

## Policy Note

April 2021

# “A Credible List”:

## Recommendations for the Secretary-General’s 2021 Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict

### Introduction

The United Nations Secretary-General has presented an annual report on the situation of children affected by armed conflict (‘annual report’) to the Security Council since 2000. The main purpose of the report has been to draw the attention of UN Member States to grave violations against children and the perpetrators. With its Resolution 1379 (2001) and subsequent resolutions on children and armed conflict, the Security Council mandated the Secretary-General to include in his annual reports a list of parties to armed conflict that commit the following grave violations against children: recruitment and use; killing and maiming; rape and other forms of sexual violence; attacks on schools and hospitals; and abductions. The Council further strengthened this system in 2005, when it established a unique global Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) to collect and rigorously verify information on the grave violations against children in armed conflict.

The listing mechanism, which draws its evidence base from the MRM, has served as an important tool for the protection of children in armed conflict. It provides a key first step towards accountability by clearly identifying warring parties responsible for grave violations against children in armed conflict. The mechanism also serves as a foundation for the UN to dialogue with warring parties, secure concrete commitments to end and prevent violations through UN action plans, and create tangible, positive changes for children affected by war.

In recent years, however, the process for determining which perpetrators are included in the report’s annexes has become increasingly politicized, threatening to undermine the report’s credibility and weaken its strength as a tool for promoting accountability and compliance with applicable international law.



### About Watchlist

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict strives to end violations against children in armed conflicts and to guarantee their rights. As a global network, Watchlist builds partnerships among local, national, and international nongovernmental organizations, enhancing mutual capacities and strengths. Working together, we strategically collect and disseminate information on violations against children in conflicts in order to influence key decision-makers to create and implement programs and policies that effectively protect children.

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict is a fiscally sponsored program of United Charitable, a not-for-profit organization.

[watchlist@watchlist.org](mailto:watchlist@watchlist.org)  
[www.watchlist.org](http://www.watchlist.org)

These concerns have been raised by civil society, UN Member States, and most recently, an independent group of experts,<sup>1</sup> following the Secretary-General's decision in 2020 to prematurely remove the Saudi- and Emirati-led coalition for killing and maiming children in Yemen and the Tatmadaw for recruitment and use of children in Myanmar.

In March 2021, a group of internationally respected child rights experts undertook an independent review of the Secretary-General's listing and de-listing decisions between 2010 and 2020.<sup>2</sup> Their analysis revealed persistent and disturbing discrepancies and double standards 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.<sup>3</sup> The experts' report also found discrepancies between the treatment of state and non-state parties to conflict, with non-state actors often listed for a lower number of verified violations than state actors, as well as inconsistent application of the criteria for de-listing.

## The COVID-19 Pandemic and Continuing Challenges to Protect Children

COVID-19 has exacerbated many of the challenges facing children in armed conflict.<sup>4</sup> Healthcare systems already battered by war have become further strained as they struggle to respond to the outbreak. With schools closed as a response to the pandemic, millions of children in

conflict areas are out of school. Child protection actors have warned that children may be at increased risk of recruitment and use by armed forces or groups, abduction, and sexual violence due to deepening poverty, restrictions on movement, and reduced access to essential services. Denial of humanitarian access had seen an alarming spike even before the pandemic. Measures aimed at stopping the spread of COVID-19 have posed additional challenges to the timely and effective delivery of lifesaving assistance to children in need, limiting the movement of goods, aid workers, and beneficiaries, and disrupting transportation services and domestic and international trade.

In addition, the COVID-19 crisis has posed challenges to the UN's work on the ground, due to restricted access to in-person verification of reported violations, additional barriers to engagement with armed groups for the development and signing of action plans, and canceled field visits in 2020. Despite these challenges, the MRM continues to function, and field teams have found innovative ways to continue their work. At the same time, resources for child protection in UN missions remain insufficient and under threat from budget cuts, and proactive engagement is needed to prevent child protection gaps in the contexts of mission transition and drawdown.<sup>5</sup>

Measures to counter terrorism and violence extremism increasingly threaten to erode human rights protections broadly and child protection norms specifically, as children are increasingly treated as threats and detained for their alleged involvement with armed groups, and

- 
- 1 Eminent Persons Group, "Keeping the Promise: An Independent Review of the UN's Annual List of Perpetrators of Grave Violations against Children, 2010 to 2020," March 2021, <https://watchlist.org/wp-content/uploads/eminent-persons-group-report-final.pdf> (accessed March 24, 2021).
  - 2 Ibid.
  - 3 These include state armed forces and international forces in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Israel, Nigeria, and Yemen, and non-state armed groups in Afghanistan and Syria (Ibid., pp. 4-5).
  - 4 For further details, see: Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, "Factsheet: COVID-19 and Children in Armed Conflict," September 2020, [https://watchlist.org/wp-content/uploads/2406-watchlist-factsheet-covid\\_final.pdf](https://watchlist.org/wp-content/uploads/2406-watchlist-factsheet-covid_final.pdf) (accessed March 24, 2021).
  - 5 Per the UN's 2017 policy on child protection in peace operations, those missions with a Security Council mandate on child protection should have a senior child protection advisor (CPA) and dedicated child protection staff, and CPAs should have direct access to senior mission leadership, as well as the political and operational space needed to engage on child protection with relevant counterparts. See: UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), Department of Field Support (DFS), and Department of Political Affairs (DPA), Policy on Child Protection in United Nations Peace Operations, 2017, [https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/1.\\_protection\\_-\\_3\\_child\\_protection\\_policy\\_0.pdf](https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/1._protection_-_3_child_protection_policy_0.pdf) (accessed April 5, 2021), para. 18.

thousands more are stranded in squalid camps in Iraq and Syria for their actual or alleged links to the Islamic State. Long-accepted principles, including the concept that children affected by armed conflict are primarily victims entitled to reintegration, are under threat, and humanitarian actors face obstacles to their ability to provide lifesaving assistance in conflicts involving armed groups designated as terrorist.

## Methodology

Watchlist conducted a desk review of various publicly available reports for 14 relevant country situations for the period from January 1 to December 31, 2020, to inform its recommendations. These particular country situations were chosen based on the Secretary-General's 2020 annual report on children and armed conflict, focusing on those situations where parties were cited as having committed considerable numbers of grave violations but were not listed in the report's annexes.<sup>6</sup> In addition to these, Watchlist reviewed information on grave violations for four situations not currently included in the Secretary-General's annual reports: Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh region), Ethiopia (Tigray region), northern Mozambique, and eastern Ukraine.

Sources include the Secretary-General's previous annual reports on children and armed conflict; reports from UN agencies and offices, peacekeeping and special political missions, treaty bodies, and commissions of inquiry; and documentation by Watchlist's members and other reputable international nongovernmental organizations

(NGOs) with relevant expertise. In some cases, Watchlist also analyzed credible news media sources. Its review focused on the five "trigger" violations: recruitment and use; killing and maiming; rape and other forms of sexual violence; attacks on schools and hospitals; and abductions.

Watchlist's method to arrive at a recommendation for listing is derived from the Security Council's relevant resolutions on children and armed conflict and the Secretary-General's previous annual reports.<sup>7</sup> While not setting a standard numerical threshold that should necessarily trigger listing, particular attention was paid to parties responsible for 10 or more verified cases of recruitment and use, sexual violence, or attacks on schools and hospitals during a single reporting period, and 20 or more cases of killing and maiming or abductions.<sup>8</sup> Where parties were found responsible for committing a number of verified violations exceeding these thresholds for two consecutive years (2019 and 2020), Watchlist recommends listing.

For some parties mentioned in the body of the Secretary-General's 2020 annual report that have not yet been listed, Watchlist recommends that the UN further investigate to determine whether they should be included in the 2021 report narrative and/or annexes. For these parties, evidence of verified violations was concerning but not sufficient to justify recommending listing. If investigation by the country team is not possible, the UN could do so by sending a delegation to the country to independently verify allegations, per MRM guidelines.<sup>9</sup>

6 In 2020, the Secretary-General added Cameroon and Burkina Faso as situations of concern, indicating that they would be covered in the 2021 report.

7 UN Security Council Resolutions 1379 (2001), para. 16; 1882 (2009), para. 3; 1998 (2011), para. 3; 2225 (2015), para. 3.

8 Watchlist paid particular attention to reviewing cases where, in the past two years, a party to conflict had committed 10 or more cases of recruitment and use, sexual violence, or attacks on schools and hospitals in a single year, but was not listed in the Secretary-General's 2020 annexes. The number for recruitment and use was chosen in accordance with Security Council Resolution 1379, which requests the Secretary-General to list parties that recruit or use children (i.e., not specifying a pattern). For sexual violence, since it is a notoriously difficult violation to verify, 10 or more violations were considered cause for particular concern and a likely indication of a pattern. Similarly, regarding attacks on schools and hospitals, where each attack often affects dozens or more children, 10 or more incidents were deemed likely to indicate a pattern. For killing and maiming and abductions, the number of violations indicating a likely pattern was set at 20 or more.

9 Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG-CAAC), UNICEF, UN DPKO, Guidelines: Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on Grave Violations against Children in Situations of Armed Conflict, June 2014, [https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/MRM\\_Guidelines\\_-\\_5\\_June\\_20141.pdf](https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/MRM_Guidelines_-_5_June_20141.pdf) (accessed March 25, 2021).

It should be noted that the information contained in this policy note is not intended to encompass all incidents perpetrated against children in all relevant situations during the reporting period. Rather, this policy note aims to *highlight specific incidents* to support Watchlist’s recommendations to list certain parties, add additional violations to parties already listed, or to further investigate certain situations.

## Recommendations

On the basis of its review and bearing in mind the limitations described above, Watchlist recommends that the UN Secretary-General:

1. List or re-list the following parties that have committed grave violations against children in 2020 in the annexes of his upcoming annual report:
  - Afghanistan: Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF), including the Afghan National Army, National Directorate of Security, and pro-government armed groups, for killing and maiming children and attacks on schools and hospitals
  - Afghanistan: United States-led international forces, for killing and maiming children
  - Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territory: Israeli forces, for killing and maiming children
  - Myanmar: Tatmadaw, for the recruitment and use of children
  - Sudan: Government security forces, including the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), and the Sudan Police Force, for killing and maiming children
  - Syria: Russian Government forces and Russian-backed Syrian air forces, for killing and maiming children and attacks on schools and hospitals
  - Yemen: Saudi- and Emirati-led coalition, for killing and maiming children
2. Further investigate to determine whether parties should be listed in the annexes:
  - Colombia: Dissident groups of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia—Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), for the recruitment and use of children
  - Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC): Police nationale congolaise (PNC), for rape and other forms of sexual violence against children
  - Iraq: Iraqi security forces, including the Iraqi army and Iraqi police, for killing and maiming children
  - Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territory: Israeli forces, for attacks on schools and hospitals
  - Libya: Libyan National Army (LNA), including pro-Haftar militias and allied foreign forces, for killing and maiming children
  - Sudan: Government security forces, including the RSF, the SAF, and the Sudan Police Force, for rape and other forms of sexual violence against children
3. Consider including in the narrative of the report as “situations of concern” and further investigate which parties are responsible for committing grave violations, in order to determine whether parties should be listed in the annexes:
  - Ethiopia (Tigray region)
  - Mozambique
  - Ukraine

## 2021 Annual Report Submission

# Annex I Countries

## Afghanistan

*The Afghan National Police (ANP), including the Afghan Local Police (ALP), are listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's most recent annual report on children and armed conflict for recruitment and use. Four armed groups (Haqqani Network, Hizb-i Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province [ISIL-KP], and Taliban forces and affiliated groups) are each listed for recruitment and use and killing and maiming of children. Of these, ISIL-KP is also listed for attacks on schools and hospitals, and the Taliban, for attacks on schools and hospitals and abductions. Watchlist makes the following recommendations on Afghanistan.*

*\*Note: The ALP was formally abolished after funding ended in September 2020. Most of its members were transferred to the ANP or Afghan National Army – Territorial Force.<sup>10</sup>*

## **Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF), Including the Afghan National Army, National Directorate of Security, and Pro-Government Armed Groups**

### **Recommendation to List – Killing and Maiming**

In the Secretary-General's most recent annual report, the ANDSF (610) and pro-government armed groups (45) were found responsible for at least 655 child casualties between January 1 and December 31, 2019.<sup>11</sup> However, the Secretary-General did not list the ANDSF for killing and maiming.

