

## Policy Note

April 2022

# “A Credible List”:

## Recommendations for the Secretary-General’s 2022 Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict

### Introduction

Twenty-five years ago, the international community issued an urgent call to protect children affected by armed conflict. Horrified by the findings of Graça Machel’s historic study on the impacts of war on children, the United Nations General Assembly established the Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) mandate in December 1996.

Since then, the CAAC agenda has expanded and become one of the most significant, dynamic, and broadly supported multilateral initiatives within the UN system. It provides international policymakers a unique set of tools for promoting the protection of children in war and addressing grave violations of their rights.

Among these tools is the Secretary-General’s annual report on the situation of children affected by armed conflict (‘annual report’), which has been presented to the Security Council each year since 2000. The main purpose of this 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.



### 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.

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The listing mechanism, which draws its evidence base from the MRM, has served as another 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.

Despite the important progress made, children continue to face the devastating impacts of armed conflict. In 2020, the UN documented nearly 24,000 grave violations against children.<sup>1</sup> More children are living in conflict zones than at any time in the previous two decades.<sup>2</sup> The rapid expansion of the global counterterrorism agenda threatens to unravel established laws and norms for protecting children's rights, and the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated children's vulnerability to grave violations and other abuses. Some governments have taken action to evade accountability for committing grave violations against children; this includes exerting political pressure to avoid being listed in the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict.

In recent years, civil society organizations and UN Member States have raised concerns about the process for determining which perpetrators are included in the report's annexes. They have noted that any politicization of the listing decisions threatens to undermine the report's credibility and weaken its strength as a tool for promoting accountability and compliance with applicable international law. Of particular concern are inconsistencies found between the data on violations that are included in the narrative of the annual report

and the parties listed in its annexes, notable non-listing of some parties, listing of parties for only some violations described, and de-listing of parties who have not yet fully met the criteria as specified in 2010.<sup>3</sup> In March 2021, a group of internationally respected child rights experts echoed these concerns after undertaking an independent review of the Secretary-General's listing and de-listing decisions between 2010 and 2020.<sup>4</sup>

Since 2017, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict ('Watchlist') has published an annual policy note with recommendations for the Secretary-General on parties to conflict that have committed grave violations against children and should be listed in the annexes of the forthcoming annual report. Watchlist's annual policy note also makes recommendations on parties that should be further investigated and country situations that should be included as "other situations of concern" in the Secretary-General's annual report.

With this sixth edition of its annual policy note, Watchlist reiterates its call to Secretary-General António Guterres to publish a complete list of perpetrators that is evidence-based and accurately reflects data collected and verified by the MRM, applying the 2010 criteria for listing and de-listing without discrimination and consistently across country situations. Watchlist also calls on Secretary-General Guterres to draw the attention of the Security Council to other situations of concern for children affected by armed conflict, by including them in his annual report.

Against the backdrop of the 25th anniversary of the CAAC mandate, Watchlist further urges all stakeholders to redouble their efforts to create a brighter future for all children, especially those affected by war. Specifically,

- 1 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/75/873-S/2021/437), May 6, 2021, <https://undocs.org/s/2021/437> (accessed January 15, 2022), para. 4.
- 2 Save the Children, "Stop the War on Children: A Crisis of Recruitment," November 2021, <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/SWOC-5-5th-pp.pdf> (accessed March 13, 2022), p. 3.
- 3 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/64/742-S/2010/181), April 13, 2010, <https://undocs.org/S/2010/181> (accessed February 18, 2022), paras. 176-180.
- 4 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 February 18, 2022).

Watchlist calls on the UN, its Member States, and civil society to build on the progress made to protect children in armed conflict by defending and upholding existing protection frameworks, strengthening efforts to prevent conflict, and promoting accountability for and to children.

## Methodology

Watchlist conducted a desk review of various publicly available reports for 11 relevant country situations, plus the Lake Chad Basin region, for the period from January 1 to December 31, 2021, to inform its recommendations. These particular country situations were chosen based on the Secretary-General's 2021 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. In addition to these, Watchlist reviewed information on grave violations for four situations not currently included in the Secretary-General's annual reports: Ethiopia, Mozambique, Niger, and Ukraine.

Sources include the Secretary-General's previous annual reports on children and armed conflict; reports from UN agencies, 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 violations that "trigger" listing: recruitment and use; killing and maiming; rape and other forms of sexual violence;

attacks on schools and hospitals; and abductions. For countries not yet in the annual report, Watchlist also considered information on the denial of humanitarian access, the sixth grave violation which is not a trigger for listing perpetrators in the annexes.

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>5</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>6</sup> In addition to reviewing information on violations committed during the 2021 reporting period, Watchlist considered the number of UN-verified violations committed in 2020 to assess the establishment of patterns or trends. In some cases, Watchlist found that parties were responsible for committing high numbers of violations across two consecutive years (2020 and 2021) and recommended listing. In other cases, there was enough information to suggest parties had committed a high number of violations in 2021 alone to recommend listing.

For some parties mentioned in the body of the Secretary-General's 2021 annual report that have not yet been listed, Watchlist recommends that the UN further investigate to determine whether they should be listed in the 2022 annexes. For these parties, evidence of verified violations was concerning but not sufficient

<sup>5</sup> UN Security Council Resolutions 1379 (2001), para. 16; 1882 (2009), para. 3; 1998 (2011), para. 3; 2225 (2015), para. 3.

<sup>6</sup> 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 2021 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, which is notoriously difficult to document, 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. However, as indicated in the text above, these figures do not represent a standard numerical threshold; instead, they were analyzed in connection with other contextual information, including the number of violations documented in previous years.

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>7</sup>

It should be noted that the information contained in this briefing 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.

Watchlist further notes the continuing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children affected by armed conflict. The Secretary-General's 2021 annual report noted that the pandemic aggravated existing vulnerabilities of children to grave violations, in particular, recruitment and use, abduction, and sexual violence. A significant number of late verifications of grave violations may be reflected in the 2022 annual report due to disruptions and additional challenges to monitoring and reporting in 2020 and 2021.<sup>8</sup>

## 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 2021 in the annexes of his upcoming annual report:
  - a. Central African Republic: Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation (3R), as part of the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement (CPC), for rape and other forms of sexual violence
  - b. Colombia: Dissident groups of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), for recruitment and use of children
  - c. Myanmar: Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces, for attacks on schools and hospitals
  - d. Sudan: Government security forces, including the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), and the Sudan Police Force, for attacks on schools and hospitals
  - e. Yemen: Saudi- and Emirati-led coalition, for killing and maiming children
  - f. Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territory: Israeli government forces, for killing and maiming children and attacks on schools and hospitals

7 Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG-CAAC), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (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 February 18, 2022).

8 OSRSG-CAAC, "Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Violations against Children in Situations of Armed Conflict," April 2021, <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Impact-of-the-COVID-19-pandemic-on-violations-against-children-in-situations-of-armed-conflict-1.pdf> (accessed February 26, 2022), p. 13.

2. Further investigate to determine whether parties should be listed in the annexes:
  - a. Colombia: Dissident groups of the FARC-EP, for killing and maiming children
  - b. Colombia: Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC), for recruitment and use of children
  - c. Sudan: Government security forces, including the RSF, SAF, and the Sudan Police Force, for killing and maiming children and rape and other forms of sexual violence
  - d. Burkina Faso: Jama 'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM), for killing and maiming children and attacks on schools and hospitals
  - e. Cameroon: Armed separatist groups, for attacks on schools and hospitals and abductions
  - f. Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territory: Palestinian armed groups, for killing and maiming children
3. Include the following countries in the narrative of the report under "other situations of concern" and further investigate which parties are responsible for committing grave violations, in order to determine whether they should be listed in the annexes:
  - a. Ethiopia
  - b. Mozambique
  - c. Niger
  - d. Ukraine

# Annex I Countries

## Afghanistan

*The Haqqani Network, Hizb-i Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP), and the Taliban and affiliated groups are listed for recruitment and use of children and for killing and maiming children in the Secretary-General's 2021 report on children and armed conflict. In addition, ISIL-KP and the Taliban are listed for attacks on schools and hospitals, and the Taliban is listed for abductions.*

## Central African Republic (CAR)

*Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC), Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC), and Union pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC) as part of the former 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 FPRC, MPC, and UPC as part of the former Séléka coalition are also listed for attacks on schools and hospitals. Watchlist recommends the following with regard to the Secretary-General's 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict.*

## Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation (3R), as part of the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement (CPC)

### Recommendation to List – Rape and Other Forms of Sexual Violence

According to the UN Secretary-General's October 2021 report on children and armed conflict in CAR, CPC factions were responsible for 49 cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence (unidentified CPC (28), UPC (10), anti-balaka (5), 3R (3), FPRC (2) and MPC (1)) during the period from July 2019 to June 2021.<sup>9</sup> 3R was responsible for an additional 38 cases. The majority of these cases occurred in late 2020 and the first half of 2021, when the security situation deteriorated in connection with electoral and post-electoral violence and military operations against the CPC. For instance, four members of 3R gang-raped a 17-year-old girl in a village in Ouham-Pendé prefecture in February 2021.<sup>10</sup> The UN had previously verified 14 cases of sexual violence against girls by 3R that took place in 2020, as reported in the Secretary-General's most recent annual report on children and armed conflict.<sup>11</sup> It is not clear how many of these cases overlap with those reported more recently.

<sup>9</sup> UN Security Council, Children and Armed Conflict in the Central African Republic: Report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/882), October 15, 2021, <https://undocs.org/en/S/2021/882> (accessed January 15, 2022), para. 28.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 30.

<sup>11</sup> UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/75/873–S/2021/437), May 6, 2021, para. 27.

## Colombia

*The Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) is listed for recruitment and use in the Secretary-General's most recent annual report on children and armed conflict. Watchlist recommends the following with regard to the Secretary-General's 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict.*

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

#### Recommendation to List – Recruitment and Use

Despite the signing of the peace accord between the Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP in 2016, dissident groups of the FARC-EP have continued to commit acts of violence against civilians and human rights violations, including recruiting and using children. The recruitment and use of children by FARC-EP dissidents has been well-documented by the UN and other credible sources. In 2020, the UN verified 66 cases of recruitment and use of children by FARC-EP dissident groups, up from 40 the previous year.<sup>12</sup>

In his December 2021 report on children and armed conflict in Colombia, covering the period from July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2021, the Secretary-General reported that dissident FARC-EP groups were responsible for the greatest number of grave violations against children, with recruitment and use continuing to be the most prevalent violation.<sup>13</sup> During the reporting period, the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) verified the

recruitment and use of 106 children by dissident FARC-EP groups.<sup>14</sup> The Secretary-General noted that recruitment and use was often linked to other grave violations. For instance, an airstrike on FARC-EP dissidents in March 2021 resulted in the death of a 16-year-old girl allegedly associated with the armed group.<sup>15</sup>

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

In his recent report on children and armed conflict in Colombia, the Secretary-General attributed 26 child casualties to dissident FARC-EP groups.<sup>16</sup> Although it was not clear when during the reporting period those casualties occurred, in 2020, the UN attributed 18 child casualties to dissident FARC-EP groups.<sup>17</sup>

### Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC)

#### Recommendation to Further Investigate to Determine if Listing Is Warranted – Recruitment and Use

The Secretary-General noted in his recent report on children and armed conflict in Colombia that the AGC was responsible for the recruitment and use of 18 children between July 1, 2019, and June 30, 2021.<sup>18</sup> Of these, at least nine children were recruited in 2020.<sup>19</sup> In one case affecting five children in January 2021, the AGC used financial incentives to recruit five indigenous children between the ages of 14 and 17 in the department of Antioquia.<sup>20</sup>

12 Ibid., para. 37; UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/74/845–S/2020/525), June 9, 2020, <https://undocs.org/S/2020/525> (accessed March 22, 2022), para. 43.

13 UN Security Council, Children and Armed Conflict in Colombia: Report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/1022), December 8, 2021, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/1022> (accessed January 18, 2022), para. 14.

14 Ibid., para. 19.

15 Ibid., para. 21.

16 Ibid., para. 25.

17 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/75/873–S/2021/437), May 6, 2021, para. 38.

18 Ibid., para. 23.

19 Ibid., para. 37.

20 UN Security Council, Children and Armed Conflict in Colombia: Report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/1022), December 8, 2021, para. 19.

## Democratic Republic of the Congo

*In the Secretary-General's 2021 annual report on children and armed conflict, 12 non-state armed groups (NSAGs) are listed for various grave violations, and the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) are listed for rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.*

## Iraq

*The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is listed for all five "trigger" violations in the Secretary-General's 2021 annual report on children and armed conflict. The Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) are listed for recruitment and use.*

## Mali

*The NSAGs Ansar Eddine; Platform, including affiliated groups; and Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad (MNLA) are listed for recruitment and use in the Secretary-General's most recent annual report on children and armed conflict. Ansar Eddine and the MNLA are also listed for rape and other forms of sexual violence.*

## Myanmar

*In his most recent annual report on children and armed conflict, the Secretary-General lists the Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces, as well as the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army, Kachin Independence Army, the Karen National Liberation Army, the Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council, the Karenni Army, the Shan State Army, and the United Wa State Army, for recruitment and use. The*

*Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces, are also listed for killing and maiming and rape and other forms of sexual violence.*

## Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces

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

In 2020, the UN verified six attacks on schools and hospitals by the Tatmadaw Kyi.<sup>21</sup> These attacks seemingly escalated in 2021, with large numbers of attacks on schools and hospitals, as well as cases of military use of schools, reported in the wake of the February 2021 military coup.

In a joint statement on March 19, 2021, UNICEF, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and Save the Children reported that, since the beginning of the coup, there were reports that Myanmar's security forces had occupied more than 60 schools and universities across the country.<sup>22</sup> In some cases, injuries and destruction were reported in connection with military use. In one incident, Myanmar's security forces reportedly beat two teachers and injured several others while entering the premises of one school.<sup>23</sup> In a letter dated May 28, 2021, the Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the UN reported that security forces raided the IELTS English Training School in Muse Township in Shan State and destroyed materials inside it.<sup>24</sup>

In a statement to the UN Human Rights Council on July 6, 2021, the High Commissioner for Human Rights stated that, since the coup, Myanmar's military had indiscriminately conducted airstrikes and artillery

21 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/75/873-S/2021/437), May 6, 2021, para. 124.

22 UNICEF, UNESCO, and Save the Children, "Occupation of Schools by Security Forces in Myanmar Is a Serious Violation of Children's Rights," March 19, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/myanmar/press-releases/occupation-schools-security-forces-myanmar-serious-violation-childrens-rights> (accessed March 13, 2022).

23 Ibid.

24 UN General Assembly, Letter dated 28 May 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the UN addressed to the Secretary-General (A/75/901-S/2021/535), June 2, 2021, <https://undocs.org/a/75/901> (accessed March 15, 2022), p. 6.



shelling that had destroyed schools.<sup>25</sup> Likewise, the Secretary-General reported in his August 2021 report on the situation of human rights of the Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar, that between August 15, 2020, and August 14, 2021, the Tatmadaw destroyed two schools in airstrikes.<sup>26</sup> According to the Secretary-General, the Myanmar Teachers' Federation had reported that Myanmar security forces killed at least five teachers and detained 76 others during the same time period.<sup>27</sup> It was not clear when exactly during the reporting period these incidents occurred.

Since the military coup, hospitals and health workers have also increasingly come under attack by the Tatmadaw, including integrated border guard forces. Hospitals and health care workers have been caught in the crossfire and have been the victims of indiscriminate attacks, which have compounded challenges for children and other civilians to access health care, especially amid the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>28</sup> For example, on August 8, 2021, the Tatmadaw reportedly fired shells near a COVID-19 clinic in Kachin state, disrupting treatment.<sup>29</sup>

Government forces also destroyed and raided ambulances and health facilities. For instance, on September 8, 2021, government forces reportedly confiscated two NGO ambulances and arrested four aid workers during a raid on the organization's office

in Yangon. The organization had been involved in distributing face masks and disinfectants and transporting patients with COVID-19.<sup>30</sup> In another incident, on October 29, 2021, government forces burned a private clinic to the ground, along with at least 160 homes, in Thantlang township, Chin state.<sup>31</sup>

Since the coup, the Tatmadaw, including integrated border guard forces, have occupied hospitals across Myanmar, undermining the humanitarian character of these facilities and access to health care for children and other civilians. In an April 2021 letter to the UN Secretary-General, the permanent representative of Myanmar to the UN reported that military troops had been deployed at hospitals across the country since March 6, 2021.<sup>32</sup> By May 2021, the World Health Organization's (WHO) Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care (SSA) had identified 51 health facilities that had been occupied by security forces.<sup>33</sup> On November 16, 2021, for example, a station hospital in Kayin state was reportedly occupied and ultimately destroyed by border guard forces. Doctors and nurses had fled the facility in anticipation of the attack.<sup>34</sup>

Data indicates that the Tatmadaw has committed the overwhelming majority of attacks on health care in Myanmar. One analysis found that government forces, including the Tatmadaw, police forces, and

25 UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Statement by Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 47th Session of the Human Rights Council, Oral update on Myanmar, July 6, 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?LangID=E&NewsID=27274> (accessed March 15, 2022).

26 UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar: Report of the Secretary-General (A/76/312), August 31, 2021, <https://undocs.org/A/76/312> (accessed March 13, 2022), para. 41.

27 *Ibid.*, para. 58.

28 UN in Myanmar, "UN Reiterates Call for Health Workers and Facilities to Be Protected," May 5, 2021, <https://myanmar.un.org/en/126289-un-reiterates-call-health-workers-and-facilities-be-protected> (accessed March 24, 2022).

29 Insecurity Insight, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), and the Johns Hopkins Center for Public Health and Human Rights (CPHHR), "Violence Against or Obstruction of Health Care in Myanmar: February-September 2021," October 26, 2021, <https://www.insecurityinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Violence-Against-Health-Care-in-Myanmar-February-September-2021-October-update.pdf> (accessed March 24, 2022), p. 4.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

31 Insecurity Insight, PHR, and the Johns Hopkins CPHHR, "Violence Against or Obstruction of Health Care in Myanmar: February-November 2021," December 23, 2021, <https://phr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Violence-Against-or-Obstruction-of-Health-Care-in-Myanmar-February-December-2021-23-December-update.pdf> (accessed March 24, 2022), p. 2.

32 UN General Assembly, Letter dated 29 March 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the UN addressed to the Secretary-General (A/75/834-S/2021/362), April 16, 2021, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/362> (accessed March 14, 2022), p. 4.

33 UN in Myanmar, "UN Reiterates Call for Health Workers and Facilities to Be Protected," May 5, 2021.

34 Insecurity Insight, PHR, and the Johns Hopkins CPHHR, "Violence Against or Obstruction of Health Care in Myanmar: February-November 2021," December 23, 2021, p. 3.

government-aligned militias, were responsible for over 90 percent of documented attacks on health care during the period between February 1 and November 30, 2021.<sup>35</sup>

## Somalia

*Al-Shabaab is listed for all five “trigger” violations. The Somali Federal Defense and Police Forces are listed for recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and rape and other forms of sexual violence, while the NSAG Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama’a is listed for recruitment and use.*

## South Sudan

*The South Sudan People’s Defense Forces, including Taban Deng-allied South Sudan People’s Defense Forces, are listed for all five “trigger” violations in the Secretary-General’s 2021 report on children and armed conflict. The Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition - pro-Machar is listed for recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and abductions.*

## Sudan

*Five NSAGs are listed for recruitment and use in the Secretary-General’s most recent annual report on children and armed conflict: Justice and Equality Movement, Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid, Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi, Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction, and Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North Malik Agar faction.*

## Government security forces, including the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), and the Sudan Police Force

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

The Secretary-General’s most recent annual report on children and armed conflict attributes the killing and maiming of 35 children in 2020 to Sudanese security forces, including the RSF (20) and SAF (13), yet they are not listed.<sup>36</sup>

On October 25, 2021, the Sudanese military staged a coup, which triggered large scale protests. UN agencies, NGOs, and rights groups expressed concerns about violations committed against children in the context of the protests and Sudanese security forces’ response. Human Rights Watch reported on November 23, 2021, that the Sudanese security forces had repeatedly used excessive, including lethal, force in response to the protests.<sup>37</sup> On November 15, 2021, UNICEF reported that three children, including a 14-year-old girl and boys aged 15 and 17 years, were killed in protest-related violence in Khartoum; the circumstances of their deaths were being verified.<sup>38</sup> In January 2022, UNICEF reported that more than 120 child rights violations had occurred since the military coup, including the killing of nine children and injury of 11 others, although the agency did not attribute responsibility for these casualties.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/75/873-S/2021/437), May 6, 2021, para. 164.

<sup>37</sup> Human Rights Watch (HRW), “Sudan: Security Forces Use Lethal Force on Protesters,” November 23, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/11/23/sudan-security-forces-use-lethal-force-protesters> (accessed March 14, 2022).

<sup>38</sup> UNICEF, “Three Children Killed in Sudan in Recent Unrest,” November 15, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/mena/press-releases/three-children-killed-sudan-recent-unrest> (accessed March 14, 2022).

<sup>39</sup> UNICEF, “Child Rights Violations Against Children in Sudan Must Stop: Nine Children Killed and 13 Injured in Violence Since October 2021,” January 19, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/child-rights-violations-against-children-sudan-must-stop> (accessed March 14, 2022).

According to rights groups, protests that took place on November 13 and 17, 2021, were particularly deadly for children. At the time, Amnesty International reported that at least five children had been killed since the beginning of the protests.<sup>40</sup> Human Rights Watch also reported that security forces shot a child dead during protests on November 17.<sup>41</sup>

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

In his most recent annual report on children and armed conflict, the Secretary-General reported that in 2020, the SAF were responsible for rape and other forms of sexual violence committed against 25 girls, while the RSF were responsible for two cases and the Sudan Police Force for one.

