

WE ARE CHILDREN NOT SOLDIERS

Afghanistan

The Government of Afghanistan signed an **Action Plan** with the United Nations to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the **Afghan National Security Forces**, including the Afghan National Police, Afghan Local Police and Afghan National Army, on **30 January 2011**.

A **Road Map** to accelerate the implementation of the Action Plan was endorsed by the Government on **1 August 2014**.

Children continue to suffer the consequences of intense fighting across Afghanistan. In 2015, child casualties rose to their highest level since the establishment of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism in 2009. In the first six months of 2016, almost a third of all civilian casualties in Afghanistan were children. The United Nations has continued to document cases of recruitment and use of children. Most cases were attributed to armed groups, but there were also cases of underage recruitment and use in the Afghan Local Police, Afghan National Police and Afghan National Army. Attacks on schools and hospitals remain a major challenge in Afghanistan and cause disruptions of education and health services across the country.

Progress in the implementation of the Action Plan

Work continues under the road map towards compliance with the Action Plan adopted in 2014. A Presidential decree criminalizing underage recruitment by the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) entered into force in February 2015. The Government has endorsed age assessment guidelines to prevent the recruitment of minors in the ANSF. In 2016 additional child protection units were established, bringing the total to thirteen. These units are embedded in Afghan National Police recruitment centres, and are credited with preventing the recruitment of hundreds of children.

Road map towards compliance: key activities

- Establishment of child protection units in police recruitment centres nationwide
- Implementation of age verification guidelines in all ANSF recruitment processes
- Legal and policy reform to criminalise child recruitment and use
- Investigation and prosecution of cases of recruitment and use of children
- Action to ensure that children arrested and detained on national security-related charges are treated in line with international juvenile justice standards

The way forward to protect the children of Afghanistan:

Release and Reintegration

In accordance with the Action Plan, all children in the ranks of the Afghan National and Local Police should be released immediately and without conditions. Resources are needed to establish and maintain sustainable reintegration services. Services should also be offered to children formerly associated with armed groups, including to those in detention.



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Rule of law and accountability

Support is necessary to strengthen the rule of law and accountability for those who commit grave violations against children. Furthermore, the Government must ensure that children arrested and detained on national security-related charges are treated in line with international and national juvenile justice standards.

Age assessment

Age assessment procedures launched by the Government in February 2016 need to be operationalized through sensitization and capacity building across the ANSF to help prevent the recruitment of children, and advocate for the release of underage members of the Afghan local and national police.

The **Child Protection Units** established in police recruitment centers in thirteen Afghan provinces demonstrated their potential to prevent the recruitment of children. The Government wants to set up these units to cover all 34 provinces. The international community is encouraged to support this initiative.

Child protection training should be available for members of the national security forces and partners. Support is needed for the development and delivery of a standardized training module on child rights and protection of children.

Birth registration

Access to birth registration services must be expanded throughout the country, with a specific focus on registering adolescent boys, the most vulnerable to recruitment.

Parties to conflict listed in the Annual Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict

- *Afghan National Police (listed in 2010 for recruitment and use), including the Afghan Local Police (listed in 2012 for recruitment and use)*
- *Haqqani Network (recruitment and use, killing and maiming)*
- *Hezb-e-Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (recruitment and use, killing and maiming)*
- *Taliban forces, including the Tora Bora Front, the Jama' at al-Da'wa il al-Qur'an wal-Sunna and the Latif Mansur Network (recruitment and use, killing and maiming, sexual violence, attacks on school and/or hospitals, abduction)*

September 2016



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