



WATCH LIST ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

2018 ANNUAL REPORT

Photo credits

Cover photo: Students inspect their destroyed school in Taiz, Yemen. © Anas Alhaji/Shutterstock.com.

Inside cover: Indigenous children from the Embera community, displaced by armed conflict in Colombia. © UN Photo/Mark Garten.

page 1: Kurdish children play outside a refugee camp in Turkey. © Giannis Papanikos/Shutterstock.com

page 3: The Security Council unanimously adopts Resolution 2427 on children and armed conflict. © UN photo/Eskinder Debebe.

page 4: A UN peacekeeper speaks with children in Mali's Mopti region. © UN Photo/Tiecoura N'daou.

page 5: A young girl and boy at a refugee settlement in northern Uganda. © UN Photo/Mark Garten.

page 6: Rohingya refugee children attend a makeshift school at Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. © Naufal Zaquan/Shutterstock.com.

page 7: Civil society briefer Yenny Londoño addresses the Security Council open debate on children and armed conflict. © UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe.

page 8: An Afghan girl helps her friend who is a landmine victim. © UN Photo/Hassan Zakizada.





Foreword

- In 2018, children living in conflict zones suffered extreme, record-setting levels of violence, as warring parties flouted international law with near impunity. UNICEF warned of attacks on children becoming the “new normal,” as world leaders failed to hold perpetrators to account.¹

According to the UN Secretary-General, more children were killed or maimed in 2018 than in any other year since 2005, when the United Nations started monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children.² Crossfire, improvised explosive devices, landmines, explosive remnants of war, and hand-to-hand combat by non-state actors, state armies, and international coalitions contributed to the killing and maiming of more than 12,000 children.³ Restrictions on humanitarian access, attacks on aid workers, and general insecurity prevented children and their families from receiving lifesaving assistance in the Central African Republic (CAR), Myanmar, and Yemen, among others. Attacks on schools and hospitals blocked thousands of children’s access to education and health services in Afghanistan, Mali, Syria, and elsewhere.

Efforts to politicize the children and armed conflict (CAC) agenda and the failure to hold perpetrators accountable hampered efforts to protect children in war. The lack of consequences for atrocities committed against Rohingya children and their families in 2017 further emboldened the Tatmadaw in its 2018 offensives in Kachin, Kayin, and Shan States. The conflict in Eastern Ukraine, ongoing since 2014, remained absent from the Security Council’s CAC agenda, as did Cameroon, where attacks on schools endangered students and teachers amid escalating hostilities.

Despite these challenges, there was some progress. In CAR, the *Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique* (MPC) signed an action plan with the UN to end and prevent grave violations against children, and the governments of Somalia and Yemen developed roadmaps to update and recommit to implementing

¹ United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), “How the world failed children in conflict in 2018,” December 2018, <https://www.unicef.org/stories/how-world-failed-children-2018> (accessed 28 August 2019).

² UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the situation of children and armed conflict, A/73/907–S/2019/509, 20 June 2019, <https://undocs.org/s/2019/509> (accessed 28 August 2019), para. 6.

³ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG-CAAC), “Record Number of Children Killed and Maimed in 2018, Urgent to Put in Place Measures to Prevent Violations,” press release, 30 July 2019, <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/record-number-of-children-killed-and-maimed-in-2018-urgent-to-put-in-place-measures-to-prevent-violations/> (accessed 28 August 2019).

existing action plans. South Sudan acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and 11 countries endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration. In 2018, more than 13,600 children were released from armed forces or groups and received reintegration support, an increase as compared to 2017.⁴ At its open debate on children and armed conflict in July, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2427, calling for child protection to be incorporated in conflict prevention activities, post-conflict recovery, and peacebuilding planning and strategies, and emphasizing the need to treat affected children primarily as victims.

In this increasingly difficult environment, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict persisted in its efforts to end violations against children in war and guarantee their rights. Working closely with international and local civil society partners, Watchlist effectively drew the attention of high-level policy-makers to the situation of children in conflict-affected countries, made concrete recommendations to strengthen programs and policies for their protection, and empowered local civil society to advocate at the international level on behalf of affected children.

With the support of key partners and funders, Watchlist achieved a number of successes in 2018. Through its CAC Monthly Updates and ongoing engagement with member states, Watchlist successfully influenced 11 Security Council resolutions and two conclusions of the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Through a coordinated advocacy campaign for a credible and accurate list of perpetrators in the Secretary-General's annual CAC report, Watchlist contributed to expanded and new listings – promoting accountability and paving the way for the UN to engage with listed parties to end and prevent violations.

Watchlist expanded its research on attacks on health care, the denial of humanitarian access, and their impact on children's rights, with the publication of a Field Monitor report on South Sudan. It also built upon its previous research, with the publication of update reports on Afghanistan and Yemen.

Through its Partnerships Program, Watchlist supported local civil society in conflict-affected countries to monitor, report, and respond to grave violations against children. In 2018, it worked with longtime partners in Colombia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and initiated a new partnership in Myanmar.

At a time when warring parties are increasingly emboldened to violate international law to the detriment of civilians, including children, and politics threaten to undermine the progress achieved through the UN's CAC agenda, Watchlist's efforts are needed today, more than ever.

On behalf of Watchlist and its members, we sincerely thank you, our partners and funders, for your support to safeguard the CAC agenda and promote the protection of children's rights in conflict.

JO BECKER,
*Chair, Watchlist Advisory Board
Representing Human Rights Watch*

ADRIANNE LAPAR
*Program Director
Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict*

⁴ Ibid.



Advocacy

In 2018, Watchlist successfully mainstreamed children and armed conflict priorities across the UN's work through its targeted advocacy and policy recommendations.

Campaign for a Credible and Accurate List

Attempts to politicize the UN's CAC agenda have threatened to undermine efforts to protect children in armed conflict. In response, Watchlist has sought to draw attention to such efforts and to advocate for a credible and accurate list of child rights violators in the annexes of the UN Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict.

In March, Watchlist launched its policy note *A Credible List: Recommendations for the 2018 Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict and Listings*. In its second edition, the yearly policy brief aims to influence the Secretary-General's annual CAC report. Based on a review of UN reports and other credible sources, Watchlist recommended the addition of six parties that had not previously been listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's report, and called for expanding the listings of parties for violations in South Sudan and Myanmar. The policy note further recommended that the Secretary-General collect additional information on the situation of children affected by armed conflict in Ukraine to determine its inclusion among "situations of concern" in the narrative section of his report.

Watchlist's policy note also drew attention to challenges facing the UN's capacity to monitor and report on grave violations, in the face of impending budget cuts and the elimination of child protection posts in several UN peacekeeping missions. Prior to the note's public launch at the UN, Watchlist shared its findings and recommendations with the Secretary-General and the Office of his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG-CAAC). The policy note was covered in the Associated Press and Inter Press Service, among other media outlets.

Watchlist complemented the policy note and related advocacy with the publication of reports on attacks on health care in Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Yemen (see *Research, below*).

In June, Watchlist and 23 other NGOs published an open letter to Secretary-General António Guterres regarding the situation of children in Yemen. Expressing concerns about the killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals, the letter called on the Secretary-General to ensure accountability for these violations by listing the Saudi-led coalition in his 2018 annual report as a party that had not put in place measures to protect children.

Through this sustained campaign, Watchlist helped contribute to new and expanded listings in the Secretary-General's annual report, which was published in June 2018. Specifically, the listing of the Tatmadaw in Myanmar was expanded to include killing and maiming and sexual violence, while the *Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique* (FPRC) in coalition with the MPC in CAR was listed for the first time. Watchlist's calls for the continued inclusion of the Saudi-led coalition and the expanded listing of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) to include attacks on schools and hospitals were also reflected in the report's annexes.



Mainstreaming Children and Armed Conflict at the Security Council

Watchlist continued to engage with Security Council and non-Council members, to ensure sustained resources and support for child protection in UN peace operations, as well as strong language on children and armed conflict in relevant resolutions, presidential statements, and other outcome documents.

