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Children and Armed Conflict

Recommendations to the Security Council

AFGHANISTAN

Hizb-i Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP), and the Taliban forces and affiliated groups, including the Haqqani network, are each listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's (SG) 2022 annual report ([S/2022/493](#)) on children and armed conflict (CAAC) for committing grave violations against children. In March, UNAMA's mandate is up for renewal, per SCR 2626 (2022). According to the SG's December report on UNAMA ([S/2022/916](#)), the UN verified 522 grave violations against children from September to December 2022. Killing and maiming was the most prevalent verified violation directly impacting 267 children (64 killed, 203 maimed). Children continued to be the main victims of unexploded ordnance. A September 30 [attack](#) on Kaaj Educational Centre in Kabul led to the deaths of 54 civilians and injury of 114, mostly women and girls from Hazara community. On December 24, the de facto authorities issued a decree [banning](#) women from working for non-governmental organizations (NGOs). As a result, several international humanitarian organizations [suspended](#) their operations, citing female staff as [essential](#) to reaching women and girls with humanitarian aid. **The Security Council should:**

- Renew UNAMA's mandate for 12 months without amendment, and ensure **allocation of sufficient resources to strengthen capacities to deliver on its child protection mandate**, including for monitoring and engagement with parties to end and prevent grave violations, and to **address threats posed by landmines, ERW, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs)**;
- Demand that all parties in Afghanistan **fully uphold their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law (IHRL)**;
- Call on the de facto authorities to **abide by Afghanistan's national and international commitments to protect children**, including the definition of a child as any individual under 18 years, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the Paris Principles and Commitments, and the Safe Schools Declaration;
- Call on the de facto authorities to **swiftly reverse the policies and practices restricting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Afghan women and girls**, including by immediately reversing the ban on female NGO workers.

Japan and the United Arab Emirates are the lead countries on Afghanistan.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (DRC)

Thirteen parties are listed in the annexes of the SG's 2022 annual report on CAAC for various grave violations against children, including the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) for rape and other forms of sexual violence. In March, the SG is expected to report on MONUSCO's mandate, pursuant to SCR 2666 (2022). According to the SG's November report on MONUSCO ([S/2022/892](#)), between September 17 and October 31, 2022, the UN verified 172 grave violations. Mai-Mai Biloze Bishambuke was responsible for the largest number of verified violations (38), and Government Security Forces were allegedly responsible for the killing of one boy, sexual violence against three girls and one attack on a school. On January 22, [13](#) children were reportedly abducted during an attack by a non-State armed group (NSAG) near the city of Butembo in North Kivu. Recent research by [Human Rights Watch](#) and [Amnesty International](#) describe evidence of summary killings and sexual violence against civilians, including children, carried out by the M23 armed group in North Kivu. In December, the Security Council Working Group on CAAC (SCWG-CAAC) adopted its latest [conclusions](#) on DRC. **The Security Council should:**

- Urge all armed groups to **immediately cease recruiting and using children**, release those within their ranks, uphold their obligations under IHL and IHRL, and if they have not yet done so, engage with the UN to **develop, sign, and implement action plans to end and prevent grave violations**;
- Encourage the Government to continue its cooperation with the UN on screening and age verification to prevent the recruitment of children, call for age verification to be implemented at the territorial level, and **encourage continued efforts to hold perpetrators of grave violations accountable**;
- Reiterate that children associated with armed forces and groups (CAAFAG) should be treated primarily as victims and **call on the Government to ensure CAAFAG are consistently handed over to civilian child protection actors** in compliance with its 2013 directives and the Paris Principles, which it has endorsed;

Monthly Update: March 2023

Situations involving parties listed for grave violations against children:

Afghanistan
Burkina Faso
Central African Republic
Colombia
Democratic Republic of Congo
Iraq
Lake Chad Basin
Mali
Myanmar
Philippines
Somalia
South Sudan
Sudan
Syria
Yemen

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WATCH LIST ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

DRC (cont'd)

- Call on all parties to take immediate and specific steps to **end and prevent rape and other forms of sexual violence against children**, including by ensuring perpetrators of grave violations are held accountable and that survivors have access to comprehensive, gender-sensitive, and age-appropriate response and protection, and call on the Government to **accelerate efforts to implement aspects of its 2012 action plan relating to sexual violence** and the Joint Communiqué signed with the UN to fight sexual violence in conflict;
- Demand that all parties **allow and facilitate the safe, unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance** to affected populations, especially children; and **respect and protect humanitarian personnel, assets, and infrastructure**;
- Call for the **swift and full implementation of the recommendations of the SCWG-CAAC** elaborated in its eighth conclusions on DRC.

