

Children and Armed Conflict

Recommendations to the Security Council

Open Debate on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV)

In April, the Security Council will hold its annual open debate on CRSV, under the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda. **The Security Council and other UN Member States should:**

- Ensure adequate **resources and funding to support access for all children to gender-sensitive, age-appropriate, disability-inclusive comprehensive and non-discriminatory child protection services**, including psychosocial, health, access to education and vocational training, livelihood support, social reintegration, access to justice, and specialized services for child survivors of gender-based violence; these efforts should take into account measures to avoid the stigmatization of survivors;
- Encourage the UN to continue to **strengthen monitoring, reporting, and response to rape and other forms of sexual violence against children** and linkages to other grave violations; where possible, gender-disaggregated information should continue to be made available to inform strategies to prevent and address sexual and gender-based violence, including advocacy and awareness-raising, ensuring adequate resources are available to support such activities;
- Strengthen support for the **reintegration of children formerly associated with armed forces or groups**, and ensure that reintegration programming is gender-sensitive;
- Demand **accountability for sexual violence in conflict**, including in cases involving child survivors, and encourage the **development and timely implementation of time-bound action plans** between parties to conflict and the UN to end and prevent all grave violations against children in conflict, including rape and sexual violence;
- Ensure adequate **financial, political, and operational support for dedicated child protection, women protection, and gender experts in UN missions**.

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.

Central African Republic (CAR)

In January, the SG published his sixth report on the situation of CAAC in CAR ([S/2024/93](#)), covering the period from July 2021 to June 2023. During this time, the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) verified 1,432 grave violations against 1,046 children (674 boys, 372 girls), a decrease compared to the previous report which is likely due to access restrictions and a lower number of children separated from armed groups associated with the *Coalition des patriotes pour le changement* (CPC), rather than an overall decrease in grave violations. Recruitment and use was the most prevalent grave violation, followed by abduction and rape and other forms of sexual violence. Armed groups were responsible for around 75 percent of grave violations, while Government Forces, other security personnel and pro-government proxies were responsible for 20 percent of grave violations. Eleven boys detained for alleged association with armed groups were released during the reporting period, as well as an additional 46 boys who had been detained in previous years. Children were killed primarily by gunshots, followed by explosive ordnance. The number of child casualties due to use of indiscriminate explosive ordnance increased by 280 percent during the reporting period, and such use also impeded the delivery of humanitarian aid. While attacks on schools and hospitals decreased by 50 percent as compared to the previous reporting period, cases of abduction increased two-fold. **The Working Group should:**

- Strongly condemn all grave violations against children in CAR and demand that all parties to conflict **fully uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law (IHRL); to allow and facilitate the safe, timely, and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to affected populations**, especially children; and to immediately end and prevent all grave violations against children;
- Call for all parties to conflict to **engage with the UN to sign and implement action plans** to end and prevent all six grave violations against children; urge the *Front populaire pour la renaissance de la*

Monthly Update:
April 2024

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

CAR (cont'd)

Centrafrique, Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique, and Union pour la paix en Centrafrique to **fully and swiftly implement their respective action plans to end and prevent grave violations** and release all children still in their ranks;

- Welcome the Government's steps toward a national prevention plan of grave violations against children, as well as the draft protocol for the handover of children allegedly associated with armed groups, and call for swift finalization and implementation of these tools as well as the 2020 Child Protection Code;
- Welcome steps toward increasing accountability for grave violations against children, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, and **ensure all children have access to gender-sensitive, age-appropriate, disability-inclusive comprehensive and non-discriminatory child protection services**, including specialized services for child survivors of gender-based violence;
- Call on all parties to **immediately cease attacks on schools and education personnel and to take concrete measures to mitigate and avoid the military use of schools**, pursuant to SCR 2601 (2021); encourage the Government to uphold its commitments under the Safe Schools Declaration.

Colombia

In February, the SG published his sixth report on the situation of CAAC in Colombia ([S/2024/161](#)), covering the period from July 2021 to June 2023. During this period, the CTFMR verified 615 grave violations against 476 children (306 boys, 166 girls, four of unknown sex), representing a substantial increase compared to the previous report (383 grave violations). Indigenous children and children of African descent were disproportionately and increasingly affected by grave violations, representing 43 percent of victims. Girls were also increasingly affected, particularly by recruitment and use and sexual violence, as compared to the previous reporting period. *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo* (FARC-EP) dissident groups were the most prominent perpetrator, responsible for 55 percent of verified grave violations, followed by *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (107 violations), *Clan del Golfo/Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia* (52 violations), and the Colombian Armed Forces (27 violations). Recruitment and use of children continued to be the most prominent grave violation, followed by killing and maiming. Rape and other forms of sexual violence, abductions, and attacks on schools and hospitals all increased compared to the previous report. Children were killed and maimed primarily through gunshots, followed by mines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and unexploded ordnance (UXO). **The Working Group should:**

- **Demand that all armed groups immediately release all children under 18 from their ranks** and prevent and end all child recruitment, use, and abductions, as well as all other grave violations against children; and to **engage with the UN 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 children, as well as other grave violations**, paying particular attention to the heightened risks of grave violations for refugee and migrant children, unaccompanied and separated children, girls, and indigenous and Afro-Colombian children;
- Welcome the Government's suspension of airstrikes against armed group camps where children might be present and **encourage the scaling up of demining and explosive ordnance risk education**; and **demand that all parties uphold their obligations under IHL and IHRL**, including respecting the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution;
- Demand that all parties **take concrete steps to end rape and other forms of sexual violence against children**, including in the context of recruitment and use; and call on the Government to **ensure all children have access to gender-sensitive, age-appropriate, disability-inclusive comprehensive and non-discriminatory child protection services**, including specialized services for child survivors of gender-based violence;
- Expressing grave concern at the six-fold increase of attacks on schools and hospitals during the reporting period, call on all parties to **cease attacks and threats of attack on schools, hospitals, and education and health care personnel**, as well as to refrain from the military use of schools and educational facilities; and **welcome the Government's plan of action for the implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration**;
- Call on the Government and parties supporting peace dialogues to **incorporate child protection issues into all ongoing and future efforts to build and sustain peace**, including those with the ELN, AGC, and FARC-EP dissident groups, pursuant to SCR 2427 (2018), drawing on the [Practice Guidance for Mediators](#).

Presidency of the Security Council for April: Malta

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, the Vancouver Principles, and the Safe Schools Declaration.

NGO RESOURCES

Save the Children, [Hanging in the Balance: Yemeni Children's Struggle for Education](#), March 24, 2024

Save the Children, [Fivefold Increase in Children Uprooted by Violence in West Africa's Central Sahel](#), March 21, 2024

Human Rights Watch, [Armed Groups Kidnap Hundreds Across Northern Nigeria](#), March 18, 2024

Plan International, [Haiti Violence Heightens Children's Emotional Stress](#), March 18, 2024

Plan International, [Dozens of Children Feared Missing after Escalation of Violence in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado](#), March 15, 2024

Save the Children, ["Complete Psychological Destruction": Children in Gaza Have Suffered "Relentless Mental Harm" During Five Months of War](#), March 12, 2024

Save the Children, [Children as Young as Nine Face Mass Sexual Violence and Mutilation in the DRC](#), March 7, 2024

EDUCO-Member of ChildFund Alliance, [Education in Emergencies: a Lifeline Funding Analysis for 2023](#), February 2024