

# Children and Armed Conflict:

SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN DEBATE ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

SPECIAL UPDATE:  
OCTOBER 2017

## Recommendations for the Security Council and Member States

On October 31, 2017, the UN Security Council will hold an Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict (CAC), to take place under France's Presidency. At the Debate, the Secretary-General (SG) will present his annual report on CAC ([A/72/361-S/2017/821](#)) pursuant to SCR 2225 (2015), covering the period from January 1 to December 31, 2016. France will take the opportunity of the Debate to encourage more endorsements and follow up to the [Paris Principles and the Paris Commitments](#), and plans to introduce a Presidential Statement for adoption.

In his report, the SG António Guterres added new parties to the annexes, including the Saudi Arabia-led Coalition for killing and maiming, and attacks on schools/hospitals in Yemen, and the Popular Mobilization Forces for the recruitment and use of children in Iraq. We welcome inclusion of these and other parties in the report, and the SG's strong stance on listing perpetrators based on credible evidence gathered, reviewed, and rigorously verified by the UN-led 1612 Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM). The impartial inclusion based on evidence, not politics, facilitates complete, credible, and accurate listing of perpetrators in all relevant situations of armed conflict essential to comprehensively addressing grave violations. Noting this year's list is split between those listed parties that "have put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children" and those that have not, we call upon the SG to provide transparent updates on those measures and progress made.

The UN's capacity on the ground to monitor, report, and respond to the violations is the foundation of the annual report and the listing process. Budget cuts to peacekeeping and the consolidation of child protection within the human rights components of missions are negatively impacting the UN's ability to deliver on the Security Council's CAC mandate. Without adequate staff and budget dedicated to child protection in missions, it is impossible for the UN to monitor, report, and respond to grave violations in the field. Going forward, we call upon the Council to preserve standalone capacity of UN peacekeeping and political missions to monitor, report, and respond to grave violations of children's rights, and to evaluate the impact of consolidation on child protection specifically.

For the second year in a row, the SG urges Member States, including when countering violent extremism, to treat children allegedly associated with non-State armed groups primarily as victims, and in particular encourages the Council to highlight the detrimental impact on children that results from widespread screening of civilians in situations of armed conflict. Child protection actors share these concerns, as current operations involve the systematic treatment of children as security threats as opposed to victims, including the detention of children solely on the basis of their real or alleged association with armed groups or forces. Children should not be detained unless they are charged with a recognizable criminal offense, and only in accordance with international law and juvenile justice standards. Their rehabilitation and reintegration, and alternatives to detention should be prioritized.

The Paris Principles state that the lasting solution to the involvement of children in armed conflict involves a comprehensive prevention plan by Member States, including ratification and implementation of international treaties, and the adoption and enforcement of national laws which criminalize the unlawful recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. The year 2018 will mark 18 years since the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OPAC), offering an opportune moment to reflect on the progress achieved and the work that still remains to prevent the recruitment, use, and exploitation of children in conflicts around the world. While OPAC today enjoys widespread support, with more than 85 percent of countries as States Parties, military recruitment and use of children persists. In anticipation of its 18<sup>th</sup> 'birthday', we call for universal ratification of OPAC and encourage those States that have not yet signed or ratified to do so without delay. A fundamental step towards ending and preventing the military exploitation of children is universal acceptance and support for a minimum deployment and enlistment age of 18 years – a so-called 'global Straight-18 standard.' We encourage States to declare their support for a Straight-18 standard and to promote global consensus to end military recruitment and use of children.

## Situations before the Council involving parties listed for grave violations against children:

[Afghanistan](#)

[Central African Republic](#)

[Colombia](#)

[Democratic Republic of the Congo](#)

[Iraq](#)

[Mali](#)

[Myanmar \(Burma\)](#)

[Nigeria](#)

[Philippines](#)

[Somalia](#)

[South Sudan](#)

[Sudan](#)

[Syrian Arab Republic](#)

[Yemen](#)

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With a view to the upcoming Open Debate, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict recommends the Security Council and other UN Member States to:

**1. Call for an accurate and credible listing of perpetrators of the six grave violations, based on impartial, evidence-based reporting:**