The Sudanese security forces' use of rape and other forms of sexual violence against girls continued in 2021. Several high-level advocates expressed significant concern over rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated against women and girls in the wake of the October 25 military coup. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC) noted credible reports that rape and gang rape against girls and women

were used to disperse protesters during an attempted sit-in near the Republican Palace on December 19.<sup>42</sup> According to the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor, Sudanese security forces raped eight girls that day, in what the director of the Unit on Combating Violence Against Women called "systematic rape."<sup>43</sup>

Separately from the protests in Khartoum, a March 2021 report of the Secretary-General said that SAF raped a 17-year-old girl in El Geneina, West Darfur, during the reporting period (from November 24, 2020, to February 15, 2021).<sup>44</sup>

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

The WHO, rights groups, and NGOs have reported a pattern of attacks targeting health care facilities following the October 25 military coup. Insecurity Insight attributed responsibility for 20 attacks on health care facilities and workers that took place from October 25 to December 30, 2021, to Sudanese security forces. The majority of these included raids on hospitals and the use of teargas inside health facilities.<sup>45</sup> Human Rights Watch reported on November 23, 2021, that security forces had attacked health care facilities, including by harassing medical personnel and disrupting medical care to wounded protesters in at least two cases.<sup>46</sup> For instance, according

40 Amnesty International, "Sudan: Investigate the Killings of People After Military Crackdown Against Protesters," November 24, 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/11/sudan-investigate-the-killings-of-people-after-military-crackdown-against-protesters/> (accessed March 14, 2022).

41 HRW, "Sudan: Security Forces Use Lethal Force on Protesters," November 23, 2021.

42 Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (OSRSG-SVC), "UN Special Representative Pramila Patten Expresses Grave Concern Over Alleged Acts of Sexual Violence against Women and Girls During the 19 December 2021 Demonstrations in Sudan and Calls for Restraint and Accountability for Those Responsible," December 23, 2021, <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/press-release/un-special-representative-pramila-patten-expresses-grave-concern-over-alleged-acts-of-sexual-violence-against-women-and-girls-during-the-19-december-2021-demonstrations-in-sudan-and-calls-for-restraint/> (accessed March 14, 2022).

43 Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor, "Sudan: Investigate Allegations of Rape, Mass Harassment During Protest Crackdown," December 24, 2021, <https://euromedmonitor.org/en/article/4808/Sudan:-Investigate-allegations-of-rape,-mass-harassment-during-protest-crackdown> (accessed March 14, 2022).

44 UN Security Council, Situation in the Sudan and the Activities of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan: Report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/199), March 1, 2021, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/199> (accessed March 14, 2022), para. 28.

45 Insecurity Insight, "Violence Against or Obstruction of Health Care in Sudan Since the Military Coup on October 25 (26 October-16 November 2021)," November 2021, <http://insecurityinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Violence-Against-or-Obstruction-of-Health-Care-in-Sudan.pdf> (accessed March 14, 2022); Insecurity Insight, "Violence Against or Obstruction of Health Care in Sudan Since the Military Coup on October 25 (17-30 November 2021)," November 2021, <https://www.insecurityinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/17-30-November-2021-Violence-Against-or-Obstruction-of-Health-Care-in-Sudan.pdf> (accessed March 14, 2022); Insecurity Insight, "Violence Against or Obstruction of Health Care in Sudan (January 2022 Update)," January 2022, <http://insecurityinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/01-December-2021-10-January-2022-Violence-Against-or-Obstruction-of-Health-Care-in-Sudan.pdf> (accessed March 14, 2022).

46 HRW, "Sudan: Security Forces Use Lethal Force on Protesters," November 23, 2021.

to Insecurity Insight, on December 25, 2021, Sudanese security forces beat medical staff and patients, fired teargas canisters, sound bombs, and stun grenades, and stole medical staff's possessions at Khartoum Teaching Hospital.<sup>47</sup> On December 20, 2021, Sudanese military snipers reportedly used the roof of Alia Military Hospital in Khartoum to target protesters.<sup>48</sup>

On January 11, 2022, the WHO noted that it was following the situation in the Sudan with concern. The WHO further stated that there had been reports of 15 attacks on health care workers and health facilities since November 2021 in Khartoum and other cities across the Sudan, 11 of which were verified. In total, the WHO reported 26 attacks on health care workers and health care facilities in 2021 that caused four deaths and 38 injuries to health workers and patients. The majority of these were direct assaults on health care workers.<sup>49</sup>

Reports suggest that, in the wake of the coup, Sudanese security forces also targeted teachers and education officials for their supposed affiliation with the former administration. In a widely reported incident on November 7, 2021, Sudanese security forces allegedly used teargas and force to disperse teachers who had staged a sit-in outside the Ministry of Education in Khartoum and detained at least 87 of them.<sup>50</sup>

## Syrian Arab Republic

*ISIL is listed for all five "trigger" violations in the Secretary-General's 2021 annual report on children and armed conflict. In addition, the NSAGs Army of Islam, Kurdish People's Protection Units and Women's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ), and Syrian armed opposition groups (formerly known as the Free Syrian Army) are listed for recruitment and use of children, while the NSAGs Ahrar al-Sham and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham are listed for recruitment and use and killing and maiming. Government forces, including National Defense Forces and pro-government militias, are listed for recruitment and use, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and attacks on schools and hospitals.*

## Yemen

*Government forces, including the Yemen Armed Forces, Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, the Houthis (who call themselves Ansar Allah), pro-government militias, including the Salafists and popular committees, and Security Belt Forces are listed for recruitment and use in the Secretary-General's 2021 annual report on children and armed conflict. In addition, the Houthis are listed for killing and maiming and attacks on schools and hospitals.*

47 Insecurity Insight, "Violence Against or Obstruction of Health Care in Sudan (January 2022 Update)," January 2022.

48 Ibid.

49 World Health Organization (WHO), "Attacks on Health Care in Sudan Must Stop Now," January 11, 2022, <http://www.emro.who.int/media/news/attacks-on-health-care-in-sudan-must-stop-now.html?format=html> (accessed March 14, 2022).

50 Zeinab Mohammed Salih, "Sudan: Scores of Teachers Arrested as Strike Begins Against Coup," The Guardian, November 7, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/07/sudan-pro-democracy-groups-strike-in-protest-at-military-coup> (accessed March 21, 2022).

## Saudi- and Emirati-Led Coalition

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

Despite being de-listed for killing and maiming children in 2020, the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen (the coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) has continued to be responsible for large numbers of child casualties over the past two years. In his most recent annual report on children and armed conflict, the Secretary-General reported that the Saudi- and Emirati-led coalition was responsible for killing and maiming 194 children in 2020, but did not list the coalition in the report's annexes.<sup>51</sup>

Since the establishment of its mandate by the UN Human Rights Council in 2017, the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen (GEE) has played an important role in monitoring and reporting on the human rights situation and investigating alleged violations of international law in Yemen. In 2021, however, the GEE's work was impeded by restrictions on access, the COVID-19 pandemic, and resource limitations. In addition, its mandate was not renewed<sup>52</sup> in October 2021, reportedly due to political pressure and threats from Saudi Arabia.<sup>53</sup> Of note, this was the first time in the Council's 15-year history that a resolution was defeated.<sup>54</sup> This affected the availability of data on grave violations against children.

Nevertheless, credible sources reported that the Saudi- and Emirati-led coalition continued to carry out airstrikes in Yemen, resulting in child casualties. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) noted that data from the Yemen Data Project revealed that the rates of bombings increased by 43 percent in the final quarter of 2021 after the GEE's mandate ended in October.<sup>55</sup> In a separate analysis, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) found that airstrikes had caused 39 times more civilian casualties since the end of the GEE's mandate and monitoring efforts (October 7, 2021, through February 6, 2022), as compared with the preceding four months, when the GEE had been conducting monitoring activities (June 7 through October 6, 2021).<sup>56</sup> According to the Protection Cluster's Civilian Impact Monitoring Project, the fourth quarter of 2021 also saw the highest number of child casualties related to airstrikes: 26, compared to three during the third quarter.<sup>57</sup> Yemeni civil society organization Mwatana for Human Rights documented 18 airstrikes that killed at least seven children and injured at least 11 others in 2021.<sup>58</sup>

51 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/75/873-S/2021/437), May 6, 2021, para. 197.

52 OHCHR, "Statement by Group of Experts on Yemen on HRC Rejection of Resolution to Renew Their Mandate," October 8, 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=27636&LangID=E> (accessed March 14, 2022).

53 Stephanie Nebehay, "Saudi Lobbying Jeopardises UN Yemen War Crimes Probe, Activists Say," Reuters, October 6, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/saudi-lobbying-jeopardises-un-yemen-war-crimes-probe-activists-say-2021-10-06/> (accessed March 24, 2022); Stephanie Kirchgaessner, "Saudis Used 'Incentives and Threats' to Shut Down UN Investigation in Yemen," The Guardian, December 1, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/01/saudi-arabia-yemen-un-human-rights-investigation-incentives-and-threats> (accessed February 14, 2022); Mwatana for Human Rights, et al., "Civil Society Groups Seek Urgent Action on Yemen," December 2, 2021, <https://mwatana.org/en/urgent-action/> (accessed March 24, 2022).

54 Stephanie Nebehay, "Saudi Lobbying Jeopardises UN Yemen War Crimes Probe, Activists Say," Reuters, October 6, 2021.

55 International Rescue Committee (IRC), "Civilian Deaths and Injuries in Yemen in Startling Escalation as Global Leaders Turn Attention to Other Crises," January 20, 2022, <https://www.rescue.org/press-release/civilian-deaths-and-injuries-yemen-startling-escalation-global-leaders-turn-attention> (accessed January 28, 2022).

56 Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), "Yemen: Civilian Casualties Double Since End of Human Rights Monitoring," February 10, 2022, <https://www.nrc.no/news/2022/february/yemen-civilian-casualties-double-since-end-of-human-rights-monitoring/> (accessed March 22, 2022).

57 Civilian Impact Monitoring Report (CIMP), "Quarterly Report - Q4: October-December 2021," January 2022, [https://civilianimpactmonitoring.org/onewebmedia/CIMP%20Quarterly%20Report\\_2021\\_Q4.pdf](https://civilianimpactmonitoring.org/onewebmedia/CIMP%20Quarterly%20Report_2021_Q4.pdf) (accessed March 14, 2022), p. 1.

58 Mwatana for Human Rights, "A New Year Added to the Age of Bloody Conflict: Press Briefing on the Situation of Human Rights in Yemen, 2021," January 2022, <https://mwatana.org/en/bloody-conflict/> (accessed March 14, 2022).

## Annex II Countries

### Nigeria

*Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups, including Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad and Islamic State West Africa Province, are currently listed for all five "trigger" violations.*

### The Philippines

*The Abu Sayyaf Group, Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, and New People's Army are currently listed for recruitment and use.*

## Countries in the Report/Not Yet Listed

The Secretary-General's 2021 annual report on children and armed conflict includes information on the situation of children in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, India, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Lake Chad Basin, Lebanon, Libya, and Pakistan. However, no parties to these conflicts have been listed in the annexes to the report. Watchlist makes the following recommendations with regard to these other situations of concern.

