

WATCH LIST ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT



2019 ANNUAL REPORT

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Foreword

- In 2019, the international community marked 30 years since the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which protects the rights of all children from discrimination, violence, and neglect.

The most widely ratified international human rights treaty in history, the CRC has been ratified by 196 governments – the entire UN membership, except the United States – leading to significant improvements in the lives of children around the world. Child survival has increased dramatically, and more children are in primary school today than ever before. Levels of extreme poverty have dropped dramatically, improving millions of children's quality of life, and child labor rates have dropped by more than a third.

Yet children living in countries affected by war continued to miss out. In 2019, the UN verified over 25,000 grave violations against children across 19 countries affected by armed conflict. More than 10,000 children were killed or maimed, and globally, attacks on schools and hospitals committed by government actors nearly doubled. Incidents of the denial of humanitarian access increased by more than 4.5 times from the previous year. Alarming numbers of children were detained for their alleged involvement with armed groups, with thousands more stranded in squalid camps in Iraq and northeast Syria. These trends raise serious concerns about respect for international law, the protection of civilians in armed conflict, and the impacts of warfare in densely populated areas.

Against this backdrop, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict remained persistent in its efforts to advance the UN's children and armed conflict (CAAC) agenda and to protect the rights of children in war.

Its advocacy helped ensure peacekeeping missions were equipped to respond to grave violations against children. Watchlist influenced at least six Security Council resolutions, including peacekeeping mandate renewals in Abyei, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mali, and South Sudan, as well as the renewal of the mandate of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Watchlist also contributed to the development and launch of the Implementation Guidance on the Vancouver

Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers. Launched by the Government of Canada in 2017, the Vancouver Principles are a set of political commitments designed to bring attention to the important role of UN peacekeeping operations in confronting and ending child recruitment and use.

With the rapid expansion of the global counterterrorism agenda increasingly threatening to undermine key protections for children in armed conflict, Watchlist conducted timely research and advocacy to sensitize policy makers to these harmful impacts. Published in December, a joint policy note from Watchlist and Human Rights Watch on the military detention of children drew the attention of UN Member States to this concerning trend.

In 2019, Watchlist continued to support local civil society efforts to monitor, report, and respond to grave violations against children, through its partnerships with local organizations in Colombia and Myanmar. Through these partnerships, Watchlist promoted local voices at the international level. In November, Watchlist brought its partners from Colombia to New York to conduct advocacy ahead of Security Council discussions on the situation in the country and conclusion negotiations of its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

This year, the Watchlist network expanded to include the Child Rights International Network (CRIN), Defence for Children International (DCI), and Plan International, increasing Watchlist's geographic reach and strengthening its thematic scope and expertise.

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 CAAC 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 uphold the integrity of the CAAC agenda, defend children's rights, and create lasting change for children in conflicts worldwide.

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

• ADRIANNE LAPAR
Director
Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict



Advocacy

- In 2019, Watchlist advocated for the protection of children's rights in conflict settings and successfully mainstreamed children and armed conflict priorities across the UN's work.

Mainstreaming Children and Armed Conflict at the Security Council

Watchlist continued to engage with UN Member States in 2019 to bolster support for the CAAC agenda. Its targeted advocacy and policy recommendations drew attention to child protection concerns in conflict-affected countries on the Security Council's agenda and ensured children's rights concerns were considered in relevant resolutions, government statements, and peacekeeping mandate renewals.

In February, Watchlist hosted its fifth annual policy workshop on children and armed conflict, together with Princeton University's Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination (LISD). The workshop brought together members of the Security Council, other Member States, UN staff, and civil society, for candid discussions on the state of the CAAC agenda and its practical implementation in war-affected countries. In a session on the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict (SCWG-CAAC), Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sweden to the UN, Olof Skoog, offered his reflections as the outgoing chair of the Working

Group. Belgian Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative, Karen Van Vlierberge, presented her country's plans as incoming chair for the 2019-2020 term.

