



May 31, 2023

Secretary-General António Guterres
United Nations Headquarters, S-3800
New York, NY 10017

Re: 2023 Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

We are writing regarding your forthcoming annual report on children and armed conflict (CAAC). As you finalize your decisions regarding the annexes listing perpetrators of grave violations against children, we urge you to ensure the publication of a complete list of perpetrators that is evidence-based and accurately reflects data collected and verified by the United Nations Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM).

As nongovernmental organizations working to alleviate suffering in humanitarian settings and protect human rights, we strongly support UN Security Council Resolution 1612 (2005) and subsequent resolutions on CAAC as concrete tools for improving the protection of children in war. The MRM, the annual CAAC report, and its annexed list of perpetrators are a crucial foundation for enhancing the protection of children, ending and preventing violations, promoting compliance with international law, and contributing to accountability. These tools are central to drawing the attention of the Security Council to the situation of children, providing an analysis of the variety of violations committed against children, and paving the way for the UN's engagement with parties to conflict.

As your office and that of your Special Representative have consistently emphasized, these tools have proven effective in changing warring parties' behaviors and strengthening protections for children. However, these mechanisms will only remain powerful if they are credible and consistently applied to all perpetrators in all contexts. Furthermore, gathering and verifying evidence on grave violations frequently involves considerable security risks for those participating in the MRM. When listing and de-listing decisions do not consistently reflect this data, they can undermine these efforts and it can appear as if these risks were taken in vain.

We reiterate our call to ensure that all parties to conflict that are responsible for committing a pattern of grave violations against children are listed in the annexes in accordance with the criteria set out in the 2010 annual CAAC report (S/2010/181). Furthermore, parties should only be de-listed once they have signed and fully implemented an action plan to end and prevent grave violations against children and

ceased commission of the violation(s) for which they are listed for at least one full reporting cycle (i.e., one year), per the same 2010 criteria.

Civil society has previously expressed its disappointment with significant disparities between the evidence presented in the annual CAAC report and the perpetrators listed in the annexes.¹ In 2020, for example, the Saudi- and Emirati-led Coalition was prematurely removed from the annexes of the annual report (S/2020/525), despite being responsible for killing and maiming 222 children in Yemen during that reporting period. The Coalition has not been re-listed for this violation despite being found responsible for killing and maiming 194 children in the 2021 annual report (S/2021/437) and 100 children in the 2022 annual report (S/2022/493). Of similar concern, Israeli government forces have never been listed in the annexes despite the UN finding them responsible for over 6,700 child casualties between 2015 and 2020.² We recall your statement in the 2022 annual report that “without meaningful improvement” both Palestinian armed groups and Israeli government forces should be listed.

As you finalize this year’s report and make your decisions regarding listings, we urge you to take into account the recommendations made by the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict in its “Credible List”³ policy note published in April 2023.

We look forward to the publication of your annual report and reaffirm our call for a complete and accurate list of perpetrators of grave violations against children, as a strong and effective tool for promoting the protection of children in armed conflict and accountability for violations against them.

Sincerely,

Amnesty International
CARE International
Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC)
Child Rights International Network (CRIN)
ChildFund Alliance
Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security
Defence for Children International
Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
Global Justice Center
Human Rights Watch
International Bureau for Children’s Rights
Legal Action Network (LAW)
Nonviolent Peaceforce
Norwegian Refugee Council
Plan International
Save the Children
Terre des Hommes International Federation
War Child
Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict
World Federalist Movement / Institute for Global Policy
World Vision International

Cc: Ms. Virginia Gamba, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

¹ See, for example, previous open letters dated [May 31, 2022](#), [May 12, 2021](#), [June 22, 2020](#), [May 11, 2020](#), [May 24, 2019](#). See also: Eminent Persons Group, Keeping the Promise: An Independent Review of the UN's Annual List of Perpetrators of Grave Violations Against Children, 2010-2020, March 2021, <https://watchlist.org/wp-content/uploads/eminent-persons-group-report-final.pdf>.

² Annual reports of the Secretary-General on CAAC, 2016-2022, available at: <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/virtual-library/>.

³ Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, "A Credible List": Recommendations for the Secretary-General's 2023 Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict, April 2023, <https://watchlist.org/publications/a-credible-list-recommendations-for-the-secretary-generals-2023-annual-report-on-children-and-armed-conflict/> (accessed May 8, 2023).