### Burkina Faso

#### Jama 'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM)

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

In 2020, the UN verified that JNIM killed or maimed 29 children.<sup>59</sup> According to credible sources, JNIM was among armed groups that continued to be responsible for armed violence against civilians in 2021, including the killing and maiming of children. Human Rights Watch reported that on June 5, 2021, armed Islamist fighters killed at least eight children during a single attack on an artisanal gold mining site outside of Solhan village in Yagha province, northeastern Burkina Faso.<sup>60</sup> JNIM denied responsibility for the

attack, but according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), circumstantial evidence indicates that local groups linked to JNIM may have been responsible.<sup>61</sup> Drawing on local partners and media sources, ACLED attributed the killing and maiming of 16 children in 14 incidents to JNIM in 2021.<sup>62</sup>

##### Recommendation to Investigate to Determine if Listing Is Warranted – Attacks on Schools and Hospitals

In 2020, the UN verified JNIM's responsibility for six attacks on schools.<sup>63</sup> According to data gathered by ACLED from local partners and media sources, JNIM was responsible for 33 attacks on schools and hospitals in 2021, including arson, the looting of school furniture and supplies, abductions of school staff, and forced closures.<sup>64</sup>

59 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/75/873-S/2021/437), May 6, 2021, para. 212.

60 HRW, "Armed Islamists' Latest Sahel Massacre Targets Burkina Faso," June 8, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/06/08/armed-islamists-latest-sahel-massacre-targets-burkina-faso> (accessed February 6, 2022).

61 Armed Conflict Location and Events Data Project (ACLED), "Sahel 2021: Communal Wars, Broken Ceasefires, and Shifting Frontlines," <https://acleddata.com/2021/06/17/sahel-2021-communal-wars-broken-ceasefires-and-shifting-frontlines/> (accessed February 6, 2022).

62 Data downloaded in December 2021 from ACLED: <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/>.

63 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/75/873-S/2021/437), May 6, 2021, para. 214.

64 Data downloaded in December 2021 from ACLED: <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/>.

## Cameroon

### Armed separatist groups

#### Recommendation to Investigate to Determine if Listing Is Warranted – Attacks on Schools and Hospitals

In 2021, conflict between armed separatist groups and the Government of Cameroon in the North-West and South-West regions continued for its fifth year, with armed separatists attacking, threatening, and intimidating civilians, particularly teachers and school children.<sup>65</sup> The UN verified 22 attacks on schools that took place in Cameroon's Anglophone regions in 2020, but did not identify the perpetrators.<sup>66</sup> However, credible sources have reported targeted attacks by armed separatists on schools and hospitals since the conflict began. Watchlist recommends the UN further investigate and verify these incidents, including to identify which armed separatist groups were responsible.

Drawing on reports from UN agencies, the World Bank, civil society organizations, and media outlets, Human Rights Watch reported in 2021 that at least 70 schools were attacked by armed separatists between January 2017 and August 2021, including 15 attacks that Human Rights Watch documented in detail.<sup>67</sup> In one attack that took place in January 2021, armed separatists shot into the air and at the gate of the Government Bilingual High School Atiela in Bamenda, causing panic among students and teachers.<sup>68</sup> In two other attacks that both occurred on January 9, 2021, suspected separatists killed the principal of a high school in South-West region and injured the principal from another school in the same region. In another attack, attributed to unidentified

perpetrators, but which the Government of Cameroon has blamed on separatists, gunmen killed four children and a female teacher and injured at least five other children, after entering their school.<sup>69</sup> In addition, Human Rights Watch documented targeted attacks on teachers. For example, on January 12, 2021, alleged separatists shot a female teacher in the abdomen.<sup>70</sup>

Drawing on local partners and media sources, ACLED reported 15 attacks on schools (12) and hospitals (3) in Cameroon in 2021.<sup>71</sup> These included targeted killings and abductions of school principals and teachers and school arsons, as well as arson and explosives targeting hospital facilities; there was also one case in April 2021, in which suspected separatists abducted three nurses. Although these attacks were not verified, they echo trends reported by others.

#### Recommendation to Investigate to Determine if Listing Is Warranted – Abductions

According to credible sources, armed separatist groups have kidnapped hundreds of students and educators since the beginning of the conflict in North-West and South-West Cameroon. Human Rights Watch documented the abduction of at least 268 students and education personnel between January 2017 and August 2021.<sup>72</sup> Unverified data from ACLED further suggest this has been a trend. In 2021, ACLED attributed the kidnapping of 19 children in five incidents to armed separatist groups, based on reporting by media sources and local partners.<sup>73</sup> As above, Watchlist recommends the UN further investigate and verify these incidents, including to identify which armed separatist groups were responsible.

65 HRW, "They Are Destroying Our Future": Armed Separatist Attacks on Students, Teachers, and Schools in Cameroon's Anglophone Regions," December 2021, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/cameroon1221\\_web.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/cameroon1221_web.pdf) (accessed March 14, 2022), p. 2.

66 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/75/873-S/2021/437), May 6, 2021, para. 225.

67 HRW, "They Are Destroying Our Future," December 2021, p. 3.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 72.

69 *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65.

70 *Ibid.*, p. 55.

71 Data downloaded in December 2021 from ACLED: <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/>.

72 HRW, "They Are Destroying Our Future," December 2021, p. 3.

73 Data downloaded in December 2021 from ACLED: <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/>.



## Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territory

### Israeli Government Forces

#### Recommendation to List - Killing and Maiming

According to the Secretary-General's most recent annual report on children and armed conflict, Israeli forces were found responsible for killing eight children and maiming 294 children in 2020. Between 2015 and 2019, the UN attributed over 6,400 child casualties to Israeli forces,<sup>74</sup> yet they have never been listed.

In the period from December 11, 2020, to December 9, 2021, the Secretary-General attributed a total of 969 child casualties, including the killing of 84 children and injury of 885 others, to Israeli security forces.<sup>75</sup> In late April and early May 2021, violence escalated between Israeli security forces and armed groups in Gaza, leading to intensive Israeli airstrikes that killed 66 children<sup>76</sup> and injured an additional 540<sup>77</sup> in Gaza between May 10 and 20, 2021.

Israeli forces also injured significant numbers of Palestinian children in the context of protests and clashes in 2021. For example, from November 16 to December 20, 2021, 206 children were injured by Israeli forces during protests in the West Bank against search-and-arrest operations.<sup>78</sup> Likewise, from September 7 to 20, 2021, Israeli forces injured 73 children in clashes across the West Bank,<sup>79</sup> and from June 29 to July 12, 2021, Israeli forces injured 133 children, again in clashes throughout the West Bank.<sup>80</sup>

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

In 2020, the UN verified 26 attacks on schools and hospitals by Israeli forces, including airstrikes, attacks on medical personnel, and threats against students or teachers.<sup>81</sup> These violations escalated in 2021. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has estimated that 58 education facilities and 19 health clinics were damaged and nine hospitals partially damaged during the escalation in violence in late April and early May 2021.<sup>82</sup>

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

75 UNSCO, Security Council Briefing on the Situation in the Middle East, Reporting on UNSCR 2334 (as Delivered by Special Coordinator Wennesland), March 25, 2021, <https://unsco.unmissions.org/security-council-briefing-situation-middle-east-reporting-unscr-2334-delivered-special-coordinator-2> (accessed March 6, 2022); UN Security Council, Implementation of Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016): Report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/584), June 15, 2021, <https://undocs.org/en/s/2021/584> (accessed March 6, 2022), para. 11; UNSCO, Security Council Briefing on the Situation in the Middle East, Reporting on UNSCR 2334 (as Delivered by UN Special Coordinator Wennesland), September 29, 2021, <https://unsco.unmissions.org/security-council-briefing-situation-middle-east-reporting-unscr-2334-delivered-un-special-4> (accessed March 6, 2022); UN Security Council, Implementation of Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016), Report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/1047), December 15, 2021, <https://undocs.org/en/s/2021/1047> (accessed March 6, 2022), para. 18.

76 UN Human Rights Council, Situation of Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Including East Jerusalem, with a Focus on the Legal Status of the Settlements, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories Occupied Since 1967\* (A/HRC/47/57), July 29, 2021, <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/47/57> (accessed March 14, 2022), para. 8.

77 UNICEF, "Briefing by UNICEF Special Representative Lucia Elmi on the Situation of Children in the State of Palestine," May 21, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/sop/press-releases/briefing-unicef-special-representative-lucia-elmi-situation-children-state-palestine> (accessed March 7, 2022).

78 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Protection of Civilians Report | 7-20 December 2021," December 27, 2021, <https://www.ochaopt.org/poc/protection-civilians-report-7-20-december-2021> (accessed January 28, 2022); OCHA, "Protection of Civilians Report | 16 November – 6 December 2021," December 14, 2021, <https://www.ochaopt.org/poc/16-november-6-december-2021> (accessed January 28, 2022).

79 OCHA, "Protection of Civilians Report | 7-20 September 2021," September 24, 2021, <https://www.ochaopt.org/poc/7-20-september-2021> (accessed January 28, 2022).

80 OCHA, "Protection of Civilians Report | 29 June – 12 July 2021," July 16, 2021, <https://www.ochaopt.org/poc/29-june-12-july-2021> (accessed January 28, 2022).

81 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/75/873-S/2021/437), May 6, 2021, para. 80.

82 UN Human Rights Council, Situation of Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Including East Jerusalem, with a Focus on the Legal Status of the Settlements, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories Occupied Since 1967\* (A/HRC/47/57), July 29, 2021, para. 12.

In addition, OCHA reported at least 15 instances during which Israeli forces violently impeded the provision of education or health care in the West Bank. Between November 16 and December 6, 2021, Israeli forces tear-gassed or physically assaulted and injured 18 students during seven incidents that took place in Nablus and the H2 area of Hebron City.<sup>83</sup> Similarly, from September 7 to 20, 2021, Israeli forces teargassed students at six schools, affecting more than 55 Palestinian students and teachers.<sup>84</sup> In addition, between June 29 and July 12, 2021, Israeli forces confiscated a mobile clinic in Hebron and demolished a school that was under construction in East Jerusalem.<sup>85</sup>

## Palestinian armed groups

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

During the 11-day escalation of violence in May 2021, Palestinian armed groups were reportedly responsible for killing seven Palestinian children<sup>86</sup> and two Israeli children.<sup>87</sup> Watchlist recommends the UN further investigate and verify these incidents, including to identify which armed groups were responsible. The Palestinian victims included two boys, ages 16 and five, who were killed on May 10 when an unguided rocket fired by a Palestinian armed group fell short and hit them.<sup>88</sup> According to Action on Armed Violence (AOAV), Hamas was responsible for killing two Israeli children: a five-year-old boy killed on May 12 after being fatally struck by shrapnel that penetrated the window of a fortified room in Sderot, and a 16-year-old girl killed May 11 in the central city of Lod.<sup>89</sup>

Israeli children have also been injured by Palestinians in the context of the May 2021 violence and amid clashes, rock and Molotov cocktail throwing, attacks, and other incidents, although it is unclear which of these cases can be attributed to Palestinian armed groups. According to UNICEF, 60 children were reportedly injured in Israel during the May 2021 violence.<sup>90</sup>

In briefings to the Security Council, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process reported that five Israeli children were injured by Palestinians between December 11, 2020, and March 23, 2021, and on July 18, 2021, a one-year-old child was injured by stones thrown by Palestinians near Damascus Gate in Jerusalem's Old City.<sup>91</sup>

83 OCHA, "Protection of Civilians Report | 16 November – 6 December 2021," 2021.

84 OCHA, "Protection of Civilians Report | 7-20 September 2021," 2021.

85 OCHA, "Protection of Civilians Report | 29 June – 12 July 2021," 2021.

86 Defense for Children International Palestine (DCIP), "2021 Is Deadliest Year for Palestinian Children Since 2014," December 10, 2021, [https://www.dci-palestine.org/2021\\_is\\_deadliest\\_year\\_for\\_palestinian\\_children\\_since\\_2014](https://www.dci-palestine.org/2021_is_deadliest_year_for_palestinian_children_since_2014) (accessed March 7, 2022).

