

United Nations Human Rights Council

45th session

29 September 2020

Interactive Dialogue on Yemen

Joint oral statement by Defence for Children International, ChildFund Alliance, the International Rescue Committee, INTERSOS, Médecins du Monde, Oxfam, Première Urgence-Aide Médicale Internationale, Relief International, Save the Children and Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict

Urgent need to address the humanitarian crisis in Yemen and its impact on the most vulnerable populations

A call for renewal and strengthening of the mandate of the Group of Eminent Experts

Dear Chair,

This statement is on behalf of Save the Children and 9 international civil society organisations.

We welcome the comprehensive report of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen and strongly support their recommendations, notably the ones on accountability.

After nearly six years of conflict, the war in Yemen has caused the deaths of nearly a quarter-million people.¹ More than 10,000 children are believed to have been killed and maimed in the conflict.² All parties to the conflict have been reported to have recruited and used children for military purposes, some as young as eight.³ Targeted attacks on schools, hospitals and health care workers as well as damages to critical water systems threaten the support Yemeni need to protect themselves and survive. Between 2015 and 2019, an average of one attack on education was reported each day in Yemen⁴. With schools closed due to COVID-19, 7.8 million children are denied access to education⁵. All parties to the conflict have taken myriad steps to control and politicize access to lifesaving humanitarian assistance and movement of humanitarian personnel.

The Yemeni people are the first to suffer from the rapidly rising fuel costs that make every daily cost greater, reduce hospital hours, and affect the safe provision of water.

And yet impunity for these egregious violations remains widespread. We were gravely disappointed by the Secretary-General's decision this past June to remove the Saudi-led coalition from his 'list of shame' of child rights violators, despite the UN's own findings that the coalition had killed or maimed at least 222 children in 2019 alone.

¹ UNDP, *Assessing the Impact of War on Development in Yemen* (April 23, 2019) (https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNDP-YEM%20War%20Impact%20on%20SDGs_compressed.pdf).

² Ibid.

³ Watchlist, [April 2020 Policy Note](#) on Children and Armed Conflict.

⁴ Education under Attack 2020

⁵ [Yemeni children face deadly hunger and aid shortages as COVID-19 pandemic spreads](#) – UNICEF (26 June 2020)

We call on Member States to:

- Renew the mandate of the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen, and give them resources for the collection, preservation and analysis of evidence and dedicated expertise on gender and children in armed conflict;
- Call on all parties to take immediate measures to prevent and end violations against civilians; for authorities to implement the Safe Schools Declaration; and ensure full access for humanitarian goods and services;
- Strongly condemn the use of explosive weapons in populated areas that have both direct and long-lasting effects on civilians and civilian infrastructures;
- Suspend the sale or transfer of arms, munitions and related materials to all parties to the conflict;
- Call for an independent, transparent review of the listing and de-listing decisions, which includes broad consultation with civil society and other stakeholders, to ensure the listing and de-listing criteria accurately and consistently reflect the evidence collected by the UN's Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM).