and swiftly implement their commitments**, and urge all parties to **immediately cease all grave violations against children, to facilitate humanitarian assistance and protect humanitarian personnel**, and to release and hand over to child protection actors all children from their ranks;
- Call on all parties to **take immediate and specific steps to end and prevent rape and other forms of sexual violence** against children, ensure survivors have access to comprehensive, gender-sensitive, and age-appropriate response systems and services, and strengthen preventive measures;
- Urge the Government to **end impunity for grave violations against children** through timely and impartial investigation and, where appropriate, prosecution; urge allocation of appropriate resources to ensure survivors of grave violations have access to justice, including for rape and other forms of sexual violence; and designate a focal point on CAAC in the Ministry of Justice;
- Call on all parties to **swiftly and fully implement the recommendations of the SCWG-CAAC**, as elaborated in its [fourth](#) conclusions on South Sudan.

The **United States** is the Security Council penholder on South Sudan.

## Recommendations to the Working Group

The Working Group has not yet adopted conclusions in response to the following reports of the SG on children and armed conflict: Myanmar ([S/2020/1243](#)), Somalia ([S/2022/397](#)), and Syria ([S/2023/805](#)), and Afghanistan ([S/2023/893](#)). For targeted recommendations, see Watchlist's Monthly CAAC updates from [February 2021](#), [July 2022](#), [December 2023](#), and [January 2024](#), respectively.

## Presidency of the Security Council for March: Japan

*Party to Geneva Conventions I-IV, Additional Protocols I-II, 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.*

## NGO RESOURCES

Action Against Hunger, et al., [NGOs Call for the UN Security Council to Urgently Convene and Pass a Resolution Demanding an Immediate and Sustained Ceasefire Following Yesterday's UN Security Council Meeting on the Risk of Conflict-Induced Famine in Gaza](#), February 28, 2024

Save the Children, [Gaza: Time Running Out with Reports Emerging of Children Dying Due to Lack of Food](#), February 27, 2024

Save the Children, [World's 10 Largest Crises Force over 10 Million Children from their Homes in One Year](#), February 19, 2024

World Vision, [Two Years on, the Future of Ukraine's Children Is at Risk](#), February 19, 2024

Save the Children, [Two Children Killed and Three Injured in Yemen Landmine Explosion](#), February 14, 2024

Human Rights Watch, [Yemen: Houthis Recruit More Child Soldiers Since October 7](#), February 13, 2024