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Promotion and protection of the rights of children

## Children and armed conflict

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report, prepared following consultations and covering the period from January to December 2023, is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2427 \(2018\)](#). The report includes trends regarding the impact of armed conflict on children and information on violations committed, as requested by the Council in its resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#) and subsequent resolutions.<sup>1</sup> Where possible, violations are attributed to parties to conflict and the annexes to the present report include a list of parties engaging in violations against children, namely the recruitment and use of children, the killing and maiming of children, rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated against children, attacks on schools, hospitals and protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals,<sup>2</sup> and the abduction of children.

2. The information contained in the present report was vetted for accuracy by the United Nations. Where information is not verified, it is qualified as such. Where incidents were committed earlier but verified only in 2023, that information is qualified as relating to an incident that was verified at a later date. The information does not represent the full scale of violations against children, but provides United Nations-verified trends in grave violations against children, given that access for monitors remains a challenge to affected areas and for victims to specialized service provision. The report highlights engagement with parties responsible for violations that has resulted in behavioural change. Attacks or threats of attacks against

<sup>1</sup> See also the relevant reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in specific country situations, in particular in Afghanistan ([S/2023/893](#)), South Sudan ([S/2023/99](#)) and the Syrian Arab Republic ([S/2023/805](#)) and the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to the Human Rights Council on children and armed conflict ([A/HRC/55/57](#)).

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of the present report, the phrase “protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals”, used in Security Council resolutions [1998 \(2011\)](#), [2143 \(2014\)](#) and [2427 \(2018\)](#), as well as in the statements by the President of the Security Council of 17 June 2013 ([S/PRST/2013/8](#)) and 31 October 2017 ([S/PRST/2017/21](#)), refers to teachers, doctors, other educational personnel, students and patients.



community and civic leaders, on human rights defenders and on monitors of violations against children are a cause for concern and a strain on the monitoring capacity.

3. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict adopted a pragmatic approach to promote broad and effective protection for children. Reference to a situation does not seek to make any legal determination as to whether situations which are referred to in the present report constitute armed conflicts within the context of the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols thereto, nor does it prejudice the legal status of the non-State parties involved in these situations. Accordingly, the report documents situations in which apparent violations of international norms and standards are of such gravity as to warrant international concern, given their impact on children. My Special Representative brings these situations to the attention of Governments, which bear the primary responsibility for protecting children, in order to encourage them to take remedial measures.

## **II. Situation of children and armed conflict**

### **A. Overview of trends and patterns**

4. In 2023, violence against children in armed conflict reached extreme levels, with a shocking 21 per cent increase in grave violations. Children bore the brunt of multiplying and escalating crises that were marked by a complete disregard for child rights, notably the inherent right to life. The number of instances of killing and maiming increased by a staggering 35 per cent. Children were killed and maimed in unprecedented numbers in devastating crises in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, notably in the Gaza Strip, in Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Ukraine, among many other situations.

5. The United Nations verified 32,990 grave violations, of which 30,705 were committed in 2023 and 2,285 were committed earlier but verified in 2023. Violations affected 22,557 children (15,847 boys, 6,252 girls, 458 sex unknown) in 25 situations and one regional monitoring arrangement covering the Lake Chad basin region.

6. The highest numbers of violations were the killing (5,301) and maiming (6,348) of 11,649 children, followed by the recruitment and use of 8,655 children, 5,205 verified incidents of the denial of humanitarian access and the abduction of 4,356 children. Children were detained for actual or alleged association with armed groups (2,491), including those designated as terrorist groups by the United Nations, or for national security reasons.

7. The United Nations made progress in engaging with parties to protect children in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, the Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Yemen. More than 10,600 children formerly associated with armed forces or groups received protection or reintegration support during 2023.

8. The changing nature, complexity, expansion and intensification of armed conflict, the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, deliberate or indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian objects, including infrastructure, and the advent of new armed groups, alongside acute humanitarian emergencies and blatant disregard for international humanitarian law and severe violations of international human rights law, have led to alarming increases in grave violations. The conflict in

Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory presents an unprecedented scale and intensity of grave violations against children, with hostilities leading to an increase in grave violations of 155 per cent. In addition, new situations of concern have arisen in Haiti and the Niger, where the number of grave violations against children is alarming. Cross-border conflicts and intercommunal violence have persistently affected children, especially those in the central Sahel and Lake Chad basin regions. The Sudan witnessed a staggering 480 per cent increase in grave violations against children and the situation in Myanmar deteriorated with a 123 per cent increase in such violations. Grave violations also increased in Colombia, Lebanon and Nigeria. Conversely, Iraq, Mozambique, the Philippines, South Sudan, Ukraine and Yemen have recorded decreases in grave violations.

9. The highest numbers of grave violations were verified in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, Nigeria and the Sudan. The monitoring and verification of grave violations remained extremely challenging, including owing to access constraints, a high level of insecurity, and threats and direct attacks on United Nations personnel, monitors and humanitarian actors, leading to the underreporting of grave violations. Verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated against children (1,470) increased by 25 per cent, which is particularly concerning, as such violence continued to be vastly underreported owing to stigmatization, the fear of reprisals, harmful social norms, the absence of, or lack of access to, services, impunity and safety concerns, as also reported in my report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2024/292). Furthermore, the number of children who were victims of multiple grave violations increased, as illustrated by the high percentage of girls being abducted for recruitment and use and sexual violence, including rape and sexual slavery.

10. While non-State armed groups were responsible for almost 50 per cent of grave violations, government forces were the main perpetrator of the killing and maiming of children, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the denial of humanitarian access.

11. In 2023, boys were more frequently subjected to recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and abduction. Girls experienced a disproportionately higher incidence of conflict-related sexual violence. The number of verified cases of grave violations saw a particularly high surge in the recruitment and use of boys. Factors including gender, age, ethnicity, race and disability were determining factors in adversely shaping the vulnerability of children to these violations.

## **B. Challenges and the way forward**

12. The denial of humanitarian access often coincides with an escalation in other grave violations, including the recruitment and use of children and sexual violence, among other violations. Safe, rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access is a prerequisite for effective humanitarian action. Verified incidents of the denial of humanitarian access continued to rise by over 32 per cent to alarming levels in 2023.<sup>3</sup> The denial of humanitarian access took various forms, including the restriction of humanitarian activities and movements, interference with humanitarian operations and aid recipients, disinformation and arbitrary detention, the perpetration of violence against and the killing of humanitarian personnel, and looting. The highest number of denials of humanitarian access were verified in Afghanistan, the Central African

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<sup>3</sup> Information related to the denial of humanitarian access to children is presented pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and follows guidelines of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict. The information presented herein does not reflect the full humanitarian access situation in the countries concerned.

Republic, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Mali, Myanmar, Ukraine and Yemen. The situation is expected to deteriorate in several contexts given the adoption of restrictive laws, decrees and regulations that increase control over humanitarian organizations and personnel, notably in Afghanistan, Myanmar and the Sudan.

13. Attacks on schools and hospitals (1,650) remain concerning, particularly in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Ukraine, Myanmar, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. Such attacks deprive children of their right to education and health care, have a detrimental impact on children's psychological well-being, disrupt the fundamental premise of these institutions as zones of learning and safety, and expose them to heightened risks of other grave violations, such as an increased number of girls being subject to abduction and sexual violence. The use of schools for military purposes erodes their integrity and civilian character, and can render them targets of attacks and further violence.

14. The incorporation of child protection measures and capabilities within the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions, in accordance with the policy on child protection policy in United Nations peace operations (2017) and Security Council resolution 2594 (2021), is crucial. The departure of United Nations peace operations often takes place in contexts characterized by complex political dynamics and protracted humanitarian, development and peace and security challenges. Sustained political involvement and the development of comprehensive child protection strategies for the period after mission drawdown are paramount to the success of transition phases and in ensuring that gains in child protection can be sustained, alongside host government protection strategies. The establishment of a follow-up mechanism equipped with dedicated personnel so as to ensure that child protection knowledge, data and capacity are preserved and transferred, and the allocation of resources, are critical.

### **III. Information on grave violations**

#### **A. Situations on the agenda of the Security Council**

##### **Afghanistan**

15. The United Nations verified 1,865 grave violations against 834 children (736 boys, 98 girls), including 5 children who were victims of multiple violations.

16. The recruitment and use in combat (150) and support roles (192) of 342 boys by the Taliban were verified. Most of the children (333) were released by the Taliban in the northern and north-eastern regions.

17. A total of 31 children (29 boys, 2 girls) were detained by the Taliban for alleged association with opposing groups, 19 of whom were released, and 1 child died in custody.

18. The United Nations verified the killing (166) and maiming (316) of 482 children (389 boys, 93 girls), attributed to unidentified perpetrators (427), the Taliban (29), Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-KP) (20), and cross-border shelling from Pakistan (6). Casualties resulted mainly from explosive ordnance (398) and targeted killings (42).

19. Sexual violence against 12 children (6 boys, 6 girls) attributed to the Taliban (10) and unidentified perpetrators (2) was verified.

20. The United Nations verified 75 attacks on schools (60) and hospitals (15), including attacks on protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, attributed to the Taliban (61) and unidentified perpetrators (14).

21. The military use of 32 schools by the Taliban was verified; 22 schools that had been used by the Taliban since August 2021 were vacated in 2023.

22. The abduction for sexual violence purposes of 3 children (1 boy, 2 girls) by the Taliban was verified. All children were released.

23. Some 951 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access by the Taliban (946) and unidentified perpetrators (5) were verified and mostly involved interference in humanitarian activities and response (829).

#### *Development and concerns*

24. I note the engagement between the Taliban and the United Nations, which resulted in the release of 333 boys from the Taliban's ranks. I urge the Taliban to end the recruitment and use of children and to release all children swiftly and unconditionally, and to ensure effective reintegration services. I reiterate my call upon the Taliban to define a child as every human being below the age of 18 years, develop standardized age assessment guidelines, establish child protection units at recruitment centres and respect the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. I further urge the Taliban to engage with the United Nations and to adopt concrete measures to prohibit and prevent grave violations against children.

25. I appeal to all parties to the conflict to end and prevent grave violations against children and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. I am concerned by the number of children killed and maimed, including by explosive ordnance, and by attacks on, and the military use of, schools and hospitals. I call upon the international community to support reintegration programmes, and explosive ordnance clearance, victim assistance and risk education.

26. I am concerned by the increase in denials of humanitarian access and call upon the Taliban and all parties to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to children.

27. I urge the Taliban to lift the suspension of girls' secondary education and urge the immediate and unconditional reopening of schools beyond the sixth grade for all girls. I further urge all parties to end and prevent sexual violence, and ensure accountability.

#### **Central African Republic**

28. The United Nations verified 414 grave violations against 230 children (123 boys, 106 girls, 1 sex unknown), including 104 children who were victims of multiple violations. The United Nations verified 570 grave violations that occurred in previous years.

29. A total of 103 children (79 boys, 24 girls) were recruited and used by Azande Ani Kpi Gbe (49); Coalition des patriotes pour le changement (CPC) (26) (Union pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC) (20), anti-balaka (2), Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation (3R) (2), Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC) (1), and unidentified CPC group (1)); in support roles by government and pro-government forces (23) (other security personnel (9), jointly by the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/other security personnel (8), Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (6)); the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)-Achaye (3) and unidentified perpetrators (2).

30. The Government detained one boy for alleged association with armed groups.

31. The killing (17) and maiming (27) of 44 children (34 boys, 10 girls) by CPC (16) (UPC (8), 3R (5), anti-balaka (1), anti-balaka/3R (1), unidentified CPC (1));

unidentified perpetrators (18); government and pro-government forces (7) (Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (2), Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/internal security forces (2), other security personnel (1), internal security forces (1), unidentified pro-government proxies (1)); Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC)/Parti pour le rassemblement de la nation centrafricaine (PRNC)/faction (1); PRNC/faction (1) and Révolutionnaires tchadiens sudistes (RTS) (1) were verified.

32. The United Nations verified sexual violence against 76 girls perpetrated by CPC (38) (UPC (25), 3R (10), unidentified CPC (2), anti-balaka (1)); government and pro-government forces (16) (Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (12), internal security forces (2), other security personnel (1), demobilized anti-balaka elements used as proxies by Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/other security personnel (1)); Azande Ani Kpi Gbe (14); unidentified perpetrators (5); Siriri/UPC (2); and LRA-Achaye (1). Cases involved rape (76), including during association with armed groups (13), forced marriage (10) and gang rape (6). One element of the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic was arrested.

33. Five attacks on schools involving the destruction of buildings and equipment were attributed to the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (2); CPC (2) (UPC (1), CPC/3R (1)); and unidentified perpetrators (1). Further, schools (12) and hospitals (1) were used by the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (7), other security personnel (3), the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/other security personnel (1) and CPC/UPC (2); 7 of the locations were vacated by the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (3), other security personnel (1), the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/other security personnel (1) and CPC/UPC (2).

34. The United Nations verified the abduction of 126 children (63 boys, 62 girls, 1 sex unknown) by Azande Ani Kpi Gbe (52); CPC (47) (UPC (23), 3R (13), anti-balaka (5), unidentified CPC (3), anti-balaka/3R (2), FPRC (1)); government and pro-government forces (14) (Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/other security personnel (8), Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (5), other security personnel (1)); unidentified perpetrators (7); LRA-Achaye (3); Siriri/UPC (2); and RTS (1). Most of the children were abducted for the purposes of recruitment and use and/or sexual violence (101). Most of the children (125) escaped or were released.

35. A total of 60 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were attributed to CPC (25) (UPC (12), anti-balaka (5), unidentified CPC (5), 3R (2), anti-balaka/MPC (1)); unidentified perpetrators (21); government and pro-government forces (6) (other security personnel (3), Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (2), Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/other security personnel (1)); Azande Ani Kpi Gbe (4); Siriri (2); PRNC/faction (1); and jointly by FPRC and PRNC/faction (1).

#### *Developments and concerns*

36. I welcome the appointment of focal points for child protection in the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and the Ministry of Defence and the establishment of the National Child Protection Council. I encourage the creation of a dedicated working group to address grave violations and the participation of the defence and security authorities in the National Child Protection Council.

37. I commend the development by the Government, in cooperation with the United Nations, of a national strategy on preventing grave violations against children and a draft protocol for the handover of children associated with armed groups to civilian actors and urge the Government to prioritize the adoption of these measures.

38. I welcome the Government's efforts, with United Nations support, to reintegrate 42 children and encourage the Government to continue gender-sensitive reintegration and establish programmes for children who are victims of grave violations. I commend the establishment of a vocational centre for conflict-affected children in Ouaka Prefecture and encourage donors to fund reintegration and vocational programmes.

39. I commend the Government for prosecuting perpetrators of sexual violence and call upon the Government to hold all perpetrators of grave violations accountable and to ensure, with United Nations support, that adequate child-friendly programmes, safe reporting and response mechanisms are accessible to survivors. I urge all parties to end and prevent sexual violence against girls, including forced marriage.

