

CHILDREN and ARMED CONFLICT REPORT of the SECRETARY-GENERAL ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY · 2019

Trends and developments 2019¹

Overall, **25,663 violations** against children. Most affected countries: Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Somalia.
Two thirds of all violations were committed by non-State actors

⊙ **Recruitment and Use: 7,747 children recruited and used.**

Most affected countries: DRC, Somalia, Syria, Yemen.
90% of recruitment attributed to non-State actors.



⊙ **Killing and Maiming: 10,173 children killed or maimed.**

Most affected countries: Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Yemen.
Mainly by crossfire, ground engagement between warring parties, use of explosive weapons in populated areas and excessive use of force.



⊙ **Rape and Other Forms of Sexual Violence: 735 verified cases.**

Most affected countries: DRC, Somalia, Central African Republic, Nigeria.
Violations significantly underreported due to fear of stigma, lack of accountability for perpetrators, intimidation and lack of survivor support in place.



⊙ **Attacks on Schools and Hospitals: 927 incidents.**

Most affected countries: Syria, Afghanistan, Mali, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory.
Attacks on schools and hospitals committed by State actors nearly doubled.



⊙ **Abductions: 1,683 incidents.**

Most affected countries: Somalia, Nigeria, DRC, Afghanistan.
Mainly interlinked to other violations such as recruitment and use and sexual violence including sexual slavery and forced marriage.



⊙ **Denial of humanitarian Access:² 4,400 incidents.**

Most affected countries: Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Yemen, Mali, CAR, Syria.
Overwhelmingly, non-State actors were responsible for such incidents.



¹ Numbers include late verifications which are violations committed prior to 2019 but verified in 2019.

² Not a listable violation



OTHER CONCERNING TRENDS AFFECTING CHILDREN

⊙ Military use of schools and hospitals

Rise in the military use of schools by both armed forces and armed groups.

Armed forces and groups in CAR, DRC, Mali, the Philippines, South Sudan and Sudan vacated schools after advocacy by the United Nations as well as pleas from local communities.

⊙ **Detention of children.** Detention of children for their actual or alleged association with armed groups, including groups designated as terrorist by the United Nations, remained a worrying trend affecting at least **2,500 children**. Most cases were verified in Afghanistan, the DRC and Iraq.

CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT: 2019 NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

19 situations of conflict with parties listed in 14 countries + 2 situations of concern added and reported on in 2021

62 PARTIES TO CONFLICT LISTED FOR GRAVE VIOLATIONS AGAINST CHILDREN

- 8 State actors
- 54 non-State actors

15 ACTION PLANS *signed and/or ongoing*

21 COMMAND ORDERS *signed*

4 NEW LEGISLATION *protecting children in conflict situations*

1 MoU AND UPDATED WORKPLAN *signed and ongoing*

13,200 CHILDREN RELEASED AND BENEFITTING FROM REINTEGRATION PROGRAMS

Through resolutions 1379 (2001), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2225 (2015) the Security Council identified **5 grave violations** which are triggers for attribution and the listing of parties to conflict

