

INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST THE USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS



As we speak, tens of thousands of boys and girls are **forced to take part in hostilities**.

They are used as fighters but also in support roles like cooks, porters or spies; some are used as sexual slaves, others as human shields.

Among the six violations, **the recruitment and use of children has the highest number of perpetrators verified**: out of 66 parties listed in the 2017 Secretary-General Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict, **63 parties are listed for the recruitment and use of children**.

In 2018ⁱ boys and girls continued to be recruited and used

- In **Nigeria**, at least **1,900 children have been recruited or used** making it the most prevalent violation. Boko Haram continued to recruit and use children including as human bombs.
- In **Somalia**, the number of children recruited and used continued to be high with **more than 1,800 boys and girls affected**.
- In **Iraq**, cases of **detention of children** on national security-related charges, including for association with armed groups, remained concerning. Children should primarily be treated victims and detention used as a last resort and for the shortest period of time, in line with International Laws.
- In **Afghanistan**, at least **40 children were verified as recruited and used**, including for the use of bacha bazi. Children are most importantly recruited and used by armed groups.
- In the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**, at least 115 children were newly recruited by armed groups. Those separated from armed elements remain at risk of re-recruitment.
- In South Sudan, more than 450 boys and girls have been verified recruited and used in 2018.

Despite some setbacks, efforts to increase the protection of children from armed conflict have been visible in several country situations in 2018 with tangible results on the ground.

- In 2018, more than 10,000 children have been released from armed groups and armed forces in the countries covered by the CAAC mandate.
- Parties to the conflict in **two countries** have been **delisted** from the annexes of the 2017 Secretary-General Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict **for the recruitment and use of children**: the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) in **Colombia** and the **Sudan** Government Security Forces.
- In the **Central African Republic**, dialogue with armed groups led to the **release of 569 children** associated with armed groups





- South Sudan became the 168th State Party to the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.
- **Afghanistan** criminalized the recruitment and use of children and the practice of bacha bazi with the revision of the Penal Code.
- In **DRC**, at least **1,095 boy and girls** were **separated** from parties to conflict.
- In **Nigeria**, the **Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF)** released more than **830 children from its ranks** in line with the Action Plan to end and prevent recruitment and use of children signed with the United Nations in 2017.
- In **South Sudan**, engagement between the United Nations, the Government of South Sudan, religious leaders and armed groups resulted in the **release of 955 children from armed groups**.
- In **Syria**, the Government established a National Committee to prevent and respond to underage recruitment.
- In the **Philippines**, **1,859 children have been disengaged from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)** ranks following their de-listing from the annexes of the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in 2017.

All boys and girls released deserve access to long-term reintegration programmes, including education, healthcare, vocational training and psychosocial support. Unfortunately, resources often fail to meet the needs and hundreds of children are left behind.

- ⦿ TO FURTHER SUPPORT RELEASED CHILDREN, THE OFFICE OF THE SRSG FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT, TOGETHER WITH UNICEF, HAS LAUNCHED THE GLOBAL COALITION FOR REINTEGRATION OF FORMER CHILD SOLDIERS. THE COALITION BRINGS TOGETHER MEMBER STATES, UN AGENCIES AND NGOS TO EXPLORE WAYS TO SUSTAINABLY SUPPORT CHILD REINTEGRATION.

[Learn more and support the Global Coalition for Reintegration of Former Child Soldiers.](#)

About the International Day against the Use of Child Soldiers

The **International Day against the Use of Child Soldiers** was initiated when the **Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict** entered into force on **February 12, 2002**. This protocol was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in May 2000 and has been **ratified by 168 states**.

February 2019

<https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org>

ⁱ Most verified numbers only cover the first months of 2018; actual figures are likely to be higher.