

February 25, 2019

Dear Secretary-General Guterres,

As organizations working to protect the rights of children in armed conflict, we urge you to include the Saudi and Emirati-led Coalition (SELC) for all relevant violations in list A of the annexes of your 2019 annual report to the United Nations Security Council on children and armed conflict.

Changing the way the coalition is listed, from the 'coalition to restore legitimacy in Yemen' to the 'SELC,' would accurately reflect Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) leadership in the coalition, and in financing and directly engaging in hostilities via airstrikes and UAE ground forces deployed throughout the country.

Including the SELC in list A of the annexes of your 2019 annual report for all relevant violations, including attacks on schools and hospitals, is critical to ensuring a credible, accurate listing of perpetrators, and providing the UN with the foundation to enter into dialogue with the SELC to actually drive change for children through the signing and implementation of a time-bound action plan.

While the coalition was included in list B in your 2018 annual report as a party that has implemented positive measures aimed at improving the protection of children, the record shows that coalition violations against children have continued to occur. For example, your 2018 annual report on children and armed conflict attributed to the coalition 19 of 20 attacks on schools and five attacks on hospitals carried out in 2017.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the coalition was delisted in the 2018 report for attacks on schools and hospitals; the Houthis, to whom the report attributed five attacks on hospitals in 2017, remained listed for the same grave violation.<sup>2</sup> Measures that the SELC might have taken in 2017 or 2018 have failed to end attacks and other abuse against children. The August 9, 2018 coalition airstrike on a school bus in Saada that killed at least 26 children is just one horrific example of many.

We have included in this letter documentation of three of the five 'trigger' violations—killing and maiming, attacks on schools and hospitals, and recruitment and use—carried out in Yemen in 2018 by the SELC. The incidents were gathered through a systematic desk review of publically available sources, including UN and international nongovernmental organization (INGO) reports and reputable media reports; they are representative, rather than exhaustive, of attacks against children during the reporting period.

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<sup>1</sup> UN Security Council, (UNSC) Report of the UN Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/72/865-S/2018/465), May 16, 2016, para. 208, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/children-and-armed-conflict-report-secretary-general-a72865-s2018465-enar> (accessed February 19, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> UNSC (A/72/865-S/2018/465), p. 40.

We note that the Houthi armed group and other parties to the conflict have recruited and used children, killed and maimed children, or attacked schools and hospitals, and consequently been listed in list A of your annex. Given continued grave violations carried out by these parties, we urge you to maintain these listings.

The stakes have never been higher. More than 24 million people in Yemen, half of them children, need humanitarian assistance.<sup>3</sup> And child protection needs have continued to increase; verified reports of grave violations of children's rights, including killing and maiming and recruitment and use, increased by nearly 25 per cent in 2018.<sup>4</sup>

The leadership you have shown these past months in helping secure the Stockholm Agreement and support its implementation have already had a significant impact on the conflict. However, the desire to fulfill and preserve this and other agreements should not prevent the international community from reflecting painful realities in its assessments of the SELC, the Houthi armed group, or any other party to the conflict. We hope you continue to seek an agreement that would safeguard the rights of children, and help to ensure accountability for all parties responsible for grave violations and other violations of international law in Yemen.

Sincerely,

Action Against Hunger  
Childfund Alliance  
Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect  
Human Rights Watch  
Mwatana  
Physicians for Human Rights  
Save the Children  
War Child  
Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict

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<sup>3</sup> Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, "Briefing to the Security Council on the Humanitarian situation in Yemen, New York," January 9, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/under-secretary-general-humanitarian-affairs-and-emergency-relief-coordinator-mark-13> (accessed February 4, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

## Killing and Maiming

There were numerous incidents documented in UN, INGO, and media reports of SELC airstrikes that killed and maimed children in 2018. For example:

- On January 27, an SELC airstrike hit a civilian home in Taiz governorate; two children were killed and two injured.<sup>5</sup>
- On April 3, an SELC airstrike hit a residential complex of internally displaced persons in Hodeidah; 10 children were killed in the attack.<sup>6</sup>
- On April 23, an SELC airstrike hit a wedding party in Hajjah governorate, killing at least 8 children and injuring at least 29.<sup>7</sup>
- On June 26, an SELC airstrike hit a bus in Hodeidah governorate; two children were killed and three injured.<sup>8</sup>
- On August 23, at least 22 children were killed by an SELC airstrike as they were fleeing with their families fighting in Al Durayhimi district in Hodeidah governorate.<sup>9</sup>

## Attacks on Schools and Hospitals

### *Attacks on Schools*

In 2018, UN, INGO, and media sources documented at least 26 SELC airstrikes on education facilities, students, and personnel.<sup>10</sup> For example:

- On July 2, an airstrike hit a school in Zabid city in Hodeida governorate, killing three civilians and injuring three others, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project.<sup>11</sup>
- On August 9, an SELC airstrike hit a school bus in the middle of a busy market in Saada governorate.<sup>12</sup> According to Human Rights Watch, the attack killed at least 34 people, including 3 teachers and 25 children who were on the bus and a child

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<sup>5</sup> Amnesty International, "Yemen: Three Years On, US and UK Arms Supplies to Saudi Arabia-led Coalition are Devastating Civilian Lives," March 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/03/yemen-three-years-on-us-and-uk-arms-supplies-to-saudi-arabia-led-coalition-are-devastating-civilian-lives/> (accessed January 24, 2019).

