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UN SECRETARY-GENERAL SHOULD ADD NEW PERPETRATORS TO HIS 2017 LIST OF VIOLATORS AGAINST CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT
Watchlist urges credible and accurate listing of violators against children

New York, March 1, 2017 - The new UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, should add at least 10 additional perpetrators of grave child rights violations to his 2017 list of violators, said Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict in a new report released today. The Secretary-General is currently preparing his 2017 annual report on children and armed conflict, which includes annexes listing parties to conflict responsible for grave violations against children.

In both 2015 and 2016, UN Member States exerted political pressure on the Secretary-General to be removed from his list. In 2016, Saudi Arabia and its allies threatened to withdraw hundreds of millions of dollars in assistance to UN programs if the Saudi Arabia-led coalition forces were not removed from the report, despite UN documentation of hundreds of child deaths in Yemen from Saudi Arabia-led coalition air strikes. Under pressure, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon removed the coalition from the list. In 2015, Israel and the United States successfully lobbied to omit the Israel Defense Forces from the list for violations committed during the 2014 war in Gaza.

"The new Secretary-General has an opportunity to send a clear message to all Member States that a party to conflict is listed for one reason alone – a pattern of documented, UN-verified evidence of grave violations against children," said Dragica Mikavica, Advocacy Officer at Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, a network of international human rights and humanitarian organizations.

In response to the worrying trend of politicization, Watchlist proposes a listing of eleven parties to conflict for inclusion in the Secretary-General's 2017 annual report, and sixteen additional parties for further investigation. The report, entitled *2017 Annual Report: Putting Children's Rights Up Front,* covers 16 conflict countries.

For the report, Watchlist reviewed all publicly available reports related to grave violations against children in all relevant situations for the years 2014-2016, including UN, governmental, and NGO sources. It found that many of the violations documented in these reports have been included in the bodies of the Secretary-General's annual reports, but the parties responsible for perpetrating them have not yet been listed. Among the parties Watchlist recommended for listing: armed opposition groups in Southern Thailand for perpetrating attacks on schools and hospitals; the Communist Party/Maoist for recruiting and using children in India; the Israel Defense Forces for killing and maiming children and attacking schools and hospitals in Gaza and the West Bank; and the Saudi Arabia-led coalition forces for killing and maiming children and attacking schools and hospitals in Yemen, among others.

For Thailand, violations by parties have been referenced in the body of every annual report since 2009, and for Israel, since 2005.

Since the Saudi Arabia-led coalition was removed from the list in June 2016, the coalition has continued to kill and maim children and attack schools and hospitals. A September 2016 coalition airstrike on a densely-populated neighborhood in Hodeida killed at least 28 civilians, including 8 children. On January 10 of this year, a Saudi-led coalition attack near a school killed two children and wounded three others.

"The Secretary-General must use his unique voice to preserve the integrity of the Children and Armed Conflict agenda by publishing a complete and accurate list of parties to conflict that commit grave child rights violations," said Mikavica, who conducted the desk review. "A third consecutive year of a publically disputed list puts the credibility of the UN Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism at stake and must be avoided."

Background on the report:
Each year, the Secretary-General submits a report on children and armed conflict to the UN Security Council. These annual reports provide information on grave violations committed against children. The reports include annexes listing the names of parties responsible for these violations. The listing of a party in the Secretary-General's reports is not only a 'name and shame' strategy, it also triggers enhanced monitoring and reporting pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1612 (2005). Including parties on the list of perpetrators enhances the protection of children in armed conflict by facilitating UN's engagement with the responsible parties to end grave violations.

Background on Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict:
Established in 2001, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict ('Watchlist') is an international network of human rights and humanitarian non-governmental organizations striving to end violations against children in armed conflict and to guarantee their rights. As a global network, Watchlist builds partnerships among local, national and international NGOs, enhancing mutual capacities and strengths. Working together, we collect and disseminate information on violations against children in conflict to influence key decision-makers to create and implement programs and policies that effectively protect children. Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict is a project of Tides Center, a non-profit public charity.

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