Throughout 2019, Watchlist published and disseminated its [Children and Armed Conflict Monthly Updates](#) – two-page briefs offering specific recommendations to the Security Council for action on issues on its agenda. With these updates, Watchlist was able to influence at least six Security Council resolutions, including peacekeeping mandate renewals in Abyei, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mali, and South Sudan, as well as the renewal of the mandate of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Towards those resolutions, Watchlist made 26 recommendations, of which 20 (i.e., 77 percent) were reflected in some form in the adopted texts.

In July 2019, Watchlist published a [special update](#) ahead of the Security Council open debate on children and armed conflict, hosted by Poland in August. The two-page brief highlighted key concerns and emerging trends impacting children in war-torn countries and provided recommendations for members of the Security Council and non-Council members participating in the open debate. The special update was broadly distributed to Member States in New York, and ahead of the open debate, Watchlist

presented its key recommendations at a meeting of the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict, chaired by Canada. A broad range of governments and other stakeholders [participated](#) in the open debate, with a total of 80 statements made, representing 115 UN Member States, the State of Palestine, the Holy See, the European Union (EU), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).



Child Protection in Peace Operations

Throughout the year, Watchlist consistently advocated for measures to strengthen the protection of children through UN peacekeeping operations.

In February 2019, Watchlist traveled to Ottawa, Canada, for the International Review Workshop on the Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers. Hosted by the Government of Canada, the workshop brought together endorsing Member States, UN officials and staff, and civil society from around the world to share their expertise and best practices to inform the development of the guidance.

In August, Watchlist's Director spoke at the launch of the Implementation Guidance at the UN in New York. She highlighted the role of civil society in the development of the Implementation Guidance, the importance of child protection in peacekeeping operations, and the need to mainstream children and armed conflict concerns into peace processes. She also urged Member

States to endorse the Vancouver Principles, Paris Principles, and Safe Schools Declaration, as a package for the protection of children in armed conflict.

Also in August, Watchlist presented at the US Institute of Peace (USIP) and State Department's Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) Workshop on Conflict Management. Watchlist's presentation focused on the role of troop- and police-contributing countries in enhancing the protection of children in armed conflict, including through the implementation of tools such as the Vancouver Principles, Paris Principles and Commitments, and the Safe Schools Declaration.

Campaign for a Credible List

In recent years, politics have set back efforts to protect children embroiled in war. In particular, the exclusion of certain parties to conflict from the Secretary-General's annual "list of shame" has undermined the list's integrity and ability to positively influence warring parties and promote compliance with international law. In response, Watchlist launched a multifaceted campaign for a credible, evidence-based list of child rights violators in the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict.

Through a series of joint civil society [letters](#) to the Secretary-General, Watchlist drew attention to warring parties known to have committed grave violations against children in countries affected by armed conflict and urged him to list these parties accordingly in his 2019 annual report. In May, Watchlist, together with 20 NGOs, again [wrote](#) to the Secretary-General, this time calling for a complete and accurate list of perpetrators of violations against children in his annual report on children and armed conflict.

Also in May, Watchlist published its third annual [policy note](#) with recommendations for the listing of perpetrators and the inclusion of additional situations of concern in the Secretary-General's annual report. Drawing on UN-verified information and other credible reports, the policy note provided information on grave violations committed against children by parties not previously listed and urged the Secretary-General to publish a credible, evidence-based list.



Research

- In 2019, Watchlist conducted timely research on the impact of counterterrorism on children's rights in armed conflict. At a moment when counterterrorism measures and policies are increasingly infringing upon existing human rights protections, the research was especially timely.

Watchlist's research sought to enhance the implementation of existing legal and normative frameworks, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law, in order to protect the rights of children caught in war.

International law recognizes children involved in armed conflict primarily as victims of serious violations who require reintegration into society and their communities. Yet increasingly, governments are treating children affected by armed conflict – even those that may not have any history as combatants – as criminals and security threats. Particularly in conflicts involving armed groups that have been designated as terrorist, governments have become more likely to detain children than to provide them with reintegration.