87 Action on Armed Violence (AOAV), "A List of Children Killed in the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict (10 May – 21 May 2021)," May 26, 2021, [https://aoav.org.uk/2021/a-list-of-children-killed-in-the-palestinian-israeli-conflict-10-may-21st-may-2021/#\\_edn58](https://aoav.org.uk/2021/a-list-of-children-killed-in-the-palestinian-israeli-conflict-10-may-21st-may-2021/#_edn58) (accessed March 4, 2022).

88 DCIP, "2021 Is Deadliest Year for Palestinian Children Since 2014," December 10, 2021.

89 AOAV, "A List of Children Killed in the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict (10 May – 21 May 2021)," May 26, 2021.

90 UNICEF, "Briefing by UNICEF Special Representative Lucia Elmi on the Situation of Children in the State of Palestine," May 21, 2021.

91 UNSCO, Security Council Briefing on the Situation in the Middle East, Reporting on UNSCR 2334 (as Delivered by UN Special Coordinator Wennesland), September 29, 2021; UNSCO, Security Council Briefing on the Situation in the Middle East, Reporting on UNSCR 2334 (as Delivered by Special Coordinator Wennesland), March 25, 2021.

## 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

Since November 2020, the armed conflict in northern Ethiopia has raised serious concerns about the situation of children, with widespread allegations of grave violations, including killing and maiming, sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, abduction, and restrictions on humanitarian access. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) carried out a joint investigation of alleged violations committed by all parties to the conflict from November 3 to June 28, 2021. The EHRC/OHCHR Joint Investigative Team (JIT) found reasonable grounds to believe that all parties to the conflict in Tigray have, to varying degrees, committed violations of international human rights, humanitarian, and refugee law, some of which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.<sup>92</sup> In particular, they found that "[c]hildren were subjected to sexual and gender-based violence, physical injuries and, in some cases, killings as a

direct result of the conflict."<sup>93</sup> Violence continued throughout 2021, expanding beyond the Tigray region and spreading to the Amhara and Afar regions.<sup>94</sup>

In light of credible evidence that parties to the conflict have committed widespread grave violations against children, raising serious concerns about children's rights and protection, Watchlist recommends that the Secretary-General include the situation in Ethiopia in his forthcoming annual report as a situation of concern.

### Recruitment and Use

The JIT investigation documented alleged violations and abuses carried out by a local Tigrayan youth group known as "Samri," including involvement in extrajudicial killings and executions and forced displacement.<sup>95</sup> It is not clear from the report whether members of the group included those under the age of 18. In June 2021, UNICEF noted accounts of fear among adolescent boys of recruitment and use by parties to the conflict.<sup>96</sup>

92 Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and OHCHR, "Joint Investigation into Alleged Violations of International Human Rights, Humanitarian, and Refugee Law Committed by All Parties to the Conflict in the Tigray Region of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia," November 2021, <https://ehrc.org/download/ehrc-ohchr-joint-investigation-report-on-tigray-conflict/> (accessed February 26, 2022), p. 5.

93 Ibid., para. 334.

94 OCHA, "Ethiopia – Northern Ethiopia Humanitarian Update Situation Report," December 23, 2021, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Situation%20Report%20-%20Ethiopia%20-%20Northern%20Ethiopia%20Humanitarian%20Update%20-%2030%20Dec%202021\\_0.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Situation%20Report%20-%20Ethiopia%20-%20Northern%20Ethiopia%20Humanitarian%20Update%20-%2030%20Dec%202021_0.pdf) (accessed February 28, 2022), p. 3; OHCHR, Statement by Nada al-Nashif, the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Special Session of the Human Rights Council on Ethiopia, December 17, 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27975&LangID=E> (accessed March 2, 2022).

95 EHRC and OHCHR, "Joint Investigation into Alleged Violations of International Human Rights, Humanitarian, and Refugee Law Committed by All Parties to the Conflict in the Tigray Region of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia," November 2021, pp. 2, 4.

96 UNICEF, "Children in Northern Ethiopia in Dire Need of Protection and Assistance," June 1, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/children-northern-ethiopia-dire-need-protection-and-assistance> (accessed March 1, 2022).

## Killing and Maiming

Children have been killed and injured in the conflict as a result of attacks on civilian-populated areas, as well as unlawful or extrajudicial killings in both 2020 and 2021. In November and December 2020, multiple reports of shelling on civilian-populated areas reportedly led to child casualties.<sup>97</sup> At least three children were reportedly killed as a result of indiscriminate shelling on the city of Axum by Ethiopian and Eritrean security forces on November 19, 2020.<sup>98</sup> In the same month, Eritrean troops allegedly carried out systematic, extrajudicial executions of young men and boys.<sup>99</sup> Between December 19 and 24, 2021, airstrikes on Tigray reportedly led to mass civilian casualties, though humanitarian partners were unable to verify the exact number of casualties due to limited access and insecurity.<sup>100</sup>

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch documented reports of Tigrayan fighters affiliated with the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) carrying out executions of unarmed civilians in and around Kobo and Chenna in Amhara region, most incidents occurring between late August and early September 2021.<sup>101</sup> Human Rights Watch received reports that at least three children

were among the 26 civilians reportedly killed by Tigrayan forces in executions carried out in Chenna between August 31 and September 4, 2021.<sup>102</sup>

## Rape and Other Forms of Sexual Violence

There have been widespread reports alleging the systematic use of rape and other forms of sexual violence against civilians, including children, in Ethiopia, often with extreme violence and brutality.<sup>103</sup> The Office of the SRS-G-SVC has described "continuing reports of targeted attacks against women, girls, boys, and men, including the systematic use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, a form of retaliation, punishment, humiliation, and also to stigmatize individuals based on their real or perceived ethnic identity."<sup>104</sup>

The JIT found the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF), Eritrean Defense Force (EDF), and Tigray Special Forces (TSF) have been implicated in multiple reports of gang rape, including one case of a 16-year-old boy who was raped by nine EDF soldiers in Humera and later committed suicide.<sup>105</sup> Amnesty International has also documented accounts of rape and other forms of sexual violence carried out by members of the EDF, the ENDF,

- 97 EHC and OHCHR, "Joint Investigation into Alleged Violations of International Human Rights, Humanitarian, and Refugee Law Committed by All Parties to the Conflict in the Tigray Region of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia," November 2021, pp. 25-27, 30-32; HRW, "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 February 28, 2022).
- 98 Amnesty International, "Ethiopia: The Massacre in Axum," February 26, 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/3730/2021/en/> (accessed February 26, 2022), p. 7; HRW, "Ethiopia: Eritrean Forces Massacre Tigray Civilians," March 5, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/05/ethiopia-eritrean-forces-massacre-tigray-civilians> (accessed February 28, 2022).
- 99 *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- 100 OCHA, "Ethiopia – Northern Ethiopia Humanitarian Update Situation Report," December 23, 2021, p. 3.
- 101 Amnesty International, "Ethiopia: Summary Killings, Rape, and Looting by Tigrayan Forces in Amhara," February 16, 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/5218/2022/en/> (accessed February 26, 2022), p. 4; HRW, "Ethiopia: Tigray Forces Summarily Execute Civilians," December 9, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/12/10/ethiopia-tigray-forces-summarily-execute-civilians> (accessed February 28, 2022).
- 102 HRW, "Ethiopia: Tigray Forces Summarily Execute Civilians," December 9, 2021.
- 103 *See, for example:* UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (S/2021/312), March 30, 2021, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/312> (accessed February 28, 2022); EHC and OHCHR, "Joint Investigation into Alleged Violations of International Human Rights, Humanitarian, and Refugee Law Committed by All Parties to the Conflict in the Tigray Region of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia," November 2021; Amnesty International, "Ethiopia: 'I Don't Know if They Realized I Was a Person': Rape and Sexual Violence in the Conflict in Tigray, Ethiopia," August 11, 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/4569/2021/en/> (accessed February 28, 2022); Amnesty International, "Ethiopia: Summary Killings, Rape, and Looting by Tigrayan Forces in Amhara," February 16, 2022.
- 104 OSRS-G-SVC, "UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and Chair of UN Action Network, Ms. Pramila Patten, Urges the Government of Ethiopia to Promptly Sign onto an Agreement with the UN to Prevent and Respond to Conflict-related Sexual Violence," December 7, 2021, <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/press-release/united-nations-special-representative-of-the-secretary-general-on-sexual-violence-in-conflict-and-chair-of-un-action-network-ms-pramila-patten-urges-the-government-of-ethiopia-to-promptly-sign-onto/> (accessed February 28, 2022).
- 105 EHC and OHCHR, "Joint Investigation into Alleged Violations of International Human Rights, Humanitarian, and Refugee Law Committed by All Parties to the Conflict in the Tigray Region of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia," November 2021, para. 172.

the Amhara Regional Police Special Forces (ASF), and Fano, an informal Amhara militia group, as well as by fighters affiliated with the TPLF.<sup>106</sup>

Beginning in July 2021, fighters affiliated with the TPLF reportedly committed widespread rape and other forms of sexual violence against ethnic Amhara women and girls in several villages in and around Chenna, including girls as young as 14.<sup>107</sup> Similar atrocities by Tigrayan fighters were documented in Nifas Mewcha and credibly reported in other regions in Amhara.<sup>108</sup>

### Attacks on Schools and Hospitals

Schools and hospitals have been extensively damaged during the conflict and subjected to looting.<sup>109</sup> The JIT found evidence that the ENDF, EDF, and Tigrayan forces either directly attacked civilian objects, including schools and hospitals, or carried out indiscriminate attacks resulting in damage or destruction of civilian objects.<sup>110</sup> Children's access to health care and education have been disrupted by looting of health facilities and military use of schools.<sup>111</sup> As of December 2021, 1,665 schools were fully damaged, 4,458 schools were partially damaged, and over 2,000 schools were closed across Tigray, Amhara, and Afar as a result of the conflict.<sup>112</sup> Around 70 percent of health facilities in Tigray were severely impacted by damage or looting.<sup>113</sup>

### Abductions

According to the JIT, the ENDF, TSF and allied groups, Amhara militia, Fano, and the EDF have engaged in arbitrary detentions, abductions, and enforced disappearances, including a mass detention of Tigrayan civilians, among them women and children, by the Amhara militia and Fano in Maikadra.<sup>114</sup> Women and girls have also been abducted in the context of other grave violations, namely rape and other forms of sexual violence.<sup>115</sup>

### Denial of Humanitarian Access

Access to affected civilian populations has been a serious and recurring concern throughout the conflict in Ethiopia.<sup>116</sup> Restrictions on access, attacks and threats of attacks on humanitarian workers, and the looting and destruction of medical and other humanitarian supplies and property have seriously hindered civilians' access to lifesaving assistance.

