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Office of the SRSg for Children and Armed Conflict
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Background

Armed clashes in Palestine refugee camps, recruitment into armed groups, sporadic armed violence and the presence of explosive remnants of war negatively affected children between 2016 and 2019.

The recruitment and use of children as young as 11 by armed groups including ISIL, the Nusrah Front (also known as Jabhat Fath al-Sham), Hizballah and the Ansarulla Movement (also known as Ansar Allah) was a growing concern from 2016 to 2019. Some children recruited and trained in Lebanon were subsequently trafficked to fight in the Syrian Arab Republic. In Palestine refugee camps, children were used to guard checkpoints and to bring food to support the groups. Children also participated in marches, wore uniforms and carried weapons in protests and memorial ceremonies.

Children continued to be arrested and prosecuted under military jurisdiction on charges relating to terrorism or national security for alleged association with armed groups. Children are detained both pre-trial and post sentencing.

The number of children killed and maimed increased from 2016 to 2017 and then decreased in 2018 and 2019. Most casualties were caused by explosive remnants of war and crossfire.

Armed clashes in Palestine refugee camps interrupted the provision of services. Some facilities were also damaged in crossfire. Ein El Hilweh, Shatila, Mieh Mieh and Beddawi camps were among the most affected. Disruptions to education and health services also occurred outside the Palestine refugee camps including in Aarsal, al-Qaa and Beirut.

Recommendations

- Urge the Government to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Encourage the Government to endorse the Principles and Guidelines on children associated with armed forces or armed groups ("Paris Principles").
- Express concern about the recruitment and use of children and call on armed groups to immediately cease this practice.
- Stress that all children allegedly associated with armed groups should be treated primarily as victims, detained only as a last resort for the shortest period possible and in accordance with juvenile justice standards. Emphasis that the priority should be on children's rehabilitation and reintegration.

- Urge all parties to protect schools and hospitals from violence which affects their proper functioning and impedes children's access to education and health care.
- Welcome the Palestinian National Security Forces in Lebanon for the issuance of a Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics in March 2019 to protect Palestinian people living in Palestine refugee camps in Lebanon.
- Commend the Government for collaborating with civil society and the United Nations to create a "Work Plan to prevent and respond to the association of children with armed violence" in Lebanon and urge Government to ensure its swift implementation.