Between January 1 and December 31, 2020, UNAMA attributed 872 child casualties (288 killed and 584 injured) to Afghan national security forces and pro-government armed groups. Of this total, Afghan national security forces were responsible for 849 child casualties (279 killed and 570 injured).<sup>12</sup>

Pro-government armed groups were responsible for 23 child casualties (nine killed and 14 injured), while an additional 44 child casualties (13 killed and 31 injured) were attributed to "undetermined or multiple Pro-Government Forces," which might include the US or other international forces.<sup>13</sup> (*See below.*)

<sup>10</sup> UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), "Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: Annual Report 2020," February 2021, [https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/afghanistan\\_protection\\_of\\_civilians\\_report\\_2020\\_revs3.pdf](https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/afghanistan_protection_of_civilians_report_2020_revs3.pdf) (accessed March 1, 2021), p. 33, footnote 70.

<sup>11</sup> UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/74/845-S/2020/525), June 2020, <https://undocs.org/s/2020/525> (accessed March 16, 2020), para. 20.

<sup>12</sup> UNAMA, "Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: Annual Report 2020," February 2021, p. 31, footnote 57.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31, footnote 58.

### Recommendation to List – Attacks on Schools and Hospitals

In 2019, the UN verified a total of 18 attacks on schools and hospitals attributed to the ANDSF (not including ANP and ALP), including the Afghan National Army (10) and the National Directorate of Security (8).<sup>14</sup> Yet, the Secretary-General did not list the ANDSF for attacks on schools and hospitals in his most recent annual report on children and armed conflict.

In 2020, the UN found pro-government forces responsible for at least 27 attacks on schools and hospitals and related personnel, including at least 17 attacks by Afghan national security forces.<sup>15</sup> UNAMA verified 18 incidents attributed to pro-government forces, which caused the death of 17 students and one education personnel, the injury of 18 students and one personnel, and damage to 18 different schools, but did not provide further disaggregation on perpetrators of these attacks.<sup>16</sup> UNAMA found pro-government forces responsible for nine incidents affecting healthcare personnel or facilities, including three direct attacks or threats.<sup>17</sup>

### US-Led International Forces

#### Recommendation to List – Killing and Maiming

In 2019, the UN verified 248 child casualties by international military forces in Afghanistan.<sup>18</sup> Yet, the Secretary-General did not list international military forces for killing and maiming.<sup>19</sup>

According to UNAMA, pro-government international military forces were responsible for 46 child casualties (36 killed and 10 injured) between January 1 and December 31, 2020.<sup>20</sup> This figure is separate from and in addition to the 44 casualties attributed to “undetermined or multiple Pro-Government Forces”—documented under the ANDSF and pro-government militias (*see above*)—some of which may also have been caused by international forces.

While child casualties attributed to international forces were comparable to 2019 levels in January and February 2020, UNAMA has noted the civilian casualties caused by international military force airstrikes in Afghanistan “all but ceased” following the signing of the US-Taliban agreement on February 29.<sup>21</sup> The total number of civilian casualties attributed to international military forces in 2020 (120) was the lowest since UNAMA began systematic documentation in 2009.<sup>22</sup>

14 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/74/845-S/2020/525), June 2020, para. 22.

15 UNAMA, “Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: Annual Report 2020,” February 2021, pp. 36-38; UN Protection Cluster Afghanistan, “Protecting Children in Afghanistan – Advocacy, Action, and Accountability,” September 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Protection-Brief-1-Children-and-Armed-Conflicts-September-2020.pdf> (accessed December 12, 2020), p. 3; UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (A/75/634-S/2020/1182), December 9, 2020, <https://undocs.org/S/2020/1182> (accessed December 17, 2020), paras. 39-40; UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (A/75/378-S/2020/809), August 18, 2020, <https://www.undocs.org/en/A/75/378> (accessed December 17, 2020), paras. 34-35; UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (A/75/897-S/2020/549), June 17, 2020, <https://undocs.org/S/2020/549> (accessed December 17, 2020), para. 37.

16 UNAMA, “Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: Annual Report 2020,” February 2021, p. 38.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

18 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/74/845-S/2020/525), June 2020, para. 20.

19 The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is leading a non-combat support mission in Afghanistan, the Resolute Support Mission (RSM), following the completion of the mission of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in December 2014. The US continues to conduct operations in Afghanistan, though troop levels have decreased significantly since March 2020. According to UNAMA’s 2020 Protection of Civilians report, “Even as troop levels are decreased, so long as operations continue to be conducted in support of Afghan national security forces, UNAMA encourages the United States Government and NATO to devote the necessary resources to the team dedicated to civilian casualty assessments.”

20 UNAMA, “Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: Annual Report 2020,” February 2021, p. 31, footnote 57.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

22 *Ibid.*



## Central African Republic (CAR)

*The former Séléka coalition and associated armed groups, including the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique and Union pour la paix en Centrafrique; the Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique as part of the ex-Séléka coalition; local defense militias known as the anti-balaka; and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) are listed in the Secretary-General's most recent annual report for recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and rape and other forms of sexual violence. The LRA is also listed for abductions, and the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique and Union pour la paix en Centrafrique as part of the former Séléka coalition are also listed for attacks on schools and hospitals.*

## Colombia

*The Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) is currently listed for the recruitment and use of children in Colombia. Watchlist recommends the following with regard to the Secretary-General's 2021 annual report on children and armed conflict.*

### Dissident Groups of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia—Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP)

#### Recommendation to Further Investigate to Determine If Listing Is Warranted— Recruitment and Use

Despite the signing of the peace accord between the Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP in 2016, dissident FARC-EP groups have continued to plague parts

of the country with violence and human rights violations, including the recruitment and use of children. The recruitment and use of children by FARC-EP dissidents has been well-documented by the UN and other credible sources. According to the Secretary-General's December 2019 report on children and armed conflict in Colombia, dissident FARC-EP groups were responsible for 82 verified incidents of recruitment and use of children in 2018.<sup>23</sup> In 2019, the UN verified the recruitment and use of 40 children by FARC-EP dissident groups.<sup>24</sup>

In 2020, multiple sources reported a surge in child recruitment by armed groups, as the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated children's vulnerability to abuses.<sup>25</sup> In his June report to the Security Council on the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, the Secretary-General expressed grave concern about the recruitment and use of children by illegal armed groups and criminal organizations, noting that the mission had received several reports of cases in Cauca, Guaviare, Meta, and Nariño.<sup>26</sup>

Between January and December 2020, the Coalition Against the Involvement of Children and Youth in the Colombian Armed Conflict (COALICO) recorded 79 cases of child recruitment, affecting 222 children—a 15.1 percent increase over the previous year.<sup>27</sup> Although COALICO could not definitively attribute the cases to particular armed groups, the evidence available suggested the perpetrators were post-demobilization armed groups, the ELN, or FARC-EP dissident groups.<sup>28</sup>

23 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in Colombia (S/2019/1017), December 31, 2019, <https://undocs.org/S/2019/1017> (accessed March 18, 2021), para. 20.

24 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/74/845-S/2020/525), June 9, 2020, para. 43.

25 Taylor, Luke, "How Colombia's armed groups are exploiting COVID-19 to recruit children," *The New Humanitarian*, September 10, 2020, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/09/10/Colombia-conflict-armed-groups-child-recruitment> (accessed March 18, 2021).

26 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the UN Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2020/603), June 26, 2020, <https://undocs.org/S/2020/603> (accessed March 18, 2021), para. 62.

27 COALICO, "Boletín de Monitoreo, No. 24: Niñez y conflicto armado en Colombia," January 2021, <http://coalico.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Boletin-ONCA-No.-24.pdf> (accessed March 18, 2021).

28 Ibid.

## Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

*Fourteen Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) are listed for grave violations in the annexes of the Secretary-General's most recent annual report on children and armed conflict. Additionally, the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) are listed for rape and other forms of sexual violence against children. Watchlist makes the following recommendation with regard to the DRC.*

### Police nationale congolaise (PNC)

#### Recommendation to Further Investigate to Determine If Listing Is Warranted – Rape and Other Forms of Sexual Violence

According to the Secretary-General's most recent annual report on children and armed conflict, the PNC were found responsible for 25 cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children in 2019 – yet the PNC were not listed in the annexes for rape and sexual violence.<sup>29</sup>

In 2020, the UN verified the cases of 46 children who had experienced conflict-related sexual violence by “State agents” between June 17 and December 1.<sup>30</sup> Although MONUSCO reporting does not attribute disaggregated numbers, it does state that such agents were “mainly” FARDC soldiers and PNC personnel. The same report states that incidents of sexual violence perpetrated by the PNC affected 17 victims, though the text does not disaggregate between adults and children.<sup>31</sup> The UN Joint

Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) attributed an additional incident of gang rape to FARDC soldiers and PNC agents in May.<sup>32</sup> In the third quarterly report for 2020, 12 percent of all conflict-related sexual violence is attributed to the PNC; however, the text does not disaggregate the ages of the survivors.<sup>33</sup>

## Iraq

*The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is listed in the Secretary-General's most recent annual report for all five “trigger” violations, while the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) are listed for recruitment and use. Watchlist makes the following recommendation on Iraq.*

### Iraqi Security Forces, Including the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police

#### Recommendation to Further Investigate to Determine If Listing Is Warranted – Killing and Maiming

The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) recorded the deaths of 34 children (all boys) killed in the context of protests that began in Baghdad and southern cities between October 1, 2019, and April 30, 2020, though the total number of children killed “is likely higher” due to the large number of youth aged 16 to 18 who participated in demonstrations.<sup>34</sup> Although UNAMI and OHCHR did not attribute age-disaggregated

29 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/74/845-S/2020/525), June 2020, para. 59.

30 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO (S/2020/919), September 21, 2020, <https://undocs.org/S/2020/919> (accessed November 13, 2020), para. 57; UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO (S/2020/1150), November 30, 2020, <https://undocs.org/S/2020/1150> (accessed December 13, 2020), para. 52.

31 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO (S/2020/919), September 21, 2020, para. 57; UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO (S/2020/1150), para. 52.

32 UN Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UNJHRO), “Analysis of the Human Rights Situation in May 2020,” [https://monusco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unjhro\\_-\\_analysis\\_of\\_the\\_human\\_rights\\_situation\\_-\\_may\\_2020.pdf](https://monusco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unjhro_-_analysis_of_the_human_rights_situation_-_may_2020.pdf) (accessed December 13, 2020), para. 33.

33 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO (S/2020/1150), paras. 52-53.

34 UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “Human Rights Violations and Abuses in the Context of Demonstrations in Iraq: October 2019 to April 2020,” August 2020, [https://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=itemlist&layout=category&task=category&id=164&Itemid=650&lang=en&limitstart=0](https://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&layout=category&task=category&id=164&Itemid=650&lang=en&limitstart=0) (accessed November 14, 2020), p. 14.



casualties to specific perpetrators, they found "security forces" responsible for 74 percent of all protester deaths and 89 percent of all protester injuries.<sup>35</sup>

In at least 17 different incidents between February and April 2020, Iraqi security forces fired live ammunition—including shotgun cartridges containing birdshot and other metal hunting pellets—and teargas at protesters in Baghdad's Khaylani Square and its surrounding areas, causing the death of at least two children.<sup>36</sup>

## Mali

*The NSAGs Ansar Eddine, Mouvement pour l'unification et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest, and Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad are listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's 2020 annual report on children and armed conflict for recruitment and use and rape and other forms of sexual violence. Platform, including affiliated groups, is listed for recruitment and use.*

## Myanmar

*The Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated Border Guard forces, is currently listed for killing and maiming children and rape and other forms of sexual violence against children in Myanmar. Seven armed groups are listed for recruitment and use: the Karen National Liberation Army; the United Wa State Army; the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army; the Kachin Independence Army; the Karenni Army; the Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council; and the Shan State Army. Watchlist makes the following recommendation on Myanmar.*

## Tatmadaw

### Recommendation to Re-List – Recruitment and Use

In the Secretary-General's 2020 annual report on children and armed conflict, the UN attributed 205 cases of recruitment and use to the Tatmadaw in 2019<sup>37</sup>—an increase from the 71 verified cases in 2018.<sup>38</sup> Despite this increase, the Secretary-General removed the Tatmadaw from the annexed list of perpetrators, citing "a continued significant decrease in recruitment, ongoing prosecutions and an agreement to continue to trace and release cases that were identified in previous years." However, the Secretary-General stated that "[t]he delisting with respect to recruitment and use is conditioned on the immediate ending and preventing of the ad hoc use of children in non-combat roles [. . .] Any failure in this regard would result in a relisting for the same violation in my next report."<sup>39</sup>

Between January and June 2020, the UN verified the recruitment of one boy and the use of 301 boys by the Tatmadaw, mostly in Buthidaung township, for periods up to two weeks alongside adults, in support functions such as military camp maintenance, digging trenches, building fences, carrying bricks, and harvesting rice.<sup>40</sup>

On October 5, two boys were killed in Buthidaung township after allegedly being used by a Tatmadaw unit "to ensure the path towards a military camp was clear of landmines and to protect the soldiers from potential enemy fire." In a statement, the co-chairs of Myanmar's Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) noted that the use of children in non-combat roles "should not be considered as a separate and lesser violation than the formal recruitment of children," adding that such use is criminalized in the country's Child Rights Law.<sup>41</sup>

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid., pp. 63-64.