40. I remain concerned by the number of grave violations attributed to government and pro-government forces, notably the recruitment and use of children, sexual violence and abduction. I urge the Government and pro-government forces to end and prevent grave violations against children, to cease the military use of schools and to vacate all schools. I call upon the Government to appoint child protection focal points in deployed units of the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and to issue command directives to all government and pro-government forces, including other security personnel.

41. I remain concerned by the scale of violations attributed to armed groups, notably abduction, recruitment and use and sexual violence. I urge FPRC, UPC and MPC to implement their respective action plans and to immediately release children. I urge all armed groups to immediately cease violations, unconditionally release associated children and refrain from attacking schools and hospitals. I call upon the Armed Forces and armed groups to facilitate and allow safe and unimpeded access of humanitarian actors.

### **Colombia**

42. The United Nations verified 432 grave violations against 329 children (219 boys, 110 girls), including 6 Venezuelan children, and 52 children were victims of multiple violations. In addition, the United Nations verified two grave violations that occurred in 2022.

43. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 262 children (176 boys, 86 girls). One child was recruited on two separate occasions, by different armed groups. Perpetrators were Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) dissident groups (186), Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) (41), Clan del Golfo (also known as Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia) (22), unidentified perpetrators (12) and the Colombian armed forces (2). The majority of those children remain associated (136), 112 were released or escaped, and 14 were killed. Some 38 children were used in combat roles. According to the Colombian Family Welfare Institute, 213 children formerly associated with armed groups entered its protection programme.

44. A total of 63 children (47 boys, 16 girls) were killed (29) and maimed (34) by unidentified perpetrators (31), FARC-EP dissident groups (18), Clan del Golfo (6), the Colombian armed forces (5) and ELN (3). Casualties resulted from explosive ordnance (19), targeted killings (17), combat (9), torture (7), unidentified reasons (7), crossfire (3) and military operations (1).

45. Sexual violence was perpetrated against 26 children (4 boys, 22 girls) by FARC-EP dissident groups (8), unidentified perpetrators (7), Clan del Golfo (5), ELN (4) and the Colombian armed forces (2).

46. A total of 27 attacks on schools (24), hospitals (3) and protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals were verified and attributed to FARC-EP dissident groups (15), unidentified perpetrators (9), ELN (2) and Clan del Golfo (1). In addition, 18 schools were militarily used by FARC-EP dissident groups (9), unidentified perpetrators (4), ELN (4) and Clan del Golfo (1). All schools have since been vacated.

47. A total of 32 children (23 boys, 9 girls) were abducted by FARC-EP dissident groups (12), ELN (10), Clan del Golfo (5), unidentified perpetrators (4) and the Colombian armed forces (1), mostly for the purposes of recruitment, retaliation or intimidation. A total of 19 children escaped or were released, 2 were killed, and the status of 11 is unknown.

48. Some 22 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were attributed to ELN (13), FARC-EP dissident groups (6) and unidentified perpetrators (3).

#### *Developments and concerns*

49. I commend the Government for the launch of the national action plan for the implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration and urge its swift implementation across the territories. I also welcome the resumption of the work of the intersectoral commission for preventing the recruitment and exploitation of, and sexual violence against, children and adolescents by illegal armed groups and organized criminal groups in April 2023.

50. I welcome the decision by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to open Case 11, which focuses on sexual violence and gender-based crimes committed in the context of the conflict. However, I remain concerned about ongoing cases of sexual violence, particularly against girls associated with armed groups. I urge all parties to take immediate action to end and prevent sexual violence.

51. I encourage the implementation of an intersectoral government strategy to prevent and respond to grave violations against children at the local level, with an ethnic, gender and community focus and with adequate human and financial resources. I reiterate that children who are victims of recruitment should be referred to civilian authorities under established protocols and be given access to reintegration services, without discrimination on the basis of nationality, ethnicity, gender or legal status. I reiterate my call upon the armed forces to stop the organization of civilian-military activities involving children.

52. I am gravely concerned by the continued increase in grave violations, particularly the recruitment and use of children by FARC-EP dissident groups and ELN, as well as attacks on schools and the widespread presence of explosive ordnance. It is particularly concerning that these violations have a disproportionate impact on Indigenous children and children of African descent, and on girls.

53. I urge armed groups to immediately end violations, unconditionally release children and, with the United Nations, adopt concrete time-bound commitments to end and prevent grave violations.

54. I reiterate my urgent call to negotiating parties in ongoing peace talks to include child protection priorities in the agenda of peace dialogues and explicitly prohibit all six grave violations against children, including sexual violence, in ceasefire protocols.

55. I call upon parties to conflict to formally recognize and comply with the age of 18 as the minimum age of recruitment and use by armed groups and armed forces, in line with Colombian legislation and global protection standards.



### Democratic Republic of the Congo

56. The United Nations verified 3,764 grave violations against 2,838 children (1,973 boys, 865 girls). In addition, 389 violations that occurred in previous years were verified. A total of 1,027 children were victims of multiple violations.

57. A total of 1,861 children (1,535 boys, 326 girls) were recruited and used by Raia Mutomboki (388), Mai-Mai Mazembe (254), Alliance des forces de résistance congolaise (AFRC) (214), Nyatura (194), Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) (123), Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS) (112), Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) (69), Front patriotique et intégrationniste du Congo (FPIC) (61), Union des patriotes pour la défense du Congo (UPDC) (56), Mai-Mai Biloze Bishambuke (38), Twigwaneho (31), Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO) (30), Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-Rénové) (30), Mai-Mai Zaïre (29), Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi (FDLR-FOCA) (25), and other armed groups (207), including Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (1). Children were used in combat (585) and support roles (1,175), including as guards (214), porters (137), spies (78) and fetish keepers (52), and in unspecified roles (101).

58. The United Nations verified the detention of 67 children (64 boys, 3 girls) for alleged association with armed groups by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (56), the Congolese National Police (8) and the National Intelligence Agency (3). All children were released, except a boy killed by the Congolese National Police while escaping.

59. The killing (419) and maiming (235) of 654 children (365 boys, 289 girls) were attributed to CODECO (198), ADF (126), M23 (125), Mai-Mai Zaïre (56), Mai-Mai Kyandenga (17), Nyatura (15), Mai-Mai Mazembe (9), Raia Mutomboki (9), Twigwaneho (8) and other armed groups (61), and to the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (26) and the Congolese National Police (4). Casualties resulted from targeted attacks against civilians (508), explosive ordnance (85), torture (36) and crossfire (20), and some occurred during recruitment (5).

60. Sexual violence was perpetrated against 281 children (2 boys, 279 girls) by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (37), M23 (32), Nyatura (32), Raia Mutomboki (30), CODECO (30), Mai-Mai Mazembe (18), AFRC (18), UPDC (15), APCLS (10), unidentified perpetrators (9), and other armed groups (39), including ADF (8), FDLR-FOCA (4), NDC-Rénové (3), Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (1) and Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (1), and by the Congolese National Police (7), the National Intelligence Agency (3) and the General Directorate for Immigration (1). Incidents involved rape (155), gang rape (50), forced marriage (37), sexual slavery (37) and attempted rape (2). Some 28 perpetrators from the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (21), armed groups (3), the Congolese National Police (2) and the National Intelligence Agency (2) were arrested.

61. A total of 88 attacks on schools (44) and hospitals (44), including against protected persons (6), by CODECO (34), M23 (24), ADF (4), unidentified perpetrators (4) and other armed groups (19), and by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2) and the Burundi National Defence Force (1) were verified. Further, 41 schools were used for military purposes by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (14), M23 (13), Nyatura (6), AFRC (4), Mai-Mai Mazembe (1), Raia Mutomboki (1), APLCS (1) and Mai-Mai Kyandenga (1).

62. A total of 870 children (618 boys, 252 girls) were abducted by ADF (185), Raia Mutomboki (111), Nyatura (94), M23 (77), CODECO (71), Mai-Mai Mazembe (62), UPDC (50), APCLS (40), AFRC (39), unidentified perpetrators (36), Mai-Mai Zaïre

(30), and other armed groups (73), including FDLR-FOCA (8) and Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (1), and by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2). Most children (666) were abducted for the purpose of recruitment and use.

63. Some 10 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access, including the perpetration of violence against (4), abduction (2) and killing (1) of humanitarian personnel, as well as looting (3), by Mai-Mai Biloze Bishambuke (3), CODECO (2), Mai-Mai Yakutumba (2), M23 (1), Mai-Mai Kamama (1) and Mai-Mai Mamadou (1) were verified.

#### *Developments and concerns*

64. I welcome the commitment of the Government to implementing the 2012 action plan. I urge the Government to prioritize the prevention of sexual violence, with a focus on addressing sexual violence perpetrated by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I welcome the establishment of the National Reparations Fund for Victims of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and Other Crimes against the Peace and Security of Mankind. I further welcome the prosecution and conviction of perpetrators of grave violations, including for sexual violence, and encourage the continuation of accountability efforts.

65. I commend the cooperation between the Government and the United Nations on screening, age assessment and separation of children from the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Congolese National Police during recruitment processes. I welcome the continued absence of verified cases of recruitment and use by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Congolese National Police. I further encourage regional forces deployed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to include child protection in predeployment trainings.

66. I welcome the signature of a unilateral declaration by Raia Mutomboki Kiriku on ending and preventing grave violations against children, and the release of 535 children by armed groups in 2023, following United Nations advocacy.

67. I urge all parties to immediately vacate all schools and to end and prevent the military use of schools and hospitals.

68. I encourage the Government to further operationalize the disarmament, demobilization, community recovery and stabilization programme and reiterate the need to prioritize children. I call upon donors, especially international financial institutions, to support this programme.

69. I remain deeply alarmed by the devastatingly high number of grave violations against children, particularly by armed groups. I condemn the further increase in grave violations, especially killing and maiming, abduction and recruitment and use of children, and call upon armed groups to immediately and unconditionally release all children. I urge all parties to take measures to better protect children.

#### **Haiti**

70. The United Nations verified 383 grave violations against 307 children (160 boys, 117 girls, 30 sex unknown), including 32 children who were victims of multiple violations.

71. The recruitment and use of 23 children (17 boys, 6 girls), by Brooklyn (5), Grand Ravine (4), Village de Dieu “5 Segond gang” (4), Team Ascenseur (2), Bas Grand Grif de Savien (1), 400 Mawozo (1), Force Résistance Chandelle (1) and Belekou (1) armed gangs, and by unidentified armed gangs (4), was verified. Children were used in attacks against the Haitian National Police or were tortured and burned

alive by Baz Gran Grif de Savien and Force Résistance Chandelle armed gangs. Girls were used for sexual purposes.

72. One boy was detained by the Haitian National Police over alleged association with an armed gang. The United Nations is advocating his release.

73. The killing (128) and maiming (78) of 206 children (126 boys, 60 girls, 20 sex unknown) by Grand Ravine (35), unidentified armed gangs (26), Belekou (18), 400 Mawozo (12), Boston (11), Canaan (9), Les Argentins de Haut Bel-Air (8), G9 Family and Allies (7), G-Pèp coalition (6) and other armed gangs (70), and by unidentified perpetrators (4) in crossfire between armed gangs and the Haitian National Police were verified. Casualties resulted mainly from stray bullets (125) and targeted killings (62), including children who were victims of gang rapes or burned alive as part of reprisals.

74. Sexual violence was perpetrated against 41 girls by unidentified armed gangs (11) and by Baz Gran Grif de Savien (6), Village de Dieu “5 Segond gang” (5), Canaan (4), Belekou (3), Grand Ravine (2), G9 Family and Allies (2), Krazé Baryé (2), Ti Bois (2), Bel-Air (1), 400 Mawozo (1), Kokorat Sans Ras (1), G Pèp coalition (1) armed gangs. Cases involved rape, gang rape and sexual slavery.

75. The United Nations verified 37 attacks on schools (12) and hospitals (25), including attacks on protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals (14), which were attributed to unidentified armed gangs (24) and to Krazé Baryé (3), Canaan (3), Warf Jérémie (3), Grand Ravine (1), Terre Noire (1), Brooklyn (1) and Charbon (1) armed gangs. In addition, the military use of 4 schools by Warf Jérémie (1), Canaan (1), Charbon (1) and Terre Noire (1) armed gangs was verified.

76. The abduction of 71 children (30 boys, 31 girls, 10 sex unknown) by unidentified armed gangs (22), Les Argentins de Haut Bel-Air (14), Baz Gran Grif de Savien (9), Kokorat Sans Ras (5), Krazé Baryé (4), Canaan (3), Belekou (3), Village de Dieu “5 Segond gang” (3), Grand Ravine (2), Palmis (2), Bel-Air (1), Delmas 6 Gang (1), 400 Mawozo (1) and Krache Dife (1) armed gangs were verified. Most abductions were for ransom (65) and sexual violence (4).

77. A total of five incidents of the denial of humanitarian access by unidentified armed gangs (3) and by Canaan (1) and Grand Ravine (1) armed gangs were verified, including direct threats to humanitarian organizations.

#### *Developments and concerns*

78. I welcome the signature of a handover protocol in January 2024 between the Government and the United Nations for the transfer of children allegedly associated with armed gangs to civilian child protection actors.

79. I call for the continuation of an inter-Haitian dialogue towards a lasting political solution and underline the importance of including child protection provisions.

80. I remain deeply concerned by indiscriminate armed gang violence and grave violations against children, in particular the killing and maiming and abduction of children, and the perpetration of sexual violence against children. I call for accelerating the deployment of the Multinational Security Support Mission to assist the Haitian National Police in re-establishing security in Haiti, as authorized by the Security Council in its resolution [2699 \(2023\)](#), and for appropriate training in child protection for its personnel.

81. I am concerned by restrictions on humanitarian access and call upon the Government, the Haitian National Police and armed gangs to support and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access.

## **Iraq**

82. The United Nations verified 61 grave violations against 57 children (46 boys, 11 girls), including 3 girls who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, 16 grave violations that occurred in previous years were verified.

83. As of 31 December, 749 children (742 boys, 7 girls) remained in detention on national security-related charges, including for their actual or alleged association with armed groups, primarily Da'esh.

84. A total of 52 children (44 boys, 8 girls) were killed (18) and maimed (34) by unidentified perpetrators (46), Turkish military air strikes against People's Defence Forces of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (HPG/PKK) targets (4) and Da'esh (2). Most incidents occurred in areas previously under the control of Da'esh. Child casualties resulted from explosive ordnance (43), air strikes (4), ground engagement (3) and crossfire (2).

85. Sexual violence perpetrated against three girls by Da'esh was verified. The violations began in 2014, when the girls were abducted, and continued until their rescue in 2023.

86. One attack on a school by unidentified perpetrators was verified. Some 21 schools that had previously been used militarily were vacated by the Iraqi security forces, while the military use of 16 schools, which had been reported previously, by the Iraqi Federal Police (12) and the Popular Mobilization Forces (4) continued.

