

**WATCH** LIST ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT



# 2017 ANNUAL REPORT



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# Foreword

- The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) declared 2017 a 'nightmare year' for children trapped in conflicts, as they were attacked in all areas, including those where they should be safe, like schools, hospitals, playgrounds, and in their homes.<sup>1</sup>

**I**n some situations, such as in Myanmar, children were forced to flee en masse as security forces attacked and burned their villages. In others, like Syria and Iraq, warring parties prevented or hindered children from seeking refuge by besieging towns and cities while simultaneously attacking these areas through aerial bombardment and intense ground fighting.

Children have also suffered and died from preventable public health crises resultant from parties to the conflict denying humanitarian access and attacking medical facilities and personnel as tactics of war. In Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen,<sup>2</sup> routine denial of access to lifesaving humanitarian aid helped lead to sweeping cholera epidemics and famine or near-famine conditions.<sup>3</sup> In these and many other situations, the most vulnerable—children—were the most affected. As these and many other crises unfolded, UN budget cuts and staffing mainstreaming in UN peacekeeping and political missions impaired the UN's ability to monitor, report, and respond to child rights violations in conflict.

Still, 2017 saw positive steps in addressing grave violations against children in conflict. After Saudi Arabia successfully pressured former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to remove them from his annual report on children and armed conflict in 2016, the Saudi Arabia-led coalition was listed in the annexes of the 2017 report for killing and maiming children and attacking schools and hospitals in Yemen. The

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF, "Children under attack in 2017," December 28, 2017, <https://medium.com/photography-and-social-change/children-under-attack-in-2017-d73d63a2dfc> (accessed March 6, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> "Rising cholera, diarrhoea and malnutrition 'deadly' for children in Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and Sudan, warns UNICEF," *UN News*, July 4, 2017, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/07/560872-rising-cholera-diarrhoea-and-malnutrition-deadly-children-yemen-south-sudan#.WV0yWITyuM9> (accessed March 6, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Max Bearak and Laris Karklis, "Starving to death: Wars in four countries have left 20 million people on the brink," *The Washington Post*, April 11, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/world/2017-famines/?utm\\_term=.e2df835ac36d](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/world/2017-famines/?utm_term=.e2df835ac36d) (accessed March 6, 2018).

report and its listing mechanism is a crucial tool for pursuing accountability and negotiating time-bound action plans to end and prevent violations with listed parties. Two parties were also delisted in 2017 for completing implementation of their action plans on recruitment and use of children: the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the Philippines and the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC).<sup>4</sup>

In 2017, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict was at the forefront of global advocacy for protecting children in conflict. Using its Children and Armed Conflict (CAC) Monthly Updates as an advocacy tool with Members of the UN Security Council, Watchlist was successful in integrating and safeguarding child protection language in more than 12 relevant resolutions, a Presidential Statement (PRST) on CAC, and five Security Council Working Group conclusions adopted in 2017.

Through an integrated approach, and in concerted efforts with partners, Watchlist contributed to the listing of the Saudi Arabia-led coalition. Towards this end, it published a Field Monitor report documenting attacks on health care and their impact on children in the war in Yemen, released a policy note calling on the Secretary-General to publish a credible and accurate list of perpetrators in his annual report on children and armed conflict, worked with Save the Children to release a joint memo outlining the case for a Saudi Arabia-led coalition listing, and together launched a public petition that collected more than 37,000 signatures calling for the listing.

Watchlist's financial and technical support to local partners in Colombia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) enabled them to make tangible impact for children affected by conflict, by strengthening local capacity to monitor and report on grave violations against children and increasing the flow of information on violations to policy-makers through the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM). Watchlist trainings also helped community-based protection committees in the DRC identify dozens of armed non-State actors that recruit and use children in their ranks in order to advocate for their release and end recruitment. With Watchlist's support, the Coalition against the involvement of boys, girls and youth in armed conflict in Colombia (COALICO) participated and represented civil society in the UN-led Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting grave violations against children. It further contributed to monitoring the implementation of child protection-related aspects of the 2016 peace agreement between the Government and the FARC-EP, including the reintegration of demobilized children and adolescents.