37 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/74/845-S/2020/525), June 2020, paras. 123-124.

38 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/73/907-S/2019/509), June 2019, para. 126.

39 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/74/845-S/2020/525), June 2020, para. 240.

40 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in Myanmar (S/2020/1243), December 17, 2020, <https://undocs.org/s/2020/1243> (accessed March 24, 2021), paras. 27, 30.

41 UN CTFMR in Myanmar, "CTFMR Expresses Grave Concern Over Circumstances of Two Children Killed in Fighting Between the Tatmadaw and Arakan Army in Buthidaung, Rakhine State," October 14, 2020, <https://myanmar.un.org/en/95539-ctfmr-expresses-grave-concern-over-circumstances-two-children-killed-fighting-between> (accessed November 22, 2020).

## Somalia

*In the Secretary-General's most recent annual report on children and armed conflict, Al-Shabaab is listed for all five "trigger" violations, Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a (ASWJ) for recruitment and use, and the Somali Federal Defence and Police Forces (previously listed as the Somali National Army) for recruitment and use and killing and maiming of children.*

## South Sudan

*The South Sudan People's Defense Forces (SSPDF), including Taban Deng-allied SSPDF, are the only government forces listed for all five "trigger" violations. The Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-in-Opposition – pro-Machar (pro-Machar SPLA-IO) is currently listed for recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and abductions.*

## Sudan

*Four NSAGs are listed for recruitment and use of children in the annexes of the Secretary-General's 2020 annual report: Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA-AW), Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi (SLA-MM), and Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N). Watchlist recommends the following with regard to the Secretary-General's 2021 annual report.*

## Government Security Forces, Including the RSF, the SAF, and the Sudan Police Force

### Recommendation to List – Killing and Maiming

The UN has documented the killing and maiming of children by Government security forces, including the RSF, SAF, and the Sudan Police Force, for several years. In 2019, the UN attributed 42 child casualties to Government security forces, including the RSF (19), the General Intelligence Service (formerly National Intelligence and Security Service [NISS]) (13), joint SAF/RSF/Sudan Police Force operations (5), and SAF (5).<sup>42</sup> The previous year, Government security forces were reportedly responsible for 98 child casualties, of which 33 were attributed to the RSF, 57 to SAF, and eight to the Sudan Police Force.<sup>43</sup>

Attacks against children resulting in casualties continued in 2020. The RSF reportedly attacked civilians in villages and camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) throughout the broader Darfur region.<sup>44</sup> One such incident reportedly took place on July 25, when approximately 1,500 armed men in RSF uniforms and plain clothes attacked the town of Masteri in West Darfur. According to the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS), five children—aged 9 to 17—were injured in the attack.<sup>45</sup>

Amnesty International documented a similar incident in late March in the neighboring villages of Thurr-Bogoge, Ballah, and Swoloh-Murrey, all located in West Darfur. The attack was perpetrated by "members of a militia," many of whom were reportedly wearing government military uniforms. Amnesty spoke with a resident of one of the affected villages who described how the men beat him and his 7-year-old son before looting and burning their home.<sup>46</sup> The UN has documented other incidents,

42 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/74/845-S/2020/525), June 9, 2020, para. 159.

43 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/73/907-S/2019/509), June 20, 2019, para. 163.

44 European Asylum Support Office, "COI Query Response," June 2, 2020, [https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2030821/2020\\_06\\_Q10\\_EASO\\_COI\\_Query\\_Response\\_Sudan\\_Rapid\\_Support\\_Forces.pdf](https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2030821/2020_06_Q10_EASO_COI_Query_Response_Sudan_Rapid_Support_Forces.pdf) (accessed November 27, 2020), p. 5.

45 African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies, "Sudan: Urgent Call to the Transitional Government to Ensure the Safety and Protection of All Sudanese," August 6, 2020, <http://www.acjps.org/sudan-urgent-call-to-the-transitional-government-to-ensure-the-safety-and-protection-of-all-sudanese/> (accessed November 28, 2020).

46 Amnesty International, "Sudan: UN and AU Must Prioritize Protection of Civilians in Darfur," May 19, 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR5423512020ENGLISH.PDF> (accessed November 28, 2020).

including the killing of three boys and the maiming of two boys, all by the RSF, in Kass, South Darfur, on December 28, 2020.<sup>47</sup>

### **Recommendation to Further Investigate to Determine If Listing Is Warranted – Rape and Other Forms of Sexual Violence**

In 2019, the UN verified 21 incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated against 59 children (two boys, 57 girls) by Government security forces, including the RSF (9), SAF (8), and Popular Defence Forces and Sudan Police Force (two each).<sup>48</sup> The previous year, Government security forces were found responsible for 39 incidents of sexual violence against children, including the RSF (20), SAF (17), the Sudan Police Force (1), and the NISS (1).<sup>49</sup>

In March 2020, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC) Ms. Pramila Patten signed a Framework of Cooperation with the Government of Sudan to address sexual violence, which her office noted has "long been a feature of the conflict" affecting women and girls in Darfur. According to SRSG Patten's statement, the Framework of Cooperation prioritizes actions that include engagement with state security forces to "enhance capacity for the investigation and prosecution of crimes of sexual violence."<sup>50</sup>

Nonetheless, former Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan Aristide Nononsi reported in July that Government security forces continued to be among the "alleged perpetrators" of sexual violence affecting children in Darfur, although in most cases complaints have not been filed due to claims that the

police "cannot or will not take appropriate action."<sup>51</sup> According to a report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Sudan, an element of the SAF raped a 17-year-old girl in El Geneina, West Darfur, during the period between November 24, 2020, and February 15, 2021.<sup>52</sup>

## **Syria**

*Government forces, including the National Defense Forces and pro-government militias, are listed in the Secretary-General's most recent annual report for recruitment and use, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and attacks on schools and hospitals. Ahrar al-Sham and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham led by Nusrah Front (Levant Liberation Organization) are listed for recruitment and use and killing and maiming of children, while Syrian armed opposition groups (formerly known as the Free Syrian Army), the Army of Islam, and the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ) are listed for recruitment and use. ISIL is listed for all five "trigger" violations. Watchlist makes the following recommendations on Syria.*

## **Russian Government Forces and Russian-Backed Syrian Air Forces**

### **Recommendation to List – Killing and Maiming**

In 2020, Russian Aerospace Forces continued to conduct airstrikes in Syria. Although the Government of Russia has repeatedly denied responsibility, multiple credible sources have found evidence that Russian aircraft have carried out airstrikes that have indiscriminately targeted civilians, including attacks on schools and hospitals.

47 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS) (S/2021/199), March 1, 2021, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/199> (accessed March 21, 2021), para. 28.

48 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/74/845–S/2020/525), June 9, 2020, para. 160.

49 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/73/907–S/2019/509), June 20, 2019, para. 164.

50 Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sexual Violence in Conflict (OSRSG-SVC), "The Government of Sudan and the United Nations Sign a Framework of Cooperation to Prevent and Respond to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence," March 11, 2020, [https://unamid.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/20200311\\_press\\_release\\_foc\\_sudan.pdf](https://unamid.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/20200311_press_release_foc_sudan.pdf) (accessed November 27, 2020).

51 UN General Assembly, Report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan (A/HRC/45/53), July 30, 2020, <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/45/53> (accessed November 27, 2020), para. 58.

52 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in the Sudan and the activities of UNITAMS (S/2021/199), March 1, 2021, para. 28.

Beginning in mid-December 2019 and continuing into 2020, aerial bombardment conducted by Syrian Government and Russian forces (“pro-government forces”) increased markedly in civilian areas of southern Idlib, northern Hama, and western Aleppo governorates.<sup>53</sup> Between December 2019 and January 2020, OHCHR recorded the killing of 108 children (55 boys, 53 girls) as a result of airstrikes and ground-based strikes in Idlib, as well as parts of Aleppo and Hama.<sup>54</sup>

Five children were among the at least 14 civilians allegedly killed after three consecutive airstrikes hit residential areas near Al Shami Surgical Hospital in Idlib’s town of Ariha on January 29; an additional 30 to 65 civilians were reportedly injured.<sup>55</sup> Flight spotters’ reports and overflight data obtained by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria (“COI on Syria”) indicate that at least one Russian aircraft departed from Hmemim Air Base minutes before the airstrikes and was observed in the vicinity of Ariha at the time of the bombardment.<sup>56</sup> Though the Russian Ministry of Defense has denied any involvement,<sup>57</sup> the COI on Syria cited “reasonable grounds to believe” that “the strikes were carried out by aircraft of the Russian Federation.”<sup>58</sup>

Based on overflight data, the COI on Syria reported that at least 217 airstrikes were launched on western Aleppo between January 20 and March 5, 2020, causing residents of multiple towns to experience aerial bombardment on a

near daily basis.<sup>59</sup> During this period, OHCHR documented at least eight child casualties (three boys, three girls, two sex not specified).<sup>60</sup>

According to the Secretary-General, Syrian Government and pro-government aerial bombardment continued across northwest Syria throughout February “at some of the highest levels since the start of the conflict.”<sup>61</sup> OHCHR verified incidents that killed at least 100 children and injured at least 130 others across all of Syria between February 1 and March 31, 2020. The “majority” of these casualties were attributed to the intensification of airstrikes and ground-based strikes conducted by pro-government forces within the “de-escalation area” prior to the Russia-Turkey brokered ceasefire that took effect on March 6. According to a report from the Secretary-General, at least 70 children were killed as a result of airstrikes and ground-based strikes carried out by Syrian Government and pro-government forces throughout northwest Syria between February and March 2020.<sup>62</sup> In one such incident, two consecutive airstrikes landed in close proximity to an IDP shelter in Ma’arrat Misrin the morning of March 5, killing three children and injuring seven others. The COI on Syria reported that it had “reasonable grounds to believe” that Russian Aerospace Forces carried out the strikes, which employed guided munitions.<sup>63</sup>

Although the March ceasefire led to a decrease in the number of child casualties, June and July witnessed an increase in the number of ceasefire violations within

53 Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P), “Atrocity Alert No. 186: Syria, Iraq and Democratic Republic of the Congo,” January 15, 2020, <https://www.globalr2p.org/publications/atrocity-alert-no-186-syria-iraq-and-democratic-republic-of-the-congo/> (accessed November 28, 2020). See also: UN General Assembly, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (“Report of the COI on Syria”) (A/HRC/44/61), <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/44/61> (accessed March 22, 2021), para. 11.

54 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017), 2401 (2018), 2449 (2018) and 2504 (2020) (“Report of the Secretary-General on Syria”) (S/2020/141), February 21, 2020, <https://undocs.org/S/2020/141> (accessed November 28, 2020), para. 14.

55 UN General Assembly, Report of the COI on Syria (A/HRC/44/61), para. 40.

56 Ibid., Annex III, (A) para. 7.

57 Ibid., Annex III, (A) para. 8.

58 Ibid., para. 40.

59 Ibid., para. 33.

60 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Syria (S/2020/141), February 21, 2020, Annex, pp. 16-17.

61 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Syria (S/2020/327), April 23, 2020, <https://undocs.org/S/2020/327> (accessed November 29, 2020), para. 4.

