

An Open Letter to UN Secretary-General António Guterres:

As organizations working to protect children in situations of war, we sincerely welcome your decision in 2017 to include the Saudi Arabia-led Coalition along with other violators in the annexes of your Annual Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed ("Annual Report") based on credible UN-verified evidence of violations against children in armed conflict. As your report noted, the Coalition was responsible for killing and injuring at least 683 children during 2016.

Despite the scale of violations, the Coalition was the only party to the armed conflict in Yemen listed in the newly-created Section B of Annex 1 among other "Listed parties that have put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children."

In 2017, however, the Coalition continued its child rights violations, including air strikes that have killed and maimed scores of children. We believe that the Coalition's measures to protect children have been insufficient and are asking you to move the Saudi Arabia-led Coalition to the list of parties that have not taken measures to protect children in your upcoming Annual Report.

Although your report last year noted that Saudi Arabia had set up a "Child Protection Unit" at the Coalition's command center in Riyadh, we have seen no evidence on the ground that this has yielded any marked shifts in behavior. Significantly, the UN Security Council Panel of Experts on Yemen said in its annual report that "measures taken by the Saudi Arabia-led Coalition in its targeting process to minimize child casualties, if any, remain largely ineffective," and found that at least 85 children were killed or maimed in 2017 in 10 Coalition airstrikes investigated by the Panel. In March of this year, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported that the Coalition airstrikes resulted in over 61 per cent of all verified civilian casualties since March 2015. After the Coalition reportedly promised to tighten its rules of engagement, Human Rights Watch documented six Coalition airstrikes that killed 55 civilians, including 33 children, and hit multiple family homes, during a three month period between June and August 2017.

While we appreciate the Coalition's efforts through the Joint Incidents Assessment Team (JIAT) to investigate some of these incidents, we find them insufficient. JIAT has so far only released initial results on some 56 air strikes, in the vast majority of which the Coalition has been largely absolved of responsibility. The methodology for JIAT investigations also remains unclear, and decidedly non-transparent. For example, investigations do not clarify which Coalition state participated in the attacks JIAT has investigated. Their findings also differ drastically from those of the UN and human rights organizations.

Finally, despite ongoing discussions, Saudi Arabia has so far failed to sign a Plan of Action with the UN on behalf of the Coalition to end and prevent its violations against children. In contrast, the Yemeni Armed Forces have done so.

To ensure the credibility of your list and avoid double standards, we implore you to signal to all parties in Yemen that much more needs to be done to protect children in conflict. We respectfully call on you to move the Saudi Arabia-led Coalition forces to Section A of Annex 1 of your 2018 Annual Report given the violations have not yet ceased on the ground, they have not yet signed and implemented a UN Plan of Action, and the measures announced towards changing the situation on the ground fall short of their responsibilities under international law and standards. Children in Yemen deserve our utmost protection.

Sincerely yours,

1. Amnesty International
2. ChildFund Alliance
3. Child Soldiers International
4. Christian Aid
5. Defence for Children International (DCI)
6. Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
7. Global Justice Center

8. Human Rights Watch (HRW)
9. International Federation for Human Rights (FDIH)
10. Medicines du Monde (MdM)
11. Nonviolent Peaceforce
12. Physicians for Human Rights (P4HR)
13. PAX
14. Plan International
15. Romeo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative
16. Save the Children
17. Terre des Hommes International Federation
18. The Yemen Peace Project
19. United Nations Association – UK
20. War Child
21. Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict
22. Win Without War
23. Women's Refugee Commission
24. World Vision



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the worldwide movement for children's rights



Terre des Hommes
International Federation