

UN: Child Rights Violators Put on Notice that Abuses Must End

June 26, 2018

by Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict

Annual UN report names 66 perpetrators for abuse and exploitation of children in conflict, including the Saudi Arabia-led coalition in Yemen

NEW YORK, June 26, 2018 – The UN Secretary-General’s latest report is evidence of the Saudi Arabia-led coalition’s continued disregard for children’s rights in Yemen, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict said.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres released his annual report on children and armed conflict to UN Security Council members. The report details grave child rights violations in conflicts around the world in 2017, including Yemen. According to the UN’s findings, the Saudi-led coalition was responsible for killing or maiming 670 children in Yemen, out of a total of 1,316 child casualties documented in 2017. It also found that the coalition was responsible for 19 out of 20 documented attacks on schools and nearly half of all attacks on hospitals in Yemen last year.



“Child rights offenders like the Saudi Arabia-led coalition have gotten away again with little more than a slap on the wrist for killing children, attacking schools and hospitals, and other grave violations,” said Bukeni Waruzi, executive director of Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict. “In the case of Yemen, the fact that such grave violations continued unabated shows that the Saudi-led coalition’s commitments to protect children are just empty promises.”

For the second consecutive year, the Secretary-General’s ‘list of shame’ of child rights violators was divided into two sections: parties to conflict that have put in place measures to protect children and those that have not. The Saudi-led coalition was listed among the former for killing and maiming children; however, it was removed from the ‘list of shame’ for attacks on schools and hospitals, despite significant evidence to the contrary. Watchlist said it is unclear what criteria had been used to determine the two categories, and warned that this division threatens to undermine the list’s use as a tool to condemn and hold violators accountable. Watchlist further called on the Secretary-General to revert to the earlier format of a single list.

This year’s report also names the national military of Myanmar, known as the Tatmadaw, for killing and maiming children and committing sexual violence against children. The Tatmadaw had previously been listed solely for recruitment and use of children in its ranks. Watchlist welcomed these additions and expressed its continued support for the list as a tool for holding perpetrators of child rights violations to account.

“By listing Myanmar forces for atrocities in Rakhine State, the Secretary-General sends a clear message to child rights abusers and their victims that such crimes will not go unnoticed,” said Waruzi. “All perpetrators listed in the report need to take urgent action to end violations against children and bring those responsible to justice.”

Each year, the Secretary-General submits a report to the UN Security Council on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict. These reports include a list that names the responsible armed forces and armed groups. Listing of a party is a tool to ‘name and shame’ perpetrators and triggers enhanced monitoring and reporting to inform Security Council action. Parties are only removed from the list after signing and successfully implementing a UN action plan to end violations against children.

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict is a New York-based coalition of nongovernmental organizations that seeks to end violations against children in armed conflict and to guarantee their rights. For more information, visit: <https://watchlist.org/>.

ChildFund Alliance is on the steering committee of Watchlist.