62 Ibid., para. 11.

63 UN General Assembly, Report of the COI on Syria (A/HRC/44/61), para. 26, Annex III (C), paras. 19-20.

the de-escalation area, including the use of unmanned drones<sup>64</sup> and intermittent airstrikes by pro-government forces in southern Idlib and western Hama.<sup>65</sup> In one such incident, on June 9, five children (three boys, two girls) were injured as a result of at least three pro-government airstrikes carried out in southern rural Idlib, in the town of Balyun, Ariha district.<sup>66</sup> At least three of the five children injured were between the ages of 4 and 14 years old and were inside their homes at the time of the strikes.<sup>67</sup> The COI stated that there were "reasonable grounds to believe" that the pro-government forces responsible for carrying out the aerial bombardment on June 9 "committed the war crime of launching an indiscriminate attack resulting in death or injury to civilians."<sup>68</sup>

Sporadic pro-government airstrikes increased throughout September and October, particularly in the areas adjacent to the strategic M4 highway.<sup>69</sup> On October 21, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported that two children were injured as a result of airstrikes carried out by Russian fighter jets in the village of Al-Rami, located in Jabal Al-Zawiyah in the southern countryside of Idlib.<sup>70</sup> These child casualties were further documented by OHCHR.<sup>71</sup>

In an October 27 briefing to the UN Security Council, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock cited three separate incidents in which airstrikes were conducted over Idlib throughout the week of October 19-26, which reportedly injured at least three children.<sup>72</sup> It is unclear whether two of these three children are those whom SOHR recorded from Al-Rami village (see above). One girl was reportedly killed as a result of airstrikes in the town of Ariha on November 4.<sup>73</sup>

### **Recommendation to List – Attacks on Schools and Hospitals**

According to the COI on Syria, 55 schools were allegedly damaged as a result of attacks attributed to pro-government forces in Idlib and western Aleppo between November 1, 2019, and April 30, 2020.<sup>74</sup> Of the 14 incidents of attacks on schools that the COI investigated, it found "reasonable grounds to believe" that all of these attacks had been conducted by pro-government forces.<sup>75</sup>

On January 1, 2020, Martyr Abdou Salama primary school sustained heavy damage as a result of three rockets containing banned cluster munitions, reportedly resulting in the killing of five children between the ages of 6 and 13 and the injury of two teachers.<sup>76</sup> Human Rights Watch

64 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Syria (S/2020/813), August 20, 2020, <https://undocs.org/S/2020/813> (accessed December 1, 2020), para. 5.

65 Ibid., para. 17.

66 Ibid., Annex, p. 17.

67 UN General Assembly, Report of the COI on Syria (A/HRC/45/31), August 14, 2020, <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/45/31> (accessed December 2, 2020), para. 84.

68 Ibid., para. 86.

69 OCHA, "Syrian Arab Republic: Recent Developments in Northwest Syria, Situation Report No. 21 – As of 20 October 2020," October 20, 2020, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/nw\\_syria\\_sitrep21\\_20201020.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/nw_syria_sitrep21_20201020.pdf) (accessed December 2, 2020), p. 2.

70 Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, "Russian Airstrikes: Children and Women Among Six People Injured in Jabal Al-Zawiyah," October 21, 2020, <https://www.syriahr.com/en/188969/> (accessed December 2, 2020).

71 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Syria (S/2020/1195), December 11, 2020, <https://undocs.org/S/2020/1195> (accessed December 16, 2020), Annex, p. 16.

72 Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock: Briefing to the Security Council on the Humanitarian Situation in Syria," October 27, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/under-secretary-general-humanitarian-affairs-and-emergency-relief-109> (accessed December 2, 2020), p. 2.

73 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Syria (S/2020/1195), Annex, p. 16.

74 UN General Assembly, Report of the COI on Syria (A/HRC/44/61), August 14, 2020, p. 5.

75 Ibid., footnote f.

76 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Syria (S/2020/141), para. 17 (j). See also: Syria Relief, "Five Children Killed in Syrian School Bombing on New Year's Day," January 2, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/5-children-killed-syrian-school-bombing-new-years-day> (accessed November 28, 2020).



examined videos and photographs of weapon remnants and identified it as a Russian-manufactured 9M79M Tochka ballistic missile equipped with a cluster munition warhead, which contains 50 9N24 fragmentation submunitions.<sup>77</sup> According to Human Rights Watch, Russian forces deployed in Syria possess stockpiles of cluster munition, as documented in photographs published by media outlets, and have actively supported the Syrian Government's use of cluster munitions since their joint operation began in September 2015.<sup>78</sup> As part of a military alliance, Russia is jointly responsible for the use of prohibited weapons and any violations of the laws of war committed in Syria.

On January 5, 2020, pro-government airstrikes were conducted in the city of Ariha in southern Idlib. In a statement, Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis Mark Cutts cited reports from humanitarian staff in the area, who noted the destruction of civilian structures, including a school and a separate building for a kindergarten.<sup>79</sup> These reports were further corroborated by the COI on Syria, which stated that six aircraft-launched munitions had caused the damage.<sup>80</sup> A Human Rights Watch investigation revealed that the rockets destroyed the kindergarten and damaged Khaled Bashir Halabieh primary school, as well as Omar Bin Abdul Aziz primary and middle schools, which are located in the same building.<sup>81</sup> The tail of a rocket was also found

in the yard of Khaled Bashir Halabieh school, which had 445 students enrolled in grades one to four. Omar Bin Abdul Aziz school—which covers grades five through nine for some 335 students—sustained significant damage to the windows, doors, and outer fence. All three schools were closed for a period of five days for repairs.<sup>82</sup>

Schools continued to be damaged by pro-government aerial bombardments throughout February and March 2020. In one such incident, on February 4, a school in western Aleppo's town of Maaret al-Arteeq was reportedly hit by an aerial strike conducted by Russian Government forces, as well as a subsequent ground-based attack carried out by Syrian Government forces. According to Amnesty International, ground spotter reports indicate Russian fighter jets flying above Maaret al-Arteeq at the time of the strike.<sup>83</sup> Satellite imagery taken on March 7, 2020, "appears to show a crater in the courtyard of the school," which is reportedly consistent with photographs that were taken of the school in the immediate aftermath of the attack.<sup>84</sup>

Nine schools and kindergartens were affected by airstrikes conducted in Idlib on February 25 alone.<sup>85</sup> These include Munib Kamisha primary school,<sup>86</sup> the Hurriya all girls' high school,<sup>87</sup> Bara'im kindergarten, Bara'im 1 (primary school), Bara'im 2 (secondary school),<sup>88</sup> Khaled Sha'ar (primary school),<sup>89</sup> Zahir Bibars, al-Izza lbd Abdelsalam, and Manahil kindergarten. After inspecting

77 Human Rights Watch, "Syria: Cluster Munition Attack on School," January 22, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/01/22/syria-cluster-munition-attack-school> (accessed November 28, 2020).

78 Ibid.

79 Office of the Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, "Statement by Mark Cutts, Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis on the Deteriorating Situation in Idlib," January 7, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/FINAL%20%20DRHC%20statement%20on%20the%20situation%20in%20Idlib%20.pdf> (accessed November 28, 2020).

80 UN General Assembly, Report of the COI on Syria (A/HRC/44/61), August 14, 2020, para. 24.

81 Human Rights Watch, "Targeting Life in Idlib: Syrian and Russian Strikes on Civilian Infrastructure," October 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/10/15/targeting-life-idlib/syrian-and-russian-strikes-civilian-infrastructure> (accessed December 3, 2020), pp. 111-112.

82 Ibid.

83 Amnesty International, "Nowhere Is Safe for Us: Unlawful Attacks and Mass Displacement in North-West Syria," May 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde24/2089/2020/en/> (accessed December 3, 2020), p. 21.

84 Ibid.

85 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Syria (S/2020/327), April 23, 2020, para. 15 (e).

86 Ibid., Annex, p. 16. See also: UN General Assembly, Report of the COI on Syria (A/HRC/44/61), August 14, 2020, para. 54.

87 See also: UN General Assembly, Report of the COI on Syria (A/HRC/44/61), para. 51.

88 See also: Human Rights Watch, "Targeting Life in Idlib: Syrian and Russian Strikes on Civilian Infrastructure," January 22, 2020, p. 115.

89 See also: Ibid., p. 116.

munition remnants, the COI on Syria reported that the cluster munitions that struck al-Izza Ibd Abdelsalam school, Bara’im secondary school, and Khaled Sha’ar primary school had been fired using an unguided rocket launcher system.<sup>90</sup> The COI further stated that “[b]y selecting a rocket-type that releases submunitions [...], Government forces increased the lethal area of attack, thereby making this system even less discriminate.”<sup>91</sup>

Information suggests that Russian Government forces and Russian-backed Syrian air forces also targeted hospitals and healthcare facilities, as well as medical personnel and vehicles, throughout 2020. Based on its investigation of incidents that took place between November 1, 2019, and June 1, 2020, in Idlib and its surrounding areas, the COI on Syria found that it had “reasonable grounds to believe that pro-Government forces committed the war crimes of deliberately attacking medical personnel and facilities by conducting air strikes.”<sup>92</sup> The COI also stated that the “consistent” and “repeated attacks” on medical facilities suggest that pro-government forces “continued their policy to target hospitals, as part of the warring strategy.”<sup>93</sup>

Between November 1, 2019, and April 30, 2020, 25 medical facilities were reported damaged due to hostilities in Idlib and western Aleppo.<sup>94</sup> The COI on Syria investigated incidents affecting 16 of these facilities,

concluding “reasonable grounds to believe” that all of the attacks investigated had been conducted by pro-government forces.<sup>95</sup>

In one attack, on January 29, three consecutive airstrikes hit Al Shami Surgical Hospital in Idlib’s town of Ariha at approximately 10:30 p.m.,<sup>96</sup> killing at least ten civilians—including five children—and one doctor,<sup>97</sup> and injuring 30 others, including four nurses, the hospital’s director, and an administrator.<sup>98</sup> Prior to the attack, Al Shami Hospital—which was on the UN deconfliction list<sup>99</sup>—had provided care to more than 3,000 people each month. The airstrikes, however, destroyed the facility,<sup>100</sup> rendering it inoperable.<sup>101</sup> The attack also destroyed an ambulance<sup>102</sup> and partially destroyed the hospital’s warehouse, resulting in the damage or loss of most of the drugs and medical equipment.<sup>103</sup> Amnesty International attributed the attack to Russian Government forces, citing ground spotter reports that indicated that only Russian aircraft had been observed in Ariha’s airspace between 10:22 and 11:10 p.m., consistent with the time of the strikes on Al Shami Hospital, according to witness testimony and verified open source videos and images.<sup>104</sup>

The March 6 ceasefire agreement ushered in a period of markedly reduced hostilities that continued for several weeks. On July 14, however, an aerial bombardment

90 UN General Assembly, Report of the COI on Syria (A/HRC/44/61), August 14, 2020, para. 53.

91 Ibid.

92 Ibid., para. 71.

93 Ibid.

94 Ibid., p. 5.

95 Ibid., footnote c.

96 Union of Medical Care and Relief Organizations (UOSSM), “Breaking: Hospital Bombed, 80K Displaced in 48 Hours, Hyperinflation in Syria,” January 30, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/breaking-hospital-bombed-80k-displaced-48-hours-hyperinflation-syria> (accessed November 28, 2020).

97 UN General Assembly, Report of the COI on Syria (A/HRC/44/61), August 14, 2020, para. 40.

98 World Health Organization (WHO), “Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care (SSA),” <https://extranet.who.int/ssa/Index.aspx> (accessed December 3, 2020).

99 Amnesty International, “Nowhere Is Safe for Us: Unlawful Attacks and Mass Displacement in North-West Syria,” p. 14.

100 Islamic Relief Worldwide, “Islamic Relief-Supported Hospital Hit in Idlib as Latest Escalation in Syria Displaces Thousands,” February 1, 2020, <https://www.islamic-relief.org/islamic-relief-supported-hospital-hit-in-idlib-as-latest-escalation-in-syria-displaces-thousands/> (accessed December 3, 2020).

101 UOSSM, “Breaking: Hospital Bombed, 80K Displaced in 48 Hours, Hyperinflation in Syria,” January 30, 2020.

102 Human Rights Watch, “Targeting Life in Idlib: Syrian and Russian Strikes on Civilian Infrastructure,” January 22, 2020, p. 51.