France is the lead country on DRC.

SOUTH SUDAN

The South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF), including Taban Deng-allied SSPDF, and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition – pro-Machar (SPLA-IO) are listed in the annexes of the SG's 2022 annual report on CAAC for committing grave violations against children. In March, UMISS's mandate is up for renewal, per SCR 2625 (2022). According to the SG's December report on UNMISS ([S/2022/918](#)), the UN verified 129 grave violations against children between September 1 and November 30, 2022—representing a significant increase from the previous report ([S/2022/689](#)). Grave violations included the recruitment and use of 14 boys, killing and maiming of eight children, rape and other forms of sexual violence against 22 girls, abduction of 17 children, 52 attacks on schools and hospitals, and nine incidents of denial of humanitarian access. Government Security Forces were found responsible for the highest number of verified violations (64), including 27 attacks on schools and 7 incidents of denial of humanitarian access.

The Security Council should:

- **Renew UNMISS's child protection mandate**, maintaining its child protection capacity, and, in subsequent budget negotiations, ensure distinct budget lines for child protection;
- Urge the Government and parties that have endorsed the 2020 Comprehensive Action Plan to **fully and swiftly implement their commitments**, and urge all parties to **immediately cease all grave violations against children, to facilitate humanitarian assistance and protect humanitarian personnel**, and to release and hand over to child protection actors all children from their ranks;
- Call on the Government to **prioritize the reintegration of CAAFAG**, ensure that disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration processes and security sector reform fully take into account the specific needs of children, and endorse the Paris Principles and the Vancouver Principles; urge donors to provide long-term, predictable funding for reintegration;
- Call on all parties to **take immediate and specific steps to end and prevent rape and other forms of sexual violence** against children, ensure survivors have access to comprehensive, gender-sensitive, and age-appropriate response systems and services, and strengthen preventive measures;
- Call on all parties to **immediately cease attacks and threats of attack on educational and health facilities and personnel**, as well as to refrain from the military use of schools, and encourage the Government to uphold its commitments under the Safe Schools Declaration, which it has endorsed;
- Urge the Government to **end impunity for grave violations against children** through timely and impartial investigation and, where appropriate, prosecution, and follow through on commitments to establish the Hybrid Court.

The **United States** is the lead country on South Sudan.

Recommendations to the Working Group

The Working Group continues to negotiate conclusions in response to the following reports of the SG on children and armed conflict: Myanmar ([S/2020/1243](#)), Syria ([S/2021/398](#)), Afghanistan ([S/2021/662](#)), Somalia ([S/2022/397](#)), and Nigeria ([S/2022/596](#)). For targeted recommendations, see Watchlist's Monthly CAAC updates from [February 2021](#), [June 2021](#), [September 2021](#), [July 2022](#), and [October 2022](#), respectively. See also, Watchlist's Monthly CAAC update from [February 2023](#) for targeted recommendations related to the SG's latest report on CAAC in Mali ([S/2022/856](#)).

Presidency of the Security Council for March: Mozambique

Party to Geneva Conventions I-IV, Additional Protocols I-II, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and ILO Convention 182. Has signed but not ratified the Rome Statute of the ICC. Has endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration; has not endorsed the Paris Principles and Commitments nor the Vancouver Principles.

NGO RESOURCES

Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, [Attacks on Education and Military Use of Education Facilities in Ukraine in 2022](#), February 24, 2023

Terre des Hommes, [After One Long Year of War in Ukraine: Children and Young People Need Peace, Protection of Their Rights, and a Plan for the Future](#), February 24, 2023

Action on Armed Violence, [Children in Ukraine Endure a Year of Horror Amid Escalating Conflict](#), February 21, 2023

Save the Children, [Over 900 Hours Underground: Children in Ukraine Endure Life in Bunkers as War Enters Second Year](#), February 20, 2023

ACF, et al., [53 NGOs Call for Full and Equitable Funding to Address Root Causes of the Crisis in Yemen](#), February 16, 2023

Save the Children, [Children Demand World Leaders Step Up as Donor Conference Raises About Half of \\$1.5 Billion Target to Boost Education Emergencies](#), February 16, 2023

Plan International, [Syrian Children Must Be Protected at All Costs](#), February 10, 2023

Education Cannot Wait, Plan International, [222 Million Crisis-Affected Children Urgently Need Education Support](#), February 3, 2023