In December, Watchlist and Human Rights Watch released the joint policy note, [*Military Detention of Children in Armed Conflict: The Role of Handover Protocols in Protecting Children's Rights*](#). Highlighting the increasingly concerning trend of military detention of children for

alleged association with non-state armed groups or on other national security-related offenses, the policy note provides recommendations to end the military detention of children, ensure their reintegration into society, and protect their rights. In partnership with the Permanent Mission of Germany, Watchlist organized a side event to launch the report and to spotlight the impacts of counterterrorism efforts on children's rights, which was widely attended by UN Member States, including members of the Security Council.

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 2019 global report, [*Impunity Remains: 2018 Attacks on Health Care in 23 Countries in Conflict*](#).



Partnerships

- In 2019, Watchlist supported local civil society efforts to monitor and report on grave violations against children in Colombia and Myanmar, while advancing institutional learning and advocacy on children's rights.

Support to Local Civil Society Organizations

Since 2001, Watchlist has supported civil society organizations in countries spanning from Afghanistan, to Nepal, to 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.

In 2019, Watchlist continued to partner with civil society organizations in Colombia and Myanmar, providing support to strengthen local capacity on monitoring, reporting, and advocacy on grave violations against children.

With Watchlist's support, the Coalition Against the Involvement of Boys, Girls, and Youth in the Colombian Armed Conflict (COALICO) continued to actively participate in the UN's country-level task force

responsible for monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children in Colombia. As the only permanent national NGO representative on the task force, COALICO plays an important role in this technical working group tasked with advancing the protection of children's rights in armed conflict. In July 2019, Watchlist and COALICO developed a joint briefing note for the Security Council ahead of its trip to Colombia, ensuring that Council members raised children and armed conflict concerns during their country visit.

In November, Watchlist facilitated an advocacy trip to New York for COALICO staff and affiliates. During the trip, Watchlist and COALICO conducted a series of advocacy meetings with UN Member States to highlight concerns affecting children and youth in Colombia ahead of Security Council discussions on the situation in the country and conclusion negotiations of its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Also during the trip, Watchlist facilitated the participation of Ms. Yenny Londoño – a child rights advocate and former child soldier from Colombia – in a side event

organized by Watchlist's member organization War Child UK and UN University (UNU). Under the title "Nothing About Us Without Us: Participatory Policy Research with Children and Youth Affected by Conflict," the event examined child and youth participation in research, policy, and programming decisions. Ms. Londoño spoke about her experience representing child victims of the armed conflict at peace talks between the Colombian government and the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo* (FARC-EP).

On November 26, 2019, Ms. Londoño spoke at an Arria-Formula meeting of the Security Council on the reintegration of children associated with armed forces and armed groups, entitled "Bridging the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus, including by taking into account children's views in designing and implementing re-integration programmes." Belgium, Peru, Poland, and the United Kingdom co-sponsored the Arria meeting, with support from War Child UK and UNU.

Watchlist also continued to provide technical and financial support to its civil society partner in Myanmar. With Watchlist's support, its partner provided training on the UN-led MRM and the Resolution 1612 framework to local human rights defenders in conflict-affected Kachin State. In May 2019, the partner organization held a two-day workshop on monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children for 14 participants representing 10 local civil society organizations in Kachin State. Subsequently,

participants documented cases of child recruitment and use, sexual exploitation of children, child casualties, military use of schools, the denial of humanitarian access, and the use of landmines. Working with the partner organization, the participants developed a report of their findings, as well as recommendations, and in June, they presented the report to government officials, civil society, UN agencies, and other stakeholders in Yangon.

Institutional Learning and Advocacy

Throughout the year, Watchlist continued to analyze and distill best practices and lessons learned in the implementation of the CAAC agenda worldwide.

As described above, in February 2019, Watchlist traveled to Ottawa, Canada, for the International Review Workshop on the Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles and spoke on a panel about the importance of including child protection provisions in peacekeeping mandates, as well as in peace processes and agreements. The review workshop provided an important platform to continue to strengthen the role of peacekeeping in preventing the recruitment and use of children and other grave violations against children in armed conflict, as well as to promote child protection through peace processes – both longstanding areas of Watchlist's work.