103 OCHA, “Syrian Arab Republic: Recent Developments in Northwest Syria, Flash Update – As of 6 February 2020,” <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/stima/document/flash-report-recent-developments-northwest-syria-6-february-2020> (accessed April 9, 2021), p. 2.

104 Amnesty International, “Nowhere Is Safe for Us: Unlawful Attacks and Mass Displacement in North-West Syria,” May 2020, p. 14.

damaged a primary healthcare facility and a medical supplies warehouse in Idlib's Ariha district.<sup>105</sup> The World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed that two medical personnel were killed, and five others were injured in the attack.<sup>106</sup>

## Yemen

*Government forces, including the Yemeni Armed Forces, are listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's most recent annual report for the recruitment and use of children. Four NSAGs (the Houthis/Ansar Allah; Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula; pro-government militias, including the Salafists and popular committees; and Security Belt Forces) are listed for recruiting and using children in their ranks. The Houthis/Ansar Allah are also listed for killing and maiming and attacks on schools and hospitals.*

*In 2020, the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen (the coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) was de-listed for killing and maiming children in Yemen, despite the coalition being responsible for 222 UN-verified child casualties the previous year. In his annual report, the Secretary-General stated that the UN would continue monitoring and engagement for a period of 12 months to "ensure the sustained implementation of the programme of time-bound activities and the further decrease in the number of affected children as verified by*

*the United Nations," noting that "any failure in this regard would result in a relisting for the same violation in [his] next report."<sup>107</sup>*

## Saudi- and Emirati-Led Coalition

### Recommendation to Re-list – Killing and Maiming

The year 2020 began with a sharp escalation in hostilities, including an intensification of the Saudi- and Emirati-led coalition's campaign of aerial bombardment in the governorates of Marib, Al-Jawf, and Sana'a.<sup>108</sup>

In one of the deadliest series of airstrikes in 2020, the coalition launched an attack on a village in Al-Jawf's district of Al-Maslub on the night of February 14-15, killing 19 children (11 girls, eight boys) and injuring 12 others (seven girls, five boys).<sup>109</sup> Yemeni human rights organization Mwatana for Human Rights documented the dropping of four bombs during the attack, the first of which reportedly hit a residential building, while the second struck the area in its immediate vicinity.<sup>110</sup> This attack was the third most lethal strike for children since the start of the Saudi-led coalition's intervention in March 2015.<sup>111</sup>

The Yemen Protection Cluster's Civilian Impact Monitoring Project (CIMP) found that the number of airstrike incidents reported to have directly impacted civilians doubled during the second quarter of 2020, rising from 44 to 88 incidents.<sup>112</sup> Of these, 68 percent of airstrikes—or

105 OCHA, "Syrian Arab Republic: Recent Developments in Northwest Syria, Situation Report No. 18 – As of 25 July 2020," July 25, 2020, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/nw\\_syria\\_sitrep18\\_25july2020.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/nw_syria_sitrep18_25july2020.pdf) (accessed December 2, 2020), p. 2.

106 WHO, "Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care (SSA): Syrian Arab Republic," <https://extranet.who.int/ssa/LeftMenu/PublicReportList.aspx?start=2020-01-01&end=2020-12-01&countryList=212&typeList=0#> (accessed December 2, 2020).

107 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/74/845-S/2020/525), June 9, 2020, para. 240.

108 GCR2P, "Atrocity Alert No. 189: Yemen, Central African Republic and Iraq," February 5, 2020, <https://www.globalr2p.org/publications/atrocity-alert-no-189-yemen-central-african-republic-and-iraq/> (accessed December 1, 2020).

109 UN Human Rights Council, Detailed Findings of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen on the Situation of Human Rights in Yemen, Including Violations and Abuses since September 2014 ("Detailed Findings of the GEE on Yemen") (A/HRC/45/CRP.7), September 29, 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/GEE-Yemen/A-HRC-45-CRP.7-en.pdf> (accessed December 4, 2020), para. 72. See also: UN Security Council, Final report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen (S/2021/79), <https://undocs.org/S/2021/79> (accessed March 21, 2021), Appendix 1, pp. 242-244.

110 Mwatana for Human Rights, "Warring Parties Continue to Undermine Yemeni Lives," March 26, 2020, <https://mwatana.org/en/warring-parties-continue-to-undermine-yemeni-lives/> (accessed December 4, 2020).

111 Yemen Data Project, "Air Raids Summary March 2020," <https://us16.campaign-archive.com/?u=1912a1b11cab332fa977d3a6a&id=41fbf40a73> (accessed December 5, 2020).

112 Civilian Impact Monitoring Project (CIMP), "Quarterly Report – Q2: April – June 2020," July 2020, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CIMP%20Quarterly%20Report\\_2020\\_Q2.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CIMP%20Quarterly%20Report_2020_Q2.pdf) (accessed December 4, 2020), p. 1.

60 incidents—hit civilian homes, disproportionately affecting women and children.<sup>113</sup> In a Security Council briefing in April, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock reported that in Al-Jawf governorate—which had been the target of some 140 coalition air raids in the first quarter of 2020<sup>114</sup>—one in every two civilian casualties was a child.<sup>115</sup>

In a widely reported incident that occurred on June 15, four children between the ages of 12 and 14 were killed in an aerial strike on a civilian vehicle traveling in Sa'ada.<sup>116</sup> In a statement, eight international NGOs condemned the attack, noting that the deadly strike had occurred on the same day the Secretary-General's annual report was published, de-listing the Saudi- and UAE-led coalition for killing and maiming children.<sup>117</sup> Coalition air raids on residential areas killed at least two more children in June, bringing the total number of child fatalities for the month to six.<sup>118</sup>

Of the total 135 child casualties documented between July and September, airstrikes killed or injured 45 children, constituting a fivefold increase from the previous

quarter, during which strikes resulted in at least nine child casualties.<sup>119</sup> Airstrikes also proved to be the most common cause of child injuries and fatalities throughout the third quarter, with more children killed or injured by aerial attacks than by any other type of armed violence throughout this three-month period.<sup>120</sup> Coalition airstrikes that killed or maimed children included the following:

- On July 12, a coalition airstrike in the district of Washhah, Hajjah governorate, resulted in the killing of at least four children and maiming of two others.<sup>121</sup>
- On July 15, another coalition airstrike killed at least six children and injured at least four others in Al-Jawf's village of Masafa.<sup>122</sup>
- On August 6, the coalition killed nine children and injured seven others in Al-Jawf.<sup>123</sup> Save the Children cited local health authorities who reported that the strike hit "residential houses and cars."<sup>124</sup> According to the Yemen Data Project, the air raid—which it reported consisted of "up to" four individual airstrikes—targeted a residential area in the district of Khab Wa Al-Sha'af.<sup>125</sup>

113 Ibid.

114 Yemen Data Project, "Air Raids Summary January 2020"; "Air Raids Summary February 2020"; "Air Raids Summary March 2020," <https://us16.campaign-archive.com/home/?u=1912a1b11cab332fa977d3a6a&id=2b2ea6df5f> (accessed December 6, 2020).

115 OCHA, "Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Mark Lowcock: Briefing to the Security Council on the Humanitarian Situation in Yemen," April 16, 2020, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20200416\\_USG\\_Statement%20to%20Security%20Council%20on%20Yemen\\_final.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20200416_USG_Statement%20to%20Security%20Council%20on%20Yemen_final.pdf) (accessed December 6, 2020), p. 2.

116 OCHA, "Attack Kills At Least a Dozen Civilians, Including Children, in Sa'ada Governorate," June 16, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/attack-kills-least-dozen-civilians-including-children-sa-ada-governorate> (accessed December 2, 2020). See also: Save the Children, "Airstrike in Yemen Kills 13, Including 4 Children: Save the Children Statement," June 15, 2020, <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/about-us/media-and-news/2020-press-releases/airstrike-in-yemen-kills-13-including-four-children> (accessed December 5, 2020). Also: Ahmed Al-Haj, "Yemen's Rebels: Saudi Coalition Airstrike Kills 13 Civilians," *Associated Press*, June 16, 2020, <https://apnews.com/article/17dca7a0cab9057ee838d4a7f0c92fc0> (accessed December 2, 2020).

117 Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), "Aid Organisations Condemn Airstrike Killing 13 Civilians," June 16, 2020, <https://www.nrc.no/news/2020/june/airstrike-kills-13-civilians-in-yemen/> (accessed December 5, 2020).

118 Yemen Data Project, "Air Raids Summary July 2020," <https://us16.campaign-archive.com/?u=1912a1b11cab332fa977d3a6a&id=1e13f3a7c7> (accessed December 6, 2020).

119 CIMP, "Quarterly Report – Q3: July – September 2020," October 2020, [https://civilianimpactmonitoring.org/onewebmedia/CIMP%20Quarterly%20Report\\_2020\\_Q3.pdf](https://civilianimpactmonitoring.org/onewebmedia/CIMP%20Quarterly%20Report_2020_Q3.pdf) (accessed December 6, 2020), p. 1.

120 Ibid.

121 UN Security Council, Final report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen (S/2021/79), January 25, 2021, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/79> (accessed March 21, 2021), Appendix 2, pp. 245-246. See also: UN Human Rights Council, Detailed Findings of the GEE on Yemen (A/HRC/45/CRP.7), September 29, 2020, para. 73.

122 UN Human Rights Council, Detailed Findings of the GEE on Yemen (A/HRC/45/CRP.7), September 29, 2020, para. 73. See also: UN Security Council, Final report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen (S/2021/79), January 25, 2021, Appendix 3, pp. 247-248.

123 Ibid.

124 Save the Children, "Seven Children Reported Killed in Yemen Airstrike," August 7, 2020, <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/seven-children-reported-killed-yemen-airstrike-%E2%80%93-save-children> (accessed December 4, 2020).

125 Yemen Data Project, "Air Raids Summary September 2020," <https://us16.campaign-archive.com/?u=1912a1b11cab332fa977d3a6a&id=e42edd60ca> (accessed December 6, 2020).

- On September 4, four children were injured in the bombing of a shop in Marib's Mahalih district.<sup>126</sup>
- On September 7, a child was killed in a coalition air raid that hit a civilian house in the district of Khadir in Taiz governorate.<sup>127</sup>

In its legal review of these incidents, the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen ("the Group of Eminent Experts") stated: "Even if it were confirmed that the coalition were directing attacks against legitimate military targets in some of these airstrikes, the extent of civilian casualties that could have been anticipated raises significant questions as to the proportionality of the attacks and whether sufficient precautions in attack were taken."<sup>128</sup>

In its September report, the Group of Eminent Experts makes specific reference to the Secretary-General's June 2020 de-listing of coalition forces, despite the coalition's responsibility for continuing violations. In particular, it notes that "other parties to the conflict in Yemen remain listed by the Secretary-General for killing and maiming despite also seeing a decrease in child casualties during the same period."<sup>129</sup> The Group goes on to express its concern about the coalition's de-listing "while so many children are still being killed and maimed" and emphasizes "the need for the even application" of the listing/de-listing criteria "across all parties to the conflict."<sup>130</sup>

---

126 Yemen Data Project, "Air Raids Summary October 2020," <https://us16.campaign-archive.com/?u=1912a1b11cab332fa977d3a6a&id=482ae9ef38> (accessed December 6, 2020).

127 Ibid.

128 UN Human Rights Council, Detailed Findings of the GEE on Yemen (A/HRC/45/CRP.7), September 29, 2020, para. 74.

129 Ibid., para. 242.

130 Ibid.



---

## Annex II Countries

### Nigeria

*Boko Haram is listed in the Secretary-General's most recent annual report for all five "trigger" violations, while the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) is listed for recruitment and use.*

### Philippines

*Abu Sayyaf Group, Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, and the New People's Army are currently listed for recruiting and using children in the Philippines.*

## Countries in the Report/Not Yet Listed

The Secretary-General's 2020 annual report on children and armed conflict includes information on the situation of children in India, Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territory, Lebanon, Libya, and Pakistan.<sup>131</sup> However, no parties to these conflicts were listed in the annexes of the report. Watchlist makes the following recommendations with regard to the situations of concern.

### Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territory

#### Israeli Forces

##### Recommendation to List – Killing and Maiming

In the Secretary-General's 2020 annual report on children and armed conflict, Israeli forces were found responsible for 1,525 child casualties (29 killed and 1,496 maimed).<sup>132</sup> Between 2015 and 2019, the UN attributed over 6,400 child casualties to Israeli forces,<sup>133</sup> yet they have never been listed.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Israeli forces were responsible for 410 child casualties in 2020, including nine boys killed and 401 children injured (six girls, 395 boys) between January 1 and December 31, 2020.<sup>134</sup>

Israeli forces injured Palestinian children in the context of protests and clashes following the announcement of the US administration's Middle East peace plan, as well as various clashes in protest of settlement expansion through 2020. Three Palestinian children were injured by Israeli forces during demonstrations held near the Gaza perimeter fence between January 28 and February 3.<sup>135</sup> The announcement of the US peace plan also sparked clashes throughout the West Bank, in which Israeli forces injured 43 children.<sup>136</sup> Between February 4 and 17, Israeli security forces killed one child and injured 21 children in various areas of the West Bank during clashes. An additional seven children were injured by Israeli forces in clashes unrelated to the plan.<sup>137</sup> Israeli forces injured "around" 60 children in Beita village during clashes that broke out amid two demonstrations organized on February 28 and March 2, respectively, in protest of

<sup>131</sup> In his 2020 annual report, the Secretary-General noted that Burkina Faso and Cameroon would be added as situations of concern and included in the 2021 report.

<sup>132</sup> UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/74/845-S/2020/525), June 2020, paras. 85-86.

<sup>133</sup> Annual reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, 2016-2020, available at: <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/virtual-library/>.

<sup>134</sup> OCHA, "Occupied Palestinian Territory, Data on Casualties," January 1 – December 31, 2020, <https://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties> (accessed March 21, 2021).

<sup>135</sup> OCHA, "Protection of Civilians: occupied Palestinian territory – 21 January – 3 February 2020," February 2020, [https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/protection\\_of\\_civilians\\_21\\_jan\\_3\\_feb\\_2020.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/protection_of_civilians_21_jan_3_feb_2020.pdf) (accessed November 15, 2020), p. 1.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>137</sup> OCHA, "Protection of Civilians: occupied Palestinian territory – 4 - 17 February 2020," February 2020, [https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/protection\\_of\\_civilians\\_4\\_17\\_feb\\_2020.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/protection_of_civilians_4_17_feb_2020.pdf) (accessed November 15, 2020), p. 2.

settlement expansion south of Nablus.<sup>138</sup> On March 11, one boy was reportedly shot and killed by Israeli forces, though details of the incidents vary.<sup>139</sup>

Recorded child casualties declined sharply between March 17 and April 13, as movement restrictions were imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19. During this period, Israeli forces reportedly injured 11 children, including an infant and a 3-year-old child who suffered from teargas inhalation in two separate incidents.<sup>140</sup> In late April and early May, at least five children were allegedly injured and one boy killed by live ammunition fired by Israeli forces during incidents in Al Fawwar refugee camp.<sup>141</sup> Israeli forces reportedly injured 10 children in multiple incidents across the West Bank in June.<sup>142</sup> OCHA recorded additional incidents in which children were killed by Israeli forces in August and December.<sup>143</sup>

OHCHR reported that, according to information it had received, Israeli security forces injured 1,048 Palestinian children across the Occupied Palestinian Territory between November 1, 2019, and October 31, 2020.<sup>144</sup>

### **Recommend to Further Investigate to Determine If Listing Is Warranted – Attacks on Schools and Hospitals**

In 2019, the UN verified 229 interferences with education by Israeli forces and four incidents of military use of schools, affecting over 48,000 Palestinian children, mostly involving Israeli forces firing live ammunition, tear gas, or sound grenades in and around schools.<sup>145</sup> Israeli forces were not listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's 2020 report on children and armed conflict for attacks against schools and hospitals.

In 2020, OCHA reported at least thirteen incidents where Israeli forces impacted the provision of education or COVID-19 services to Palestinian children. Most incidents involved firing live ammunition or tear gas in and around schools, demolishing facilities used for education or COVID-19 response, or seizing supplies used by such facilities. For example, on February 2, Israeli soldiers arrived at the Burin Co-Ed Secondary School in Nablus governorate in response to clashes that had broken out after a group of reportedly armed settlers gathered near

- 138 OCHA, "Protection of Civilians: occupied Palestinian territory – 28 February - 2 March 2020," March 2020, [https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/protection\\_of\\_civilians\\_18\\_feb\\_2\\_march\\_2020.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/protection_of_civilians_18_feb_2_march_2020.pdf) (accessed November 15, 2020), p. 2.
- 139 OCHA, "Protection of Civilians: occupied Palestinian territory – 3 - 16 March 2020," March 2020, [https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/protection\\_of\\_civilians\\_3\\_16\\_march\\_2020.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/protection_of_civilians_3_16_march_2020.pdf) (accessed November 15, 2020), p. 1.
- 140 OCHA, "Protection of Civilians: occupied Palestinian territory – 17 - 30 March 2020," April 2020, [https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/protection\\_of\\_civilians\\_17\\_30\\_march\\_2020.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/protection_of_civilians_17_30_march_2020.pdf) (accessed November 15, 2020); OCHA, "Protection of Civilians: occupied Palestinian territory – 31 March - 13 April 2020," April 2020, [https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/protection\\_of\\_civilians\\_31\\_march\\_13\\_april\\_2020.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/protection_of_civilians_31_march_13_april_2020.pdf) (accessed November 15, 2020).
- 141 OCHA, "Protection of Civilians: occupied Palestinian territory – 28 April - 11 May 2020," May 2020, [https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/protection\\_of\\_civilians\\_28\\_april\\_11\\_may\\_2020.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/protection_of_civilians_28_april_11_may_2020.pdf) (accessed November 15, 2020), p. 1; Office of the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), "Security Council Briefing on the Situation in the Middle East, Including the Palestinian Question (As Delivered by SC Mladenov)," May 20, 2020, <https://unsco.unmissions.org/security-council-briefing-situation-middle-east-including-palestinian-question-delivered-sc-1> (accessed November 15, 2020); OCHA, "Protection of Civilians: occupied Palestinian territory – 12 May - 1 June 2020," June 2020, [https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/protection\\_of\\_civilians\\_12\\_may\\_1\\_june\\_2020.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/protection_of_civilians_12_may_1_june_2020.pdf) (accessed November 15, 2020), p. 1.
- 142 OCHA, "Protection of Civilians: occupied Palestinian territory – 2 - 15 June 2020," June 2020, <https://www.ochaopt.org/poc/2-15-june-2020> (accessed November 15, 2020), p. 1; OCHA, "Protection of Civilians: occupied Palestinian territory – 16 - 29 June 2020," July 2020, <https://www.ochaopt.org/poc/16-29-june-2020> (accessed November 15, 2020), p. 1.
- 143 OCHA, "Protection of Civilians: occupied Palestinian territory – 11 - 24 August 2020," August 2020, <https://www.ochaopt.org/poc/11-24-august-2020> (accessed November 16, 2020), p. 1; OCHA, "Protection of Civilians: occupied Palestinian territory – 24 November - 7 December 2020," December 2020, <https://www.ochaopt.org/poc/24-november-7-december-2020> (accessed December 18, 2020), p. 1.
- 144 OHCHR, "UN Experts Alarmed by Sixth Palestinian Child Killing by Israeli Forces in 2020, Call for Accountability," December 17, 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26619&LangID=E> (accessed December 18, 2020).
- 145 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/74/845-S/2020/525), June 2020, para. 87.

the school gate. Upon arriving, the soldiers fired tear gas canisters into the schoolyard, striking and injuring at least one child.<sup>146</sup>

Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) fired some 80 missiles and shells targeting Hamas facilities and agricultural fields in Gaza between August 11 and 24. According to OCHA, these strikes caused damage to civilian property, including a school.<sup>147</sup> Briefing the Security Council on August 25, UN Special Coordinator Nickolay Mladenov stated that an unexploded Israeli missile had been found in an UNRWA school in the ash-Shati refugee camp following one of the strikes.<sup>148</sup>

According to OCHA's Education Cluster, Israeli authorities had "partially or fully demolished" three schools in the West Bank as of October 14. An additional 52 schools remain under threat of demolition.<sup>149</sup>

Israeli security forces reportedly "raided and shut down" a COVID-19 testing center and arrested a volunteer on April 14. The center, which was located in the Silwan neighborhood of East Jerusalem, had been opened by the Palestinian Ministry of Health.<sup>150</sup> On June 3, Israeli authorities reportedly seized a donor-funded tent that was being utilized as a COVID-19 quarantine site for the community of Maghayer al Abeed, located within the same "firing zone" as Masafer Yatta in Hebron

governorate. At the time of the tent's confiscation, Hebron was described as the area "hardest hit by the COVID-19 outbreak" throughout all of the West Bank.<sup>151</sup>

In August, 20 members of Al Maqased hospital's medical staff were injured when Israeli forces allegedly fired tear gas canisters and sound grenades in the hospital compound to "disperse a gathering" at the facility's entrance.<sup>152</sup>

## Libya

### Libyan National Army (LNA), Including Pro-Haftar Militias and Allied Foreign Forces

#### Recommend to Further Investigate to Determine If Listing Is Warranted – Killing and Maiming

In the Secretary-General's 2020 annual report on children and armed conflict, 50 child casualties were attributed to the LNA and allied forces in 2019.<sup>153</sup> The LNA and affiliated forces have not been listed for killing and maiming children.

During the first quarter of 2020, the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) documented 27 child casualties (12 deaths and 15 injuries). Of the total number of civilian casualties reported—which included an additional 104 adult victims—81 percent were attributed to "forces affiliated" with the LNA.<sup>154</sup>

146 NRC, "Raided and Razed: Attacks on West Bank Education," November 2020, <https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/raided-and-raized/raided-and-raized.pdf> (accessed November 18, 2020), p. 13.

147 OCHA, "Protection of Civilians: occupied Palestinian territory – 11 - 24 August 2020," August 2020, p. 1.

148 UNSCO, "Security Council Briefing on the Situation in the Middle East, Including the Palestinian Question (As Delivered by UN Special Coordinator Mladenov)," August 25, 2020, <https://unsco.unmissions.org/security-council-briefing-situation-middle-east-including-palestinian-question-delivered-un-1> (accessed November 16, 2020).

149 NRC, "Israel to Demolish European-Funded School in Central West Bank," October 14, 2020, <https://www.nrc.no/news/2020/october/Israel-release/> (accessed November 17, 2020).

150 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) (S/2020/555), June 18, 2020, <https://undocs.org/s/2020/555> (accessed November 15, 2020), para. 37.

151 OCHA, "West Bank Demolitions and Displacement: An Overview," June 2020, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/demolition\\_monthly\\_report\\_june\\_2020.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/demolition_monthly_report_june_2020.pdf) (accessed November 17, 2020), pp. 1-3.

152 OCHA, "Protection of Civilians: occupied Palestinian territory – 11 - 24 August 2020," August 2020, p. 2.

153 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/74/845-S/2020/525), June 2020, para. 101.

154 UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), "Civilian Casualties Report: 1 January – 31 March 2020," April 30, 2020, [https://unsmil.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/first\\_quarter\\_civilian\\_casualty\\_report\\_2020\\_0.pdf](https://unsmil.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/first_quarter_civilian_casualty_report_2020_0.pdf) (accessed November 19, 2020), pp. 1-2.

Between April 1 and June 30, UNSMIL recorded at least 52 child casualties, though disaggregated attribution to specific parties is not provided.<sup>155</sup> Of the total number of civilian casualties reported during this period—which included an additional 306 adult victims—80 percent were attributed to “forces affiliated” with the LNA.<sup>156</sup> After the LNA lost control of the town of Tarhouna in the first week of June, several mass graves were discovered, including of children.<sup>157</sup> Over 100 bodies, including an unspecified number of children, were also reportedly found in an unidentified hospital.<sup>158</sup>

Between August 26 and December 3, 2020, the UN reported an additional 10 child casualties; however, no information on attribution was available.<sup>159</sup> The UN observed a decrease in civilians casualties following the signing of the ceasefire agreement in October 2020.

155 UNSMIL, “Civilian Casualties Report: 1 April – 30 June 2020,” July 29, 2020, [https://unsmil.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/civilian\\_casualties\\_report\\_-\\_1\\_april-30\\_june\\_2020.pdf](https://unsmil.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/civilian_casualties_report_-_1_april-30_june_2020.pdf) (accessed November 20, 2020), p. 1.