Ethiopian government officials have hurled unfounded accusations against humanitarian agencies of bias and support for armed groups and threatened to expel staff from these organizations.<sup>117</sup> During an August 2021 visit to Ethiopia, UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths denounced the Government's accusations, warning that such claims

106 Amnesty International, "Ethiopia: 'I Don't Know if They Realized I Was a Person': Rape and Sexual Violence in the Conflict in Tigray, Ethiopia," August 11, 2021; Amnesty International, "Ethiopia: Summary Killings, Rape, and Looting by Tigrayan Forces in Amhara," February 2022.

107 Amnesty International, "Ethiopia: Summary Killings, Rape, and Looting by Tigrayan Forces in Amhara," February 16, 2022, p. 14.

108 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

109 OHCHR Statement by Nada al-Nashif, the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Special Session of the Human Rights Council on Ethiopia, December 17, 2021.

110 EHRC and OHCHR, "Joint Investigation into Alleged Violations of International Human Rights, Humanitarian, and Refugee Law Committed by All Parties to the Conflict in the Tigray Region of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia," November 2021, p. 2.

111 *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

112 UNICEF, "Ethiopia: 2021 Humanitarian Situation Report, January – December 2021," January 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/media/114861/file/Ethiopia-Humanitarian-SitRep-31-December-2021.pdf> (accessed February 26, 2022), p. 2.

113 *Ibid.*

114 EHRC and OHCHR, "Joint Investigation into Alleged Violations of International Human Rights, Humanitarian, and Refugee Law Committed by All Parties to the Conflict in the Tigray Region of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia," November 2021, p. 3.

115 *Ibid.*; *see also*: Amnesty International, "Ethiopia: 'I Don't Know if They Realized I Was a Person': Rape and Sexual Violence in the Conflict in Tigray, Ethiopia," August 11, 2021, pp. 14, 15, 21.

116 UNICEF, "Millions of Children in Tigray Remain Out of Reach Despite Access Agreement," December 15, 2020, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/millions-children-tigray-remain-out-reach-despite-access-agreement-unicef> (accessed March 1, 2022).

117 Philip Kleinfeld, "Aid Neutrality Under Fire in Ethiopia's Widening Conflict," July 22, 2021, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2021/7/22/Ethiopian-government-accuses-aid-Tigray-rebels-disinformation> (accessed March 22, 2022).

were “dangerous.”<sup>118</sup> In a September 2021 statement, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Ethiopia *ad interim* condemned attacks and threats of attacks on humanitarian workers, noting that at least 23 had been killed since the onset of the conflict in Tigray.<sup>119</sup> In one incident, three staff of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) were brutally executed while on a field mission in Tigray.<sup>120</sup> An investigation by *The New York Times* found corroborating evidence that Ethiopian government forces were responsible for the killings, although the Government has blamed Tigrayan forces.<sup>121</sup>

Between April and June 2021, at least 31 missions by mobile health, nutrition, and water teams supported by UNICEF were unable to access Tigray, either due to insecurity or because of harassment and denial of passage.<sup>122</sup> Speaking in December 2021, the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights stated that “only limited UN-organized humanitarian supplies [had] been able to enter Tigray since July,” and noted that access challenges were compounded by harassment of humanitarian workers and widespread anti-humanitarian rhetoric.<sup>123</sup> No relief convoys were able to reach Tigray in the latter half of December.<sup>124</sup> The JIT also found Tigrayan forces had looted property from humanitarian organizations.<sup>125</sup>

The nationwide state of emergency announced in November 2021 has raised additional concerns of mass arrests and detention of thousands of Ethiopians, including UN staff.<sup>126</sup> Between October and December 2021, the Ethiopian Government detained at least 16 UN staff members; the 16 Ethiopian staff were released in February 2022, although the UN reportedly never received any explanation for why they had been detained.<sup>127</sup>

## Mozambique

Since 2017, the province of Cabo Delgado, located in northern Mozambique, has been the site of a violent armed insurgency, which has led to a growing humanitarian crisis with devastating impacts on children. The situation worsened in March 2021, when the armed group locally known as Al-Shabab or Al-Sunna wa Jama’a (ASWJ), which is linked to the Islamic State, launched an attack on the town of Palma. The attack on Palma and subsequent insecurity led to mass displacement, and by December 2021, nearly 856,000 civilians, including 414,272 children, were displaced and in need of humanitarian assistance.<sup>128</sup> Military operations by Mozambican government forces and the Dyck Advisory Group—a private security company hired by the Government—were still ongoing after the March attack on Palma, and insecurity prevented humanitarian

118 UN News, “Ethiopia: ‘Heartbreaking’ Devastation in Tigray, Says UN Humanitarian Chief,” August 4, 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/08/1097082> (accessed March 22, 2022).

119 OCHA, HC a.i. Statement on the Killing of 23 Aid Workers in the Tigray Region Since the Start of the Crisis, September 1, 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/hc-ai-statement-killing-23-aid-workers-tigray-region-start-crisis> (accessed March 22, 2022).

120 Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), “Ethiopia: MSF Demands Investigation into Killing of Three Staff Members in Tigray,” July 7, 2021, <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/latest/ethiopia-msf-demands-investigation-killing-three-staff-members-tigray> (accessed March 22, 2022).

121 Simon Marks and Declan Walsh, “‘Finish Them Off’: Aid Workers, Found on Battlefield, Executed by Soldiers,” *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/17/world/africa/ethiopia-tigray-aid-workers-killed.html> (accessed March 22, 2022).

122 UNICEF, “Children in Northern Ethiopia in Dire Need of Protection and Assistance,” June 1, 2021.

123 OHCHR, Statement by Nada al-Nashif, the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Special Session of the Human Rights Council on Ethiopia, December 17, 2021.

124 OCHA, “Ethiopia – Northern Ethiopia Humanitarian Update Situation Report,” December 23, 2021, p. 1.

125 EHRC and OHCHR, “Joint Investigation into Alleged Violations of International Human Rights, Humanitarian, and Refugee Law Committed by All Parties to the Conflict in the Tigray Region of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,” November 2021, para. 189.

126 OHCHR, Statement by Nada al-Nashif, the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Special Session of the Human Rights Council on Ethiopia, December 17, 2021.

127 Edith M. Lederer, “UN Says Last of At Least 16 Staffers Held in Ethiopia Freed,” *Associated Press*, February 18, 2022, <https://www.usnews.com/news/us/articles/2022-02-18/un-says-last-of-at-least-16-staffers-held-in-ethiopia-freed> (accessed March 22, 2022).

128 UNICEF, “Humanitarian Action for Children 2022 – Mozambique,” December 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2022-HAC-Mozambique.pdf> (accessed February 27, 2022).

agencies from accessing affected civilian populations until late into the year. In July 2021, troops from Rwanda and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC)—known as the SADC Mission in Mozambique—were deployed to Mozambique, where they are still conducting operations as of March 2022.

At the end of 2021, violence spilled over into neighboring Niassa province, with attacks for the first time in Mecula district resulting in the displacement of an additional 3,741 civilians, 46 percent of whom were children.<sup>129</sup> Attacks continue throughout Cabo Delgado at this writing.

The situation of children in northern Mozambique has been of serious concern for the past several years. The ASWJ has committed grave violations against children, including brutal killings (with beheadings featuring prominently), abductions for the purpose of forcibly recruiting children as soldiers, marrying them to fighters, and sexually abusing them, and attacks on schools and hospitals. Children and other civilians in Cabo Delgado have been caught between the ASWJ and Mozambican government forces, as well as the Dyck Advisory Group when it was present, and insecurity threatens children's access to humanitarian services, as well as their rights to education and health. For these

reasons, Watchlist urges the Secretary-General to include Mozambique in his forthcoming annual report on children and armed conflict as a situation of concern.

### Recruitment and Use

Previous reports<sup>130</sup> of the recruitment and use of children by the ASWJ were further substantiated in 2021. Human Rights Watch documented several cases of boys—some as young as 12—who were abducted by the ASWJ, trained in bases across Cabo Delgado, and forced to fight alongside adults against Mozambican government forces.<sup>131</sup> The testimonies Human Rights Watch collected were consistent with media reports and those of local NGOs.<sup>132</sup> In 2021, UNICEF also said that it had received unverified reports of the recruitment and use of children as young as five years old handling weapons and being trained to fight.<sup>133</sup>

### Killing and Maiming

It is estimated that over 3,000 people, including children, have been killed in the conflict in Cabo Delgado since October 2017.<sup>134</sup> During its March 2021 incursion on Palma, the ASWJ launched brutal attacks on villages, where it reportedly burned down houses and beheaded children as young as 11 years old.<sup>135</sup> Fighting between ASWJ and Mozambican government forces across Palma district intensified

- 129 UNICEF, "Mozambique Humanitarian Situation Report No. 11 (Reporting Period: January-December 2021)," January 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNICEF%20Mozambique%20Humanitarian%20Situation%20Report%20No.%2011.pdf> (accessed February 27, 2022), p. 2.
- 130 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 February 27, 2022); Amnesty International, "'What I Saw Is Death': War Crimes in Mozambique's Forgotten Cape," March 2, 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4135452021ENGLISH.PDF> (accessed March 25, 2021), p. 21; HRW, "World Report 2021: Events of 2020," January 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.
- 131 HRW, "Mozambique: ISIS-linked Group Using Child Soldiers," November 19, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/09/29/mozambique-isis-linked-group-using-child-soldiers> (accessed February 27, 2022).
- 132 See: Ngala Killian Chimtom, "Islamist Insurgents Kidnapping Children to Serve as Soldiers, Brides in Mozambique," Crux, June 30, 2021, <https://cruxnow.com/interviews/2021/06/islamist-insurgents-kidnapping-children-to-serve-as-soldiers-brides-in-mozambique> (accessed March 14, 2022); Nádia Issufo, "Cabo Delgado: 'Governo está a lutar contra crianças que estão do outro lado,'" DW, June 21, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/pt-002/cabo-delgado-governo-est%C3%A1-a-lutar-contra-crian%C3%A7as-que-est%C3%A3o-do-outro-lado/a-57983161> (accessed March 14, 2022).
- 133 UNICEF, "Geneva Palais Briefing Note on Reports of Abduction of Minors in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado Province," October 5, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/geneva-palais-briefing-note-reports-abduction-minors-mozambique-cabo-delgado> (accessed February 27, 2022).
- 134 Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P), "Populations At Risk: Mozambique," <https://www.globalr2p.org/countries/mozambique/> (accessed March 14, 2022).
- 135 Save the Children, "Children as Young as 11 Brutally Murdered in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique," March 15, 2021, <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/about-us/media-and-news/2021-press-releases/children-murdered-in-cabo-delgado-mozambique> (accessed February 27, 2022).