87. The abduction of five children (2 boys, 3 girls) by Da'esh (4) and the People's Defence Forces of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (1) was verified. All the children were released.

### *Developments and concerns*

88. I commend the Government for the completion of the activities of the action plan, including the establishment of a Human Rights Directorate and complaints desk in the Popular Mobilization Forces, the appointment of focal points, the re-issuance of command orders prohibiting the recruitment and use of children, the provision of training on child protection and strengthened age assessment procedures. I note the decision of the Minister of Labour in March 2024 to establish the National Committee for the Prevention of Child Rights Violations and Preventing Future Violations and encourage the swift operationalization thereof.

89. I welcome the Government's engagement with my Special Representative, including through her visit in January 2024, and encourage the Government to further institutionalize child protection by developing preventive frameworks, including by adopting the draft child protection law, taking into account its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and international human rights law, ensuring legal documentation for all children in Iraq and strengthening long-term community-based reintegration, with the support of the United Nations.

90. I further welcome the absence of verified cases of recruitment and use and denial of humanitarian access.

91. I am concerned that explosive ordnance remains the leading cause of child casualties. I call upon the Government to continue clearing contaminated areas, prioritizing areas of return and child-friendly spaces, and to provide education regarding the risks of explosive ordnance, as well as assistance to victims.

92. I note the release of 71 children who had been detained on national security-related charges, but I remain concerned by the continued detention of children on such charges, including for their actual or alleged association with Da'esh. I reiterate

that children should be treated primarily as victims and in line with international juvenile justice standards. Children should be detained only as a last resort and for the shortest period. I call upon the Government to release the children to child protection actors and to ensure access for formerly detained children to services, assistance and protection.

93. I commend the Government for the repatriation of 2,255 Iraqi children (1,142 boys, 1,113 girls) from the north-eastern Syrian Arab Republic. I reiterate my call upon all countries concerned to facilitate and expedite the voluntary repatriation of children, including those with suspected family ties to Da'esh.

#### **Israel and the State of Palestine<sup>4</sup>**

94. On 7 October 2023, Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups in the Gaza Strip launched a large-scale armed attack on Israel which included numerous acts of terror. In addition, some 250 people, including women and children, were abducted and taken into the Gaza Strip, with some subsequently released, including during a seven-day humanitarian pause that started on 24 November. The violence that has been perpetrated since 7 October in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory – particularly in and around the Gaza Strip – has shaken the region and devastated the lives of millions of Palestinians and Israelis. The scale of death and destruction is shocking and unprecedented.

95. The United Nations verified 8,009 grave violations against 4,360 children (3,139 boys, 1,221 girls; Israeli children (113), Palestinian children (4,247)) in Israel (120); the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (4,868); and in the Gaza Strip (3,021).

96. Verified grave violations were attributed to Israeli armed and security forces (5,698), Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades (116), unidentified perpetrators (58), Israeli settlers (51), Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades (21), individual Palestinian perpetrators (13) and Palestinian Authority Security Forces (1). In addition, the process of attribution of verified violations (2,051) is ongoing.

97. Owing to severe access challenges, in particular in the Gaza Strip, the information presented herein does not represent the full scale of violations against children in this situation. 2023 saw a significant increase in violations, and the last quarter of the year witnessed widespread violence by all parties to the conflict; over 23,000 grave violations against children (3,900 Israeli children, 19,887 Palestinian children) by all parties to the conflict were reported and are pending verification.

98. The United Nations verified 136 violations against 113 Israeli children (66 boys, 47 girls) in Israel (120), the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (15), and the Gaza Strip (1) by Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and other armed groups (116), Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades (1), individual Palestinian perpetrators (12), and unidentified perpetrators (7). Six children were victims of multiple violations.

99. The United Nations verified the use of two Israeli boys by Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades (1) and Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades (1) in Israel (1) and in the Gaza Strip (1) to accompany Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades in house-to-house searches and to film a video.

100. The United Nations verified that 43 Israeli children (29 boys, 14 girls) had been killed in Israel (37) during acts of terror on 7 October (live ammunition (27), crossfire

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<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of the present report, the present section provides information on grave violations in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and Israel.

(2), burned (1) and by rockets (7)), and in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (6), in shooting (4) and vehicle-ramming (2) attacks.

101. Israeli children were verified as having been maimed (27) (19 boys, 8 girls) in Israel (18) and in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (9). Israeli children were maimed (13) during attacks on 7 October (live ammunition (7), shrapnel (5) and burns (1)). In addition, in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in northern Israel, children were maimed (14) by rocket fire (4), in shooting or stabbing attacks (6), and incidents of stone-throwing (4). Some 3,900 Israeli children were reported maimed and the reports are pending verification.

102. Perpetrators include Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups (54), individual Palestinian perpetrators (12), and unidentified perpetrators (4) including during crossfire between Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and Israeli armed and security forces (4).

103. Sexual violence against Israeli civilians, including children, in the context of the 7 October attacks in southern Israel, was reported.

104. The United Nations verified 17 attacks on schools (2) and hospitals (15) in Israel, including on health facilities (4), ambulances (4) and protected personnel (7), by Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups (14) and unidentified perpetrators (3). Israeli schools were closed for weeks following the 7 October attacks. In addition, the United Nations verified the military use of a school by Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups in Israel. There are numerous other reports of the use of human shields by Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups in the Gaza Strip.

105. A total of 47 Israeli children (20 boys, 27 girls) were abducted by Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups in southern Israel, 36 of whom were held hostage and subjected to ill-treatment in the Gaza Strip by Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades, the Palestinian Mujahidin Movement Mujahidin Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups. Two boys were still being held as at December 2023. Children held hostage in the Gaza Strip continue to be denied humanitarian access and assistance. The remaining 11 children were abducted by Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups during the 7 October attacks in southern Israel and escaped or were released (8) or were killed (3).

106. The United Nations verified 7,873 violations against 4,247 Palestinian children (3,073 boys, 1,174 girls), in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (4,853), and the Gaza Strip (3,020). Violations were perpetrated by Israeli armed and security forces (5,698), Israeli settlers (51), unidentified perpetrators (51), Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups (20), individual Palestinian perpetrators (1) and Palestinian Authority Security Forces (1). In addition, the process of attribution regarding the verified killing of Palestinian children (2,051) that occurred between 7 October and 31 December in the Gaza Strip is ongoing. Five children were victims of multiple violations.

107. In the occupied West Bank, the United Nations verified the use of Palestinian boys (5) by Israeli armed and security forces to shield forces during law enforcement operations. Three children reported that Israeli armed and security forces had attempted to recruit them as informants. During 2023 in the Gaza Strip, Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades organized "summer camps", including for children, exposing them to military content and activities.

108. The United Nations verified the detention of 906 Palestinian children (897 boys, 9 girls) for alleged security offences by Israeli armed and security forces in the occupied West Bank (435), East Jerusalem (458) and the Gaza Strip (13). Israeli authorities reported that 49 Palestinian children were held under administrative detention as at 31 December. The United Nations received the testimonies of 84 children who reported ill-treatment by Israeli armed and security forces while in detention. Further, the United Nations received reports of the detention of Palestinian children in the Gaza Strip, compounded by multiple forms of sexual violence.

109. The United Nations verified the killing of 2,267 Palestinian children (1,259 boys, 1,008 girls) in the Gaza Strip (2,141) and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (126), by Israeli armed and security forces (206), Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades or other Palestinian armed groups (2), Israeli settlers (1), Palestinian Authority Security Forces (PASF) (1) and unidentified perpetrators (6) (improvised explosive devices (4) and crossfire between PASF and armed Palestinians (1)). Of the total, 9 children (7 boys, 2 girls) were killed between 1 January and 6 October 2023, by Israeli armed and security forces (5), Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups (2), and unidentified perpetrators (2). In addition, the process of attribution regarding the verified killing of Palestinian children (2,051) that occurred between 7 October and 31 December in the Gaza Strip is ongoing. Most incidents were caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas by Israeli armed and security forces. Furthermore, in the Gaza Strip, some 9,100 children were reported killed and verification is ongoing. In the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, most Palestinian children were verified as having been killed by Israeli armed and security forces (120), by live ammunition (102) and air strikes (18), during Israeli armed and security forces' law enforcement operations, many in circumstances raising concerns of unwarranted or excessive use of force, including militarized operations and operations leading to armed exchanges with Palestinians, and in relation to attacks or alleged attacks on Israeli civilians or forces (9). Some 19,887 Palestinian children were reported killed or maimed and the reports are pending verification.

110. A total of 1,975 Palestinian children (1,809 boys, 166 girls) were verified as maimed in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (1,825), and in the Gaza Strip (150). The main perpetrators were Israeli armed and security forces (1,892), Israeli settlers (36), Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades or other Palestinian armed groups (18), individual Palestinian perpetrators (1) and unidentified perpetrators (28), including by explosive ordnance (13). The main causes of maiming in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, were teargas inhalation (1,187: 1,079 boys, 108 girls), live ammunition (433) and rubber-coated metal bullets (70), in the context of law enforcement operations (979). Further, reports of some 10,787 maimed children in the Gaza Strip are pending verification.

111. The United Nations verified 371 attacks on schools (45) and hospitals (326), including on protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals (104), attributed to Israeli armed and security forces (340), Israeli settlers (14) and unidentified perpetrators (17), in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (188), and in the Gaza Strip (183). Incidents involved attacks and threats of attack on health facilities (118), medical personnel (102) and ambulances (106), and attacks on schools (43) and education personnel (2). In addition, the United Nations verified incidents of the military use (5) of ambulances by Israeli armed and security forces (4) and a health centre by Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades (1). Separately, 561 other interferences with education (461) and health (100) by Israeli armed and security forces (443), Israeli settlers (24) and unidentified perpetrators (94) were verified. Schools in the Gaza Strip have remained closed since 7 October 2023, affecting 625,000 children.

112. The denial of humanitarian access by Israeli armed and security forces (3,250) was verified in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (2,698) and in the Gaza Strip (546). A total of 3,227 permit applications (1,895 for boys, 1,332 for girls) to Israeli authorities for children to exit the Gaza Strip through the Erez crossing point, or from the occupied West Bank, to gain access to specialized medical treatment were denied or not approved in time to reach scheduled hospital appointments, while 17,693 applications were approved. On 7 October 2023, the Erez crossing point was closed. Following the attack on 7 October, Israel declared and imposed a siege of the Gaza Strip on 9 October. The United Nations verified 23 denials of humanitarian access by Israeli authorities related to denied coordination of humanitarian aid missions and prevention of access to medical care. In the context of Israeli armed and security forces military operations in the Gaza Strip, humanitarian personnel were killed, including 144 United Nations personnel, and nearly all critical infrastructure, facilities and services have been attacked, including shelter sites, United Nations installations, schools, hospitals, water and sanitation facilities, grain mills and bakeries. Access restrictions, water and fuel shortages and electricity and telecommunications blackouts also impeded access to humanitarian services. Children are at risk of famine, severe malnutrition and preventable death.

*Developments and concerns*

113. I am appalled by the dramatic increase and unprecedented scale and intensity of grave violations against children in the Gaza Strip, Israel and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, despite my repeated calls for parties to implement measures to end grave violations. I reiterate my urgent call upon Israel, Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups to take meaningful measures to comply with international humanitarian and human rights law, urgently and immediately agree to a humanitarian ceasefire, and facilitate the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and for them to be treated humanely. In the interim, they must be allowed to receive visits from the International Committee of the Red Cross. I reiterate that international humanitarian law requires the parties to treat children affected by armed conflict as persons who are entitled to special respect and protection. I repeat my call for an end to all violations of international humanitarian law.

114. I am shocked at the killing and maiming and abduction of children by Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups. Nothing can justify the brutal acts of terror that were committed and the deliberate killing, maiming, torture and abduction of civilians and other protected persons. I am appalled by the reports of sexual violence during the attacks; these must be investigated and prosecuted. I call upon all Palestinian armed groups to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and refrain from attacks that target civilians, including children, and from indiscriminate attacks, including the launching of rockets and mortars from densely populated areas in the Gaza Strip towards Israeli civilian population centres. I call upon Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups to release immediately and unconditionally all hostages, including children, and facilitate access for humanitarian actors. I am deeply concerned by reports that children held hostage were subjected to threats, violence and ill-treatment. I call upon Palestinian armed groups to protect schools and hospitals, including protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals.

115. I am shocked by the unprecedented number of children killed and maimed by Israeli armed and security forces in the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The magnitude of the Israeli military campaign against Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and the scope of death and destruction in the



Gaza Strip have been unprecedented. I reiterate my calls upon Israel to abide by international humanitarian law and human rights law and ensure that civilians, including children, and civilian infrastructure are not targeted, and that incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects are not caused in violation of the principle of proportionality in international humanitarian law, and to ensure that all feasible precautions are taken to avoid, and in any event to minimize, such incidental loss, injury or damage in the conduct of military operations. I am deeply concerned regarding the excessive use of force during law enforcement operations and reiterate that security forces must exercise maximum restraint and use intentional lethal force only when it is strictly unavoidable in order to protect life and put in place preventive and protective measures to minimize damage and injury, including damage and injury that affect children. I further urge Israel to pursue accountability for violations against children. I exhort Israel to take immediate steps to protect schools and hospitals, including ambulances and protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, and refrain from attacking them or using them for military purposes. Further, I am deeply concerned by the alarming increase in the number of children arrested and detained by Israel and by the reports by children of physical violence directed against them during detention. I reiterate my call upon Israel to uphold international juvenile justice standards, including the use of detention only as a last resort and for the shortest period of time, to immediately end the administrative detention of children, to prevent any violence and ill-treatment in detention and to prevent attempted use of children as informants.

116. I urge all parties to conflict to immediately end and prevent grave violations against children and to urgently engage with my Special Representative and the United Nations working group on children and armed conflict on the ground, on the basis of the letters previously addressed by Israel, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad to my Special Representative in 2022 and 2023, and to adopt immediately clear, time-bound commitments to end and prevent grave violations against children, as proposed by the United Nations, and to comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

117. I am deeply alarmed about the deteriorating humanitarian conditions, and by attacks against humanitarian workers, including the killing of United Nations personnel. I call upon Israel to grant full, rapid, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian aid and personnel into and within the Gaza Strip. The United Nations and its partners cannot effectively deliver humanitarian aid while the Gaza Strip is under heavy, widespread and unrelenting military operations, including air strikes. I call upon all parties to conflict to respect the humanitarian notification system so as to maximize the safety of aid operations.

### **Lebanon**

118. The United Nations verified 104 grave violations against 95 children (87 boys, 8 girls).

119. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 74 boys by unidentified armed groups (25), Jund Ansar Allah (13), Nusrah Front (11), Fatah (9), Al-Shabab al-Muslim (7), Jund al-Sham (6), Hizbullah (2) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (1).

120. Seven children were arrested and prosecuted under military jurisdiction on national security-related charges. Two children who were detained in 2022 and 2023, respectively, were released during the reporting period.