156 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on UNSMIL (S/2020/832), August 25, 2020, <https://undocs.org/S/2020/832> (accessed November 19, 2020), para. 51.

157 “The Secretary-General Remarks to the Security Council on the Situation in Libya,” July 8, 2020, <https://unsmil.unmissions.org/secretary-general-remarks-security-council-situation-libya-8-july-2020> (accessed November 20, 2020).

158 UNICEF, “UNICEF Libya Country Office Humanitarian Situation Report No. 2 April - June 2020,” August 4, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/unicef-libya-country-office-humanitarian-situation-report-no-2-april-june-2020> (accessed April 7, 2021).

159 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on UNSMIL (S/2021/162), January 19, 2021, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/162> (accessed March 21, 2021), para. 51.



## Countries Not Yet in the Report

The Secretary-General may bring to the Security Council's attention 'other situations of concern,' including those which may not be on the Council's agenda, but where the protection of children is of concern. Watchlist calls upon the Secretary-General to bring the following country situations to the attention of the Security Council.

### Ethiopia (Tigray Region)

Since November 2020, the armed conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region has raised serious concerns about the situation of children, with evidence of gross violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, including the killing and maiming of children, sexual violence, and attacks on schools and hospitals. By late November, nearly 39,000 people had fled across the border into neighboring Sudan, including 17,000 children.<sup>160</sup>

### Recruitment and Use

During fighting in Axum in late November, witnesses reportedly saw boys as young as 12 fighting with Tigrayan militia against Eritrean troops.<sup>161</sup> In December, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet expressed concern about reports of the forced recruitment of Tigrayan youth to fight against their own communities.<sup>162</sup>

### Killing and Maiming

During the second week of fighting in November, Ethiopian and Eritrean forces reportedly indiscriminately shelled Axum in an apparent joint operation to capture the city, hitting streets and civilian buildings and allegedly killing and maiming civilians, including children. Amnesty International collected witness reports of civilians, including children, killed during artillery shelling on November 19.<sup>163</sup>

On November 28 and 29, Eritrean soldiers allegedly conducted systematic house-to-house raids and extrajudicially executed men and boys, some as young as 12 years old, for their alleged association with the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF).<sup>164</sup> Soldiers also allegedly shot and killed civilians on the street, including boys as young as 13, and detained hundreds of men and boys in different sites of Axum, executing some of them.<sup>165</sup> Human Rights Watch documented the killing of

160 UN News, "UN 'extremely concerned' for safety of Tigray civilians in regional capital, as refugee numbers grow," November 23, 2020, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/11/1078382> (accessed March 19, 2021).

161 Human Rights Watch, "Ethiopia: Eritrean Forces Massacre in Tigray Civilians," March 5, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/05/ethiopia-eritrean-forces-massacre-tigray-civilians#> (accessed March 19, 2021).

162 OHCHR, "Exceedingly worrying and volatile situation in Ethiopia – Bachelet," December 9, 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26583&LangID=E> (accessed March 19, 2021).

163 Amnesty International, "The Massacre in Axum," February 26, 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR2537302021ENGLISH.PDF> (accessed March 19, 2021), pp. 4, 6-7.

164 *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 12-13; Human Rights Watch, "Ethiopia: Eritrean Forces Massacre in Tigray Civilians," March 5, 2021.

165 *Ibid.*

at least 83 civilians, including children, and wounding of over 300 in the city of Mekelle and the towns of Humera and Shire during the month of November.<sup>166</sup>

TPLF-aligned forces have also been accused of killing civilians,<sup>167</sup> including children, although other sources suggest these may be the work of Amhara militia aligned with the Government of Ethiopia.<sup>168</sup>

## Rape and Other Forms of Sexual Violence

In December, OHCHR confirmed that it had corroborated evidence of gross human rights violations and abuses in Tigray, including sexual violence against women and girls.<sup>169</sup> In January 2021, SRSO-SVC Patten expressed great concern about serious allegations of sexual violence in the Tigray region, including a high number of alleged rapes in Mekelle, reports of individuals allegedly forced to rape members of their own families, and increasing reports of sexual violence against women and girls in several refugee camps.<sup>170</sup> In February 2021, Ethiopia’s Minister of Women, Children, and Youth confirmed that a Government taskforce mandated to investigate accounts of sexual assault in the region of Tigray had conclusively

found that rapes had taken place.<sup>171</sup> Multiple news agencies have also reported receiving accounts of rapes by Ethiopian or Eritrean soldiers in Tigray.<sup>172</sup>

## Attacks on Schools and Hospitals

Human Rights Watch documented multiple attacks on schools in November, including shelling near a school in the town of Humera on November 9, and mortar and tank fire that hit an elementary school in Shire on November 17.<sup>173</sup> During the November 28 attack on Mekelle, shelling on a residential area reportedly hit an empty school in Ayder sub-city; video footage shows damage to the Yekatit 23 school building.<sup>174</sup> Amnesty International also documented multiple artillery attacks that fell near schools in Axum in late November.<sup>175</sup>

There was at least one report of military use of an empty elementary school by Tigrayan forces in southeastern Tigray.<sup>176</sup>

On November 9, artillery reportedly fired from Eritrea hit areas near the Kahsay Aberra hospital in the town of Humera, causing medical personnel to flee the facility and leaving it nearly empty.<sup>177</sup> On November 17, mortar and tank fire struck residential areas near Suhul hospital in the town of Shire in northwestern Tigray.<sup>178</sup> On

166 Human Rights Watch, “Ethiopia: Unlawful Shelling of Tigray Urban Areas,” February 11, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/02/11/ethiopia-unlawful-shelling-tigray-urban-areas> (accessed April 9, 2021).

167 Amnesty International, “Ethiopia: Investigation reveals evidence that scores of civilians were killed in massacre in Tigray state,” November 12, 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/11/ethiopia-investigation-reveals-evidence-that-scores-of-civilians-were-killed-in-massacre-in-tigray-state/> (accessed March 30, 2021).

168 Amin, Mohammed, “Tigray refugees recount the horrors of Ethiopia’s new conflict,” *The New Humanitarian*, November 19, 2020, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/11/19/ethiopia-tigray-conflict-sudan-refugees> (accessed March 30, 2021).

169 OHCHR, “Exceedingly worrying and volatile situation in Ethiopia – Bachelet,” December 9, 2020.

170 OSRSO-SVC, “United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten, urges all parties to prohibit the use of sexual violence and cease hostilities in the Tigray region of Ethiopia,” January 21, 2021, <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/press-release/united-nations-special-representative-of-the-secretary-general-on-sexual-violence-in-conflict-ms-pramila-patten-urges-all-parties-to-prohibit-the-use-of-sexual-violence-and-cess-hostilities-in-the/> (accessed March 25, 2021).

171 “Ethiopia: Rapes occurred ‘without a doubt’ in conflict-hit Tigray,” TRT World, February 12, 2021, <https://www.trtworld.com/africa/ethiopia-rapes-occurred-without-a-doubt-in-conflict-hit-tigray-44124> (accessed March 19, 2021).

172 Ibid.

173 Human Rights Watch, “Ethiopia: Unlawful Shelling of Tigray Urban Areas,” February 11, 2021.

174 Ibid.

175 Amnesty International, “The Massacre in Axum,” February 26, 2021.

176 Human Rights Watch, “Ethiopia: Unlawful Shelling of Tigray Urban Areas,” February 11, 2021.

177 Ibid.

178 Ibid.

November 19, Eritrean forces allegedly shot patients in St. Mary's hospital in Axum, killing civilians and wounded Tigrayan fighters, and looted the facility, reportedly taking medicine, beds, and other equipment.<sup>179</sup> The pillaging of Axum reportedly continued throughout the week of November 20, with Eritrean soldiers allegedly taking medicine, beds, and equipment from the city's pharmacies and medical centers, which prevented injured and sick people from receiving treatment.<sup>180</sup> During the assault on Mekelle on November 28, projectiles reportedly struck near Ayder Referral hospital and nearby physicians' residences, killing a woman and a child.<sup>181</sup>

## Denial of Humanitarian Access

Ethiopia's federal Government reportedly cut off access to Tigray at the start of the conflict, and food was in short supply.<sup>182</sup> In December, UNICEF warned that 2.3 million children in Tigray had no access to humanitarian assistance, including food, water, fuel, and medicines.<sup>183</sup> That same month, MSF found the capital of Tigray, Mekelle, with no basic supplies and the local hospital running at 30 to 40 percent, with very little medication.<sup>184</sup> Medical teams found a similar situation in Tigray's second most populated city, Adigrat.<sup>185</sup> On

March 3, 2021, the Ethiopian prime minister announced that aid agencies could operate in Tigray by providing a notification to the Ministry of Peace; however, the humanitarian situation remains extremely concerning, with some areas still inaccessible.<sup>186</sup>

## Mozambique

Since October 2017, Mozambique's far north Cabo Delgado province has been the site of an intensifying humanitarian crisis and violence by NSAGs, which significantly increased in intensity throughout 2020. The number of individuals displaced from conflict and insecurity more than quadrupled, from 110,400 in March 2020, to nearly 530,000 that November, with children accounting for around 45 percent of those displaced.<sup>187</sup> Alarming reports of violence against civilians rose in 2020, such as killing, maiming, abductions, and sexual violence, including of children.<sup>188</sup> Insecurity has also reportedly led to the destruction of key infrastructure, including health and water facilities, and impacted 171 schools in nine districts.<sup>189</sup> Humanitarian access has also deteriorated, with some districts in the north "effectively cut off from the rest of the province."<sup>190</sup> Both NSAGs and state forces,

179 Human Rights Watch, "Ethiopia: Eritrean Forces Massacre in Tigray Civilians," March 5, 2021.

180 Ibid.

181 Human Rights Watch, "Ethiopia: Unlawful Shelling of Tigray Urban Areas," February 11, 2021.

182 OCHA, "Ethiopia: Tigray Region Humanitarian Update - Situation Report No. 1," November 7, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-tigray-region-humanitarian-update-situation-report-no-1-7-november-2020> (accessed March 25, 2021).

183 UNICEF, "Millions of children in Tigray remain out of reach, despite access agreement – UNICEF," December 15, 2020, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/millions-children-tigray-remain-out-reach-despite-access-agreement-unicef> (accessed March 19, 2021).

184 MSF, "Ethiopia: 'If seriously ill people can't get to hospital, you can imagine the consequences,'" February 1, 2021, <https://www.msf.org/people-finding-access-healthcare-difficult-tigray-ethiopia> (accessed March 25, 2021).

185 Ibid.

186 OCHA, "Ethiopia - Tigray Region Humanitarian Update Situation Report," March 8, 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-tigray-region-humanitarian-update-situation-report-8-march-2021> (accessed April 7, 2021).

187 OCHA, "2021 Mozambique Humanitarian Response Plan (Abridged Version)," December 18, 2020, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/MOZ\\_2021\\_HRP\\_Abridged\\_Version\\_20201218.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/MOZ_2021_HRP_Abridged_Version_20201218.pdf) (accessed March 25, 2021), p. 5.

188 UNICEF, "Humanitarian Action for Children 2021 – Mozambique," December 14, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/mozambique/humanitarian-action-children-2021-mozambique> (accessed March 25, 2021); see also: UN News, "UN chief shocked at 'wanton brutality' in northern Mozambique," November 11, 2020, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/11/1077382> (accessed March 25, 2021).

189 UNICEF, "Mozambique: Humanitarian Situation Report No. 3, End of Year 2020," February 4, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/media/92271/file/Mozambique-Humanitarian-Situation-Report,%20End-of-Year-2020.pdf> (accessed March 25, 2021), p. 2.