Despite these successes, children in armed conflict continue to face grave challenges, and in some conflicts, violations are escalating at alarming rates. Watchlist continues to play a crucial role in advocating for vulnerable children, both on the ground and at the highest levels of the United Nations.

On behalf of the Members of Watchlist, we sincerely thank our partners and funders for their support of Watchlist's efforts to improve policies and protections for children in conflict.

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

DEBRA JONES,  
*Vice-Chair*  
*Watchlist Advisory Board*  
*representing Save the Children*

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<sup>4</sup> The FARDC remains listed for rape and other forms of sexual violence, for which it has also signed an action plan.





# 1. Advocacy

For Watchlist advocacy, 2017 was marked by a rigorous and sustained campaign targeting the new UN Secretary-General to put children above politics. This follows several years of politicization of the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict and its annexed list of child rights violators, including Saudi Arabia's threat in 2016 to pull all UN funding if the Saudi-led coalition was not removed from the annexes.

## Campaign to Ensure a Credible and Complete Listing of Child Rights Violators

In March, Watchlist published a policy note, entitled *2017 Annual Report: Putting Children's Rights Up Front*, calling on the new Secretary-General, António Guterres, to stand up to countries' efforts to politicize the listing process and call out all parties to conflict who committed, in 2016, UN-documented and verified violations in his report. Most controversially, one year after Saudi Arabia had lobbied the former Secretary-General to be removed from his annual list of shame, Watchlist singled out the Saudi-led coalition for killing and maiming and attacks on schools and hospitals in Yemen. Following the launches of the policy note and a field monitor report on Yemen in April, Watchlist engaged in sustained advocacy, including meeting with the Permanent Mission of Saudi Arabia to the UN in New York.

When the Secretary-General's 2017 report draft was put through a series of delays and it became known that the Executive Office was considering "freezing" the listing in 2017, reportedly to avoid listing the coalition, Watchlist garnered the support of 44 major human rights and humanitarian organizations to call for a complete and credible list of perpetrators in an *Open Letter to the UN Secretary-General António Guterres*. In the summer months, Watchlist and its Members followed up with meetings with key UN officials, including the Special Representative to the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, other senior advisers, and key Member States, to discuss the importance of sending a strong signal to perpetrators that the new Secretary-General will list any and all parties when there is UN-verified evidence of grave violations against children. To supplement these initiatives, Watchlist also worked with Save the Children to galvanize public support through a joint brief laying out the case for a Saudi listing, and a petition calling on the Secretary-General to list the Saudi Arabia-led coalition for attacks on schools and hospitals and killing and maiming of children in Yemen, which was signed by more than 37,000 individuals.

The Secretary-General's 2017 annual report on children and armed conflict was released in October, restoring the Saudi-led coalition to its list of perpetrators. Through its strong advocacy with the UN Security Council and other Member States, Watchlist significantly influenced delegations' statements at the October 31 Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict to reiterate support for the impartiality of the Secretary-General's listing process. Watchlist congratulated the Secretary-General for listing the Saudi Arabia-led coalition for Yemen, in addition to other relevant parties and listings. Watchlist further called on the Secretary-General to make public measures countries had taken towards the protection of children, as referenced in the report's annexes, and ensure that action plans are still pursued, signed, and fully implemented in order for parties to be delisted.

Watchlist's sustained follow-up and advocacy around the annual report contributed to ensuring the production of a more credible and accurate list of perpetrators in 2017, including relisting of the Saudi Arabia-led coalition and the addition of the pro-Government Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq for recruitment and use.

## Mainstreaming Children and Armed Conflict in the Security Council

Watchlist continued to advocate with the UN Security Council and friendly Member States to ensure sustained support for child protection, as well as advocate for preservation of the strongest possible children and armed conflict language in relevant negotiated documents.