121. Some 21 children (13 boys, 8 girls) were killed (10) and maimed (11) by unidentified perpetrators (15) and the Israeli armed and security forces (6), including during shelling and drone strikes (6) and by explosive remnants of war (5).

122. Nine attacks on schools by unidentified perpetrators (9) were verified. Attacks occurred during armed clashes in a Palestine refugee camp (6) and during shelling across the Blue Line (3). The military use of eight United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools by Fatah and Jund al-Sham in a Palestine refugee camp was verified. Four schools have since been vacated but remain inaccessible to UNRWA.

*Developments and concerns*

123. I am concerned about the rise in verified grave violations, notably the recruitment and use of children and the killing and maiming of children. I urge the Government to engage with the United Nations to strengthen child protection systems.

124. I reiterate my call upon the Government to release children detained on national security grounds to civilian child protection actors and to treat them primarily as victims and in line with international juvenile justice standards.

125. I am disturbed by continued armed clashes in Palestine refugee camps and their impact on children. I urge Fatah and Jund al-Sham to immediately vacate schools.

**Libya**

126. The United Nations verified 58 grave violations against 16 children (14 boys, 1 girl, 1 sex unknown). In addition, 24 grave violations that occurred in the previous year were verified.

127. A total of 159 children were detained under the jurisdiction of the Judicial Police in Tripoli. Some 61 children of multiple nationalities were arrested by the Judicial Police and detained with their mothers, including 34 children who continue to be detained in Judaydah prison for their mothers' alleged association with Da'esh. A further 241 children were detained in migration detention centres across Libya.

128. The United Nations verified the killing (2) and maiming (9) of 11 children (8 boys, 2 girls, 1 sex unknown) by explosive ordnance (9) and crossfire (2) between Tareq Bin Ziyad Brigade affiliated with Libyan National Army (LNA) and armed groups (1) and armed clashes between anti-terrorism forces and Shabab al-Shurafa (1).

129. Two verified attacks on hospitals were attributed to unidentified perpetrators.

130. The United Nations verified the abduction of five boys by LNA. The children remain in captivity.

131. The United Nations verified 40 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access attributed to the administrative department of the Government of National Unity (7), the Libyan Coast Guard (6), the Internal Security Agency (5), the Department for Combating Illegal Migration (4), the Internal Security Agency and administrative department of the Government of National Unity (3), LNA (2), the Intelligence Service (2), the Department for Combating Illegal Migration and administrative department of the Government of National Unity (2), the administrative department of the Government of National Unity and the Libyan Coast Guard (8), and 55 Brigade of the Ministry of Interior (1).

*Developments and concerns*

132. I welcome the commitment made by the Government of National Unity to increase the minimum age of recruitment into security forces to 18 years.

133. I am concerned about the increase in abductions of children, including by security institutions, and the prevalence of killing and maiming of children. I urge all

parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law to ensure the protection of children.

134. I urge the Libyan authorities to engage with the United Nations to develop and adopt measures to end and prevent all violations against children, and to ensure that child protection provisions are included in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts.

135. I urge the Libyan authorities to immediately end child detention, including for children detained for their mothers' alleged association with Da'esh, pursue alternatives to detention, provide children with safe family-based care and facilitate access by the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies to detention centres. I encourage the Libyan authorities to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of children allegedly associated with Da'esh and call upon all countries concerned to facilitate their voluntary repatriation and reintegration, in line with the principle of non-refoulement, family unity and the best interests of the child.

### **Mali**

136. The United Nations verified 1,141 grave violations against 1,024 children (879 boys, 143 girls, 2 sex unknown), including 31 children who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, 91 violations that occurred in previous years were verified.

137. Some 691 children (660 boys, 31 girls) were recruited and used by unidentified perpetrators (205); Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA) (169) (Haut Conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad (HCUA) (61), Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad (MNLA) (57), Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad (MAA) (43), unidentified CMA (8)); Platform (162) (Ganda Lassal Izo (83), Ganda Izo (44), Mouvement pour le salut de l'Azawad (MSA) (15), MAA-Platform (6), Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés (GATIA) (4), MAA-GATIA (4) Mouvement pour le salut de l'Azawad des Daoussak (MSA-D) (3) and Ganda Koy (3)); in support roles by the Malian Defence and Security Forces (79) (Malian armed forces (72), gendarmerie (5), police (2)); Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) (34); Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) (33) and unidentified MAA (9).

138. The Malian Defence and Security Forces captured or arrested 14 boys during military operations for alleged association with armed groups. Nine children were handed over to child protection structures in accordance with the Protocol on the Release and Handover of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Groups of 2013. Five children were detained by national authorities for longer periods, in contravention of the Protocol.

139. The United Nations verified the killing (107) and maiming (153) of 260 children (176 boys, 82 girls, 2 sex unknown) by unidentified perpetrators (149); JNIM (59) (Front de Libération du Macina (FLM) (53) and unidentified JNIM (6)); Malian armed forces (28); ISGS (13); CMA (4) (HCUA (3), unidentified CMA (1)); Platform (3) (MSA (2), MSA-D (1)); Dan Nan Ambassagou (2); dozo traditional hunters (1) and foreign security personnel (1).

140. The rape of 15 girls by unidentified perpetrators (7); Malian armed forces (4); CMA (2) (MAA (1), MNLA (1)); MSA-D (1) and ISGS (1) was verified.

141. Some 17 attacks on schools (11) and hospitals (6) were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (7); JNIM (7) (unidentified JNIM (5), FLM (2)); ISGS (1); Malian armed forces and foreign security personnel (1); and during crossfire between foreign security personnel and dozo traditional hunters (1).

142. A total of 91 children (67 boys, 24 girls) were abducted by unidentified perpetrators (48); ISGS (42) and GATIA (1).

143. Some 67 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (47); JNIM (12) (unidentified JNIM (7), Ansar Eddine (4) and FLM (1)); Malian armed forces (5); ISGS (2); and dozo traditional hunters (1).

*Developments and concerns*

144. I welcome the transitional Government's efforts, in cooperation with the United Nations, to implement the Safe Schools Declaration. I call upon the transitional Government to finalize and adopt the bill on the protection of education from attacks.

145. I am concerned by the levels of recruitment and use, killing and maiming of children and sexual violence perpetrated by the Malian Defence and Security forces, and I urge them to engage with the United Nations to take concrete prevention measures to protect children. I urge the transitional Government to notify the United Nations of children associated with the government forces and to release them. I call upon the transitional Government to finalize the revision of the Child Protection Law and Code, criminalizing the recruitment and use of children, including those between the ages of 15 and 17, and to hold perpetrators accountable. I reiterate my call upon the transitional Government to adopt and implement a national prevention plan regarding all grave violations against children.

146. I welcome the cooperation of CMA and Platform with the United Nations, which enabled visits to military bases and the screening of combatants to verify the presence of children in Kidal and Gao regions. I am concerned by the lack of progress in the implementation of their action plans and by their continued recruitment and use of children. I call upon CMA and Platform to respect their commitments, release all children from their ranks and to prevent further recruitment and use and other grave violations.

147. I remain extremely concerned at the elevated number of grave violations against children. I urge all parties to immediately cease all violations, unconditionally release associated children, to take measures to protect children during operations, protect schools and hospitals and allow the safe and unimpeded access of humanitarian actors.

**Myanmar**

148. The United Nations verified 2,799 grave violations against 2,093 children (1,694 boys, 385 girls, 14 sex unknown), including 134 children who were affected by multiple violations. In addition, 17 violations against 13 children that occurred in previous years were verified.

149. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 1,171 children (1,123 boys, 42 girls, 6 sex unknown) by the Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias (1,102), the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (38), Kachin Independence Army (KIA) (26), the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) (2), Zomi Revolutionary Organization/Zomi Revolutionary Army (ZRO/ZRA) (2); and the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) (1). Children (1,071) were used by the Myanmar armed forces in support roles (1,001), as human shields (68), guides (1) and porters (1) in combat settings; 100 children were used by the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (38), KIA (26), the Myanmar armed forces (7) and affiliated militias (24), ZRO/ZRA (2), TNLA (2) and DKBA (1) in combat settings. A total of 10 children (9 boys, 1 girl) were released, including by KIA (9), following advocacy by the United Nations.

150. The United Nations verified the detention of 61 children (51 boys, 10 girls) by the Myanmar armed forces for alleged association with armed groups. One girl was

released while others were sent to a training school managed by the Department of Social Welfare.

151. The killing (238) and maiming (623) of 861 children (538 boys, 318 girls, 5 sex unknown) was attributed to the Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias (645) (Myanmar armed forces (620), joint force of Myanmar armed forces and Pyu Saw Htee (10), Pyu Saw Htee (6), border guard forces (5), joint force of Myanmar armed forces and border guard forces (2), militia group (1) and Myanmar Police Force (1)); unidentified perpetrators (201), including resulting from explosive ordnance (121) and crossfire (44); the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (9); Arakan Army (4); and Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) (2). Child casualties were caused by heavy weapons and/or artillery shelling (406) and air strikes (163) by the Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias.

152. The United Nations verified the rape of 3 children (1 boy, 2 girls) by the Myanmar armed forces (1) and affiliated militia (1), and by the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (1).

153. The United Nations verified 154 attacks on schools (117) and hospitals (37), including against protected personnel (6), attributed to the Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias (104) (Myanmar armed forces (99), joint force of Myanmar armed forces and Pyu Saw Htee (2), joint force of Myanmar armed forces and Myanmar Police Force (2) and militia group (1)); the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (27); unidentified perpetrators (20); KNLA (1); an allied troop of KNLA and the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (1); and TNLA (1). The United Nations verified the military use of schools (82) and hospitals (10) by the Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias (86), the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (5) and KIA/People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (1). A total of 27 schools and 4 hospitals were vacated.

154. The abduction of 192 children (119 boys, 64 girls, 9 sex unknown) by the Myanmar armed forces and related forces and affiliated militias (145) (Myanmar armed forces (139), Myanmar Police Force (4), joint force of the Myanmar armed forces and Myanmar Police Force (1) and joint force of Myanmar armed forces and Pyu Saw Htee (1)); the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (31); KIA (15); and Shan State Progressive Party (SSPP)/Shan State Army (SSA) (1) was verified. Most children were abducted for the purposes of recruitment and use (141).

155. The United Nations verified 418 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access by the Myanmar armed forces (387), including Pyu Saw Htee (1), the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (13), Arakan Army (6), SSPP/SSA (4), KNLA (3), Pa-O National Organization/Pa-O National Army (1), Chin National Front (1), unidentified perpetrators (1), the Three Brotherhood Alliance (comprising Arakan Army, Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army and TNLA) (1) and KIA (1). Humanitarian access significantly worsened as a result of administrative restrictions, continued arrests, insecurity and armed conflict, interference in programming, violence against humanitarian actors, movement restrictions, road blockages and communication and network shutdowns.

*Developments and concerns*

156. I am deeply alarmed by the surge in grave violations against children, especially the scale of recruitment and use, and the killing and maiming of children, as well as the rise in attacks on schools and on hospitals by all parties to the conflict, in particular by the Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias. I am gravely concerned by the pattern of indiscriminate and targeted attacks by the Myanmar armed forces, including the use of explosive ordnance affecting children.

157. I urge the Myanmar armed forces and other parties to comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law, end and prevent the recruitment of children, and end attacks on schools and hospitals and protected persons and the military use of schools and hospitals.

158. I reiterate my call upon the Myanmar armed forces to re-engage with the United Nations for the full implementation of the 2012 joint action plan on the recruitment and use of children, and to adopt a joint action plan to end and prevent killing and maiming, sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, and abductions.

159. I am concerned by the increase in the recruitment and use of children, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the abduction of children perpetrated by the People's Defence Forces and local defence groups, and I urge them to engage with the United Nations to take concrete prevention measures to protect children.

160. I welcome the meetings of the Arakan Army, Restoration Council of Shan State/ Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA), DKBA and KNLA with the United Nations on child protection, notably the development of action plans. I welcome the release of children by KIA and I call upon all parties to release all children from their ranks.

161. I am alarmed by severe restrictions on humanitarian access and reiterate my call upon the Myanmar armed forces and all other parties to facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access.

162. I am deeply concerned by the high number of children in detention and by reports of torture and urge the Myanmar armed forces to immediately release children, implement the July 2019 Child Rights Law and act in line with international juvenile justice standards.

**Somalia**

163. The United Nations verified 2,283 grave violations against 1,802 children (1,349 boys, 453 girls), including 401 children who were victims of multiple violations. Violations were mainly attributed to Al-Shabaab (1,402) and government security forces (102). In addition, 26 violations that occurred in 2022 were verified.

164. A total of 658 children (596 boys, 62 girls) were recruited and used by Al-Shabaab (559), "community defence forces" (24), regional forces (23) (Puntland forces (9), Puntland police (5), Jubbaland forces (3), Puntland Security Commando Force (2), Galmudug police (1), Galmudug forces (1), Jubbaland police (1), Hirshabelle police (1)), clan militias (18), government security forces (18) (Somali National Army (15), National Intelligence and Security Agency (2), Somali Police Force (1)), clan militia engaged in Sool Region (15), and unidentified perpetrators (1).

165. A total of 278 children (275 boys, 3 girls) were detained for their alleged association with armed groups by the Somali Police Force (123), Somali National Army (55), National Intelligence and Security Agency (48), Somali Police Force jointly with the National Intelligence and Security Agency (22), Somali Police Force

jointly with the Somali Military Police (13), regional forces (10) (Hirshabelle police (7), Galmudug police (2), Puntland Maritime Police Force (1)), and the National Intelligence and Security Agency and the Somali Military Police (7). 136 children were released.

166. The killing (191) and maiming (438) of 629 children (461 boys, 168 girls) by unidentified perpetrators (377), Al-Shabaab (103), government security forces (51) (Somali National Army (33), Somali Police Force (15), National Intelligence and Security Agency (3)), clan militias (47), regional forces (32) (Puntland police (13), South-West forces (5), Hirshabelle police (5), Puntland forces (4), South-West Police (3), Jubbaland police (1), Puntland Maritime Police Force (1)), “community defence forces” (13), Da’esh (5), and clan militia fighting in Sool region (1) was verified. Most child casualties were caused by explosive ordnance (438).

167. Rape and other forms of sexual violence were perpetrated against 197 girls by unidentified perpetrators (125), Al-Shabaab (29), government security forces (28) (Somali National Army (23), Somali Police Force (5)), clan militias (6), regional forces (6) (Hirshabelle police (4), Puntland forces (1), Jubbaland police (1)), “community defence forces” (2) and the Ethiopian Liyu Police (1).

168. A total of 54 attacks on schools (36) and hospitals (18) were attributed to Al-Shabaab (25), unidentified perpetrators (20), “Somaliland” forces (5), clan militias (2), Hirshabelle police (1) and the Somali National Army (1). In addition, the United Nations verified the military use of seven schools by clan militia fighting in Sool Region.

