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Children and Armed Conflict

Recommendations to the Security Council

**Monthly Update:
September 2023**

AFGHANISTAN

Hizb-i Islami of Gulbuddin, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-KP), and Taliban forces and affiliated groups, including the Haqqani network, are each listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's (SG) 2023 annual report ([S/2023/363](#)) on children and armed conflict (CAAC) for grave violations against children. Afghanistan remained among the situations with the highest numbers of UN-verified grave violations (1,797) against children in 2022. The Taliban and affiliated forces were the most prominent perpetrator of recruitment and use, rape and other forms of sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, abduction, and the denial of humanitarian access. The UN also verified 69 boys as detained by the Taliban for alleged association with the National Resistance Front, as well as 57 incidents of the military use of schools and hospitals by the Taliban. The majority of UN-verified child casualties in Afghanistan in 2022 were caused by explosive ordnance. In September, the SG is expected to report on the situation in Afghanistan, including implementation of UNAMA's mandate, pursuant to SCR 2678 (2023). **The Security Council should:**

- 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;
- Reiterate its 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 related to their access to education, employment, freedom of movement, and women's full, equal and meaningful participation in public life, pursuant to SCR 2681 (2023);
- Reiterate its **demand that all parties allow full, rapid, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access consistent with international law for all humanitarian personnel**, including women, for United Nations agencies, international and national non-governmental organizations, and for other humanitarian actors, and to **allow women and girls safe access to humanitarian assistance and basic services**.

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

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (DRC)

Fifteen non-State armed groups (NSAGs) are listed in the annexes of the SG's 2023 annual report on CAAC for various grave violations against children, and the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) are listed for rape and other forms of sexual violence. In the 2023 annual report, the SG newly listed the *Mouvement du 23 mars* (M23) for killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, and abduction, the Mai-Mai Zaïre for killing and maiming, and Twigwaneho for recruitment and use. In 2022, the DRC was the situation with the highest number (3,377) of UN-verified grave violations against children. In September, the SG is expected to report on MONUSCO, pursuant to SCR 2666 (2022). According to the SG's June report on MONUSCO ([S/2023/451](#)), between March 21 and May 31, 2023, the UN verified 573 grave violations against children in the DRC. The most prevalent grave violation was recruitment and use (290), and the *Alliance des forces de résistance congolaises* were responsible for the most grave violations, followed by CODECO factions and Mai Mai Mazembe factions.

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 and implement concrete commitments, including action plans where relevant, to end and prevent grave violations against children**;
- 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 grave violations accountable**;

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
Ukraine
Yemen

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WATCH LIST ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

- 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;
- 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 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 Security Council Working Group on CAAC** (SCWG-CAAC) elaborated in its eighth [conclusions](#) on DRC.

France is the lead country on DRC.

SUDAN

Five armed groups are listed in the annexes of the SG's 2023 annual report on CAAC for recruiting and using children in Sudan. In September, the Council is expected to meet to discuss the SG's August report on the implementation of UNITAMS's mandate (forthcoming at the time of writing). According to the UN, ongoing violence between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) which broke out on April 15, has so far displaced at least [two million](#) children and nearly 14 million children are now in urgent need of humanitarian support. According to the SG's May report ([S/2023/355](#)), the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) had verified 13 grave violations against children in Sudan between February 19 until the outbreak of the current fighting, as well as the release of 122 children associated with armed forces and armed groups. As of July, the UN had received reports of over [2,500](#) severe violations of children's rights, including reports that 435 children have been killed and at least 2,025 have been injured, in addition to reports of abduction, recruitment into armed groups, attacks on schools, occupation of schools, and denial of humanitarian access. At least [498](#) children have reportedly died from hunger as critical services run out of supplies or close, and a recent Integrated Food Security Phase Classification [snapshot](#) reported that "20.3 million people across Sudan have been driven into high levels of acute food insecurity." **The Security Council should:**

- **Reiterate its condemnation of all attacks on humanitarian actors, civilians, especially children, and civilian infrastructure**; call on all parties to **avoid the use of explosive weapons in populated areas**;
- Demand that all parties **uphold their obligations under IHL and IHRL**, taking all necessary precautions to protect civilians and civilian objects, including schools and hospitals, in accordance with the principles of precaution, distinction, and proportionality, and implement commitments under the Jeddah Declaration;
- **Reiterate calls for an immediate ceasefire** with clearly articulated timeframes, coordination with relevant regional and subregional organizations and humanitarian actors to establish such a ceasefire, as well as to prevent further violations and abuses against civilians, including children;
- Demand that all parties **allow and facilitate the safe, timely, and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to affected populations**, especially children; and respect and protect humanitarian personnel, assets, and infrastructure; and allow civilians safe passage out of conflict zones.

The United Kingdom is the lead country on 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](#)), Nigeria ([S/2022/596](#)), and Mali ([S/2022/856](#)). For targeted recommendations, see Watchlist's Monthly CAAC updates from [February 2021](#), [June 2021](#), [September 2021](#), [July 2022](#), [October 2022](#), and [February 2023](#), respectively.

Presidency of the Security Council for August: Albania

Party to Geneva Conventions I-IV, Additional Protocols I-III, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the Rome Statute of the ICC, and ILO Convention 182. Has endorsed the Paris Principles and Commitments, the Safe Schools Declaration, and the Vancouver Principles.

NGO RESOURCES

Save the Children, [Ukraine: Child Casualties Rise in Deadly Summer with Over 540 Children Killed in 18 Months of War](#), August 23, 2023]

Save the Children, [Nigeria: More Than 1600 Schoolchildren Kidnapped in Nigeria Since the 2014 Chibok Girls Abduction](#), August 17, 2023

Human Rights Watch, ["Living a Nightmare": Haiti Needs an Urgent Rights-Based Response to Escalating Crisis](#), August 14, 2023

Plan International, [Political Instability in Niger Puts Children at Risk](#), August 11, 2023

Save the Children, [Colombia Ceasefire Agreement Needs to Stop Recruitment of Child Soldiers](#), August 4, 2023