”  
Watchlist garnered support of 44 major human rights and humanitarian organizations to call for a complete and credible list of perpetrators in an open letter to the UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

Throughout 2017, certain Member States were keen to “streamline” or cut language in resolutions mandating UN political and peacekeeping missions, which was further followed by cuts to child protection posts by the General Assembly during budget committee negotiations. Given this context, Watchlist used its cornerstone advocacy tool of the Children and Armed Conflict Monthly Updates to call for maintaining dedicated child protection capacity in mission mandates being renewed by the Security Council. It closely followed those resolution negotiations, working with friendly Member States to ensure preservation and safeguarding of existing language. In particular, Watchlist was successful in integrating and/or safeguarding child protection language in more than 12 relevant resolutions.

Watchlist further influenced the Security Council's 2017 PRST on children and armed conflict. Working closely with the penholder, Sweden, all but one recommendation Watchlist made was integrated into the final document, adopted October 31, 2017. One such recommendation builds on Watchlist's development in 2016 of the *Checklist for Drafting Children and Armed Conflict Provisions in Ceasefire and Peace Agreements*, specifically the PRST calls on the UN to develop practical guidance on integrating child protection issues in peace processes. With regards to detention, the PRST reiterates Watchlist's messaging emphasizing that children recruited and used by armed forces and armed groups be treated primarily as victims. Watchlist was particularly pleased to see the Council in the PRST reaffirm its strong support for the UN's children and armed conflict agenda during a particularly difficult year for child protection at the UN.



## 2. Research

- Watchlist's research has shown that parties to the conflict are systematically denying access to lifesaving humanitarian assistance while at the same time attacking medical facilities and personnel, leading to public health crises, including cholera and famine, that have devastating impacts on the most vulnerable--children.

**I**n 2017, Watchlist launched two Field Monitor reports focused on attacks on medical facilities and personnel and conducted field-based research for the third report in the series. Watchlist launched the first report, a field monitor entitled *"Every Clinic Is Now on the Frontline" The Impact on Children of Attacks on Health Care in Afghanistan*, at a March 6 press conference at UN headquarters in New York. That same week, on March 8, Watchlist presented the report at a side event, "The Impact on Children of Attacks on Health in Situations of Armed Conflict," during the 34th Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva. On March 29, Watchlist launched the report in Kabul, Afghanistan, and conducted advocacy meetings with UN agencies, INGOs, and NGOs working in the health sector. The report was picked up or mentioned by multiple media outlets, including the *New York Times*, *Reuters*, *Newsweek*, and *Associated Press*.

On April 20, Watchlist launched the second report, co-branded with Save the Children, entitled *"Every Day Things Are Getting Worse" The Impact on Children of Attacks on Health Care in Yemen*, also at a press conference at the UN in New York. On May 5, Watchlist presented the report at a side event to the one-year anniversary of the adoption

of UN Security Council Resolution 2286, hosted by the Mission of Belgium; Physicians for Human Rights also presented their report on denial of humanitarian access in Syria. The report received broad media coverage, including by the *BBC World Service*, *BBC Newshour*, *Newsweek*, *Reuters*, and *Foreign Policy*. Watchlist utilized the report as part of an advocacy campaign in advance of the release of the Secretary-General's 2017 annual report on children and armed conflict, as previously described, that called for a credible and accurate list of perpetrators in the report's annexes, highlighting the Saudi Arabia-led coalition's violations against children in Yemen.

Watchlist additionally conducted field research in Uganda and South Sudan for the third report, launched in April 2018, entitled: *"Everyone and Everything is a Target" The Impact on Children of Attacks on Health Care in South Sudan*.

Finally, in keeping with its thematic focus on attacks on health care outlined in Watchlist's 3-year Strategic Plan, Watchlist continued to actively participate in the Steering Committee of the Safeguarding Health and Conflict Coalition, including by contributing country chapters for Afghanistan and Yemen for the coalition's 2017 global report on attacks on health care.





## 3. Partnerships

In 2017, Watchlist's Partnerships Program supported child rights activists' efforts to monitor and report on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict, and contributed to institutional learning and advocacy on children's rights in conflict.