in late April and continued through May and June, with additional reports of children and other civilians brutally killed. On June 13, 2021, for example, two 15-year-old boys, along with two adults, were beheaded while out searching for food near Palma.<sup>136</sup>

### Rape and Other Forms of Sexual Violence

The ASWJ has abducted over 600 girls and women in Cabo Delgado since 2018 and forcibly married them to fighters, who have enslaved and sexually abused them.<sup>137</sup> Hundreds of girls were reportedly abducted and sexually assaulted during the ASWJ's March 2021 attack on Palma. One witness told Human Rights Watch that ASWJ fighters assaulted her aunt and forced her at gunpoint to identify all the houses with girls between the ages of 12 and 17 in Diaca town, Mocimboa da Praia. The woman counted 203 girls but did not know whether the fighters abducted all of them.<sup>138</sup> Although Mozambican government authorities have rescued hundreds of girls and women from the ASWJ, reports suggest that hundreds more remain captive, suffering sexual violence and other abuse.<sup>139</sup>

### Attacks on Schools and Hospitals

Violence and insecurity in Cabo Delgado, coupled with the reverberating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and Cyclone Kenneth, have led to an education crisis

in northern Mozambique. As of March 2021, data from Mozambique's Ministry of Education indicated that 38 percent of school-age children in Cabo Delgado were out of school.<sup>140</sup> During its March 2021 assault on Palma, the ASWJ reportedly looted and destroyed civilian property and infrastructure, including schools and health centers.<sup>141</sup> At the time, UNICEF reported that the three remaining functional health facilities were no longer operational, and the main hospital was destroyed.<sup>142</sup> As of May 2021, the Health Cluster had estimated that 43 out of 131 (33 percent) of health facilities in Cabo Delgado had been destroyed.<sup>143</sup>

### Abductions

As described above, the ASWJ has abducted hundreds of children since 2018. Girls have been sexually abused, forced to marry fighters, and used in other support roles, such as cooks and cleaners,<sup>144</sup> while boys have been abducted and forcibly recruited to fight for the armed group.<sup>145</sup> In a January 6, 2021 attack on Matemo Island, Ibo district, for example, the ASWJ abducted six children and 15 women, who were later rescued by government forces.<sup>146</sup> The armed group abducted many more children during and after its assault on Palma. By June, Save the Children had identified that at least 51 children—the majority girls—had been abducted over the past 12 months.<sup>147</sup> In October 2021, UNICEF told journalists

136 Save the Children, "Statement on the Beheading of Two Children in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique," June 18, 2021, <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/statement-beheading-two-children-cabo-delgado-mozambique> (accessed February 27, 2022).

137 HRW, "Mozambique: ISIS-linked Group Using Child Soldiers," November 19, 2021.

138 HRW, "Mozambique: Hundreds of Women, Girls Abducted," December 7, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/12/07/mozambique-hundreds-women-girls-abducted#> (accessed February 27, 2022).

139 Ibid.

140 Mozambique Education Cluster, "Mozambique Response to Insecurity: EIE Coordination Group/Education Cluster Year Overview - Reporting of activities from 1 January 2021 - 30 November 2021," December 2021, [https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/insecurity\\_factsheet\\_nov\\_2021\\_version\\_1.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/insecurity_factsheet_nov_2021_version_1.pdf) (accessed February 27, 2022).

141 HRW, "Mozambique: Protect Residents Fleeing Northern Town," March 26, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/26/mozambique-protect-residents-fleeing-northern-town#> (accessed March 14 2022).

142 UNICEF, "Statement by UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore on Situation of Children Following Attack on Palma, Mozambique," March 29, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/statement-unicef-executive-director-henrietta-fore-situation-children-following> (accessed March 14 2022).

143 WHO Health Cluster, "Mozambique: Cabo Delgado Humanitarian Response - Health Cluster Bulletin No. 10 (October 2021)," December 2021, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/health\\_cluster\\_bulletin\\_oct\\_2021.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/health_cluster_bulletin_oct_2021.pdf) (accessed March 14, 2022).

144 MSF, "Displaced by Violence, People in Cabo Delgado Arrive in More Mental than Physical Pain," March 4, 2021, <https://www.msf.org/mozambique-people-arrive-more-mental-physical-pain> (accessed March 14, 2022).

145 Amnesty International, "'What I Saw Is Death': War Crimes in Mozambique's Forgotten Cape," March 2, 2021, p. 21.

146 HRW, "Mozambique: Hundreds of Women, Girls Abducted," December 7, 2021.

147 Save the Children, "At Least 51 Children Kidnapped in Cabo Delgado over Past 12 Months," June 8, 2021, <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/about-us/media-and-news/2021-press-releases/at-least-51-children-kidnapped-in-cabo-delgado-over-past-12-months> (accessed March 14, 2022).



it had received reports, including testimonies from family members, of young boys and girls abducted from their families and villages.<sup>148</sup>

### Denial of Humanitarian Access

Following the outbreak of fighting in Palma in March 2021, humanitarian access to the district was completely blocked for several months.<sup>149</sup> Government forces imposed restrictions that prevented tens of thousands of civilians from fleeing, placing them at risk from fighting and aid shortages.<sup>150</sup> These restrictions further hindered the access of humanitarian organizations operating in Cabo Delgado.

The World Food Programme (WFP) reportedly suspended food distribution to Palma district in March 2021.<sup>151</sup> MSF reported that bureaucratic hurdles had impeded the import of certain supplies and the issuing of visas for additional humanitarian workers.<sup>152</sup> NGOs have reportedly experienced significant challenges in securing visas for their staff, further complicating efforts to shore up the humanitarian response and better address the needs of affected children and other civilians.

## Niger

In 2020, the UN documented 206 grave violations committed against children in the Diffa region of Niger, near Lake Chad. Boko Haram was primarily responsible for these violations, which included

the recruitment and use of 33 children, killing and maiming of 31 children, and seven attacks on schools and hospitals.<sup>153</sup> However, in recent years, violence by other Islamist groups has increased substantially in other areas of Niger. In 2021, instability and violence by Islamist groups, particularly the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and JNIM, escalated in the Tillabéri region and the neighboring Tahoua region.<sup>154</sup>

Although the Lake Chad Basin is already included among "other situations of concern" in the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict, Watchlist recommends that Niger be included in a standalone section covering the situation of children affected in the southwestern regions of Tillabéri and Tahoua.

### Recruitment and Use

Credible sources have indicated that Islamist armed groups are recruiting children as fighters. In 2021, Amnesty International documented an unknown number of cases in which JNIM recruited children in four villages in Torodi department, Tillabéri region. A February 2021 humanitarian protection assessment identified more than 80 children who had been recruited in Torodi department and Téra department, also in Tillabéri region.<sup>155</sup>

In addition, one elder who survived a March 21, 2021, attack on his village told Human Rights Watch that the attackers were partly punishing the community for refusing to give their children as recruits. It was unclear which armed group was responsible for the attack.<sup>156</sup>

148 UNICEF, "Geneva Palais Briefing Note on Reports of Abduction of Minors in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado Province," October 5, 2021.

149 Ibid.

150 HRW, "Mozambique: Civilians Prevented from Fleeing Fighting," August 6, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/08/06/mozambique-civilians-prevented-fleeing-fighting> (accessed February 28, 2022).

151 Ibid.

152 Jonathan Wittall, "Focus on Fighting 'Terrorists' Ignores Real Humanitarian Needs in Cabo Delgado," News 24, May 1, 2021, <https://www.news24.com/news24/columnists/guestcolumn/opinion-focus-on-fighting-terrorists-ignores-real-humanitarian-needs-in-cabo-delgado-20210501> (accessed March 3, 2022).

153 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/75/873–S/2021/437), May 6, 2021, paras. 240, 241, 243, 245.

154 ACLED, "Sahel 2021: Communal Wars, Broken Ceasefires, and Shifting Frontlines," <https://acleddata.com/2021/06/17/sahel-2021-communal-wars-broken-ceasefires-and-shifting-frontlines/> (accessed February 6, 2022).

155 UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Rapport mensuel d'analyse des données de monitoring de protection, Régions de Tillabéri et Tahoua (Niger)," February 2021, [https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/rapport\\_analytique\\_monitoring\\_protection\\_tillaberi-tahoua\\_fevrier\\_2021.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/rapport_analytique_monitoring_protection_tillaberi-tahoua_fevrier_2021.pdf) (accessed March 6, 2022), p. 9.

156 HRW, "Niger: Surging Atrocities by Armed Islamist Groups," August 11, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/08/11/niger-surging-atrocities-armed-islamist-groups> (accessed February 6, 2022).

## Killing and Maiming

Amnesty International found that at least 46 children between the ages of five and 17 were killed in the Tillabéri and Tahoua regions in four deadly attacks that took place during the first three months of 2021. The ISGS claimed responsibility for two of these attacks.<sup>157</sup>

In August 2021, Human Rights Watch reported that armed Islamists had killed more than 420 civilians, primarily ethnic Zarma and Tuareg, including children who were executed after being taken away from their parents, since January of that year. For instance, Human Rights Watch documented an attack that took place on March 21, 2021, during which Islamist armed fighters beat a mother before executing her 17-year-old son in front of her.<sup>158</sup> In total, Human Rights Watch reported that the attack—which occurred in the Tuareg villages of Bakorat and Intazayene and the nomad camps of Warisanet and Tangaran—left 102 people, including 22 children, dead.<sup>159</sup>

In another attack documented by Human Rights Watch, members of an Islamist armed group killed 102 people on January 2, 2021, in the villages of Tchoma Bangou and Zaroumdareye, near Niger's border with Mali.<sup>160</sup> According to UNICEF, there were unconfirmed reports that 10 boys and seven girls under the age of 16 were among those killed, including by being burnt to death. An unknown number of additional children were reportedly injured in the attack.<sup>161</sup>

UNICEF and Human Rights Watch also reported on an attack on a trading convoy that took place on March 15, 2021, near Banibangou, Tillabéri region. UNICEF's regional director for West and Central Africa noted that six children between the ages of 11 and 17 were killed in the attack.<sup>162</sup>

## Rape and Other Forms of Sexual Violence

In 2021, four people from different villages reported to Amnesty International that JNIM fighters had abducted and forcibly married girls. Although Amnesty International was unable to independently verify these reports through witness accounts, JNIM has been known for restricting women's dress and movement and imposing marriage requirements on young women and older girls.<sup>163</sup>

## Attacks on Schools and Hospitals

Credible sources have also indicated that Islamist armed groups attacked schools and health facilities in 2021, including through arson, intimidation, threats, and forced closure.

