

Children and Armed Conflict

Recommendations to the Security Council

Monthly Update:
May 2024

Somalia

Al-Shabaab is listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's (SG) latest annual report ([S/2023/363](#)) on children and armed conflict (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 May, the SG is expected to report on the situation in Somalia and the implementation of UNSOM's mandate, pursuant to SCR 2705 (2023). According to the SG's February report ([S/2024/129](#)), the UN verified 567 grave violations against 454 children (341 boys, 113 girls), including two attacks on schools and one incident of the denial of humanitarian access between October and December 2023. During this period, child casualties increased in Banaadir and Shabelle Hoose, particularly due to mortar shells and explosive remnants of war (ERW). Humanitarian [access](#) for children remains a significant challenge in Somalia primarily due to ongoing conflict, insecurity, and limited infrastructure, and the withdrawal of ATMIS will potentially exacerbate these challenges. **The Security Council should:**

- Demand that all parties **fully uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law (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 on education, as well as 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.

Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (PoC)

On May 21, the Security Council will hold its annual open debate on the PoC. **The Security Council and other UN Member States should:**

- Express political support and allocate adequate resources to UN missions to deliver on protection mandates, including dedicated child protection capacity; ensure that protection (PoC, conflict-related sexual violence, and child protection) knowledge, data, and capacity are preserved during mission transitions or drawdown;
- Call on the SG to ensure a credible, evidence-based list of perpetrators in the annexes of his annual report on CAAC, including listing parties responsible for attacks on schools and hospitals and other trigger violations, and consistently applying standards to all perpetrators across all conflicts;
- Pursue accountability for violations of IHL and consistently support international, independent investigative mechanisms in situations of armed conflict with significant civilian casualties, ensuring adequate child rights expertise is included in such mechanisms, and that reports from these mechanisms are made public;
- Call on parties to conflict, including Member States, to avoid the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and to protect civilians, including objects indispensable to their survival.

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

For resolution language on Children and Armed Conflict, download the Children and Armed Conflict smartphone app from Watchlist, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland, available on iPhone, iPad, Android, and the web!

 WATCH LIST ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

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](#)), Central African Republic ([S/2024/93](#)), and Colombia ([S/2024/161](#)). For targeted recommendations, see Watchlist's Monthly CAAC updates from [February 2021](#), [July 2022](#), [December 2023](#), [January 2024](#), and [April 2024](#), respectively.

Iraq

In March, the SG published his fifth report on the situation of CAAC in Iraq ([S/2024/247](#)), covering a reporting period from July 2021 to September 2023. During this period, the UN Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) verified 381 grave violations against 289 children (218 boys, 70 girls, 1 of unknown sex) and an additional 48 grave violations that had occurred in a previous reporting period. Killing and maiming remained the most prominent grave violation verified (236), followed by the denial of humanitarian access (76), and recruitment and use (32). Most incidents of killing and maiming of children were not attributed to a specific perpetrator, with 65 percent of child casualties due to explosive ordnance and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Other child casualties were attributed to ground engagements (62) and airstrikes (20). Recruitment and use significantly increased compared to the previous reporting period, and the CTFMR has indicated that the actual number is likely to be higher due to accessibility and security challenges to reporting and verification. The majority of recruitment and use cases were attributed to People's Defence Forces of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (HPG/PKK). At the end of the reporting period, a total of 668 children continued to be detained on national security related charges, some as young as nine years old. The CTFMR verified rape and sexual violence against eight girls, as well as late-verification of this grave violation against an additional 14 girls – all cases were attributed to Da'esh. In addition to six attacks on schools and hospitals, 42 incidents of the military use of schools were verified, the majority of which were by Iraqi police (28) and security forces (7). **The Working Group should:**

- Strongly **condemn all continuing grave violations against children** in Iraq and demand that all parties to conflict **fully uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law (IHRL)**;
- Express concern at the increased incidents of recruitment and use of children and call for all armed groups to **immediately release all children under 18 years old from their ranks** and to engage with the UN to **end and prevent grave violations against children**; Encourage the Popular Mobilization Forces to **continue to take steps toward full implementation of all aspects of its 2023 action plan and to sustain gains toward preventing any future recurrence** of recruitment and use of children;
- Recall that **all children allegedly associated with armed forces and armed groups 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; encourage the Government to continue its **efforts to repatriate children held in Northeast Syria**, following a rights-based approach, in accordance with their duty under international law;
- 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;
- 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**;
- 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 explosive ordnance risk education, conflict preparedness, and protection for affected communities.

Presidency of the Security Council for May: Mozambique

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, and ILO Convention 182. Has signed but not ratified the Rome Statute of the ICC. Has endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration; has not endorsed the Paris Principles and Commitments nor the Vancouver Principles.

NGO RESOURCES

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, [Explosive Weapons and the Children and Armed Conflict Agenda](#), May 1, 2024

Save the Children, [Haiti: 600 Children Daily Dodging Gunfire as They Flee Haitian Capital in Month of Violence](#), April 24, 2024

Amnesty International, [Aftermath: Injustice, Torture, and Death in Detention in North-East Syria](#), April 17, 2024

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, ["Credible List": Recommendations for the Secretary-General's 2024 Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict](#), April 16, 2024

[More than 250 Humanitarian and Human Rights Organizations Call to Stop Arms Transfers to Israel, Palestinian Armed Groups](#), April 11, 2024

Human Rights Watch, [Myanmar: Military Forcibly Recruiting Rohingya: Over 1000 Abducted in Violation of Conscription Law, Prohibition on Child Soldiers](#), April 10, 2024

Save the Children, [Sudan's Year of War: One in Two Children in the Line of Fire](#), April 10, 2024

Save the Children, [Over 2 Percent of Gaza's Child Population Killed or Injured in Six Months of War](#), April 4, 2024