

Children and Armed Conflict

Recommendations to the Security Council

OPEN DEBATE ON THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT (PoC)

In May, 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 Secretary-General (SG) to ensure a credible, evidence-based list of perpetrators in the annexes of his annual report on Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC), including listing parties responsible for trigger violations, and consistently applying standards to all perpetrators across all conflicts;
- Pursue accountability for violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law (IHRL) 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.

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: Syria ([S/2023/805](#)), the Democratic Republic of Congo ([S/2024/705](#)), and Mali ([S/2024/883](#)). For targeted recommendations, see Watchlist's Monthly CAAC updates from [December 2023](#), [December 2024](#), and [March 2025](#), respectively.

BURKINA FASO

In March 2025, the SG published his first report [on the situation of](#) children and armed conflict in Burkina Faso ([S/2025/101](#)), covering the period from July 2022 to June 2024. During this time, the UN verified 2,483 grave violations against 2,255 children (1,310 boys, 750 girls, 195 of unknown sex), including 223 children who were victims of multiple grave violations. Killing and maiming (1,386) emerged as the most prevalent violation, followed by abduction (592) and recruitment and use (257). Armed groups, particularly Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), committed 65 percent of the violations. The Defence and Security Forces and the Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie committed 20 percent of violations. The UN attributed the remaining 15 percent to unidentified perpetrators. Armed attacks and military operations killed 920 children and maimed 466, while explosive devices resulted in 163 child casualties. The UN verified 132 attacks on schools and hospitals, 96 incidents of denial of humanitarian access and 25 cases of detention of children for their alleged association with armed groups. Parties to conflict also subjected at least 20 girls to rape and other forms of sexual violence, though stigma and fear of reprisals likely led to underreporting. Insecurity, access restrictions, and the risk of reprisals against monitors limited the UN's ability to verify allegations of violations, especially in hard-to-reach areas. **The Working Group should:**

- Strongly **condemn all grave violations and abuses committed against children** in Burkina Faso, and demand that all parties **uphold their obligations under IHL and IHRL**;
- Remind all parties that **children affected by armed conflict should be treated primarily as victims**, including those allegedly associated with armed groups designated as terrorist by the UN; their reintegration should be prioritized in line with international juvenile justice standards, and detention should only be used as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate time; call for the **release of children detained for their alleged association with armed groups, and for the full implementation of the 2022 handover protocol jointly developed with the UN**;

Monthly Update: May 2025

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

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BURKINA FASO (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;
- Call on all parties to **immediately cease attacks on schools and education personnel** and urge the authorities to continue to uphold commitments under the Safe Schools Declaration;
- Call for **the safe and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance** to affected populations, including children.

MYANMAR

In March 2025, the Secretary-General published his seventh report on the situation of children and armed conflict in Myanmar ([S/2025/81](#)), covering the period from July 2020 to December 2023. The previous report on Myanmar was issued in 2020; however, the Working Group was unable to adopt conclusions at that time or in the interim. During this reporting period, the UN verified 5,141 grave violations against 4,089 children (3,238 boys, 721 girls, 130 of unknown sex). Recruitment and use (2,195) was the most prevalent verified violation, followed by killing and maiming (1,635) and abduction (519). The Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias, were responsible for nearly 80 percent of all verified violations. Armed attacks killed 470 children and maimed 1,165, with explosive weapons accounting for most casualties. The UN also verified 288 attacks on schools and hospitals, 497 incidents of denial of humanitarian access, 256 cases of detention, and 25 cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, though underreporting remains a concern. The number of grave violations increased more than fourfold compared to the previous reporting period, including increased use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Widespread insecurity, access restrictions, and disruptions to telecommunications severely impacted monitoring and verification efforts, suggesting the true scale of violations is significantly higher. **The Working Group should:**

- Strongly **condemn all grave violations and abuses that continue to be committed against children** in Myanmar, and demand that all parties **uphold their obligations under IHL and IHRL**;
- Call on the Myanmar armed forces to implement the 2012 joint action plan on non-recruitment of children, to **immediately end all grave violations against children**, and urge all listed parties to **sign and implement joint action plans with the UN to end and prevent grave violations**;
- Urge the National Unity Government to **develop a prevention plan with the UN**, and urge People's Defence Forces and local defence groups to **engage with the UN to adopt measures to protect children**;
- Urge all armed groups to **immediately release all children under 18 from their ranks and end and prevent all child recruitment and use**; reiterate that children associated with armed forces and groups should be treated primarily as victims, and their reintegration should be prioritized;
- 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 perpetrators are held accountable and that survivors have access to comprehensive, gender-sensitive, and age-appropriate response and protection;
- Reiterate calls for **safe, timely, and unimpeded access for the delivery of humanitarian assistance** to affected populations, including children, which is imperative in the aftermath of the [7.7 magnitude earthquake](#) that hit Myanmar on March 28, 2025;
- Call on all parties to **immediately cease attacks and threats of attack on educational and health facilities and personnel**, as well as to refrain from the military use of schools.

NGO RESOURCES

Amnesty International, [The State of the World's Human Rights 2024/25](#), April 29, 2025

Médecins Sans Frontières, [The relentless and indiscriminate bombing in Ukraine must cease](#), April 24, 2025

Human Rights Watch, [Lebanon: Indiscriminate Israeli Attacks on Civilians](#), April 23, 2025

Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect, [Atrocity Alert No. 435: Sudan, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), April 16, 2025

Human Rights Watch, [Sudan: After 2 Years of War, Global Action Needed](#), April 13, 2025

Human Rights Watch, [Syria: Landmines, Explosive Remnants Harming Civilians](#), April 8, 2025

Amnesty International, [Syria: Coastal massacres of Alawite civilians must be investigated as war crimes](#), April 5, 2025

War Child, [Children have no place in war: War Child warns child recruitment could rise as violence escalates in South Sudan](#), April 1, 2025

Presidency of the Security Council for May: Greece

Party to Geneva Conventions I–IV, Additional Protocols I and 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 Safe Schools Declaration, and the Vancouver Principles.