Amnesty International reported that ISGS was likely behind the burning of schools in Zibane in Tillabéri department, Tarou in Ouallam department, and in Ngaba in Banibangou department, all in Tillabéri region. For instance, multiple people who spoke to Amnesty International indicated that there had been an arson attack on a primary school and secondary school in Zibane on March 24, 2021, which reportedly led to the killing of 14 people. Amnesty International also reported that ISGS fighters had attacked teachers and education officials.<sup>164</sup>

157 Amnesty International, "I Have Nothing Left Except Myself: The Worsening Impact on Children of Conflict in the Tillabéri Region of Niger," September 13, 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr43/4627/2021/en/> (accessed March 14, 2022), p. 6.

158 HRW, "Niger: Surging Atrocities by Armed Islamist Groups," August 11, 2021.

159 Ibid.

160 Ibid.

161 UNICEF, "Statement by UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore on attacks against villages in Niger," January 4, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/statement-unicef-executive-director-henrietta-fore%C2%A0attacks-against-villages-niger> (accessed February 6, 2022).

162 UNICEF, "Statement by UNICEF Regional Director for West and Central Africa, Marie-Pierre Poirier on Attack in Western Niger," March 17, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/statement-unicef-regional-director-west-and-central-africa-marie-pierre-poirier-0> (accessed February 6, 2022). See also: HRW, "Niger: Surging Atrocities by Armed Islamist Groups," August 11, 2021.

163 Amnesty International, "I Have Nothing Left Except Myself: The Worsening Impact on Children of Conflict in the Tillabéri Region of Niger," September 13, 2021, pp. 40-41.

164 Ibid., pp. 23-24.

According to Amnesty International, JNIM fighters were likely behind attacks on schools in Torodi department in retaliation for providing secular or “Western” education. These attacks included threats against teachers and school officials, burning of school buildings, and forced school closures.<sup>165</sup>

Likewise, Human Rights Watch reported that Islamist armed groups had forcibly closed schools in western Niger, including during an attack that took place on May 12, 2021, in Fantio village. One person with whom Human Rights Watch spoke said that the fighters had attacked the school director’s house and burned books and notebooks.<sup>166</sup>

ISGS also reportedly attacked health facilities and health workers, including looting health centers, stealing medicine and ambulances, and threatening medical staff.<sup>167</sup> According to a February 2021 situation report from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), attacks against health care, including medical workers and supplies, were increasingly characteristic of raids by non-state armed groups in the Tillabéri and Tahoua regions.<sup>168</sup>

## Ukraine

In 2021, the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine entered its eighth year, and children continued to suffer from grave violations of their rights. The use of explosive weapons, mine-related incidents, and explosive remnants of war (ERW) were the leading causes of child

casualties. Schools came under fire along the ‘contact line’ in eastern Ukraine and were damaged from small arms fire and shelling. According to UNICEF, more than 750 schools had been damaged since 2014,<sup>169</sup> disrupting access to education for thousands of children.

The situation dramatically deteriorated in 2022, with armed conflict spreading to the rest of the country following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on February 24. The use of explosive weapons with wide area effect and indiscriminate weapons, such as cluster munitions, has caused mass destruction, with severe consequences for Ukraine’s 7.5 million children. In less than a month of hostilities, OHCHR had already documented 174 child casualties: 75 killed (11 girls, 25 boys, 39 unknown sex) and 99 injured (22 girls, 17 boys, 60 unknown sex).<sup>170</sup> The actual number of casualties is believed to be much higher. According to a March 21 statement from Save the Children, at least 464 schools had been damaged.<sup>171</sup> As of March 13, 2022, the WHO had documented 31 attacks on health care, including medical facilities, health workers, and ambulances, killing at least 12 people and injuring 34.<sup>172</sup> Meanwhile, damage to water and sanitation infrastructure has left millions without safe drinking water, and shortages and insecurity have severely limited civilians’ access to food, medicine, heating, and other essentials.<sup>173</sup> Stores of critical medical supplies have dwindled, including medicines, first aid kits, midwifery kits, and surgical equipment, and efforts to curb a polio

165 Ibid., p. 42.

166 HRW, “Niger: Surging Atrocities by Armed Islamist Groups,” August 11, 2021.

167 Amnesty International, “I Have Nothing Left Except Myself: The Worsening Impact on Children of Conflict in the Tillabéri Region of Niger,” September 13, 2021, p. 25.

168 UNHCR, Rapport mensuel d’analyse des données de monitoring de protection, Régions de Tillabéri et Tahoua (Niger), February 2021.

169 UNICEF, “Children in Eastern Ukraine Must Have Access to Safe Education and Childhood – UNICEF,” February 18, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/eca/press-releases/children-eastern-ukraine-must-have-access-safe-education-and-childhood-unicef> (accessed March 3, 2022).

170 OHCHR, “Civilian Casualties as of 24:00 20 March 21, 2022,” <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/03/Ukraine-civilian-casualty-update-21-march-2022> (accessed March 21, 2022).

171 Save the Children, “Six Million Children Trapped in Ukraine Face Grave Danger as Attacks on Schools and Hospitals Soar,” March 21, 2022, <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/six-million-children-trapped-ukraine-face-grave-danger-attacks-schools-and-hospitals-soar> (accessed March 22, 2022).

172 UNICEF, UN Population Fund (UNFPA), and WHO, “Stop Attacks on Health Care in Ukraine: Joint Statement from UNICEF, UNFPA, and WHO,” March 13, 2022, <https://www.who.int/news/item/13-03-2022-stop-attacks-on-health-care-in-ukraine> (accessed March 13, 2022).

173 UNICEF, “UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell’s Remarks at the UN Security Council Meeting on the Humanitarian Situation in Ukraine,” March 7, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-executive-director-catherine-russells-remarks-un-security-council-meeting> (accessed March 8, 2022).

outbreak were halted.<sup>174</sup> Access and security constraints have hindered the ability of humanitarian agencies to reach those most affected.

Watchlist has expressed concerns about the situation of children affected by armed conflict in eastern Ukraine and called for its inclusion in the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict every year since the publication of its first annual "credible list" policy note in 2017.<sup>175</sup> Given concerns about the situation of children in eastern Ukraine since 2014, as well as the rapid escalation of hostilities and resultant grave violations committed against children throughout the country in 2022, Watchlist urges Secretary-General Guterres to immediately designate Ukraine as a "situation of concern" in his 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict. At this writing, Watchlist can provide only a snapshot of the devastating impacts the ongoing conflict is having on children in Ukraine. However, below are additional details about grave violations committed against children in eastern Ukraine during the 2021 reporting period covered in this policy note.

### Killing and Maiming

In 2021, at least four children were killed, and at least six were maimed in connection to the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine.<sup>176</sup> All four child deaths were reportedly the consequence of mine-related incidents

and the handling of ERW.<sup>177</sup> One such incident took place on April 6, 2021, when an unidentified explosive device detonated in the non-government-controlled area of Slovianoserbsk (Luhansk) and resulted in two child casualties.<sup>178</sup> A 17-year-old boy was killed, and a 16-year-old boy was seriously injured in the incident.<sup>179</sup> In another incident a 15-year-old girl sustained a spinal injury and gunshot wound to the neck on April 18 in the non-government-controlled area of Voznesenivka.<sup>180</sup>

### Attacks on Schools and Hospitals

Attacks on schools and hospitals have been widespread throughout the duration of the conflict in eastern Ukraine since 2014, and 2021 was no exception. Between January 1 and December 31, 2021, the UN and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (OSCE SMM) documented at least 16 attacks on schools (15) and hospitals (1).<sup>181</sup> The majority of these incidents (14) occurred in non-government-controlled areas, while two incidents (one attack on a school and one attack on a hospital) were documented in government-controlled areas.<sup>182</sup>

In addition to endangering the lives of children and teachers, attacks on schools have resulted in damage to education facilities and interrupted children's education. For example, on June 24, 2021, a kindergarten in government-controlled Mariinka (Donetsk oblast)

174 UNICEF, "First Shipment of UNICEF Humanitarian Aid Arrives in Ukraine as Conflict Escalates," March 5, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/first-shipment-unicef-humanitarian-aid-arrives-ukraine-conflict-escalates> (accessed March 11, 2022).

175 For a library of Watchlist's reports, please visit: <https://watchlist.org/resources/reports/>.

176 UNICEF, "Ukraine Country Office Humanitarian Situation Report No. 3/2021: 1 July – 30 September 2021," October 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNICEF%20Ukraine%20Humanitarian%20Situation%20Report%20September-December%202021.pdf> (accessed February 15, 2022), p. 1

177 OHCHR, "Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine: 1 February – 31 July 2021," September 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/32ndReportUkraine-en.pdf> (accessed February 15, 2022), para. 27

178 Ibid., para. 29.

179 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), "Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine Daily Report 103/2021," May 6, 2021, [https://www.osce.org/files/2021-05-06%20Daily%20Report\\_ENG.pdf?itok=32501](https://www.osce.org/files/2021-05-06%20Daily%20Report_ENG.pdf?itok=32501) (accessed February 17, 2022), p. 3; OSCE, "Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine Daily Report 114/2021," May 19, 2021, <https://www.osce.org/files/2021-05-19%20Daily%20Report.pdf?itok=49041> (accessed February 17, 2022), p. 3.

180 OSCE, "Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine Daily Report 112/2021," May 17, 2021, <https://www.osce.org/files/2021-05-16-17%20Daily%20Report%20-%20amended%20clean.pdf?itok=48308> (accessed February 17, 2022), p. 4.

181 UNICEF, "Ukraine Country Office Humanitarian Situation Report No. 4/2021: 1 January – 31 December 2021," February 2, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNICEF%20Ukraine%20Humanitarian%20Situation%20Report%20No.%204%20-%20January-December%202021.pdf> (accessed February 15, 2022), p. 2; OSCE, "Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine Daily Report 103/2021," May 6, 2021, pp. 3-4.

182 Ibid.

had to be evacuated as a result of nearby hostilities.<sup>183</sup> In another incident, on September 21, 2021, children and teachers were forced to take shelter for three hours due to an armed attack in non-government-controlled Yasynuvata (Donetsk oblast), which resulted in minor damages to their school's infrastructure.<sup>184</sup> Following the attack, several families withdrew their children from school out of concerns for their safety.

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183 UNICEF, "Ukraine Country Office Humanitarian Situation Report No. 2/2021: 1 January – 30 June 2021," July 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNICEF%20Ukraine%20Humanitarian%20Situation%20Report%20No.%202%20-%201%20January-31%20June%202021.pdf> (accessed February 15, 2022), p. 2.

184 UNICEF, "Ukraine Country Office Humanitarian Situation Report No. 3/2021: 1 July – 30 September 2021," October 2021, p. 2.





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