

# Children and Armed Conflict:

UN SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN DEBATE ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

SPECIAL UPDATE:  
JUNE 2025

## Recommendations for the UN Security Council and Member States

On June 25, 2025, the Security Council will hold its open debate on children and armed conflict (CAAC), under Guyana's presidency. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG-CAAC) will present the Secretary-General's (SG) 2025 annual report on CAAC (forthcoming), covering the period from January 1 to December 31, 2024. The open debate will focus on strategies to prevent and end grave violations against children with emphasis on killing and maiming and rape and other forms of sexual violence, particularly against girls.

Since its inception, the UN's CAAC agenda has made valuable progress in protecting children in armed conflict, encouraging compliance with international law and promoting behavior change of warring parties. The agenda encompasses unique tools that Member States, UN offices and agencies, and civil society can leverage to strengthen the protection of children and ensure full respect for their rights. The SG's annual report, the Office of the SRSG-CAAC, the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM), and the Security Council Working Group on CAAC (SCWG-CAAC) each play a role in spurring concrete commitments and measures to prevent and end grave violations against children and upholding international legal and normative standards for their protection. Despite this progress, in 2023, the UN verified the highest ever number of grave violations in a single reporting period. Parties to conflict continue to kill and maim children in increasingly high numbers, including by using explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA) with disproportionate impacts on children. Rape and other forms of sexual violence against children is rampant, systematically used as a weapon of war, and remains severely underreported.

As we mark 20 years since the adoption of SCR 1612 which established the MRM and the SCWG-CAAC, more action is needed to enforce compliance with obligations to protect children in armed conflict and ensure accountability for those who continue to commit grave violations. A blatant disregard for international law, pervasive impunity, shrinking civic space, the proliferation of counterterrorism measures lacking adequate safeguards for children's rights, the withdrawal of UN missions and their child protection personnel, and a persistent and widening resource gap all undermine efforts to protect children in armed conflict.

The open debate presents a critical opportunity for Member States to reaffirm their commitment to the CAAC agenda and translate it into action, including implementing existing frameworks, investing in child protection capacities, and holding perpetrators accountable. Member States, UN entities, and civil society should work towards consistent, meaningful, and safe child participation in decisions affecting them.

In view of the upcoming open debate, Watchlist recommends that the Security Council and other UN Member States:

### 1. Strongly reiterate support for the UN's CAAC agenda, demand increased compliance with international law and child protection norms, and strengthen accountability measures for perpetrators of grave violations:

- a. Reaffirm commitments to uphold international humanitarian, human rights, and refugee law and child protection norms; encourage Member States who have not done so to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict; and demand timely, meaningful accountability for all violations and abuses committed against children in armed conflict.
- b. Strongly condemn all grave violations and abuses against children and encourage the signing and implementation of joint action plans with the UN to end and prevent grave violations; demand that all parties take action to protect children in accordance with the principles of precaution, distinction, and proportionality.
- c. Demand that all parties to conflict allow and facilitate unimpeded, rapid, and safe access to ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance to affected populations, especially children, and respect and protect humanitarian personnel, assets, and infrastructure.

### Situations before the Council involving parties listed for grave violations against children:

[Afghanistan](#)

[Burkina Faso](#)

[Central African Republic](#)

[Colombia](#)

[Democratic Republic of the Congo](#)

[Iraq](#)

[Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory](#)

[Lake Chad Basin](#)

[Mali](#)

[Myanmar](#)

[Nigeria](#)

[Philippines](#)

[Somalia](#)

[South Sudan](#)

[Sudan](#)

[Syrian Arab Republic](#)

[Ukraine](#)

[Yemen](#)

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- d. Urge Member States to bring to justice all those responsible for grave violations against children, including through prompt investigation and, where appropriate, prosecution for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and other egregious crimes against children; encourage cooperation with international justice mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court, and call for dedicated child rights expertise within investigative and justice mechanisms.
- e. Call for a complete, evidence-based list of perpetrators in the annexes of the SG's annual reports that accurately reflects data collected and verified by the MRM; strongly urge the SG to implement a rigorous, objective, and transparent process to ensure that parties are listed and de-listed according to the [2010 criteria](#), consistently across all country situations.