169. A total of 719 children (641 boys, 78 girls) were abducted by Al-Shabaab (677), unidentified perpetrators (20), clan militias (17), Da’esh (4) and the Somali National Army (1). Children were abducted for recruitment and use (321), over alleged association with opposing parties to conflict (90), for the purposes of sexual violence and forced marriage (49) or indoctrination (39), as a punishment or for non-compliance with Al-Shabaab rules (18), for the purposes of extortion (10) and killing (1). Some children were released (114) or escaped (31).

170. A total of 26 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access by Al-Shabaab (9), clan militias (5), the Somali National Army (3), unidentified perpetrators (3), “Somaliland” forces (2), clan militia fighting in Sool Region (1), South-West Police (1), South-West forces (1), and Jubbaland forces (1) were verified.

#### *Developments and concerns*

171. I welcome the continued efforts of the Federal Government to implement the 2019 road map to expedite the 2012 action plans on ending and preventing the recruitment and use and the killing and maiming of children, including at the federal member state level, and call upon the Government to expedite the full implementation of these commitments. I reiterate my call upon the Government to ensure that the “community defence forces” end and prevent grave violations against children.

172. I commend the Federal Government for the endorsement of the age assessment guidelines and its standardized checklist and call for their implementation. I further welcome the continued implementation of the 2014 standard operating procedures for the handover of children allegedly associated with armed groups. I am deeply concerned, however, by the significant increase in the number of children detained for alleged association with armed groups, the prosecution of minors through military courts, and the imposition of the death penalty on children in Puntland. I reiterate my call upon the Federal Government and federal member states to treat children primarily as victims and to promptly hand over children to child protection actors, in line with the 2014 standard operating procedures. I recommend that the Federal

Government conduct joint screening exercises with the Ministry of Defence Child Protection Unit and the Somali National Army with the presence of the United Nations and allow access for the United Nations to barracks and military training centres.

173. I commend the endorsement of the juvenile justice and the child rights bills by the Federal Cabinet and I urge their adoption by the Federal Parliament, including with the provision maintaining that a child is a person below the age of 18 years. I underline that the Provisional Federal Constitution and all legislation pertaining to children should be in line with the human rights commitments of Somalia and meet international and regional standards.

174. I am deeply alarmed by the continued high number of grave violations against children in Somalia, including those attributed to Al-Shabaab. I am concerned about the high number of incidents linked to explosive ordnance and incidents of sexual violence and by the increase in attacks on schools and hospitals. I am concerned by access and security constraints. I call upon all parties to end and prevent violations and to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

175. I call upon the Federal Government to strengthen accountability measures, including for perpetrators of sexual violence, improve access to justice for children and ensure that the offences of rape and indecency bill is in line with international standards.

176. I encourage inclusion of child protection considerations and the ensuring of adequate protection and uninterrupted service delivery to children and their communities during the ongoing drawdown of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) and the handover of security responsibilities to the Somali security forces.

### **South Sudan**

177. The United Nations verified 236 grave violations against 221 children (179 boys, 39 girls, 3 sex unknown), including 13 children who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, 75 violations that occurred in 2022 were verified.

178. A total of 152 children (136 boys, 16 girls) were recruited and used by the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (65), the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) (56), forces loyal to General James Nando (19), the Necessary Unified Forces (5), the South Sudan National Wildlife Services (3), the National Civil Defence Service (2), the South Sudan National Police Service (1) and SPLM/A-IO Kit-Gwang (1).

179. The killing (26) and maiming (21) of 47 children (31 boys, 16 girls) were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (42), including as a result of explosive ordnance (41) and crossfire between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and unidentified perpetrators (1), the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (3), SPLM/A-IO (1) and the National Salvation Front (NAS) (1).

180. Sexual violence was perpetrated against 4 girls by SPLM/A-IO Kit-Gwang (2), SPLM/A-IO (1) and forces loyal to General James Nando (1).

181. The military use of 7 schools and 2 hospitals by the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (3), the South Sudan National Police Service (2), SPLM/A-IO (2) and the Necessary Unified Forces (2) was verified. Four schools (3) and hospitals (1) were vacated by SPLM/A-IO (2) and the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (2).



182. The abduction of 32 children (22 boys, 7 girls, 3 sex unknown) by SPLM/A-IO (13), NAS (11) and SPLM/A-IO Kit-Gwang (8) was verified; 10 of the children were abducted for recruitment and use. All children were released.

183. One incident of the denial of humanitarian access by the South Sudan People's Defence Forces was verified.

*Developments and concerns*

184. I note the decrease in grave violations, but remain concerned by grave violations committed against children by all parties to the conflict, including the recruitment and use of children, notably by Government security forces. I reiterate my call for all parties to end and prevent grave violations, ensure accountability and uphold their responsibilities under international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

185. I welcome the commitment of the Government to the 2020 Comprehensive Action Plan to End and Prevent All Grave Violations against Children and reiterate my call for the Government to prioritize its implementation and to budget accordingly, including for the training of the Necessary Unified Forces. I underline the importance of the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, including its provisions relating to children.

186. I encourage the continued cooperation of parties to the conflict with the United Nations, including continued access to barracks for age screening, as well as with the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, which resulted in the release of 49 boys in 2023. I reiterate the need for reintegration programmes for children formerly associated with armed forces and groups and call upon the Government to fund these efforts.

187. I urge the Government to prioritize explosive ordnance risk education programmes, mine clearance and victim assistance and urge donors to support such efforts.

188. I also urge the Government to strengthen accountability, and note the sentencing of two perpetrators of grave violations against children.

**Sudan**

189. The United Nations verified 1,721 grave violations against 1,526 children (778 boys, 540 girls, 208 sex unknown), including 61 children who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, 141 violations that occurred in previous years were verified.

190. A total of 209 children (174 boys, 35 girls) were verified as recruited and used by the Rapid Support Forces (87), Third Front-Tamazuj (80), the Gathering of the Sudan Liberation Forces (30), the Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi (SLA/MM) (6), the Sudanese Police Force (4), the Joint Security-Keeping Force for Darfur (1) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Yassir Arman faction (SPLM-NYA) (1). Children were used in combat (112) and support (91) roles and in unknown capacities (6).

191. The killing (480) and maiming (764) of 1,244 children (650 boys, 386 girls, 208 sex unknown), some as young as 1, were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (952), including during crossfire between the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces (813), the Sudanese Armed Forces (142), the Rapid Support Forces (136), the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction (SPLM-N al-Hilu) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (7), Arab militia affiliated with the Rapid

Support Forces (3), SPLM-N al-Hilu (2), the Rapid Support Forces and Arab militia affiliated with the Rapid Support Forces (1) and the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA/AW) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (1). Child casualties resulted mainly from crossfire (813), shelling (146), aerial bombardment (129) and shooting (83).

192. Sexual violence was perpetrated against 114 girls by the Rapid Support Forces (57), unidentified perpetrators (39), Arab militia affiliated with the Rapid Support Forces (15), SLA/AW (2) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (1).

193. A total of 85 attacks on schools (8) and hospitals (77) were verified, including attacks on protected personnel (17). Violations were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (34), including to crossfire between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces (21), and to attacks carried out by the Rapid Support Forces (37), the Sudanese Armed Forces (11), the Sudanese Police Force (1), the Joint Security-Keeping Force (1) and SLA/MM (1). In addition, the military use of 38 schools (27) and hospitals (11) by the Rapid Support Forces (24), the Sudanese Armed Forces (11), SLA/AW (1), the Central Reserve Police (1) and unidentified perpetrators (1) was verified.

194. The abduction of 20 children (10 boys, 10 girls) by the Rapid Support Forces (10), unidentified perpetrators (8), Arab militia affiliated with the Rapid Support Forces (1) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (1) was verified.

195. A total of 49 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (39), the Rapid Support Forces (5), the Sudanese Armed Forces Military Intelligence (2), SLA/AW (2) and SLA/MM (1). Some 1,000 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were reported and are pending verification.

#### *Developments and concerns*

196. I am appalled by the dramatic increase in grave violations, especially recruitment and use, killing and maiming, sexual violence and attacks on schools and hospitals, and the deteriorating humanitarian access situation. I urge all parties, particularly the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, to end and prevent grave violations and to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

197. I am gravely concerned about escalating intercommunal violence, including ethnically motivated attacks and the mass displacement of children, and call upon all parties to immediately commit to a durable cessation of hostilities.

198. I urge all parties to immediately take preventive and mitigating actions to avoid and minimize harm and better protect children, including to refrain from the use of explosive devices.

199. I urge all parties to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, especially schools and hospitals, water and sanitation systems, and to facilitate safe and unhindered humanitarian access to ensure life-saving assistance and to vacate all schools and hospitals currently used for military purposes.

200. I note the efforts made by parties to the conflict with the support of the United Nations that led to the release of 122 children. I call upon all parties to adopt and implement procedures on the screening and age assessment of recruits and to immediately release all children from their ranks.

### **Syrian Arab Republic**

201. The United Nations verified 1,574 grave violations against 1,549 children (1,385 boys, 118 girls, 46 sex unknown), including 4 girls who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, 12 violations that occurred in previous years were verified.

202. A total of 1,073 children (1,059 boys, 14 girls) were verified as recruited and used by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (477), the opposition Syrian National Army (opposition SNA) (282) (unidentified factions (206), Jabhah al-Shamiyah (36), Ahrar al-Sham (19), Faylaq al-Sham (13), Hamzah Division (8)), the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) (231) (Kurdish People's Protection Units and Women's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ) (203), Internal Security Forces under the umbrella of the self-administration in northern and eastern Syria (27) (Internal Security Forces), other components of SDF (1)); Syrian government forces and pro-government forces (73) (pro-government forces (51), Syrian government forces (20), pro-government air forces (2)) and Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (10). Most children (1,062) were used in combat roles.

203. The United Nations verified the detention of 10 boys by SDF for alleged association with parties to conflict. At the end of 2023, over 800 children, including foreign children, reportedly remained detained for alleged association with armed groups, mainly Da'esh, and approximately 29,000 children with suspected family ties to Da'esh continued to be deprived of liberty in Hawl and Rawj camps in north-eastern Syrian Arab Republic.

204. The United Nations verified the killing (201) and maiming (274) of 475 children (326 boys, 103 girls, 46 sex unknown), by Syrian government forces and pro-government forces (325) (pro-government forces (184), pro-government air forces (139), Syrian government forces (1), pro-government militias (1)), unidentified perpetrators (139), SDF (8) (YPG/YPJ (4), other SDF components (3), Internal Security Forces (1)), opposition SNA (2) and the Turkish Armed Forces (1). Casualties resulted from ground shelling (203), air strikes (142), explosive ordnance (123) and shooting (7).

205. The forced marriage of one girl to an opposition SNA commander was verified.

206. The United Nations verified 20 attacks on schools (19) and hospitals (1) from shelling (18) and air strikes (2) by pro-government forces (15) and pro-government air forces (2), unidentified perpetrators (2) and YPG/YPJ (1). The military use of 34 schools (33) and hospitals (1) was attributed to YPG/YPJ (31), Syrian government forces (1), opposition SNA (1) and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (1).

207. The abduction of 4 girls by the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (3) and pro-government militias (1) was verified. All girls were released.

208. One incident of the denial of humanitarian access by SDF was verified.

### *Developments and concerns*

209. I am concerned by the high number of grave violations against children in the Syrian Arab Republic, particularly recruitment and use and killing and maiming. I urge all parties to end and prevent grave violations and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. I call upon all parties to unconditionally and immediately release all children and to better protect children and civilian infrastructure during hostilities and from the risks of explosive ordnance, especially in populated areas.

210. All parties must end and prevent attacks against schools and hospitals and their military use. I urge all relevant parties to vacate schools and hospitals.

211. I call upon the Government to ensure accountability for perpetrators of grave violations, in accordance with its obligations under international law and in line with international standards. I call upon all parties to hold their members to account for perpetrating grave violations.

212. I encourage the Government to continue engagement with the United Nations on finalizing a comprehensive action plan.

213. I welcome the engagement of the opposition SNA, including Ahrar al-Sham and Army of Islam, and its aligned legions and factions, with my Special Representative, leading to the signature on 3 June 2024 of an action plan between the opposition Syrian National Army, including Ahrar al-Sham and Army of Islam, and its aligned legions and factions and the United Nations to end and prevent grave violations against children. I urge the opposition SNA to expedite its implementation, notably the screening of all legions and factions and to immediately release children from their ranks, the issuance and dissemination of command orders prohibiting the recruitment and use and killing and maiming of children, and the establishment of complaint mechanisms to report grave violations.

214. I am concerned by the increase in recruitment and use of children by SDF and I encourage SDF to fully implement its 2019 action plan. I note the constructive dialogue between SDF, the self-administration in northern and eastern Syria, and the United Nations in adopting a road map to prioritize the implementation of the action plan, including the reappointment of senior-level focal points, the establishment of an implementation committee and a military order reiterating the prohibition of the recruitment and use of children.

215. I remain alarmed by the persistently high number of children deprived of liberty for their actual or alleged association with parties to conflict, including Da'esh, or on national security grounds. Children should be treated primarily as victims and deprivation of liberty should only be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest period of time. I remain seriously concerned by the appalling humanitarian situation and violence affecting women and children in Hawl and Rawj camps and in places of detention in the north-east. I urge all parties and relevant authorities detaining and/or depriving children of liberty to provide the United Nations and humanitarian actors with systematic and meaningful access to children deprived of liberty, including in Hawl and Rawj camps, military and civilian prisons, administrative detention and in reintegration centres, and to facilitate access to essential services and family reunification for these children.

216. I reiterate my call upon all concerned countries of origin and relevant authorities inside the Syrian Arab Republic to facilitate the safe and voluntary repatriation of women and children from Hawl and Rawj camps and in places of detention in the north-east, including those with suspected family ties to Da'esh, in line with international law and in respect for the principles of non-refoulement, family unity and the best interests of the child, in line with the Global Framework on United Nations Support to Member States on Individuals Returned from the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq and, upon request, with United Nations support.

### **Yemen**

217. The United Nations verified 809 grave violations against 666 children (546 boys, 120 girls), including 14 children who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, 185 grave violations that occurred in previous years were verified.

218. A total of 173 boys were verified as recruited and used by the Yemen Armed Forces and affiliated armed forces and groups (111) (Yemen Armed Forces (33), the Security Belt Forces (25), 5th brigade (10), the Southern Transitional Council (10), the National Shield Forces (8), Shabwahi Defence Forces (6), Amaliqah Brigades (5), Tareq Saleh's National Resistance Forces (commonly referred to as the Guardians of the Republic) (4), Shabwani Elite Forces (3), Southern Resistance Forces (2), Border Guard Brigade (2), Thunderbolt Forces (2) and Support and Backup Brigades (1)), the Houthis (who call themselves Ansar Allah) (hereinafter "the Houthis") (59) and unidentified perpetrators (3). Most children were used in support roles (81) and combat roles (43).