In January, Watchlist hosted its fourth workshop on children and armed conflict in collaboration with Princeton University's Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination (LISD). Bringing together Security

Council members, non-Council members, UN staff, and civil society, the event allowed for candid discussions of challenges and opportunities for strengthening implementation of the CAC agenda. The workshop built upon Watchlist's previous work on child protection and peace processes, with a guest speaker from Colombia reflecting upon her country's recent experience.

Throughout the year, Watchlist published and disseminated its CAC Monthly Updates – two-page briefs offering specific recommendations to the UN Security Council for action on issues on its agenda. Using the CAC Monthly Update as an advocacy tool in meetings with Council members, in 2018 Watchlist targeted and successfully integrated child protection language into 11 relevant Security Council resolutions (nine renewals of UN peacekeeping mandates, one panel of experts' mandate renewal, and one resolution on the humanitarian situation in Syria). Through its Monthly Updates, Watchlist also targeted and influenced the conclusions of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict on the DRC and Mali.

In May, Watchlist's executive director spoke at an Arria Formula meeting (an informal briefing of the Security Council, also open to other member states) organized by Poland, in collaboration with Côte d'Ivoire, France, and Sweden, on the role of action plans in ending and preventing violations against children. He highlighted Watchlist's 2013 research on action plans, underscoring the importance of sustained high-level advocacy, support from third-country governments, and effective UN mission structures for their success.

Ahead of the July 2018 Security Council open debate on children and armed conflict, Watchlist published a special bulletin with targeted recommendations for member states and used this bulletin for advocacy and outreach. A total of 98 member states co-sponsored Resolution 2427, which was unanimously adopted and calls upon states and the UN to mainstream child protection into all relevant activities in conflict prevention, conflict, and post-conflict settings, including peace processes. A total of 91 speakers, representing 116 member states, spoke at the open debate, representing an increase from the previous year. The majority of interventions were positive and supportive of the CAC mandate, and reflected Watchlist's messaging.



Research

In line with its 2016-2018 strategic plan, Watchlist continued to build a body of research on attacks on health care, the denial of humanitarian access, and their devastating impacts on children.

In January 2018, Watchlist participated in a panel event hosted by the International Peace Institute (IPI) on how to operationalize Security Council Resolution 2286, which condemns attacks against medical facilities and personnel in conflict situations and calls on all parties to adopt practical measures to prevent, end, and ensure accountability for such attacks. Watchlist presented its research on Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Yemen, and highlighted the importance of accountability as a deterrent for future attacks.

In March, Watchlist released updates to its 2017 Field Monitor reports on attacks on health care and the denial of humanitarian access in Afghanistan and Yemen. The first – *“Every Clinic Is Still on the Frontline”: Attacks on Health Care in Afghanistan in 2017* – detailed attacks carried out by the Taliban, the Islamic State, and Afghan military forces in 22 provinces across Afghanistan in 2017. The second report – *“Every Day Things Are Still Getting Worse”: Attacks on Health Care in Yemen in 2017* – examined attacks on health care and denials of humanitarian access carried out by the Saudi-led coalition, the Houthis, and Yemeni government forces.

In April, Watchlist published a Field Monitor report entitled *“Everyone and Everything Is a Target”: The Impact on Children of Attacks on Health Care and Denial of Humanitarian Access in South Sudan*. Based on field

research conducted in South Sudan and in northern Uganda in late 2017, the report documented the deliberate targeting of medical facilities and personnel and the denial of humanitarian access in South Sudan in 2016 and 2017. It showed the devastating impacts on children’s health and made targeted recommendations for the protection of health care and humanitarian access. Following the report launch at UN headquarters in New York, Watchlist carried out advocacy meetings with key stakeholders in New York and Washington, DC.

Watchlist’s report garnered attention to the situation of children affected by armed conflict in South Sudan, including the impact of attacks on health care and the denial of humanitarian access. It was covered in the Associated Press, IRIN (now The New Humanitarian), and Voice of America, as well as in analyses published by DEVEX and Just Security. Watchlist’s research officer published an op-ed on the Inter Press Service, calling on the government of South Sudan to uphold its obligations to allow unhindered, safe access to humanitarian assistance.