In October, Watchlist participated in the Pan-African Conference on Children Affected by Armed Conflict in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, organized by the African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) and Save the Children. The conference brought together senior policymakers from across the African continent to discuss children and armed conflict, including strengthening synergies between the UN's and the African Union's work on the agenda. Watchlist participated in a panel discussion on the role of local civil society in monitoring, reporting, and response to grave violations against children, where Watchlist encouraged child delegates from war-affected countries to continue their development as youth advocates.





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 2019.

Reflecting Watchlist's unique identity as a civil society network, an Advisory Board comprised of international NGOs provides general supervision and decides the programmatic content. The Advisory Board shares fiduciary responsibility for Watchlist's staff, programs, fundraising, and finances. Watchlist's Advisory Board is made up of five organizations distinguished in their fields: ChildFund Alliance, Human Rights Watch, Save the Children, War Child, and World Vision International.

Beyond its Advisory Board, Watchlist's network also includes Associate Members who share the same commitment to protect the rights of children affected by armed conflict. In 2019, Watchlist proudly welcomed the Child Rights International Network (CRIN), Defence for Children International (DCI), and Plan International, as Associate Members.

In 2019, Watchlist left the Tides Center and became a fiscally sponsored program of United Charitable, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. While United Charitable provides administrative and legal support, it does not provide

Watchlist with any direct financial support. Watchlist also bid farewell to its long-time offices in the Chanin Building, moving to a new space closer to the UN.

Watchlist enjoyed the sustained support of several donors and is especially grateful for the funding it received in 2019 from the Governments of Australia, Germany, Luxembourg, and Sweden. Watchlist also appreciates the support of individual donors who have invested in our mission throughout the year.

The support of our partners and funders is critical for the continuity of Watchlist's programs and activities. Their generous support and collaboration allow Watchlist to remain the indispensable player it is in the area of children and armed conflict, influencing decision makers and making a difference for affected populations.

Financials

	1/1/2018 through 12/31/2018	1/1/2019 through 12/31/2019*
REVENUE		
Public Support		
Grants & Contributions	\$215,154.50	\$112,668.63
Government Grants	\$429,525.38	\$339,382.53
Total Public Support	\$644,679.88	\$452,051.16
Other Revenue		
External Revenue	\$30,000.00	\$0.00
Other Revenue	\$0.00	\$1,715.22
Total Other Revenue	\$30,000.00	\$1,715.22
TOTAL REVENUE	\$674,679.88	\$453,766.38
EXPENSES		
Operating-Personnel		
Wages/Salaries	\$319,108.28	\$114,707.70
Payroll Taxes	\$27,342.20	\$9,722.83
Benefits	\$52,483.35	\$12,949.08
Other Personnel Costs	\$1,613.77	\$835.00
Total Operating-Personnel	\$400,547.60	\$138,214.61
Operating-Non-Personnel		
Professional Services	\$67,632.93	\$44,605.00
Rent	\$76,970.71	\$29,250.00
Utilities	\$17,520.80	\$4,114.75
Other Occupancy Expense	\$1,280.44	\$6,270.91
Materials & Supplies	\$7,148.67	\$5,560.64
Grants & Awards	\$10,000.00	\$64,417.63
Travel	\$18,565.03	\$8,995.43
Conferences	\$6,778.51	\$14,957.20
Communication & Outreach	\$189.00	\$0.00
Other Operating Expenses	\$4,692.43	\$7,271.66
Total Operating-Non-Personnel	\$210,778.52	\$185,443.22
Fees		
Internal Fees	\$72,627.68	\$49,737.93
External Fees	\$1,101.25	\$613.35
Total Fees	\$73,728.93	\$50,351.28
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$685,055.05	\$374,009.11
Surplus/(Deficit)	(\$10,375.17)	\$79,757.27
Beginning Net Assets	\$145,045.99	\$134,670.82
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	(\$10,375.17)	\$79,757.27
Ending Net Assets	\$134,670.82	\$214,428.09

* Watchlist was a fiscally sponsored program of the Tides Center until March 31, 2019. In April 2019, Watchlist became a fiscally sponsored program of United Charitable.



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