219. The deprivation of liberty of 16 boys for their alleged association with parties to conflict was verified and attributed to the Yemen Armed Forces (10) and the Houthis (6). Six boys were released by the Yemen Armed Forces and five boys were released by the Houthis to civilian authorities within the framework of the 2020 handover protocol.

220. The United Nations verified the killing (105) and maiming (374) of 479 children (376 boys, 103 girls), attributed to unidentified perpetrators (350), including in crossfire (31), the Yemen Armed Forces and affiliated armed forces and groups (74) (Yemen Armed Forces (32), Security Belt Forces (17), Amaliqah Brigades (10), Southern Transitional Council (5), Yemeni police (4), Southern Resistance Forces (2), Islah (2), 5th brigade (1), Thunderbolt Forces (1)) and the Houthis (55). The main causes of casualties were explosive ordnance (236), gunshots and crossfire (87), the running over of children by military vehicles (67), shelling (61) and drone attacks (14).

221. Sexual violence against 24 children (8 boys, 16 girls) was verified and attributed to the Yemen Armed Forces and affiliated armed forces and groups (20) (Yemen Armed Forces (9), Yemeni police (4), 5th brigade (2), Special Forces Brigade (1), Security Belt Forces (1), Amaliqah Brigades (1), Shabwahi Defence Forces (1) and Hadrami Elite Forces (1)) and the Houthis (4).

222. A total of 37 attacks on schools (20) and hospitals (17), including on protected persons (15) in relation to schools and/or hospitals, were verified and attributed to the Yemen Armed Forces and affiliated armed forces and groups (15) (Yemen Armed Forces (7), Security Belt Forces (2), Southern Transitional Council (2), Yemeni police (2), Amaliqah Brigades (1), Thunderbolt Forces (1)), the Houthis (12) and unidentified perpetrators (10).

223. The military use of 34 schools (32) and hospitals (2) was verified and attributed to the Houthis (25), the Yemen Armed Forces and affiliated armed forces and groups (8) (Yemen Armed Forces (4), Joint Forces (also known as National Resistance Forces) (1), Thunderbolt Forces (1), Shabwahi Defence Forces (1), Islah (1)) and unidentified perpetrators (1). In addition, the military use of 11 schools (10) and hospitals (1) that occurred in previous years was verified in 2023.

224. The abduction of 4 children (3 boys, 1 girl) was attributed to the Houthis (3) and unidentified perpetrators (1).

225. A total of 92 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access, attributed to unidentified perpetrators (92), were verified. Incidents involved interference in the implementation of humanitarian activities (31), restrictions on the movement of personnel or goods (27), violence against humanitarian personnel, assets and facilities (27) and restrictions on access to services and assistance (7).

*Developments and concerns*

226. I welcome the continued engagement of the Government in the implementation of the 2014 action plan and 2018 road map and the hosting of my Special Representative in October 2023. I welcome the facilitation of visits to military installations to verify and promote the directives to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children, the appointment and training of 80 military focal points and the separation of children from fighting forces. I welcome the participation of the Security Belt Forces and the Amaliqah Brigades in activities under the action plan and road map, and I call for the full commitment of groups affiliated with the Presidential Leadership Council to the action plan and road map. I request the Government to adopt a handover protocol on the release of children detained during military operations and to implement the Safe Schools Declaration.

227. I welcome the continued engagement of the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen with my Special Representative, including during her visit to Riyadh in October 2023, and I welcome the completion of the 2019 memorandum of understanding and the related programme of time-bound activities.

228. I welcome the progress made by the Houthis in the implementation of the 2022 action plan and the continued engagement with the United Nations, including during the visit of my Special Representative in October 2023. I note the endorsement of standard operating procedures and training on age assessment and the visit of the United Nations to military recruitment centres and a “summer school”. I remain concerned by reports of the organization by the Houthis of “summer camps” for children, exposing them to military content. I call upon the Houthis to continue to implement the 2020 handover protocol and to allow the unimpeded access of the United Nations to all places of detention.

229. I am encouraged by the decreasing number of grave violations, but remain concerned by the continued recruitment and use of children, and I urge parties to support the implementation of a nationwide ceasefire and engage in preparations for the resumption of an inclusive political process under United Nations auspices, including child protection provisions. I encourage all parties to facilitate the socioeconomic reintegration of children affected by armed conflict, with the support of the United Nations and donors.

230. I remain deeply concerned by the prevalence of killing and maiming of children by explosive ordnance. I urge all parties to coordinate with the United Nations to mobilize resources and implement explosive ordnance risk education, victim assistance, the mapping of contaminated areas and explosive ordnance clearance.

231. I remain concerned about the denial of humanitarian access and urge all parties to protect humanitarian relief personnel and objects used for humanitarian relief operations.

## **B. Situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or other situations**

### **Burkina Faso**

232. The United Nations verified 1,219 grave violations against 941 children (566 boys, 305 girls, 70 sex unknown). In addition, 52 violations that occurred in previous years were verified.

233. A total of 169 boys were recruited and used by Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) (128), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) (35) and unidentified perpetrators (6). Most boys were used in combat (139), 122 of whom were killed.

234. A total 25 boys were detained for alleged association with armed groups, including 6 who have been in detention for several years. Six children were released in 2023.

235. The United Nations verified the killing (485) and maiming (193) of 678 children (420 boys, 188 girls, 70 sex unknown) by the Defence and Security Forces (251), JNIM (196), unidentified perpetrators (114), including in crossfire (76) between parties to conflict, ISGS (96), *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie* (15) and joint operations of the Defence and Security Forces and *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie* (6), mostly in the Sahel region. Casualties resulted mainly from shootings (300), ground engagement and air strikes (152).

236. The rape of eight girls was attributed to *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie* (3), ISGS (2), unidentified perpetrators (2) and JNIM (1) was verified. A *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie* element was arrested.

237. Responsibility for 56 verified attacks on schools (33) and hospitals (23), including on protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals (21), was attributed to JNIM (38), ISGS (8), unidentified perpetrators (7) and the Defence and Security Forces (3).

238. Five schools were militarily used by the Defence and Security Forces (4) and ISGS (1). In addition, one school and one hospital continued to be used by JNIM and ISGS.

239. Some 259 children (118 boys, 135 girls, 6 sex unknown) were abducted by JNIM (134), ISGS (92), unidentified perpetrators (26) and *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie* (7), mostly as punishment for not adhering to the norms set by armed groups or to gather intelligence on positions of the Defence and Security Forces and *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie*.

240. Responsibility for 49 verified incidents of the denial of humanitarian access was attributed to JNIM (28), ISGS (10), unidentified perpetrators (8) and the Defence and Security Forces (3).

#### *Developments and concerns*

241. I welcome the establishment by the transitional authorities of a joint technical working group to implement the 2022 handover protocol for the transfer of children allegedly associated with armed groups, and of a coordination mechanism with the United Nations on human rights. I call upon the transitional authorities, to treat children associated with armed groups primarily as victims and to release all detained children.

242. I welcome the fact that the transitional authorities organized training for the Defence and Security Forces and *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie* on child protection. I am concerned by the levels of killing and maiming of children by the Defence and Security Forces, and I urge them to engage with the United Nations to take concrete prevention measures to protect children. I further urge the authorities to pursue accountability.

243. I am extremely concerned by the persistent high number of grave violations, in particular the killing and maiming of children, abductions, affecting girls in particular, the recruitment and use of children, in particular by JNIM and ISGS, and by attacks on schools and hospitals, as well as severe restrictions on humanitarian operations. I urge JNIM, ISGS and other parties to release associated children, cease all violations and end attacks on schools and hospitals and on protected persons.

### **Cameroon**

244. The United Nations verified 239 violations against 173 children (75 boys, 94 girls, 4 sex unknown), including 3 girls who were victims of multiple violations, in North-West (130), Far North (80) and South-West (29) Regions.

245. The recruitment and use of 3 boys by unidentified perpetrators was verified.

246. A total of 29 children were detained by national authorities for their alleged association with armed groups and on national security grounds. As of December 2023, 14 children remained in detention.

247. The killing (29) and maiming (21) of 50 children (29 boys, 19 girls, 2 sex unknown) by unidentified perpetrators (25), including in crossfire between the Cameroon Armed Forces and unidentified perpetrators (1), by Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) (24), and by the Cameroon Armed Forces (1) was verified.

248. Sexual violence perpetrated against 17 girls by the Cameroon Armed Forces (10), unidentified perpetrators (6) and JAS (1) was verified.

249. Responsibility for 50 attacks on schools (40) and hospitals (10), including against protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals (39), was attributed to unidentified perpetrators (45), the Cameroon Armed Forces (4) and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) (1). Incidents involved threats, abductions, attacks against and the killing of protected persons, as well as the looting and destruction of facilities.

250. In the Far North Region, 10 schools continued to be used for military purposes by the Cameroon Armed Forces and 9 other schools previously used by the Cameroon Armed Forces were vacated following United Nations advocacy.

251. The abduction of 106 children (43 boys, 61 girls, 2 sex unknown) by unidentified perpetrators (83) and JAS (23) was verified. A total of 18 children were released.

252. Some 13 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access attributed to unidentified perpetrators were verified.

#### *Developments and concerns*

253. I welcome the training of law enforcement officers on child protection in cooperation with the United Nations. I call upon the Government to extend the training to all defence and security forces, to pursue its efforts to strengthen the protection of children and to ensure accountability for grave violations against children, including sexual violence. I further welcome the development by the Government of a road map for the implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration. I call upon the Government to vacate schools being used for military purposes and prevent the further military use of schools.

254. I welcome the development by the Government, with United Nations support, of a handover protocol for children associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors and urge its swift adoption. I am concerned about the detention of children for their alleged association with armed groups. I call upon the Government to treat these children primarily as victims, with detention only as a measure of last resort, and to release all children in its custody.

255. I am deeply concerned about the continued grave violations, mostly by armed groups, particularly attacks on schools and hospitals, including the killing and



abduction of protected persons, and the denial of humanitarian access. I urge all parties to immediately cease all violations.

256. I urge armed groups in the Far North Region, notably JAS, to put an end to violations and immediately release associated children.

### **Ethiopia**

257. The United Nations verified 253 grave violations against 198 children (112 boys, 52 girls, 34 sex unknown), including 1 child who was a victim of multiple violations. Most violations were verified in Tigray (140), Amhara (38) and Oromia (34). In addition, 12 violations that occurred in previous years were verified. The information does not represent the full scale of violations against children, and over 880 allegations of grave violations are under verification.

258. The United Nations verified the detention for alleged association with armed groups of one boy by the Ethiopian National Defence Forces. The boy was subsequently killed by the Ethiopian National Defence Forces.

259. The killing (36) and maiming (133) of 169 children (103 boys, 32 girls, 34 sex unknown) was attributed to unidentified perpetrators (157), the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (4), Fano (4), Oromo Liberation Army/Front-Shene (2), the Eritrean Defence Forces (1) and Somali special forces (1). Most children (150) were killed and maimed as a result of explosive ordnance.

260. Sexual violence was perpetrated against 17 girls by unidentified perpetrators (13), the Eritrean Defence Forces (2) and Oromo Liberation Army/Front-Shene (2).

261. Some 12 attacks on schools by unidentified perpetrators (12) were verified, affecting 4 teachers. Six schools were militarily used by the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (5) and Tigrayan forces (1).

262. The abduction of 12 children (9 boys, 3 girls) by the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (8), Oromia Special Forces (3) and the Eritrean Defence Forces (1) was verified.

263. The United Nations verified 43 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access attributed to unidentified perpetrators (34), the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (5), regional police forces (2), the Eritrean Defence Forces (1) and the Amhara Special Forces (1).

### *Developments and concerns*

264. I commend efforts towards the effective implementation of the Agreement for Lasting Peace through a Permanent Cessation of Hostilities signed by the Government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front. I remain concerned about the impact on children of ongoing armed conflict in several regions and call upon all parties to prioritize dialogue and peace.

265. I welcome the collaboration between the Government and the United Nations. I encourage the Government to swiftly implement the recommendations contained in the letters exchanged with my Special Representative. I acknowledge progress in enhancing child protection measures during the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and the development of a transitional justice policy that includes child protection concerns. I encourage donors to fund the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and encourage the prioritizing of immediate assistance to children. I urgently call upon the Government to facilitate access for the United Nations and partners to encampments so as to enable the identification, transfer and reintegration of children.

266. I call upon the Government to expedite and facilitate the clearance of explosive ordnance and mine risk education to children, and call upon donors to support such operations.

267. I urge all parties to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to children and to safeguard humanitarian personnel from attacks.

268. I am concerned by the increase in sexual violence and urge all parties to end and prevent this violation. I call upon the Government to hold perpetrators accountable, and provide assistance services for survivors.

269. I call upon all parties to adopt concrete measures to end and prevent grave violations, and to protect schools and hospitals from military use and attack. I call upon the Government to endorse and implement the Safe Schools Declaration.

### **Lake Chad basin**

270. The United Nations verified 2,258 grave violations against 1,193 children (505 boys, 677 girls, 11 sex unknown) in the Lake Chad basin region, namely in Far North Region (Cameroon) (80), Lac Province (Chad) (60), Diffa Region (the Niger) (123), and the north-east of Nigeria (1,995), including 741 children who were victims of multiple violations. Information pertaining to violations in the Far North Region of Cameroon, in Diffa Region of the Niger and in north-east Nigeria is included under the respective country sections of the present report. Grave violations were perpetrated by Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) (1,475), Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) (519), unidentified perpetrators (239), Nigerian Security Forces (21), the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) (3) and the Niger security forces (1). Grave violations involved recruitment and use (720), killing and maiming (118), sexual violence (370), attacks on schools and hospitals (11), abduction (1,038) and the denial of humanitarian access (1). In addition, the United Nations verified 171 grave violations that occurred in previous years.

271. In Lac Province, the United Nations verified 60 grave violations against 59 children by unidentified perpetrators. These included the recruitment and use (10), killing and maiming (4) and abduction (45) of children and one attack on a school.

### *Developments and concerns*

272. I welcome the continued efforts by the Government of Chad to comply with its action plan on child recruitment and use, which was completed in 2014, and the 2014 handover protocol. I reiterate my call upon the Government to extend existing training to all security and defence forces, and to incorporate this training into the curricula of military schools. I urge the Government to pursue accountability for violations against children and to ensure that all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and social reintegration programmes consider the specific rights and needs of children formerly associated with armed groups.

273. I am alarmed by the scale of grave violations against children, particularly girls, perpetrated by JAS and ISWAP, notably the cases of abduction, recruitment and use and sexual violence against children. I urge these groups to end and prevent all violations, and to immediately release all children.

### **Mozambique**

#### *Cabo Delgado*

274. The United Nations verified 153 grave violations against 108 children (47 boys, 61 girls), including 44 children who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, the United Nations verified 344 grave violations that occurred in previous years.