Throughout the year, Watchlist continued to actively participate in the Steering Committee of the Safeguarding Health and Conflict Coalition and contributed to the coalition’s 2018 global report, *Violence on the Front Lines: Attacks on Health Care in 2017*.



Partnerships

In 2018, Watchlist supported local civil society efforts to monitor and report on grave violations against children in Colombia, the DRC, and Myanmar, while advancing institutional learning and advocacy on children's rights.

Support to Local Child Rights Organizations

Since 2001, Watchlist has supported civil society organizations in countries spanning from Afghanistan, to Nepal and Nigeria, to monitor and report on child rights violations and advocate on behalf of children living in war. In addition to providing financial and technical support, Watchlist identifies opportunities and facilitates collaboration with local partners on high-level advocacy at the UN. In turn, partners contribute to Watchlist's institutional knowledge base.

With Watchlist's financial and technical support, its local partner in the DRC (unnamed for security reasons) trained approximately 120 members of community-based protection committees to identify and report cases of child recruitment and advocate for these children's release. Through regular engagement with these protection committees, the partner documented grave violations against children, contributed to the UN-led Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM), and helped facilitate the release, reintegration, and rehabilitation of affected children, in coordination with other child protection actors.

Watchlist also continued its longstanding partnership with COALICO, a coalition of NGOs working to protect the rights of children affected by armed conflict in Colombia. With Watchlist's support, COALICO continued to actively participate in the UN Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) in Colombia, a technical working group led by the UN to implement the MRM and advance the protection of children's rights in the context of the armed conflict. In 2018, COALICO continued to monitor implementation of child protection-related provisions of the 2016 peace accord between the government and the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo* (FARC-EP). In coordination with COALICO, Watchlist's partnerships officer published an op-ed in the Colombian daily *El Espectador* on February 12 – the International Day against the Use of Child Soldiers – urging the Colombian government and the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN) to prioritize the protection of children.

In July, a child rights advocate affiliated with COALICO was invited to New York to brief the Security Council open debate on children and armed conflict on behalf of civil society. A former child soldier herself, Ms. Yenny Londoño provided targeted recommendations to UN member

states on protecting children's rights in armed conflict and strengthening reintegration and rehabilitation programs for affected children. On the day of the open debate, Watchlist and COALICO published a joint press statement, available in English and Spanish, highlighting the importance of integrating and promoting the protection of children's rights in peace processes. In the following days, Watchlist organized a series of meetings for Ms. Londoño with key member states, UN offices, and NGOs to highlight key concerns affecting children in Colombia.

In March and April, Watchlist traveled to Myanmar to identify potential civil society partners and gather information on the situation of children affected by armed conflict. Subsequently, Watchlist established a new partnership with a local NGO and launched a pilot project to raise awareness in conflict-affected communities in Kachin State about child rights and how to report violations. Using theater and participatory drama, the local partner educated community members, fellow civil society organizations in the region, and local government officials on the impact of armed conflict on children, highlighting recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and sexual violence. In the next phase of the project, the partner will build upon the theater workshop to train and mobilize local activists on how to document grave violations against children and report them to the UN-led MRM and other complaint mechanisms.

Institutional Learning and Advocacy

In October, Watchlist and its local partner from the DRC traveled to Nairobi, Kenya, to participate in a conference organized by the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action – a global network of operational agencies, academic institutions, policy-makers, donors, and practitioners that facilitates inter-agency technical collaboration on child protection in all humanitarian contexts – and the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). The event brought together practitioners from the child protection and education sectors to discuss ways to systematically improve

collaboration in order to complement and reinforce each other at the field level. Watchlist's partner was invited to present on best practices in integrated approaches to education and child protection in humanitarian settings, highlighting its work to promote the reintegration of girls formerly associated with armed groups and the restoration of their rights.

In November, Watchlist traveled to Colombia to participate in a conference organized by its partner COALICO. Under the banner "Children as Defenders, Leaders, and Peace Builders," the event brought together children and youth, NGOs, and policy-makers to exchange reflections, concerns, and recommendations on the protection of children's rights in Colombia since the peace process. Watchlist's partnerships officer spoke on a panel together with Ms. Londoño – who briefed the Security Council open debate on children and armed conflict earlier in the year – about the UN's CAC agenda, including implementation of the MRM, and its importance in promoting accountability at the international level.

