



Human Rights Council: Protecting Children's rights a Cornerstone of Peace-making Efforts and Conflict Prevention

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Geneva – Protecting children's rights must be a cornerstone of peace-making efforts and conflict prevention, Leila Zerrougui, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, told the Human Rights Council during the presentation of her Annual Report to that body.

“The Human Rights Council and the international community can enhance their efforts to open up political space to address violations against children,” she added, following a description of the impact of conflict on boys and girls she qualified as “once again, deeply troubling.”

The report of the Special Representative, covering the period from December 2015 to December 2016, describes grave violations committed against children, including killing and maiming, sexual violence, and recruitment and use of children.

In the past year, an upsurge in denial of humanitarian access and besiegement raised concerns for the health and well-being of thousands of children, who in some cases have little or no access to food, water and basic medical care.

Deprivation of liberty

Given the gravity of concerns related to children deprived of liberty in situations of armed conflict, the Special Representative raised this issue again this year in her presentation to the Council.

“While I am cognizant of the serious security challenges that confront some Governments, they must avoid short-sighted strategies,” Leila Zerrougui declared. “I encourage this body to convince Member States to adopt protocols for the handover of children encountered in military and security operations to child protection actors.” She added that providing children with reintegration opportunities must be the prevailing approach.

Impact of conflict on girls

This year's report dedicated a section to the impact of conflict on girls, highlighting that they are at high risk for violations in times of war and displacement and calling

for additional services to assist girl victims. In her presentation to the Council, the Special Representative also called for a special focus on the prevention of violations against girls.

Twenty years for children

Today's report was the last one Leila Zerrougui will introduce at the Human Rights Council as Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict.

“During my tenure as Special Representative, I have prioritised developing partnerships with Member States to allow the United Nations to grasp opportunities for progress,” Zerrougui said. This approach has led to tangible results for children, most recently through the campaign “Children, Not Soldiers” and the peace process in Colombia.

Earlier this year, the mandate celebrated its 20th anniversary, thus creating an opportunity to take stock of the progress accomplished and outline remaining challenges.

She concluded her presentation by calling on the international community to follow up on efforts to protect children by working as true partners to end and prevent violations.

For additional information, please contact:

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Read [Leila Zerrougui's statement to the Human Rights Council](#)

Read the [annual report of the Special Representative to the Human Rights Council](#)

Read the [press release issued when the report was published](#)