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UN: Upcoming Report Should Highlight Violations Against Children Affected by Conflicts in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Ukraine

Secretary-General Should Also Include Tatmadaw, Israeli Government Forces, and Other Child Rights Violators in Annual 'List of Shame'

New York, April 12, 2022 – As grave violations against children escalate in Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Ukraine, the UN Secretary-General should add these conflicts to his upcoming annual report on children and armed conflict, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict said in a new [report](#) published today. Watchlist also called on the Secretary-General to add four government or coalition forces, including security forces in Myanmar and Israel, and two armed groups to his annual list of child rights violators. Secretary-General António Guterres is currently preparing his annual report on children and armed conflict, which details grave violations committed against children in countries around the world in 2021 and includes an annexed list of perpetrators.

“The Secretary-General’s past omission of Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Ukraine is inexplicable, given the scale of violations against children in these conflicts,” said Adrienne Lapar, director of Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, a network of international human rights and humanitarian organizations. “His upcoming report should shed light on grave violations against children in these countries and call all perpetrators to be accountable.”

In these three countries, armed conflicts have had devastating impacts on children for several years, including killings and serious injuries, recruitment and use as soldiers, sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, abductions, and denial of access to humanitarian aid. Yet, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Ukraine have never been included in the Secretary-General’s annual reports on children and armed conflict. By including them in his upcoming report, the Secretary-General would ensure the UN’s continued monitoring and trigger regular reporting to the Council on the situation of children in these countries. Watchlist has called for Ukraine’s inclusion in the Secretary-General’s report on children and armed conflict each year since it first [started issuing](#) its annual recommendations in 2017.

Watchlist’s 32-page report, [“A Credible List”: Recommendations for the Secretary-General’s 2022 Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict](#), provides information on grave violations committed against children in 12 countries in 2021. Drawing on UN-verified information and other credible accounts, the report recommends that 10 parties in eight countries be added to the Secretary-General’s ‘list of shame,’ listed for additional violations, or investigated further with a view towards possible listing. It also recommends that the Secretary-General include four new ‘situations of concern’ in the report’s narrative.

For example, Myanmar’s military—known as the Tatmadaw—intensified attacks on schools and hospitals in the wake of the February 2021 coup, occupying more than 60 [education facilities](#) by March of 2021 and more than 50 [health facilities](#) by May; in many cases, these occupations also entailed attacks against teachers, students, health workers, and patients, as well as the destruction of property. In 2021, the Secretary-General listed the Tatmadaw for recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming children, and sexual violence against children, but not attacks on schools and hospitals.

In Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, Israeli government forces were responsible for over 900 child casualties in 2021, including [66 children killed](#) and [540 injured](#) during the 11-day escalation of hostilities between the two sides last May. Watchlist also calls on the UN to further investigate the killing of [seven Palestinian children](#) and [two Israeli children](#) by Palestinian armed groups last May. Between 2015 and 2020, the UN attributed over 6,700 child casualties to Israeli forces, yet they have never been listed.

“When warring parties aren’t called out for violating children’s rights, it sends the message that they can get away with these violations,” said Lapar. “The UN Secretary-General should set the record straight by listing all perpetrators—whether they are governments, international coalitions, or armed groups—in his forthcoming report on children and armed conflict.”

Additional Background

The Secretary-General’s annual report on children and armed conflict and its annexed list of perpetrators have served as a unique and important first step for holding perpetrators accountable and pressuring them to end abuses and protect children in times of war. Their [impact and credibility](#) largely rely on the application of the same standards to all parties, whether they be non-state armed groups, government forces, or coalitions of governments.

Watchlist and other civil society groups have previously [expressed concerns](#) about efforts to politicize the list and the Secretary-General’s failure to include all parties responsible for child rights abuses. In 2021, an independent [analysis](#) by a group of international experts revealed persistent discrepancies in the listing of perpetrators, including at least eight parties to conflict who were found responsible for killing and maiming over 100 children in a single year, yet were not listed. The experts also found double standards in the treatment of state and non-state parties to conflict.

In 2021, the Secretary-General’s [annual report](#) detailed the situation of children affected by war in 19 countries, plus the Lake Chad Basin region, and listed perpetrators from across 14 countries in the annexes. Despite ongoing conflicts in Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Ukraine for several years, these countries were not included in the report.

In Ethiopia, warring parties have [killed](#), maimed, and [raped](#) children, [attacked](#) schools and hospitals, and prevented [humanitarian assistance](#) from reaching children and other civilians since fighting broke out in the Tigray region in 2020. Since 2017, the government of Mozambique, with the support of private and regional forces, has been battling a local armed group with links to the Islamic State (IS) that has brutally [killed](#) children, including through [beheadings](#), abducted children to forcibly [recruit](#) them as soldiers or marry them off to fighters, and [sexually abused](#) them. Since 2014, conflict between Ukrainian forces and Russian-backed armed groups in eastern Ukraine’s Donbas region has left hundreds of children [dead or disabled](#) as a result of the use of explosive weapons and thousands more deprived of education after their [schools](#) were damaged or destroyed. Since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February, [hundreds more children](#) have been killed and seriously injured in attacks on civilian homes, schools, and health care facilities.

For more information, please contact:

Adrienne Lapar, Director, Watchlist – adriannel@watchlist.org, +1 516 853 1196

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict is a New York-based coalition of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that seeks to end violations against children in armed conflict and guarantee their rights. For more information, please visit: <https://watchlist.org/>.