<sup>6</sup> UN Human Rights Council (HRC), Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights containing the findings of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts and a summary of technical assistance provided by the Office of the High Commissioner to the National Commission of Inquiry (A/HRC/39/43), August 17, 2018, pg. 40, [http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/39/43](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/39/43) (accessed January 24, 2019).

<sup>7</sup> HRC, Report of the Group (A/HRC/39/43), pg. 40.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pg. 41.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Mark Lowcock, Statement on the situation in Yemen, August, 24 2018, <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/under-secretary-general-humanitarian-affairs-and-emergency-relief-coordinator-mr-mark-3> (accessed January 24, 2019).

<sup>10</sup> The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, "Safeguard Yemen's Future: Protect Education from Attack," February 2019, pp. 2-5, [http://protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/safeguard\\_yemens\\_future\\_2019.pdf](http://protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/safeguard_yemens_future_2019.pdf) (accessed February 22, 2019).

<sup>11</sup> Xinhua General News Service, as cited in Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), Data ID 1902717.

<sup>12</sup> Shuaib Almosawa and Ben Hubbard, "Saudi Coalition Airstrike Hits School Bus in Yemen, Killing Dozens," *New York Times*, August 9, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/09/world/middleeast/yemen-airstrike-school-bus-children.html> (accessed January 15, 2019).

and teacher who were in the market. In addition, 13 children in the market and 6 children on the bus were wounded. The coalition later admitted that the airstrike was a mistake.<sup>13</sup>

The highest number of attacks occurred in Saada; the SELC launched at least 15 airstrikes throughout the governorate in 2018.<sup>14</sup>

### *Attacks on Hospitals*

In 2018, there were multiple SELC attacks on medical facilities and personnel, according to INGO and media reports. For example:

- On June 11, an SELC bomb destroyed a Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) clinic in Abs governorate.<sup>15</sup>
- On September 8, in Marib governorate, SELC forces killed three paramedics who were attending to injured motorcyclists.<sup>16</sup>
- On October 11, SELC forces destroyed a patient ward, and damaged an adjacent unit of an MSF cholera treatment center in the town of Abs in Hajjah governorate.<sup>17</sup>

### **Recruitment and Use<sup>18</sup>**

Media reports documented Saudi Arabia's employment in 2018 of tens of thousands of Sudanese soldiers; between 20 and 40 per cent are reportedly children from the war-torn region of Darfur.<sup>19</sup> According to a report by the *New York Times*, many of the child soldiers were boys between 14 and 17 years old; according to the same report, Saudi Arabia had offered Sudanese families as much as US\$10,000 for enlisting their children.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Saman Javed, "Saudi-led coalition admits air strike on Yemen school bus was 'unjustifiable'," *The Independent*, September 1, 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/yemen-school-bus-civil-war-saudi-coalition-unjustifiable-a8518606.html> (accessed January 15, 2019).

<sup>14</sup> GCPEA

<sup>15</sup> Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), "Yemen: Attacks on Health" October 2018, pg. 1,

[https://s3.amazonaws.com/PHR\\_other/Yemen\\_Oct\\_2018\\_Newsletter\\_FINAL.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/PHR_other/Yemen_Oct_2018_Newsletter_FINAL.pdf) (accessed January 24, 2019).

<sup>16</sup> Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition, "Urgent Action Needed to Avert Humanitarian Catastrophe in Yemen," December 2018, pg. 1, <https://www.safeguardinghealth.org/sites/shcc/files/SHCCYemenbrief20181217.pdf> (accessed January 24, 2019).

<sup>17</sup> PHR, "Yemen: Attacks on Health," January 2019, pg. 1, [https://phr.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Jan\\_2019-Newsletter\\_FINAL.pdf](https://phr.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Jan_2019-Newsletter_FINAL.pdf) (accessed February 5, 2019).

<sup>18</sup> There is ample anecdotal evidence of recruitment and use of children by all parties; however, publicly available reports provide evidence in aggregate, rather than specific incidences.

<sup>19</sup> David Kirkpatrick, "On the Frontline of the Saudi War in Yemen: Child Soldiers from Darfur," *The New York Times*, December 28, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/28/world/africa/saudi-sudan-yemen-child-fighters.html> (accessed January 24, 2018).

<sup>20</sup> Kirkpatrick, "On the Frontline of the Saudi War," *The New York Times*.