



May 30, 2024

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

Re: 2024 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 of 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 organizations have previously expressed disappointment with significant disparities between the evidence presented in the annual CAAC report and the perpetrators listed in the annexes.¹ For example, Israeli government forces have never been listed in the annexes despite the UN finding them responsible for over 7,000 child casualties between 2015 and 2021.² In your 2023 report on children and armed conflict, Israeli forces were cited as responsible for killing 42 children and injuring an additional 933, and for 110 attacks against schools and hospitals. Palestinian armed groups were also identified as responsible for several grave violations against children, notably killing at least 9 and maiming at least 100 children in 2022. Yet, no parties were included in the annexes, despite your statement in the 2022 annual report that “without meaningful improvement” both Palestinian armed groups and Israeli government forces should be listed.³

During the October 7 attacks by Palestinian armed groups and ensuing “intense air, naval, and subsequent ground operation by Israel in the Gaza strip,”⁴ more than 14,000 children in Gaza, 113 in the West Bank, and 33 children in Israel have reportedly been killed, and over 12,000 children in Gaza and 725 children in the West Bank have reportedly been injured.⁵ The Gaza Ministry of Health, as cited by OCHA, has stated that full identification details have been collected for 7,797 children killed as of April 30, 2024.⁶ Israeli forces have also damaged or destroyed hundreds of education and medical facilities, as well as imposed “severe limitations...on the delivery of humanitarian aid to people in Gaza, who are facing widespread starvation.”⁷ In light of the scale and gravity of violence committed against children in 2023 and ongoing, it is imperative that all perpetrators committing patterns of grave violations against children in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory are appropriately listed this year.

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” policy note published in April 2024.⁸

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 compliance with international law.

Sincerely,

Action on Armed Violence
Amnesty International
CARE International
Caritas Internationalis
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
Human Rights Watch
International Bureau for Children’s Rights
International Rescue Committee
Legal Action Worldwide (LAW)
Mennonite Central Committee

Nonviolent Peaceforce
PAX
Plan International
Save the Children
Street Child
Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict
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, 2023](#), [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 Secretary-General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict (A/76/871 – S/2022/493), <https://undocs.org/s/2022/493>, para. 302-303.

⁴ United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016) (S/2023/988), December 14, 2023, <https://undocs.org/s/2023/988>, para. 17.

⁵ OCHA, "Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel | Flash Update #165," May 13, 2024, <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-165>, and Save the Children, "Over 2 % of Gaza's Child Population Killed or Injured in Six Months of War," April 4, 2024, <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/over-2-gaza-s-child-population-killed-or-injured-six-months-war#:~:text=In%20the%20six%20months%20since,Ministry%20of%20Health%20in%20Gaza>.

⁶ OCHA, "Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel | Flash Update #165," May 13, 2024, <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-165>.

⁷ United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016) (S/2023/988), para. 18; and "Secretary-General's remarks to the Security Council on the Middle East," April 18, 2024, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2024-04-18/secretary-generals-remarks-the-security-council-the-middle-east%C2%A0>.

⁸ Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, "A Credible List": Recommendations for the Secretary-General's 2024 Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict, April 2024, <https://watchlist.org/wp-content/uploads/2024-credible-list-report-final.pdf>.