

Fact Sheet: Recruitment and Use of Children

11 Feb 2014

For the International Day Against the Use of Child Soldiers on February 12, Leila Zerrougui, the SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF jointly created a fact sheet on recruitment and use of children.

In conflict situations, the United Nations monitors and reports on six grave violations against children, including child recruitment.[1] As part of this monitoring and reporting mechanism (MRM), we gather information on armed forces and groups that recruit and use children, not just as combatants, but also in support functions that put their lives in danger.

In situations of conflict where children are recruited, the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF work with their partners to reach out to all parties to conflicts to collect and verify information, release children, reunite them with their families and support their reintegration into civilian life.

Parties to conflicts who commit grave violations against children are named in the annexes of the Annual Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict. Currently, the MRM mechanism is officially in place in 14 countries including the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Syria.

Central African Republic:

- The crisis that began over a year ago has made children highly vulnerable to recruitment, particularly those who have been separated from their families, displaced from their homes or with limited access to basic services and education. Seleka combatants, and more recently, self-defense groups known as anti-Balaka, have actively recruited children and forced them to commit atrocities.
- UNICEF estimates that the current number of children associated with armed groups has risen considerably – although volatile security conditions make it difficult for child protection actors to verify exact numbers.
- Since May 2013, UNICEF and partners have secured the release of 229 children associated with armed groups and forces in the Central African Republic.

South Sudan:

- The United Nations continues to receive credible reports that children have been recruited and used by Government and opposition forces in the conflict in South Sudan.
- The Government of South Sudan has committed to preventing and ending the recruitment and use of children by its national security forces by signing an action plan with the United Nations in 2009. The action plan was renewed in 2013 with the Sudan People's Liberation Army representing the country's national security forces.
- The Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities signed between the Government and the opposition in Ethiopia on 23 January 2014 contains a reference in

paragraph 3.4 that includes the cessation of recruitment and use of children. The United Nations hope this will provide another avenue for both parties to release children under 18 from their forces and prevent further recruitment.

Syria:

- According to the recently released Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict in Syria, children have been recruited and used by armed opposition groups as combatants and in support roles including as cooks, porters, lookouts, spies and messengers as well as to clean weapons and prepare and load ammunition.
- The Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict has engaged with Free Syria Army commanders in Syria and with representatives of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (Syrian Opposition Coalition) to end the recruitment and use of children in the Syrian conflict.

For additional information, please contact:

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[1] The six grave child rights violations are killing or maiming (including torture) of children; recruitment or use of children by armed forces or armed groups; attacks on schools or hospitals; rape or other sexual violence; abduction of children; denial of humanitarian access.