That same month, Watchlist traveled to Amman, Jordan, to participate in a technical consultation of experts on implementation of the UN's CAC agenda in the Middle East and North Africa. The first of its kind in the region, the consultation brought together child protection experts from the UN and civil society to discuss implementation of the MRM and monitoring of CAC situations of concern.





Organizational Update

- **Established in 2001 by a group of leading human rights and humanitarian organizations, Watchlist continued to be at the forefront of efforts to protect children affected by war in 2018.**

Watchlist's programmatic content is set by an Advisory Board of international NGOs. Its network also includes associate members that share Watchlist's commitment to protect the rights of children affected by armed conflict and who frequently collaborate on joint advocacy initiatives. In 2018, Watchlist members included, but were not limited to: ChildFund Alliance, Child Soldiers International, Geneva Call, the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P), Human Rights Watch, the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, Save the Children International, the Terre des Hommes International Federation (TdHIF), War Child International, and World Vision International.

Watchlist was a fiscally-sponsored project of the Tides Center, a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization, throughout 2018.⁵ Watchlist did not receive any direct financial support from the Tides Center. Watchlist enjoyed the sustained backing of several donors and is especially grateful for

the funding it received in 2018 from the governments of Australia, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Watchlist also appreciates the contributions of a major anonymous donor. The support of our partners and funders is critical for the continuity of Watchlist's programs and activities.

In 2018, changes in the funding landscape presented new challenges. With these shifts, as well as the culmination of its 2016-2018 strategic plan, Watchlist seized the opportunity to reflect upon its work and identify its top strategic priorities. In response to rising costs, Watchlist left its longtime office near Grand Central in December 2018, and moved to a new shared space that is centrally located and near the United Nations.

In 2019, Watchlist will build on past successes and deliver upon its strategic priorities, in order to respond to the changing environment and emerging challenges facing children in armed conflict.

⁵ In April 2019, Watchlist became a fiscally-sponsored project of United Charitable, a US-based 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization.

Financials

	1/1/2017 through 12/31/2017	1/1/2018 through 12/31/2018
REVENUE		
Public Support		
Grants & Contributions	\$280,025.00	\$215,154.50
Government Grants	\$529,198.94	\$429,525.38
Total Public Support	\$809,223.94	\$644,679.88
Other Revenue		
External Revenue	\$29,942.94	\$30,000.00
Other Revenue	\$0.75	\$0.00
Total Other Revenue	\$29,943.69	\$30,000.00
TOTAL REVENUE	\$839,167.63	\$674,679.88
EXPENSES		
Operating-Personnel		
Wages/Salaries	\$373,628.34	\$319,108.28
Payroll Taxes	\$31,422.00	\$27,342.20
Benefits	\$60,938.71	\$52,483.35
Other Personnel Costs	\$1,290.00	\$1,613.77
Total Operating-Personnel	\$467,279.05	\$400,547.60
Operating-Non-Personnel		
Professional Services	\$138,509.26	\$67,632.93
Rent	\$75,037.27	\$76,970.71
Utilities	\$18,968.41	\$17,520.80
Other Occupancy Expense	\$1,600.75	\$1,280.44
Materials & Supplies	\$19,901.06	\$7,148.67
Grants & Awards	\$80,000.00	\$10,000.00
Travel	\$45,309.19	\$18,565.03
Conferences	\$15,497.88	\$6,778.51
Communication & Outreach	\$0.00	\$189.00
Other Operating Expenses	\$7,960.03	\$4,692.43
Total Operating-Non-Personnel	\$402,783.85	\$210,778.52
Fees		
Internal Fees	\$78,658.87	\$72,627.68
External Fees	\$983.46	\$1,101.25
Total Fees	\$79,642.33	\$73,728.93
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$949,705.23	\$685,055.05
Surplus/(Deficit)	(\$110,537.60)	(\$10,375.17)
Beginning Net Assets	\$255,583.59	\$145,045.99
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	(\$110,537.60)	(\$10,375.17)
Ending Net Assets	\$145,045.99	\$134,670.82



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