190 OHCHR, "Mozambique: Bachelet Appalled by Escalating Conflict in Cabo Delgado province," November 13, 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26497&LangID=E> (accessed March 25, 2021).

including a private military company that supports the Government’s counterinsurgency response, have been implicated in grave human rights abuses.<sup>191</sup>

## Recruitment and Use

In November, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet described grave human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law by armed groups since 2017, including possible forced recruitment of children.<sup>192</sup> In September, the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P) similarly noted the alleged recruitment and use of children by an armed group known locally as Ahlu-Sunnah Wa-Jama (ASWJ) or “al-Shabaab,” a group loosely affiliated with the Islamic State.<sup>193</sup> In a recent report, Amnesty International describes allegations that ASWJ has abducted boys to forcibly recruit them to fight, and abducted girls to be made into ‘wives’ or do work around its bases.<sup>194</sup>

## Killing and Maiming

Children were frequently reported among the civilian casualties in 2020. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), OHCHR, and OCHA have each expressed alarm at reports of beheadings, kidnappings, sexual violence, and disappearances of women and children.<sup>195</sup>

Amnesty International documented the beheading and killing of boys and girls at the hands of ASWJ in towns and villages in Cabo Delgado in the first half of 2020.<sup>196</sup> A recent report describes indiscriminate attacks carried out by ASWJ in the village of Litamanda, where survivors reported seeing bodies of children in the streets, some of whom had been beheaded.<sup>197</sup> According to local media reports, ASWJ abducted 15 boys in the town of Muatide and beheaded them, along with nine other individuals on November 2.<sup>198</sup> It is not clear if these children were counted among the at least 50 civilians killed during attacks against several northern villages in early November.<sup>199</sup>

## Rape and Other Forms of Sexual Violence

UNICEF has noted sexual violence against children in Cabo Delgado in 2020.<sup>200</sup> In a November statement, the NGO CARE reported concerns over a spike in gender-based violence and child marriage.<sup>201</sup>

Amnesty International has also documented allegations of girls being targeted for abduction for the purpose of sexual violence or forced marriage to ASWJ fighters.<sup>202</sup>

191 See for example: OHCHR, “Mozambique: Bachelet Appalled by Escalating Conflict in Cabo Delgado province,” November 13, 2020; Amnesty International, “‘What I Saw Is Death’: War Crimes in Mozambique’s Forgotten Cape,” March 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4135452021ENGLISH.PDF> (accessed March 25, 2021); Human Rights Watch, “World Report 2021: Events of 2020,” 2021, [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media\\_2021/01/2021\\_hrw\\_world\\_report.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/01/2021_hrw_world_report.pdf) (accessed March 25, 2021), pp. 470-471.

192 OHCHR, “Mozambique: Bachelet Appalled by Escalating Conflict in Cabo Delgado province,” November 13, 2020.

193 GCR2P, “Atrocity Alert No. 220: Mozambique, Democratic Republic of the Congo, HRC45,” September 16, 2020, <https://www.globalr2p.org/publications/atrocity-alert-no-220-mozambique-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-and-hrc45/> (accessed March 25, 2021).

194 Amnesty International, “‘What I Saw Is Death’: War Crimes in Mozambique’s Forgotten Cape,” March 2021, pp. 13, 21.

195 UNHCR, “Fresh Violence in northern Mozambique Forces thousands to flee,” February 7, 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/briefing/2020/2/5e3d2d8f4/fresh-violence-northern-mozambique-forces-thousands-flee.html>; OHCHR, “Mozambique: Bachelet Appalled by Escalating Conflict in Cabo Delgado province,” November 13, 2020; UNICEF, “Humanitarian Action for Children 2021 – Mozambique,” December 14, 2020.

196 Amnesty International, “‘What I Saw Is Death’: War Crimes in Mozambique’s Forgotten Cape,” March 2021, p. 22.

197 Ibid., p. 26.

198 Bowker, Tom and Mutsaka, Farai, “Islamist Extremists in Mozambique Blamed for Mass Beheadings,” *Associated Press*, November 11, 2020, <https://apnews.com/article/africa-mozambique-maputo-united-nations-3143ee5a6a33bb81f1cb84d886bdf9ce> (accessed March 25, 2021).

199 UN News, “UN chief shocked at ‘wanton brutality’ in northern Mozambique,” November 11, 2020.

200 UNICEF, “Mozambique: Humanitarian Situation Report No. 3, End of Year 2020,” February 4, 2021, p. 4.

201 CARE, “CARE Extremely Concerned Over Spike in Gender-Based Violence and Child Marriage in Northern Mozambique,” November 20, 2020, <https://www.care-international.org/news/press-releases/care-extremely-concerned-over-spike-in-gender-based-violence-and-child-marriage-in-northern-mozambique> (accessed March 25, 2021).

202 Amnesty International, “‘What I Saw Is Death’: War Crimes in Mozambique’s Forgotten Cape,” March 2021, pp. 5, 13.

## Attacks on Schools and Hospitals

There were several reports of attacks on civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, in 2020. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reported an attack in late May that led to the destruction of a maternity hospital previously repaired from damage sustained from Cyclone Kenneth.<sup>203</sup> MSF described a May 28 attack by “insurgents” on a healthcare center in Macomia, in which four of its staff members were forced to flee before the facility was ransacked and burned. In the ensuing violence, MSF received unverified reports that at least 15 civilians, including multiple children, were killed.<sup>204</sup> Human Rights Watch has reported that the ASWJ burned and destroyed schools and hospitals in 2020, including a teachers’ training college in Quissanga district.<sup>205</sup>

Amnesty International spoke with local residents from northern Mozambique who said they saw helicopters and light aircraft belonging to the Dyck Advisory Group (DAG)—a private military contractor hired by the Government of Mozambique to fight ASWJ—shoot at civilian infrastructure, including hospitals and schools.<sup>206</sup> During a March 2020 attack, ASWJ fighters allegedly torched the local hospital and school in Quissanga.<sup>207</sup>

## Abductions

Several sources have referred to incidents of abductions and kidnappings of women and children.<sup>208</sup> Amnesty International documented abductions of girls as young

as 7 years old by ASWJ between March and June 2020, with teenage girls being targeted for sexual violence and boys abducted to become fighters.<sup>209</sup> In one interview, a former resident of Quissanga named over a dozen girls, some as young as 15, who had been abducted to become wives of fighters or do work around the base, and claimed boys were taken to be beheaded or to become soldiers.<sup>210</sup>

Human Rights Watch documented one incident in which two girls from Mocímboa da Praia were kidnapped by ASWJ and later escaped. The girls told police they had been forced to sleep naked to prevent them from running away from the camp.<sup>211</sup> Human Rights Watch also reported abductions by Mozambican state security forces, although it did not specify whether children were among those abducted.<sup>212</sup>

## Ukraine

2020 marked the seventh year of the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine. Throughout the conflict, the UN, other international organizations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and NGOs have reported grave violations against children. In 2020, violations continued, primarily during an escalation in fighting during the first half of the year. This increase in fighting and reports of killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals occurred in the early stages of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, further exacerbating the situation of affected children and their communities.

203 ICRC, “Mozambique: World cannot ignore growing violence and humanitarian crisis,” August 27, 2020 <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/mozambique-world-cannot-ignore-growing-violence-and-humanitarian-crisis> (accessed March 25, 2021).

204 MSF, “‘It was like the end of the world’ during attack in northern Mozambique,” June 30, 2020, <https://www.msf.org/thousands-caught-crossfire-invisible-conflict-northern-mozambique> (accessed March 25, 2021).

205 Human Rights Watch, “World Report 2021: Events of 2020,” 2021, p. 471.

206 Amnesty International, “‘What I Saw Is Death’: War Crimes in Mozambique’s Forgotten Cape,” March 2021, p. 17.

207 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

208 See: Human Rights Watch, “World Report 2021: Events of 2020,” 2021, pp. 470-471; UN News, “UN chief shocked at ‘wanton brutality’ in northern Mozambique,” November 11, 2020; OHCHR, “Mozambique: Bachelet Appalled by Escalating Conflict in Cabo Delgado province,” November 13, 2020; UNHCR, “Fresh Violence in northern Mozambique Forces thousands to flee,” February 7, 2020; UNICEF, “Humanitarian Action for Children 2021 – Mozambique,” December 14, 2020, p. 2.

209 Amnesty International, “‘What I Saw Is Death’: War Crimes in Mozambique’s Forgotten Cape,” March 2021, p. 5.

210 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

211 Human Rights Watch, “World Report 2021: Events of 2020,” 2021, p. 471.

212 *Ibid.*, pp. 470-471.



## Killing and Maiming

An increase in hostilities in eastern Ukraine throughout the first half of 2020 led to higher numbers of child casualties than the previous year. A situation report by OHCHR on human rights in eastern Ukraine covering the period from January 1 to July 31 reported one boy was killed, and six girls and four boys were injured, although the report did not attribute these casualties to any party to the conflict.<sup>213</sup> In May 2020, UNICEF expressed concern over increased violence in 2020, noting that 10 conflict-related child casualties had occurred between January and May—double the amount from the same period the previous year.<sup>214</sup> Of these, six child casualties occurred during shelling of villages in the first week of May alone, including three girls between the ages of 7 and 10, who were seriously injured. In another incident, a 17-year-old girl was injured by shrapnel while at school.<sup>215</sup>

The violence continued into the year, as a UNICEF situation report published in October which covered the period from July 1 to September 30 reported one child killed and two boys injured as a result of shelling, small arms, and light weapons fire.<sup>216</sup>

## Attacks on Schools and Hospitals

There were several reported incidents of attacks or conflict-related damage to schools in 2020, peaking in April. In its first situation report for 2020, the Ukraine Education Cluster reported two conflict-related incidents

of damage to school infrastructure.<sup>217</sup> On February 27, Horlivka School 10's windows were reportedly damaged, and on February 29, a window on the fourth floor of a school in Oleksandrivka was reportedly broken due to heavy machine-gun fire.<sup>218</sup>

Between April 13 and May 4, the Ukraine Education Cluster reported four instances where schools sustained damage due to fighting.<sup>219</sup> On April 22, for example, a school in Oleksandrivka Donetsk Non-Government Controlled Area (NGCA) sustained damage due to gunfire, and on April 25, School 116 in Donetsk city was damaged by shelling.<sup>220</sup> On April 28, a school in Zolote 5 Luhanska NGCA 8 reportedly sustained damage to windows from shelling, as well as damage to interior rooms, door, and computers.<sup>221</sup> On April 30, the windows of a school in Zolote 4, Luhanska Government Controlled Area (GCA), were reportedly shattered by shrapnel.<sup>222</sup>

In its own reporting, UNICEF recorded nine attacks on schools since the beginning of the year and five in April alone,<sup>223</sup> as well as seven cases of physical damage to educational facilities and one fatality as a result of the attacks occurring between April 1 and June 30.<sup>224</sup> Overall, the rise in hostilities during the first half of 2020 was accompanied by a concerning rise in attacks and damage to schools in the region.

213 OHCHR, "Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine (16 February to 31 July 2020)," September 22, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/report-human-rights-situation-ukraine-16-february-31-july-2020-enruuk> (accessed January 14, 2021), para. 3.

214 UNICEF, "Surge in violent attacks during COVID-19 lockdown puts children's lives at risk in eastern Ukraine – UNICEF," May 20, 2020, <https://www.unicef.org/eca/press-releases/surge-violent-attacks-during-covid-19-lockdown-puts-childrens-lives-risk-eastern> (accessed January 14, 2021).

215 Ibid.

216 UNICEF, "UNICEF Ukraine Humanitarian Situation Report No. 3: 1 July to 30 September 2020," October 23, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/unicef-ukraine-humanitarian-situation-report-no-3-1-july-30-september-2020> (accessed January 14, 2021).

217 Ukraine Education Cluster, "Attacks on Education in Ukraine, Situation Report, as of 4 March 2020," March 4, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/attacks-education-ukraine-situation-report-04-march-2020> (accessed January 14, 2021).

218 Ibid.

219 Ukraine Education Cluster, "Attacks on Education in Ukraine, Situation Report, as of 4 May 2020," May 4, 2020, <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/ukraine/education/infographics> (accessed January 14, 2021).

220 Ibid.

221 Ibid.

222 Ibid.

223 UNICEF, "Surge in violent attacks during COVID-19 lockdown puts children's lives at risk in eastern Ukraine – UNICEF," May 20, 2020.

224 UNICEF, "UNICEF Ukraine Humanitarian Situation Report No. 2, 1 April to 30 June 2020," July 22, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/unicef-ukraine-humanitarian-situation-report-no-2-1-april-30-june-2020> (accessed January 14, 2021).

**Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict**

919 2nd Avenue, Suite 200, New York, NY 10017 USA • Phone: 212.972.0695

Email: [watchlist@watchlist.org](mailto:watchlist@watchlist.org) • Website: [www.watchlist.org](http://www.watchlist.org)