



ACT TO PROTECT CHILDREN



Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for
CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT



**ACT TO PROTECT
CHILDREN
AFFECTED BY
CONFLICT**



**TODAY'S CONFLICTS HAVE A
DEVASTATING IMPACT ON CHILDREN.**

Every year, the United Nations reports increases in the number of grave violations committed against children in times of war. Behind the numbers are boys and girls who face some of the worst types of abuses.

**TOGETHER WE CAN
BUILD A MORE PEACEFUL FUTURE
FOR MILLIONS
OF CHILDREN WHO
DESERVE PROTECTION.**

**ACT NOW
TO PROTECT
CHILDREN
AFFECTED BY
CONFLICT**

COMMIT AND ACT FOR CHILDREN

- Implement or support existing Action Plans signed between parties to conflict and the UN to end and prevent grave violations against children;
- Generate engagement with more parties to conflict to commit to new Action Plans to end grave violations against children;
- Work towards universal ratification and implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict;
- Advocate for universal endorsement of international commitments to strengthen the norms and standards for the protection of children such as the Safe Schools Declaration, Paris Principles, and Vancouver Principles;
- Engage on better ways to foster and protect war orphans and unaccompanied children on the move;

PROVIDE JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN

- Support efforts to strengthen national legal frameworks for the protection of children;
- Advocate for the criminalization of grave violations committed against boys and girls;

- Work towards accountability for perpetrators of grave violations against children in conflict by calling for prosecutions of alleged perpetrators and reparations for child victims;
- Promote regional and international norms on justice and accountability for conflict-affected children,
- Ensure child victims of grave violations are treated primarily as victims

DELIVER SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

- Work to strengthen local capacity to assist children affected by war
- Provide access to education and health services for all children including emergency education and education during long-term reintegration process;
- Increase efforts to ensure that children have access to humanitarian assistance, even in times of conflict;
- Ensure that all children released by armed groups and forces have access to sustainable reintegration programs;
- Increase the availability of gender-specific services available for child survivors of sexual violence, including long-term health and psycho-social assistance;

PREVENT VIOLATIONS

- Work with communities in countries affected by conflict to increase awareness and action to protect children
- Ensure sufficient and dedicated child protection expertise and capacity in all countries affected by conflict, including those with UN peacekeeping or political missions;
- Develop and strengthen child protection capacities within national security forces, non-state actors including civil society, and the international community;
- Develop and implement national and regional plans to prevent violations against children;
- Integrate child protection issues in peace processes;

BUILD PARTNERSHIPS

- Strengthen partnerships between the UN, civil society including inter-faith organizations, affected countries and the international community to enhance the protection of children;
- Work with universities and other research institutions to strengthen child protection knowledge and practices;

- Create or become part of a local initiative to strengthen advocacy and support for the protection of children;
- Support parties to conflict in their efforts to end and prevent all violations against children in armed conflict;

TOGETHER, WE CAN ACT TO PROTECT CHILDREN AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT!

- Stay informed and share news about what is happening to children growing up in countries affected by conflict
- Remind warring parties the world has long agreed that all children must be protected;
- Support organizations that provide services for child victims of grave violations;
- Promote a culture of peace and support initiatives that help create communities that are more secure for children;
- Encourage the international community to give attention and resources for the protection of children;

Add your voice, use the hashtag: **#ACTtoProtect**

HOW CHILDREN ARE AFFECTED BY CONFLICT

Wars have rules that bind all parties to conflict and serve to protect civilians, including children. However, millions of boys and girls wake up every morning in communities affected by war, with little or no access to the protection assistance they need.

Ending and preventing violations is the focus of the Special Representative's work and advocacy. The international community has defined the following six grave violations as those affecting children the most in times of war. These also serve as the basis for the United Nations to collect information, report on how children are affected by conflict, take action to protect them and when possible prevent their use and abuse for, in and by armed conflict.



RECRUITMENT AND USE OF CHILDREN

In many conflicts, children take direct part in combat. They are also used in other functions such as lookouts, porters, cooks or for sexual purposes. No matter their role, children recruited and used are exposed to acute levels of violence – as direct victims, witnesses, and forced participants.

Every year, thousands of children are injured and killed as a direct result of conflict. Many are also victims of landmines and unexploded ordnance. Some are even used to carry out suicide attacks. Survivors carry the mental and physical scars of such violence for the rest of their lives.



KILLING AND MAIMING OF CHILDREN



SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Children are often subjected to rape, sexual violence and forced marriage in situations of conflict. Despite the global attention and mobilization to end sexual violence in conflict, this violation against girls and boys remains underreported due to fear of stigma and lack of services. Children who experience sexual violence suffer from long-term trauma and health consequences, including unintended pregnancies and can be ostracized by their communities for life.

The notion of schools and hospitals as zones of peace is challenged in many conflicts. Schools are used for military purposes and students, teachers and schools targeted. Conflict and insecurity can result in the closure or disrupted functioning of schools and hospitals, preventing access to education and health care for boys and girls.



ATTACKS AGAINST SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS



ABDUCTION OF CHILDREN

Mass abductions of children have been on the rise in recent years and are used as a tactic to terrorize or target political, ethnic and religious groups. The abduction of children is often the precursor to other violations and has been systematically exploited by armed elements to recruit child soldiers and commit sexual violence.

The denial of humanitarian assistance to civilians trapped or displaced by conflict is increasingly used as a tactic of war. Examples abound of children trapped in besieged areas, or deprived of access to food, water, shelter and medical assistance, including vaccines.



DENIAL OF HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

EVERY YEAR,
TENS OF THOUSANDS
OF BOYS AND GIRLS
ARE VICTIMS
OF ONE OR SEVERAL
GRAVE VIOLATIONS.

IT IS TIME TO ACT
TO PROTECT THEM.

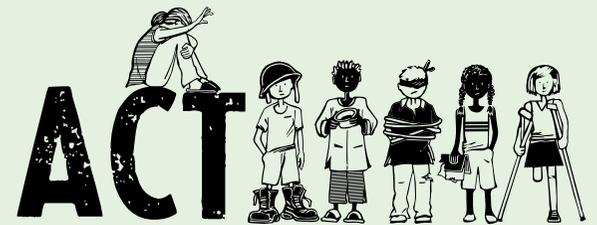
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