⊙ RECRUITMENT AND USE OF CHILDREN

6 State actors **54** non-State actors listed

⊙ KILLING AND MAIMING CHILDREN

4 State actors **19** non-State actors listed

⊙ RAPE AND OTHER FORMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

4 State actors **16** non-State actors listed

⊙ ATTACKS ON SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS

2 State actors **11** non-State actors listed

⊙ ABDUCTION OF CHILDREN

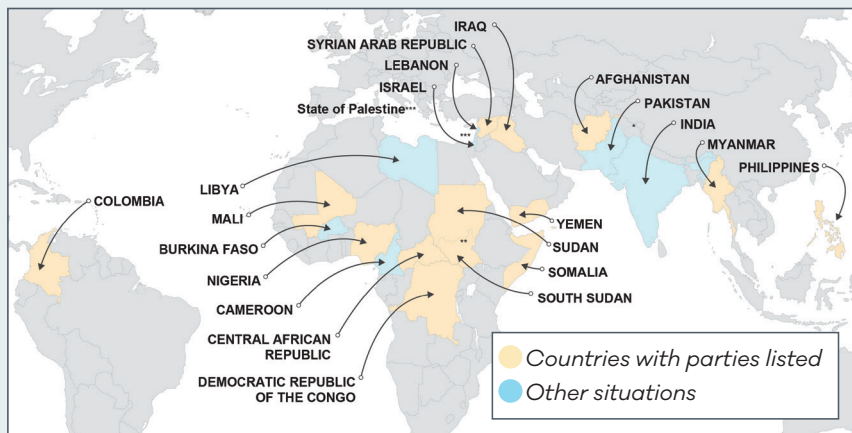
1 State actors **14** non-State actors listed

⊙ **DENIAL OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE** to children is also a CAAC grave violation but it is not a listable offense

Through Security Council resolution 2427 (2018), the Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) Office was mandated to engage in national and regional prevention plans and programs to better protect children from the **six grave violations**.

In 2019:

- ⊙ National Prevention plans adopted or under-development in some country situations including in the Central African Republic and South Sudan.
- ⊙ Regional Policy under-development for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes Region.



MAP NOTES: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

* Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the Parties.

** Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined.

ENHANCED ENGAGEMENT PROGRESS SUMMARY

- ⊙ **Comprehensive Action Plan signed by the Government of South Sudan** to address all violations against children developed throughout 2019 and signed in February 2020. Opposition forces that will unify with the South Sudan People's Defense Forces (SSPDF) also signed.
- ⊙ **Signature of a Roadmap by the Somali Federal Government** in October 2019 to expedite the implementation of their 2012 Action Plans on ending and preventing child recruitment and use and killing and maiming; also includes prevention of sexual violence. The Somali Police Force has now been included in its implementation.
- ⊙ **Two new action plans signed in the Central African Republic** with:
 - » *Front Populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique* (FPRC, June 2019) and
 - » *Union pour la paix en Centrafrique* (UPC, August 2019)
 both operating under the ex-Seleka coalition umbrella. The action plans cover the four violations for which they are listed.
- ⊙ The **Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)** signed an Action Plan (June 2019) with the United Nations to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children, the first Action Plan with a listed party in Syria.
- ⊙ Signature of a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen in March 2019** and the development of a workplan with time-bound activities (agreed in December 2019).
- ⊙ In the **DRC, 21 commanders of factions of armed groups** signed **unilateral declarations and roadmap committing to end and prevent child recruitment** and other grave child violations.

Ongoing Action Plans signed before 2019:



AFGHANISTAN

Afghan National Police, including the Afghan Local Police

(recruitment and use) — discussions to broaden the Action Plan to include prevention of other violations underway in 2020.



CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Mouvement Patriotique pour la Centrafrique

(recruitment and use, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals)



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

(rape and other forms of sexual violence)



MALI

Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad

(recruitment and use, rape and other forms of sexual violence)



NIGERIA

Civilian Joint Task Force

(recruitment and use)



SOMALIA

Somali Federal Defence and Police Forces

(recruitment and use, killing and maiming) — now including sexual violence and a broadening of implementation to the Somali Police Force.



SOUTH SUDAN

Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition

(recruitment and use, killing and maiming)



SUDAN

Sudan Liberation Army/ Minni Minnawi

(recruitment and use)

Justice and Equality Movement

(recruitment and use)

Sudan People's Liberation Movement North (SPLM-N)

(recruitment and use)



YEMEN

Government forces, including the Yemeni armed forces

(recruitment and use)

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NATIONAL AND OTHER MEASURES ACHIEVED TO BETTER PROTECT CHILDREN IN SITUATIONS OF ARMED CONFLICT

Legislation enacted benefitting children and prevention of six grave violations:

- ⊙ The **Philippines** enacted the **Children in Situations of Armed Conflict Law** in January 2019 and signed the Law's Implementing Rules and Regulations in June 2019.
- ⊙ In July 2019, **Myanmar** adopted the **Child Rights Law**, criminalizing the six grave violations against children.
- ⊙ In March 2019, the **Child Rights Protection Law** in **Afghanistan** prohibiting *bacha bazi* and the recruitment and use of children was enacted by Presidential Decree.
- ⊙ In **CAR**, the **Child Protection Code** was adopted in February 2020, criminalizing the recruitment and use of children.
- ⊙ **Ratification of OPAC: Myanmar and The Gambia** acceded to the **Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OPAC)** in September 2019.
 - » **Safe Schools Declaration:** 104 endorsements (June 2020)
 - » **Vancouver Principles:** 96 endorsements (April 2020)
 - » **Paris Principles:** 110 endorsements (February 2019)
 - » **New Groups of Friends of CAAC:** in Mali (July 2019) and Somalia (October 2019)
- ⊙ **A total of 13,200 children were separated from armed groups.** In the DRC, more than **2,500 children were separated**, most of them during demobilization processes, voluntarily release following UN engagement and/or command orders while other escaped from armed groups.

Recommendations

- ⊙ Parties to conflict should **prioritize humanitarian access to children and vulnerable populations in situations of armed conflict** and allow child protection experts and humanitarians to do their work.
- ⊙ Since 25% of all child casualties were caused by UXOs, IEDs and landmines, it is urgent to **highlight the responsibility of parties and governments to securing and clearing these deadly weapons.**
- ⊙ **Children released from armed forces or groups, including those designated as terrorist by the United Nations, should be treated primarily as victims.** The best interest of the child should be the primary consideration, detention only used as last resort and reintegration actively sought.
- ⊙ The number of attacks on schools and hospitals and of incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence remained disturbingly high with responsibility attributed to State and non-State actors. **More efforts at capacity building, accountability, monitoring and reporting and preventing these two violations must be made.**
- ⊙ Parties to conflict must respect the **civilian character of schools and hospitals and stop using them for military purposes.** Member States should sign the Safe Schools Declaration.
- ⊙ **Accountability for perpetrators of sexual violence, as well as all other grave violations,** and implementation of existing legislative frameworks must be pursued.
- ⊙ **International forces and coalitions must mitigate child casualties as a priority when conducting military operations.**

READ THE ANNUAL REPORT:

https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2020/525&Lang=E&Area=UNDOC

<https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org>



CHILD PROTECTION IN PEACE PROCESSES

The prevention of grave violations against children is instrumental in building sustainable peace and the inclusion of the specific needs and rights of children into peace negotiation and mediation efforts can support that endeavor. Launched by the Secretary-General in February 2020 the *Practical guidance for mediators to protect children in situations of armed conflict* is a tool to enable mediators to identify and prevent obstacles to child protection in the course of peace dialogues.

The guidance was produced by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict at the request of the Security Council in Presidential Statement (S/PRST/2017/21).



GLOBAL COALITION FOR REINTEGRATION OF CHILD SOLDIERS

The Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers (GCR), co-chaired by the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF, published a first series of recommendations in May 2020. The paper "*Improving Support to Child Reintegration: Summary of Findings*" summarizes key elements to consider while envisaging the future of reintegration support to former child soldiers, their families, and communities. This includes the provision of sustainable and predictable resources for reintegration programmes addressing children released from armed groups and armed forces.



ACT TO PROTECT

The plight of conflict-affected children remained high on the international agenda, thanks partially to the *ACT to Protect* global campaign focusing on all six grave violations. Launched globally in New York in April 2019, ACT to Protect continued to expand its reach through several national and regional launches: Brussels (April 2019), the Central African Republic (May 2019), Somalia (June 2019), Mali (July 2019), Bangkok (September 2019) and South Sudan (February 2020).