- a. Welcoming his 2017 annual report, reiterate support for the SG's impartiality with respect to his decisions for listing all perpetrators responsible for committing grave violations, which are based on evidence-based reporting through the UN-led MRM, not politics;
- b. In exercise of his impartiality, call upon the SG to ensure a complete, accurate, and credible listing of perpetrators of the grave violations in the annexes of his annual reports. Taking note of the reformatting of this year's annexes, strongly urge that the SG publicly document and carefully monitor measures listed parties have taken to improve the protection of children, including through UN-agreed action plans;

**2. Call for more effective monitoring, reporting, and response to child rights violations on the ground:**

- a. In order to enable the UN to effectively deliver on the Security Council's CAC mandate, preserve standalone capacity of UN peacekeeping and political missions to monitor, report, and respond to grave violations, and to this end, call for a review of consolidation of the child protection functions within human rights components of these missions to determine impact on delivery of the UN's child protection mandate;
- b. To support release and sustainable reintegration of children in response to their recruitment and use and other violations, call for integration of child protection into peace processes from the outset of any negotiation, and specifically request the UN to develop guidance for mediators on how to integrate specific provisions on the needs of children into peace processes and peace agreements;
- c. Express grave concern over the increasing trend of detention of children on the basis of security charges which deprives children of their basic rights and safeguards, and urge Member States to treat children associated with armed groups, including those engaged in violent extremism, as victims entitled to full protection of their human rights, and urgently put in place alternatives to detention and prosecution of children;
- d. Call upon all parties to allow child protection actors regular and unhindered access to all detention facilities in order to facilitate continued monitoring and reporting on detention of children for their association with armed forces or groups;

**3. Call for effective implementation and signing of more UN action plans with armed forces and groups listed in the annexes of the SG's annual reports on CAC:**

- a. Emphasize the responsibility of all listed parties, including those designated as taking measures to protect children, to enter into and fully implement concrete and time-bound action plans with the UN to end all violations;
- b. Call upon donors to support timely and effective implementation of the UN action plans with armed forces and armed groups to end and prevent grave violations;

**4. Call for better accountability for all perpetrators of child rights violations, particularly those who attack schools and hospitals and recruit and use children:**








- a. Invite the Special Representative to the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to provide regular briefings to the Security Council on country-specific situations in which parties to the conflict are attacking medical facilities and personnel or denying humanitarian access that bear egregious impact on children's health;
- b. Hold accountable parties to the conflict who are deliberately targeting and militarily using schools, and call upon Member States to commit to integrating the guidance on military use of schools into their training materials and SOPs, and to consider endorsing the Safe Schools Declaration;
- c. In order to promote the global consensus to end military recruitment and use of children, support the Straight-18 standard, and encourage those States that have not yet signed or ratified the OPAC to do so without delay.

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## **PRESIDENCY OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL FOR OCTOBER: FRANCE**

- *Party to Geneva Convention IV, Additional Protocols I and II, Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol, ILO Convention 182, and the Rome Statute of the ICC. Endorsed the Paris Principles and the Paris Commitments, and the Safe Schools Declaration.*

### **NGO Resources**

-  [Watchlist, 2017 Annual Report: Putting Children's Rights Up Front, March 2017](#)
-  [Watchlist, "Every Clinic is Now of the Frontline," The Impact on Children of Attacks on Health Care in Afghanistan, March 2017](#)
-  [Watchlist, "Every Day Things are Getting Worse", The Impact on Children of Attacks on Health Care in Yemen, April 2017](#)
-  [Watchlist, Checklist for Drafting Children and Armed Conflict Provisions in Ceasefire and Peace Agreements, October 2016](#)
-  [Human Rights Watch, Extreme Measures: Abuses against Children Detained As National Security Threats, July 2016](#)
-  [Watchlist, Action Plans to End and Prevent Violations Against Children, April 2013](#)
-  [Watchlist, Briefing Note, A Checklist for Mainstreaming, March 2013](#)

### **About Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict**

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict is a global network of international human rights and humanitarian non-governmental organizations which strives to end violations against children in armed conflicts through local partnerships, reporting and advocacy.

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