

Children and Armed Conflict

Recommendations to the Security Council

Monthly Update:
March 2025

COLOMBIA

The *Fuerza Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia- Ejército del Pueblo* (FARC-EP) dissident groups and the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN) are listed in the annexes of the Secretary General's (SG) 2024 annual report ([S/2024/384](#)) on children and armed conflict (CAAC) for the recruitment and use of children. In 2023, the UN verified 432 grave violations against 329 children. FARC-EP dissidents recruited 186 children, and ELN recruited 41. Explosive ordnance, targeted killings, combat-related violence, torture, cross-fire and military operations killed and maimed 63 children. FARC-EP dissidents, ELN, Clan del Golfo, Colombian armed forces, and unidentified perpetrators committed 26 cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence and 32 abductions, mostly for recruitment. Armed groups attacked 27 schools and hospitals and blocked humanitarian access 22 times. In December 2024, the UN Verification Mission ([S/2024/968](#)) reported an increase in child recruitment, conflict-related sexual violence, and forced displacement, disproportionately affecting Indigenous and Afro-Colombian children. The SG will report on the Verification Mission's implementation in March. **The Security Council should:**

- **Demand that all parties uphold their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law (IHRL),** including respecting the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution;
- Call on all armed groups to immediately **cease the use of explosive ordnance** and **encourage the government to scale up demining and explosive ordnance risk education;**
- Call on all parties to **allow and facilitate the safe, timely, and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to affected populations,** especially children;
- 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 **take concrete steps to end rape and other forms of sexual violence against children,** including in the context of recruitment and use;
- 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 most vulnerable, including girls and indigenous and Afro-Colombian children, and noting vulnerability to recruitment at informal border crossings.

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

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (DRC)

Sixteen non-State armed groups and the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) are listed in the annexes of the SG's 2024 annual report on CAAC for committing grave violations against children. Amid escalating violence in North and South Kivu, the Security Council per SCR 2773 (2025), strongly condemned the M23's advances with the support of the Rwanda Defence Forces (RDF), including the capture of Goma and Bukavu, and demanded an immediate ceasefire, withdrawal from occupied areas, and the dismantling of illegitimate parallel administrations. The resolution strongly condemned all attacks directed against the civilian population, as well as summary executions and maiming, sexual and gender-based violence, human trafficking, and recruitment and use of children and reiterated that perpetrators to must be held accountable. Armed groups in DRC continue to commit grave violations against children, with OCHA [reporting](#) at least 1,500 cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against children in the past 1.5 months. UNICEF [reported](#) a five-fold increase in rape cases between January 27 and February 2, 2025, with 30 percent of victims being children. OHCHR [confirmed](#) summary executions of children by M23 in Bukavu, and the UN Child Rights Committee reported that 45 street children in Goma were killed by M23 after the group entered the city. **The Security Council Should:**

- **Strongly condemn all continuing violations and abuses committed against children** in the DRC, express grave concern at the increase in verified grave violations against children, and **demand that all parties uphold their obligations under IHL and IHRL;**
- **Reiterate its call for an immediate ceasefire,** per SCR 2773 (2025), with clearly articulated timeframes, coordination with relevant stakeholders at regional and subregional organizations and humanitarian actors to establish such a ceasefire, as well as to prevent further violations and abuses against civilians, including children;

Situations involving parties listed for grave violations against children:

Afghanistan
Burkina Faso
Central African Republic
Colombia
Democratic Republic of Congo
Iraq
Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory
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

DRC (Con't)

- Urge all parties to take immediate steps to end and prevent rape and other forms of sexual violence against children and ensure that survivors have access to comprehensive, gender-sensitive, and age-appropriate response and protection, and call on the Government to **accelerate efforts to implement its 2012 action plan to end and prevent rape and other forms of sexual violence** and the Joint Communiqué signed with the UN to fight sexual violence in conflict;
- Reiterate the need for regional security arrangements, including the Southern African Development Community (SAD) Mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC), to **fully comply with IHL and IHRL**, and **highlight the importance of coordinated technical support on child protection**, per SCR 2746 (2024);
- Call on all parties to **allow and facilitate the safe, timely, and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to affected populations**, especially children;
- Demand that all parties **immediately cease hostilities against peacekeepers, ensure their safety and security, guarantee their freedom of movement, and allow the full and unimpeded implementation of their mandates**, including those related to human rights and the protection of civilians.

France is the Security Council penholder on DRC.

Recommendations to the Working Group

The Working Group has received the following reports of the SG on children and armed conflict and conclusions remain pending: Myanmar ([S/2020/1243](#)), Syria ([S/2023/805](#)), and the Democratic Republic of Congo ([S/2024/705](#)). For targeted recommendations, see Watchlist's Monthly CAAC updates from [February 2021](#), [December 2023](#), and [December 2024](#), respectively.

MALI

In January 2025, the SG published his fifth report on the situation of CAAC in Mali ([S/2024/883](#)), covering the period from April 2022 to March 2024. During this period, the UN verified 2,091 grave violations against 1,782 children (1,433 boys, 334 girls, 15 of unknown sex). The recruitment and use of children remained the most prominent grave violation, followed by killing and maiming and abduction, with these violations increasing by 14 percent, 23 percent, and 27 percent, respectively, with most child casualties (222) resulting from explosive devices. Verified incidents of attacks on schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian access decreased by 70 percent and 53 percent, respectively. Monitoring and reporting challenges persisted due to insecurity, limited child protection capacity, and access restrictions following the withdrawal of MINUSMA. The report highlighted the ongoing lack of accountability, particularly for rape and other forms of sexual violence. **The Working Group should:**

- Strongly **condemn all grave violations and abuses that continue to be committed against children** in Mali, and demand that all parties **uphold their obligations under IHL and IHRL**;
- Call upon the Coordination des Mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA) and Platform to **implement their action plans, release all children from their ranks, and prevent all further recruitment and use**;
- Call for **continued and full implementation of the 2013 handover protocol**, including for children allegedly associated with armed groups designated as terrorist groups by the UN, treating children primarily as victims and prioritizing their reintegration, as guided by the Paris Principles;
- Urge transitional Government to **strengthen the legal child protection framework**, including by finalizing the revision and adoption of the draft national law on child protection, reinforcing national systems to prevent child recruitment and use;
- **Call for allocation of sufficient resources to the UN Country Team to strengthen child protection capacities in light of the withdrawal of MINUSMA**, including for monitoring and engagement with parties to end and prevent grave violations, and to **address threats posed by explosive ordnance**;
- Call on all parties to **immediately cease attacks on schools and education personnel** and urge the transitional Malian authorities to continue to uphold commitments under the Safe Schools Declaration, including by enacting the draft bill on protecting education from attack;
- **Express concern at the lack of progress on combatting impunity**, and urge the Malian authorities to strengthen accountability for grave violations against children, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, by conducting timely and impartial investigations and, where appropriate, prosecutions, and ensuring child survivors of sexual violence have access to comprehensive, gender-sensitive, and age-appropriate response systems and services.

Presidency of the Security Council for March: Denmark

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

Human Rights Watch, "[Submission to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on Children in Armed Conflict](#)," February 24, 2025.

Save the Children, "[Three Years of Loss and Fear: War in Ukraine shatters children's lives](#)," February 24, 2025.

World Vision, "[What three years of war have cost Ukrainian children](#)," February 17, 2025.

Amnesty International, "[I'm a Child, Why Did This Happen to Me?: Gangs' Assault on Childhood in Haiti](#)," February 12, 2025.

Human Rights Watch, "[Northeast Syria: Camp Detainees Face Uncertain Future](#)," February 7, 2025.

Plan International, "[Protection from Violence - A snapshot of our evidence from 2024](#)," February 5, 2025.

Save the Children, "[Suffering has not stopped for children in Gaza' - Save the Children CEO](#)," February 5, 2025.