## 2. Strengthen the effective use of existing mechanisms and tools to monitor, report, and respond to grave violations:

- a. Encourage Member States who have not done so to endorse and implement the Paris Principles and Commitments, Vancouver Principles, Safe Schools Declaration, and the EWIPA Declaration; and encourage endorsers to uphold their commitments and fully implement and exchange lessons learned and good practices.
- b. Call for increased financial and political support for the UN's MRM, encouraging systematic analysis of the impact of gender, disability, and other vulnerabilities to inform response and prevention efforts; further support efforts to strengthen and enhance monitoring and reporting, including data disaggregation.
- c. Call for increased child protection capacity in UN peace operations and political missions, including maintaining child protection best practice, capacity, and standards in all new missions, with financial, political, and operational support; prioritize child protection considerations in the context of mission drawdown or transition, per [SCR 2764 \(2024\)](#).
- d. Urge donors to provide predictable and long-term funding for comprehensive, gender-sensitive, age-appropriate, and disability-inclusive child protection response systems and services, including for reintegration of children associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAG).

## 3. Redouble efforts to prevent grave violations against children and protect their rights in armed conflict:

- a. Call on states to review military doctrine, policies, and planning around the use of EWIPA, adopting an avoidance policy, and ensuring child-specific impacts are systematically considered and addressed; renew efforts to mark and clear explosive remnants of war; and promote explosive ordnance risk education, conflict preparedness, and protection for affected communities.
- b. Call on all parties to take immediate and specific steps to end and prevent rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, ensure survivors have access to comprehensive, gender-sensitive, and age-appropriate response systems and services, and strengthen preventative measures.
- c. Call for effective measures to prevent and address attacks and threats of attack on education facilities, including prohibiting the military use of schools through, inter alia, legislation or military doctrine, and paying particular attention to inclusive access to education for girls, refugee and internally displaced children, and children with disabilities.
- d. Recalling that CAAFAG should be treated primarily as victims and that detention should be used only as a last resort, call for the release and timely transfer of children in security force custody to civilian child protection authorities and encourage the adoption and effective implementation of [handover protocols](#) to prevent the military detention of children as well as for access to detention facilities for UN and other independent monitors; in cases where children may have committed violent criminal acts, ensure they are treated in accordance with international juvenile justice standards.
- e. Call for the protection, rights, well-being, and empowerment of children affected by armed conflict to be fully incorporated and prioritized in ongoing and future efforts to build and sustain peace, per [SCR 2427 \(2018\)](#); encourage and facilitate the meaningful, consistent consideration of children's perspectives in these processes, where possible and compatible with their best interests, drawing on existing tools, including the [Practical Guidance for Mediators to Protect Children in Situations of Armed Conflict](#).

### NGO Resources

- ➔ [Children and Crimes Against Humanity Coalition, Justice for Children in the Future Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes Against Humanity, May 2025](#)
- ➔ [The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, Brief: Global Impact of Funding Cuts on Children and Their Protection in Humanitarian Contexts, April 2025](#)
- ➔ [Watchlist, "A Credible List": Recommendations for the Secretary-General's 2025 Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict, April 2025](#)
- ➔ [Save the Children, Stop the War on Children 2024: Pathways to Peace, October 2024](#)
- ➔ [Watchlist, Explosive Weapons and the Children and Armed Conflict Agenda, May 2024](#)
- ➔ [ICRC, Childhood in Rubble: The Humanitarian Consequences of Urban Warfare for Children, May 2023](#)
- ➔ [Save the Children, Blast Injuries: The impact of explosive weapons on children in conflict, 2019](#)

### About Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict is a global network of international human rights and humanitarian non-governmental organizations which strives to end violations against children in armed conflicts through local partnerships, reporting and advocacy.

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