### Support to Local Child Rights Organizations

Watchlist's support to civil society organizations provides an opportunity to put policy into practice and to respond to the needs and expectations of victims on the ground. Since its inception, Watchlist has supported over 25 civil society organizations around the world to monitor child rights violations and advocate for children living in conflict-affected areas. Watchlist provides partners with financial and technical support, as well as opportunities to collaborate on high-level advocacy; in turn, partners help build Watchlist's institutional knowledge base. In 2017, Watchlist supported long-standing partners in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Colombia.

In the DRC, Watchlist's local partner, unnamed for security reasons, monitored and documented grave violations and other abuses affecting children. In particular, the partner focused on recruitment and use of children by armed groups, and used the data collected to produce a mapping of armed non-State actors that actively recruit and use

children in their ranks in South Kivu. The information will be shared with the UN, child protection agencies, and other stakeholders, to combat children's rights violations.

Watchlist and its Congolese partner also worked together closely on UN advocacy. In August, Watchlist hosted its partner in New York, where they briefed key UN Member States on the situation of children in the DRC. In the face of impending cuts to child protection capacity within UN peacekeeping missions, the local partner highlighted the important role MONUSCO Child Protection plays in facilitating and supporting the work of local civil society and child protection workers. During a visit to the DRC in October, Watchlist and its partner met with UN actors, NGOs, and local civil society to discuss ways to enhance coordination and collaboration across efforts to respond to violations of children's rights.

In 2017, Watchlist continued its longstanding partnership with COALICO, a civil society coalition working to protect the rights of children affected by armed conflict in Colombia. A standing member of the UN Country Task



Force on Monitoring and Reporting, COALICO monitors violations of children's rights and conducts advocacy at the national and regional levels in order to strengthen measures to protect children and prevent future abuses. Following the signing of the final peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP in late 2016, COALICO monitored the implementation of child protection-related provisions of the accord and advocated for strengthening the protection of children, including adequate support for the reintegration of former child soldiers.

Watchlist and COALICO collaborated on a number of advocacy initiatives during the year, including briefing notes for the UN Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict around its conclusions on Colombia in January, and for the UN Security Council ahead of its visit to Colombia in May. In February, during a visit to Colombia, Watchlist accompanied COALICO on a series of advocacy meetings with key embassies, donors, and government institutions.

## Institutional Learning and Advocacy

In 2017, Watchlist continued to support enhanced monitoring and reporting on grave violations of children's rights in conflict situations through a series of capacity strengthening activities. In February, the organization was invited to give a presentation at a regional workshop for child protection practitioners in Lebanon, on monitoring, reporting, and response to the grave violations within the framework of Security Council Resolution 1612. In November, Watchlist traveled to Colombia to participate in a series of events organized by COALICO in celebration of Universal Children's Day. This included a full-day workshop on monitoring and reporting and Resolution 1612 framework, which Watchlist and COALICO jointly presented to diverse civil society actors; these included teachers, community workers, local government representatives, and NGOs. COALICO also held a conference on promoting

the protection of children's rights in the post-conflict period, at which Watchlist presented its research on child protection in peace processes.

Watchlist also continued to develop and share its institutional learning on children and armed conflict. As members of the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, Watchlist and its local partner from the DRC participated in the Alliance's annual meeting in Kampala, Uganda, in September. Under the theme, "Working across Sectors to Protect Children," the 2017 conference brought together child-protection-in-emergencies practitioners, researchers, donors, and policy makers to share experiences and innovative ideas to better protect children in humanitarian and emergency contexts. Watchlist's local partner shared some of its own experiences of working with the education sector to prevent child recruitment and use and to support the reintegration of former child soldiers.

Watchlist further contributed to institutional learning during the last quarter of the year through the development of an e-learning course on child protection in emergencies, in collaboration with partner organizations. An interactive resource for mid-level child protection practitioners, the web-based course includes introductory guidance on engagement with the UN-led MRM.





## 4. Organizational Update

- Established in 2001 by a group of leading human rights and humanitarian organizations, Watchlist celebrated its 16th anniversary in 2017. Since 2012, Watchlist has been a fiscally-sponsored project of Tides Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and the largest fiscal sponsor in the US. Watchlist does not receive direct financial support from Tides Center.

**A**s a network, Watchlist's programmatic content is set by an Advisory Board composed of international nongovernmental organizations. In 2017, Watchlist's Advisory Board was made up of seven distinguished human rights and humanitarian organizations: **Human Rights Watch, the Norwegian Refugee Council, Save the Children International, Terre des Hommes International Federation, War Child International, World Vision International**, and newly joined **ChildFund Alliance**.

Beyond its Advisory Board, Watchlist's network also includes Associate Members that share Watchlist's commitment to protect the security and rights of children affected by armed conflict. Associate Members include, **Child Soldiers International**,

**Geneva Call, the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, Nonviolent Peaceforce, and the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative.**

In 2017, Watchlist continued to enjoy sustained support of several donors. We are especially grateful for the support received from the Governments of Australia, Belgium, Luxembourg, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Watchlist is additionally grateful for support received from a major anonymous donor.

“Watchlist's work on children and armed conflict has been very important to the Council's work on the CAC agenda. Watchlist remains an indispensable player in the area of children and armed conflict.

*- Mr. Raphaël Dang, First Secretary,  
Permanent Mission of France  
to the UN*

Our partners and funders are critical in their patronage to Watchlist's programs and activities. Their generous support and encouragement enables Watchlist to remain the indispensable player it is in the area of children and armed conflict, making a difference where it really matters.



# Financials

	2016-01-01 through 2016-12-31	2017-01-01 through 2017-12-31
Ordinary Income/Expense		
<b>REVENUE</b>		
<b>Public Support</b>		
Grants & Contributions	\$369,942.00	\$280,025.00
Government Grants	\$918,527.90	\$529,198.94
<b>Total Public Support</b>	<b>\$1,288,469.90</b>	<b>\$809,223.94</b>
External Revenue	\$2,914.36	\$29,942.94
Other Revenue	\$0.00	\$0.75
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$1,291,384.26</b>	<b>\$839,167.63</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
<b>Operating-Personnel</b>		
Wages/Salaries	\$340,229.14	\$373,628.34
Payroll Taxes	\$28,833.31	\$31,422.00
Benefits	\$57,728.80	\$60,938.71
Other Personnel Costs	\$1,015.00	\$1,290.00
<b>Total Operating-Personnel</b>	<b>\$427,806.25</b>	<b>\$467,279.05</b>
<b>Operating-Non-Personnel</b>		
Professional Services	\$172,569.07	\$138,509.26
Rent	\$73,414.79	\$75,037.27
Utilities	\$17,985.52	\$18,968.41
Other Occupancy Expense	\$1,897.93	\$1,476.41
Materials & Supplies	\$21,018.82	\$19,901.06
Grants & Awards	\$80,690.00	\$80,000.00
Travel	\$67,936.97	\$45,309.19
Conferences	\$25,822.32	\$15,497.88
Communication & Outreach	\$2,000.00	\$0.00
Other Operating Expenses	\$3,759.00	\$7,960.03
<b>Total Operating-Non-Personnel</b>	<b>\$467,094.42</b>	<b>\$402,659.51</b>
<b>Fees</b>		
Internal Fees	\$116,365.12	\$78,658.87
External Fees	\$1,030.83	\$983.46
<b>Total Fees</b>	<b>\$117,395.95</b>	<b>\$79,642.33</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$1,012,296.62</b>	<b>\$949,580.89</b>
Surplus/(Deficit)	\$279,087.64	(\$110,413.26)
<b>BEGINNING NET ASSETS</b>	<b>(23,504.05)</b>	<b>255,583.59</b>
<b>NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>	<b>279,087.64</b>	<b>(110,413.26)</b>
<b>ENDING NET ASSETS</b>	<b>255,583.59</b>	<b>145,170.33</b>



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