WATCH LIST ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

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New Tool Drives Accessibility, Transparency in Data on Harm to Children in War

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict's dashboard of UN data on grave violations of children creates access to searchable trends, reveals context over time

NEW YORK – September 30, 2024 – Each year, the office of the UN Secretary-General releases a report detailing harm against children in violent conflicts around the world. The 2023 report made news by including the Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups, the state miliary force of a permanent UN Security Council member, to the so-called "list of shame." Similarly, Israeli armed and security forces, Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades, and Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and affiliated factions were included for the first time in the 2024 list. This month, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict released a new tool to view and search data on grave violations against children collected and verified by the UN's monitoring and reporting mechanism.

"Our work aims to support accountability for actors who harm children so that this harm will end. An essential factor in holding violators accountable is identifying them and making it known to the global community what they are doing to the next generation," said **Ezequiel Heffes, the director of Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict.** "By building out this tool, we literally map out geographically and over time what is happening to children affected by armed conflict, creating ease of access for researchers and governments to hold accountable the State and non-State actors who harm children."

Each year since 2002, the UN releases a report sharing verified data from the previous year and includes in the annexes a list of States and non-State armed groups responsible for committing grave violations against children. In 2005, the UN Security Council mandated the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on Children and Armed Conflict to document instances of the following grave violations against children during armed conflict: (1) recruitment and use of children, (2) killing and maiming, (3) rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, (4) attacks on schools or hospitals, (5) abduction, and (6) denial of humanitarian access. The first five of these grave violations can trigger the listing of parties to armed conflict in the annexes to the UN Secretary-General's annual reports on children and armed conflict and are thus included in the Dashboard. The "Watchlist Children and Armed Conflict Global Dashboard" builds on this data and provides a searchable, interactive interface to allow researchers, policy makers, and other users to view trends in these 'trigger' violations over time and location.

During the tool's development researchers at Watchlist unearthed findings that give a picture of how children are impacted by armed conflict.

"Over the past five years, the leading verified grave violations that would result in parties being listed have consistently been the recruitment and use of children into armed forces or armed groups and killing and maiming, followed by abduction," said **Dr. Rob Grace, the lead researcher at Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict.** "Of these top three violations, it is non-state armed groups that are responsible for most recruitment and use of children in war and more than 10,000 cases of maiming and deaths in that time frame. State actors are responsible for even more grievous injuries and deaths of children – more than 15,000 since 2019."

Other early findings include:

Since the beginning of data collection in 2001, the top four individual State parties committing grave 'trigger' violations against children have been:
- Israel (15,538 verified grave violations)
- Syria (6,984 verified grave violations)
- Afghanistan (6,247 verified grave violations)
- Myanmar (5,577 verified grave violations)

In the same time period, the top three non-State armed groups are:

- Al-Shabaab in Somalia (28,924 verified grave violations)
- Taliban forces and affiliated groups in Afghanistan (12,615 verified grave violations)
- Boko Haram in Nigeria (8,319 verified grave violations)

"This new tool paints a clear picture and plainly shows more than 20 years of data on verified grave violations of children's rights in war in a simple visual format," said **Aleksandra Jelonek, operations coordinator for Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict.** "We must understand the scope of the harm to children in war if we are going to effectively pressure perpetrators to change their behavior. This tool is a critical step toward greater understanding and transparency; we're hopeful that it can serve advocates for children's protection."

The dashboard is available at https://watchlist.org/resources/caac-global-dashboard/ and allows users to search verified UN data by specific harm to children, country, year, armed group or military and whether the armed group represented a state or a non-state force.

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[Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict](#) *strives to end violations against children in armed conflicts and to guarantee their rights. As a global network, the Watchlist builds partnerships among local, national, and international nongovernmental organizations, enhancing mutual capacities and strengths. Working together, we collect and disseminate information on violations against children in conflicts in order to influence key decision-makers to create and implement programs and policies that effectively protect children.*