275. The recruitment and use of 40 children (18 boys, 22 girls) by armed groups was verified.

276. The killing (5) and maiming (3) of 8 children (7 boys, 1 girl) by armed groups (3), the Mozambique Defence Armed Forces (3) and unidentified perpetrators (2) were verified.

277. Sexual violence against 12 girls was attributed to the Mozambique Defence Armed Forces (5), armed groups (4) and the Rapid Intervention Unit of the police (3).

278. One attack on a hospital by unidentified perpetrators was verified. Schools that were militarily used in previous years continued to be used in 2023 by the Rapid Intervention Unit (1), the Mozambique Defence Armed Forces (1) and the Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (1). The Rapid Intervention Unit has since vacated the school it had occupied.

279. The abduction of 92 children (52 girls, 40 boys) by armed groups, mostly for the purposes of recruitment and use (40) and sexual violence (4), was verified.

#### *Developments and concerns*

280. I welcome the continued engagement of the Government and international forces with the United Nations to end the military use of schools. I reiterate my call upon the Government to fully implement the Safe Schools Declaration.

281. I welcome the continued training of the Mozambique Defence Armed Forces on child protection and call upon the Government to extend the training to all security forces, including the Rapid Intervention Unit and community-based militias, notably Força Local and Namparama, and to clarify their status and establish accountability measures.

282. I welcome the Government's roll-out of reintegration programmes for children in Cabo Delgado, including community sensitization to end cultural stigma against girls who were victims of sexual violence, and I encourage the expansion of these efforts, with United Nations support.

283. I call upon the Government to prioritize the finalization and adoption of the handover protocol, to adopt age assessment mechanisms for community-based militias and to continue engaging with the United Nations on a prevention plan.

284. I am concerned about the increase in grave violations against children by armed groups, especially recruitment and use, abduction and sexual violence, and urge them to release associated children.

#### **Niger**

285. The United Nations verified 170 grave violations against 163 children (93 boys, 70 girls), including 1 girl who was the victim of multiple violations. In addition, four grave violations that occurred in previous years were verified.

286. The recruitment and use of 31 children (25 boys, 6 girls) by unidentified perpetrators was verified.

287. The killing (1) and maiming (8) of 9 boys owing to explosive ordnance (8) and attributed to Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) (1) was verified.

288. The United Nations verified sexual violence against 8 girls by unidentified perpetrators (7) and the Niger security forces (1).

289. Six attacks on schools (5) and hospitals (1) by unidentified perpetrators were verified.

290. The United Nations verified the abduction of 116 children (59 boys, 57 girls) by unidentified perpetrators. Of these, seven girls were released.

*Developments and concerns*

291. I commend the continued implementation of the 2017 handover protocol, including through the referral of 34 children to reintegration services, with United Nations support. I encourage the authorities, in cooperation with the United Nations, to evaluate the implementation of the protocol and develop a road map for the full implementation thereof.

292. I appeal to all parties to end and prevent grave violations against children and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. I am particularly concerned by the number of children abducted and recruited and used. I urge armed groups to immediately release associated children.

293. I call upon the Niger security forces to re-activate and strengthen the capacity of child protection focal points, and for the authorities of the Niger to re-establish a civilian entity dedicated to child protection. I further encourage the authorities to strengthen community-based reintegration programmes and encourage donors to support such efforts.

**Nigeria**

294. The United Nations verified 1,995 grave violations against 943 children (367 boys, 571 girls, 5 sex unknown), including 740 children who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, 164 grave violations that occurred in previous years were verified.

295. A total of 685 children (254 boys, 431 girls) were recruited and used by Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) (510), Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) (170), all following their abduction, and by the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) (3) and the Nigerian Security Forces (2). Some 295 children (including 7 boys) were victims of sexual violence during their association. Five boys were used by CJTF (3) and the Nigerian Security Forces (2) for domestic chores.

296. Some 141 children (86 boys, 55 girls) were detained by the Nigerian Security Forces for their or their parents' alleged association with armed groups. All were released.

297. The United Nations verified the killing (39) and maiming (43) of 82 children (20 boys, 57 girls, 5 sex unknown) by unidentified perpetrators (28), ISWAP (23), the Nigerian Security Forces (19) and JAS (12).

298. The United Nations verified sexual violence against 366 children (7 boys, 359 girls), by JAS (286) and ISWAP (80) following their abduction.

299. Two attacks on schools (1) and hospitals (1) were attributed to ISWAP (2).

300. The United Nations verified the military use of one school by the Nigerian Security Forces.

301. Some 859 children (310 boys, 549 girls) were abducted by JAS (616) and ISWAP (243). Most of the children (680) escaped, while 179 remain unaccounted for.

302. One incident of the denial of humanitarian access was attributed to JAS.

*Developments and concerns*

303. I welcome the fact that CJTF, in collaboration with the United Nations, established seven additional child protection units in the framework of the 2017 action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children and provided child protection training to commanders. I am concerned about recruitment and use attributed to CJTF and welcome the fact that disciplinary measures have been taken against the perpetrators.

304. I welcome the fact that the Government adopted an implementation plan for the 2022 handover protocol for children encountered in military operations. I urge the Government to provide access for the United Nations to all children in detention, to treat these children primarily as victims, facilitate reintegration programmes and to release all children from detention.

305. I call upon the Government to expedite explosive ordnance clearance and mine risk education, and I call upon donors to support such operations.

306. I am gravely concerned about the increase in grave violations perpetrated by JAS and ISWAP. I urge all parties to end and prevent violations and to release all children.

**Pakistan**

307. A total of 78 grave violations against 73 children (13 boys, 7 girls, 53 sex unknown) were reported. Children (73) were reportedly killed (40) and maimed (33) by unidentified armed elements (72) and in one case, the casualty was claimed by Islamic State (1). Casualties were caused by explosive ordnance (66) and gunshots (7).

308. Five attacks on schools, including against protected persons in relation to schools, were reported.

*Developments and concerns*

309. I welcome the engagement of the Government with my Special Representative and the United Nations to develop concrete measures to protect children. Such engagement may lead to the removal of Pakistan as a situation of concern from my next report, should all agreed practical measures be fully implemented. I call upon the Government to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration.

310. I am concerned about the rise in reported grave violations, in particular the killing and maiming of children and attacks against schools, and about incidents in the border areas with Afghanistan.

**Philippines**

311. The United Nations verified 25 grave violations against 17 children (13 boys, 4 girls), including 3 children who were victims of multiple violations.

312. The recruitment and use of 12 children (8 boys, 4 girls) attributed to the New People's Army (NPA) (7), Dawlah Islamiyah-Maute Group (3), Abu Sayyaf Group (1) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (2) was verified, with 1 child recruited and used by two perpetrators.

313. The killing (3) and maiming (3) of 6 children (5 boys, 1 girl) was attributed to unidentified perpetrators (3), Dawlah Islamiyah-Maute Group (2) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (1).

314. Sexual violence against one girl by NPA was verified.

315. Attacks and threats of attacks on schools (4) were verified and attributed to Dawlah Islamiyah-Maute Group (2), including attacks that affected education personnel (2) and attacks linked to “red tagging”<sup>5</sup> by the Government’s National Intelligence Coordinating Agency jointly with the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (2).

316. The abduction of 2 girls by NPA, was verified.

#### *Developments and concerns*

317. I welcome the finalization of protocols on handling children in situations of armed conflict by relevant Government departments. I call upon the Government to ensure the immediate handover of detained children, and I encourage the establishment of reintegration programmes.

318. I welcome the coordination between the United Nations and the Inter-Agency Committee on Children in Situations of Armed Conflict on the referral of detention cases to social services, on mitigating threats of attacks against schools and on capacity-building for government and non-government partners so as to enhance response and prevention.

319. I call upon the Government to revive consultations with the United Nations to ensure the integration of child rights and child protection in peace negotiations and agreements.

320. I also call upon the Government to sustain its collaboration with the United Nations on the strategic plan with the Armed Forces of the Philippines in order to protect children affected by armed conflict, align its priorities with the provisions of the law on children in situations of armed conflict and advocate the prevention of the “red tagging” of schools, teachers and children.

#### **Ukraine**

321. The United Nations verified 938 grave violations against 543 children (309 boys, 204 girls, 30 sex unknown). In addition, 160 violations that occurred in 2022 were verified.

322. Two boys were verified by the United Nations as having been used by Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups (1) for intelligence-gathering and by the Ukrainian armed forces (1) to aid a local centre of recruitment and social support.

323. The United Nations verified the detention of two boys by Ukrainian authorities, who remained in detention at the time of writing, and verified the detention of two boys by Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups, who were subjected to ill-treatment and torture and were released in 2022.

324. The United Nations verified the killing (80) and maiming (339) of 419 children (232 boys, 157 girls, 30 sex unknown) attributed to Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups (287: 59 killed, 228 maimed), unidentified perpetrators (92: 12 killed, 80 maimed), including 23 caused by shrapnel when the Ukrainian armed forces intercepted missiles or loitering munitions launched by Russian armed forces, and the Ukrainian armed forces (40: 9 killed, 31 maimed). Most casualties resulted from the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects (363) and explosive ordnance (54).

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<sup>5</sup> Allegations by the authorities that individuals, groups and organizations are directly affiliated with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) or New People’s Army (NPA) and are therefore considered part of the insurgency.

325. A total of 335 attacks on schools (243) and hospitals (92), including attacks on protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, were verified and attributed to Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups (249), the Ukrainian armed forces (70) and unidentified perpetrators (16), including 3 by shrapnel when the Ukrainian armed forces intercepted missiles or loitering munitions launched by Russian armed forces. Most incidents involved damage (259) and destruction (75), notably by the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects, and looting (1). Two attacks resulted in child casualties.

326. The United Nations verified the military use of two schools and one hospital by the Ukrainian armed forces.

327. The United Nations verified the abduction, which began in 2022 and continued into 2023, of 122 children (75 boys, 47 girls) attributed to Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups and Russian authorities located in territories of Ukraine temporarily controlled or occupied by the Russian Federation. Of the total, at least 12 children were reunited with their parents/legal guardians. In addition, the United Nations verified the transfer or deportation of 33 children within the temporarily controlled or occupied territories of Ukraine, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, or to the Russian Federation.

328. The United Nations verified 60 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access attributed to Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups (44), unidentified perpetrators (15) and the Ukrainian armed forces (1). Incidents involved attacks affecting humanitarian sites and/or operations (29), the denial of access to cross the frontline to deliver humanitarian assistance (16) and attacks on energy infrastructure (15).

#### *Development and concerns*

329. I note a significant decrease in the number of grave violations against children. I call upon all parties to the conflict to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. I further call upon parties to the conflict to ensure timely and effective investigations into allegations of violations against children and to ensure that alleged perpetrators, including members of the security forces and persons in command positions, are duly prosecuted.

330. I welcome the significant decrease in the verified number of children killed and maimed and attacks on schools and hospitals attributed to the Ukrainian armed forces. I welcome the signing on 18 August 2023 and the close cooperation between the Government of Ukraine and the United Nations in the swift implementation of a joint prevention plan to prevent grave violations against children, including through the appointment of focal points and reviewing the Safe Schools Declaration action plan. I encourage the Ukrainian armed forces to train children and armed conflict focal points in the Ministry of Defence, and to prevent the military use of schools.

331. I also note a decrease in the overall number of verified grave violations against children perpetrated by the Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups, but I remain deeply concerned by the continued killing and maiming of children due to explosive weapons in populated areas and attacks on schools and hospitals. I encourage the continued engagement of the Government of the Russian Federation with my Special Representative to end and prevent grave violations against children and I note the practical prevention measures reported by the Russian Federation. I urge the Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups to speedily agree to enhance these measures through the development of a joint action plan to end and prevent grave violations against children.

332. I remain particularly concerned by the denial of humanitarian access attributed to the Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups. I call upon the Russian Federation to grant the United Nations and its partners access to deliver humanitarian assistance and to conduct monitoring of grave violations through the cross-lines to the territories of Ukraine temporarily controlled or occupied by the Russian Federation.

333. I am concerned by the detention of children, and I urge all parties to ensure that children are detained only as a last resort and for the shortest period of time. I urge the Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups to cease all forms of ill-treatment.

334. I am concerned by the levels of the verified cases of abduction of children and by continued reports of transfers of children by the Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups and Russian authorities located in territories of Ukraine temporarily controlled or occupied by the Russian Federation, and I urge the Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups and Russian authorities located in territories of Ukraine temporarily controlled or occupied by the Russian Federation to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and to exchange information with the United Nations on all affected children. I am gravely concerned by the introduction in the Russian Federation of a simplified procedure to apply for Russian citizenship for orphaned children and children without parental care. I urge the Russian Federation to ensure that no changes are made to the personal status of Ukrainian children, including their nationality. I urge all parties to uphold the principle of the best interests of the child, facilitate family tracing and reunification of unaccompanied and/or separated children who find themselves across borders or lines of control without their families and/or guardians, including by giving child protection actors access to facilitate reunification. I strongly urge the Russian Federation to cooperate with the United Nations for the return of Ukrainian children and reunification of such children with their families and/or guardians. I also encourage Ukraine to continue its active cooperation with the United Nations on this important issue.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

335. I am deeply concerned by the magnitude and severity of grave violations against children and their gendered impact, in particular the killing and maiming of children. I urgently call upon all parties to adhere strictly to their obligations under international humanitarian law, notably the principles of distinction, proportionality and precautions in attack, and under international human rights law. I urge all parties to cease attacks on civilians and civilian objects and to take immediate, decisive action to end and prevent these grave violations.

336. I call upon parties to conflict to refrain from using explosive weapons in populated areas. I encourage Member States to endorse the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas.

337. I urge all parties to undertake explosive ordnance clearance, risk education and victim assistance. I urge Member States, if they have not yet done so, to become parties to and to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions; the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects and the Protocols thereto; and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, and I call upon donors to provide financial and technical assistance.



338. I commend the continued engagement by parties to conflict with the United Nations to develop and implement action plans and other commitments to end and prevent grave violations. I reiterate my call upon Member States to support this engagement, including by facilitating United Nations engagement with non-State actors. I request my Special Representative and the country task forces and equivalent arrangements to engage with all parties to end and prevent grave violations and to strengthen the monitoring and reporting on children and armed conflict.

339. I call upon the Security Council to ensure that child protection provisions and capacity are included in all relevant mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions. Governments and the United Nations should ensure that during mission transitions, including the start-up, reconfiguration, drawdown or withdrawal phases, child protection frameworks are upheld, and that data and capacity are preserved and transferred. I underline the importance of mainstreaming child protection concerns in the nexus between early warning, conflict analysis, mediation, transitional justice and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

340. I call upon Member States to become parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, if they have not yet done so. I urge Member States and parties to conflict to consider every human being below the age of 18 years as a child.

341. I call upon Member States to endorse and implement the Paris Principles, the Safe Schools Declaration and the Vancouver Principles.

