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UN: New Report Points to Abuses Against Children in Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Ukraine

Secretary-General Declares Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Ukraine “Situations of Concern” for Children, but Downplays Israel’s Responsibility for Violations

New York, July 11, 2022 – The UN Secretary-General’s latest [report](#) is evidence of flagrant disregard for the lives of children by parties to conflicts in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Ukraine, and other war-torn countries, [Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict](#) said today. Secretary-General António Guterres released his annual report on children and armed conflict today. It details over 22,600 grave violations committed in 2021 against children in armed conflicts in 21 countries, plus the Lake Chad Basin region.

In the new report, the Secretary-General announced that Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Ukraine would be designated as ‘situations of concern’ with immediate effect, given the gravity and number of violations against children. The report did not, however, further elaborate on these situations.

“It is high time the Secretary-General drew the attention of the Security Council to the situation of children in Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Ukraine, who have endured extreme violence for years,” said Adrienne Lapar, director of Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, a network of international human rights and humanitarian organizations. “Designating a conflict as a ‘situation of concern’ without presenting meaningful information about actual violations squanders an opportunity to shed light on abuses and hold parties accountable.”

The Secretary-General’s report also includes an annexed list of warring parties who have committed grave violations against children. Despite UN-verified information that Israeli forces were responsible for killing 78 Palestinian children and injuring an additional 982 in 2021, they were not listed in the annexes, which have often been referred to as the Secretary-General’s ‘list of shame.’ During a period of escalated hostilities lasting just 11 days, Israeli forces killed 60 children in Gaza in May 2021. The Secretary-General warned that, should there be a similar escalation leading to an increase in violence against children in 2022, Israel and Palestinian armed groups should be listed next year. Israeli government forces have never been included in the Secretary-General’s annual list, despite the UN finding them responsible for over 6,700 child casualties between 2015 and 2020.

“Year after year, Israeli government forces have gotten away with committing serious crimes against children, with virtual impunity,” said Lapar. “The Secretary-General needs to hold the Israeli government to the same standard as any other warring party, whether they be state forces or armed groups. For its part, the Israeli government must take concrete steps to address violations, including holding commanders to account and putting in place measures to prevent future child casualties.”

Other violators were conspicuously missing from this year’s ‘list of shame,’ including the Saudi Arabia-led coalition, which was responsible for killing and maiming 100 children in Yemen in 2021. In Myanmar, the Tatmadaw, which is already listed for killing and maiming, recruitment and use, and sexual violence against children, was not listed for attacks on schools and hospitals, despite committing 17 such attacks in 2021.

In a positive move, the Secretary-General added dissident groups of the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo* (FARC-EP) to his ‘list of shame’ for recruiting and using children in their ranks. Despite the signing of a peace agreement between the FARC-EP and the Colombian government in 2016, dissenting elements of the former armed group have continued to commit acts of violence against civilians and other rights violations, including against children. In 2021, the UN verified the recruitment and use of 75 children by the FARC-EP dissident groups. The Secretary-General also listed the armed group Jama‘a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) for the recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and abduction of children in Burkina Faso, and Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups for the abduction of children in the Lake Chad Basin region.

The Secretary-General’s annual report and its annexed list of perpetrators have served as a unique and largely effective tool for identifying perpetrators and pressuring them to end abuses and protect children in times of war. The report’s impact and credibility rely largely on the application of the same standards to all parties across all armed conflicts.

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

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See also:

- [Open Letter from 18 Nongovernmental Organizations \(NGOs\) to the UN Secretary-General Calling for a Credible, Evidence-based List of Perpetrators, May 31, 2022](#)
- [“A Credible List”: Recommendations for the Secretary-General’s 2022 Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict, April 12, 2022](#)

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