342. I call for the adoption and implementation of legislation that criminalizes violations of international law, including grave violations against children, and encourage Member States to adopt accountability measures and to cooperate with international accountability mechanisms.

343. I am deeply alarmed by the increase in the denial of humanitarian access and the continued high numbers of attacks on schools and hospitals. I call upon all parties to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access, and access by children to assistance and protection, irrespective of their age, gender, diversity characteristics, nationality, or legal status, and to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and assets. I underline that civilians and civilian objects, including hospitals, schools, their personnel and transport, must be protected, in accordance with international humanitarian law. I urge parties to refrain from the military use of schools and hospitals.

344. I am deeply concerned by the increase in the number of children deprived of liberty. I reiterate that detention should be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, that alternatives to detention should be prioritized and that children should be treated exclusively within child justice systems, and that children should never be detained or prosecuted solely for their or their parents' actual or alleged association with armed groups. I urge Member States to treat children actually or allegedly associated with armed forces or groups, including those designated as terrorist groups by the United Nations, primarily as victims, to prioritize their best interests, and to give child protection actors access to them. I encourage Member States to adopt and implement handover protocols for children encountered or detained during military operations to civilian child protection actors.

345. I reiterate my call upon Member States, in line with the principle of non-refoulement, family unity and the best interests of the child, to release children with alleged links to Da'esh who are held in places of detention in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, in line with international law and Security Council resolutions. I call

upon Member States to ensure the consistency of counter-terrorism measures with international law, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

346. I call upon the donor community to scale up long-term financial support for effective, sustainable, timely, gender- and age-sensitive and survivor-centred long-term programmes, following an intersectional approach, including reintegration for victims of grave violations, and to address the needs of children with disabilities.

347. I encourage donors to provide funding for monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children, in particular for child protection capacities on the ground. I underline the importance of data collection on sexual violence, on children with disabilities and on trafficking in children.

348. I encourage Member States and regional and subregional organizations to engage with the United Nations to prevent grave violations and foster partnerships.

## **V. Lists contained in the annexes to the present report and measures by listed parties aimed at improving the protection of children**

349. The modifications to the presentation of this section and to the lists contained in the annexes to the present report resulted from the recognition of the measures by listed parties aimed at improving the protection of children, the recognition of the primary responsibility of States to protect their populations and of their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and the recognition of the need for non-State armed groups to abide by international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as well as from the need to foster accountability and justice for grave violations against children.

350. The modifications render redundant the separation of annexes I and II into sections A and B based on whether listed parties have put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children.

### **A. New listed parties contained in the annexes to the present report**

#### *State actors*

351. In Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Israeli armed and security forces have been listed for the killing and maiming of children, and for attacks on schools and hospitals. While noting a decrease in violations against children during the first nine months of 2023, owing to direct engagement with my Special Representative regarding the prompt approval for children to receive medical attention outside the Gaza Strip, the last quarter of 2023 exposed an extreme rise in violations, particularly against children in the Gaza Strip, in particular the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects, including in highly populated areas, which resulted in a large number of child casualties and increased attacks on schools and hospitals. I urge Israel to immediately sign an action plan with the United Nations to end and prevent the killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals. Further, although the denial of humanitarian access to children is a non-listable violation, I urge the Israeli armed and security forces to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law and to ensure safe, rapid and unimpeded access for humanitarian aid and humanitarian workers throughout the Gaza Strip. I request Israel to expedite working with my Special Representative so as to put in place measures to better protect children.

352. In the Sudan, the Sudanese Armed Forces have been listed for the killing and maiming of children and for attacks on schools and hospitals. Children were killed

and maimed at unprecedented levels in the devastating crisis in the Sudan, including through the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects, including in highly populated areas. My Special Representative has advocated with the Sudanese Armed Forces to immediately take preventive and mitigating actions to protect children, schools and hospitals. I urge the Sudanese Armed Forces to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and to urgently sign an action plan with the United Nations to end and prevent grave violations against children.

*Non-State armed groups*

353. In Burkina Faso, Islamic State in the Greater Sahara has been listed for the abduction of children. I call upon the armed group Islamic State in the Greater Sahara to adopt concrete measures to protect children in line with international standards.

354. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the armed group Alliance des forces de résistance congolaise has been listed for the recruitment and use of children.

355. In Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and affiliated factions, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades have been listed for the killing and maiming and abduction of children, following the brutal acts of terror on Israel of 7 October 2023. I urge the armed groups Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and affiliated factions, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades, to urgently end and prevent grave violations against children.

356. In the Sudan, the armed group Rapid Support Forces has been listed for the recruitment and use and killing and maiming of children and for rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, as well as for attacks on schools and hospitals, and the armed group Third Front-Tamazuj has been listed for the recruitment and use of children. I urge the armed groups Rapid Support Forces and Third Front-Tamazuj to urgently develop action plans with the United Nations to end and prevent grave violations against children.

357. The following parties were previously listed and have had additional violations added to their listing. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the armed group Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain has been listed for the abduction of children, and the armed group Mouvement du 23 mars has been listed for the recruitment and use of children. I urge Alliance des forces de résistance congolaise, Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain and Mouvement du 23 mars to urgently develop action plans with the United Nations to end and prevent grave violations against children. In Mali, the following party was previously listed and has had additional violations added to their listing: the armed group Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin, including Ansar Eddine, has been listed for the killing and maiming of children. I call upon the armed group Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin, including Ansar Eddine, to adopt concrete measures to protect children in line with international standards.

*Modifications to terminology and to names of parties*

358. Modifications to terminology and to names of parties resulting from changes on the ground are aimed at reflecting the names of parties more accurately. In the Central African Republic, the armed groups Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique, Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique and Union pour la paix en Centrafrique have been listed separately to reflect the fact that the former Séléka coalition no longer exists. In Myanmar, the Myanmar regime's armed forces have been listed as Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias, to reflect more adequately the configuration of the armed actors. In Somalia, the

Somali Federal Defence Forces have been listed as Somali National Army to align with other United Nations reporting.

**B. Measures, including by listed parties, aimed at improving the protection of children**

359. I welcome the State actors and non-State armed groups that have engaged with the United Nations, in line with Security Council resolutions [1539 \(2004\)](#) and [1612 \(2005\)](#), to develop and sign action plans to end and prevent grave violations against children. In the lists contained in the annexes, listed parties that have signed action plans with the United Nations are acknowledged as such, and I urge the continued and prompt implementation of these action plans.

360. I call upon all listed parties that have not yet done so to urgently engage with the United Nations to develop and sign action plans to end and prevent grave violations against children.

*State actors*

361. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in the context of its 2012 action plan, I welcome the establishment by the Government of the National Reparations Fund for Victims of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and Other Crimes against the Peace and Security of Mankind, the prosecution of perpetrators of grave violations, including for sexual violence, and the continued screening and separation of children from the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Congolese National Police during recruitment processes.

362. In Israel, I welcome the offer by the Government of Israel on 28 May 2024 to engage with my Special Representative to develop an action plan with the United Nations.

363. In Somalia, in the context of its 2012 action plan and the 2019 road map for implementation, I welcome the endorsement by the Federal Government of age assessment guidelines and its standardized checklist. I commend the endorsement of the juvenile justice and the child rights bills by the Federal Cabinet and I urge their adoption by the Federal Parliament, including with the provision maintaining that a child is a person below the age of 18 years.

364. In South Sudan, in the context of its 2020 action plan, I welcome the continued cooperation of the Government with the United Nations, including continued access to barracks for age screening, as well as with the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, which resulted in the release of 49 boys.

365. In Ukraine, I welcome the continued engagement of the Government of the Russian Federation with my Special Representative to end and prevent grave violations against children, and I note the practical prevention measures reported by the Russian Federation. I urge the Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups to develop and sign an action plan with the United Nations to end and prevent grave violations against children immediately.

366. In Yemen, I welcome the continued engagement of the Government in the implementation of the 2014 action plan and 2018 road map and the hosting of my Special Representative in October 2023. I welcome the facilitation of visits to military installations to verify and promote the directives to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children, the appointment and training of 80 military focal points, and the separation of children from fighting forces. I welcome the participation of the Security Belt Forces and the Amaliqah Brigades in activities under the action plan and road map.

*Non-State armed groups*

367. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I welcome the signature of an unilateral declaration by the armed group Raia Mutomboki Kiriku to end and prevent grave violations against children following United Nations advocacy.

368. In Mali, in the context of their 2017 and 2021 action plans respectively, I welcome the cooperation of the armed groups Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and Platform with the United Nations, enabling visits to military bases and the screening of combatants to verify the presence of children in Gao and Kidal Regions.

369. In the Syrian Arab Republic, I welcome the signature on 3 June 2024 of an action plan between the opposition Syrian National Army, including Ahrar al-Sham and Army of Islam, and its aligned legions and factions, and the United Nations to end and prevent grave violations against children.

370. I also welcome the adoption of a road map for the implementation of the 2019 action plan between the armed group Syrian Democratic Forces, the self-administration in northern and eastern Syria, and the United Nations, including the reappointment of senior-level focal points, the establishment of an implementation committee and a military order reiterating the prohibition of the recruitment and use of children.

371. In Yemen, in the context of its 2022 action plan, I welcome the continued engagement by the Houthis armed group with the United Nations, leading to the endorsement of standard operating procedures and training on age assessment and the visit of the United Nations to military recruitment centres and a "summer school."

## Annex I

### **Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2225 (2015), parties that commit grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council**

#### **A. State actors**

##### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo<sup>c,f</sup>

##### **Parties in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory**

Israeli armed and security forces<sup>b,d</sup>

##### **Parties in Myanmar**

Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias<sup>a,b,c,d,e,f</sup>

##### **Parties in Somalia**

1. Somali National Army<sup>a,b,c,f</sup>
2. Somali Police Force<sup>a,b,c,f</sup>

##### **Parties in South Sudan**

South Sudan People's Defence Forces<sup>a,b,c,e,f</sup>

##### **Parties in the Sudan**

Sudanese Armed Forces<sup>b,d</sup>

##### **Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic**

Government forces, including the National Defence Forces and pro-government militias<sup>a,b,c,d</sup>

##### **Parties in Yemen**

Security Belt Forces<sup>a</sup>

#### **B. Non-State armed groups**

##### **Parties in Afghanistan**

1. Hizb-i Islami Gulbuddin<sup>a,b</sup>
2. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan<sup>a,b,d</sup>
3. Taliban forces and affiliated groups, including the Haqqani Network<sup>a,b,d,e</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Party that recruits and uses children.

<sup>b</sup> Party that kills and maims children.

<sup>c</sup> Party that commits rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

<sup>d</sup> Party that engages in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

<sup>e</sup> Party that abducts children.

<sup>f</sup> Party that has concluded an action plan, joint commitment or similar measure with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

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**Parties in the Central African Republic**

1. Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique<sup>a,b,c,d,f</sup>
2. Local militias known as the anti-balaka<sup>a,b,c</sup>
3. Lord's Resistance Army<sup>a,b,c,e</sup>
4. Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique<sup>a,b,c,d,f</sup>
5. Union pour la paix en Centrafrique<sup>a,b,c,d,f</sup>

**Parties in Colombia**

1. Ejército de Liberación Nacional<sup>a</sup>
2. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) dissident groups<sup>a</sup>

**Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

1. Alliance des forces de résistance congolaise<sup>a</sup>
2. Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain<sup>a,e</sup>
3. Allied Democratic Forces<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>
4. Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO)<sup>b,c,d,e</sup>
5. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi<sup>a,c,d,e</sup>
6. Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri<sup>a,c,d,e</sup>
7. Lord's Resistance Army<sup>a,b,c,e</sup>
8. Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale<sup>a,c,e</sup>
9. Mai-Mai Mazembe<sup>a,b,e,f</sup>
10. Mai-Mai Simba<sup>a,c</sup>
11. Mai-Mai Zaïre<sup>b</sup>
12. Mouvement du 23 mars<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>
13. Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové<sup>a,b,c</sup>
14. Nyatura<sup>a,c,e</sup>
15. Raia Mutomboki<sup>a,c,e,f</sup>
16. Twigwaneho<sup>a</sup>

**Parties in Iraq**

Da'esh<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>

**Parties in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory**

1. Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades<sup>b,e</sup>
2. Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and affiliated factions<sup>b,e</sup>

**Parties in Mali**

1. Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin, including Ansar Eddine<sup>a,b,c</sup>

2. Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad, part of the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad<sup>a,c,f</sup>
3. Platform, including affiliated groups<sup>a,f</sup>

#### **Parties in Myanmar**

1. Democratic Karen Benevolent Army<sup>a,f</sup>
2. Kachin Independence Army<sup>a</sup>
3. Karen National Liberation Army<sup>a</sup>
4. Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council<sup>a</sup>
5. Karenni Army<sup>a</sup>
6. Shan State Army<sup>a</sup>
7. United Wa State Army<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in Somalia**

1. Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a<sup>a</sup>
2. Al-Shabaab<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>

#### **Parties in South Sudan**

Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition – pro-Machar<sup>a,b,e,f</sup>

#### **Parties in the Sudan**

1. Justice and Equality Movement<sup>a,f</sup>
2. Rapid Support Forces<sup>a,b,c,d</sup>
3. Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid<sup>a</sup>
4. Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi<sup>a,f</sup>
5. Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction<sup>a,f</sup>
6. Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Malik Agar faction<sup>a,f</sup>
7. Third Front-Tamazuj<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic**

1. Da'esh<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>
2. Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham<sup>a,b</sup>
3. Kurdish People's Protection Units and Women's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ)<sup>a,f</sup>
4. The opposition Syrian National Army, including Ahrar al-Sham and Army of Islam<sup>a,b,f</sup>

#### **Parties in Yemen**

1. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula<sup>a</sup>
2. Houthis (who call themselves Ansar Allah)<sup>a,b,d,f</sup>
3. Pro-government militias, including the Salafists and popular committees<sup>a</sup>



## Annex II

### **Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2225 (2015), parties that commit grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council, or in other situations**

#### **A. State actors**

##### **Parties in Ukraine**

Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups<sup>b,d</sup>

#### **B. Non-State armed groups**

##### **Parties in Burkina Faso**

1. Islamic State in the Greater Sahara<sup>b,e</sup>
2. Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin<sup>a,b,d,e</sup>

##### **Parties in the Lake Chad basin**

1. Islamic State West Africa Province<sup>e</sup>
2. Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad<sup>e</sup>

##### **Parties in Nigeria**

1. Islamic State West Africa Province<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>
2. Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>

##### **Parties in the Philippines**

1. Abu Sayyaf Group<sup>a</sup>
2. Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters<sup>a</sup>
3. New People's Army<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Party that recruits and uses children.

<sup>b</sup> Party that kills and maims children.

<sup>c</sup> Party that commits rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

<sup>d</sup> Party that engages in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

<sup>e</sup> Party that abducts children.

<sup>f</sup> Party that has concluded an action plan, joint commitment or similar measure with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).