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Children and armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#) and subsequent resolutions on children and armed conflict, is the fifth report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and covers the period from 1 October 2022 to 31 December 2024.

The report documents the effects of conflict on children in the Syrian Arab Republic, highlighting trends and patterns of the six grave violations against children, namely, the recruitment and use of children, the killing and maiming of children, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, attacks on schools, hospitals and protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals,¹ the abduction of children and denial of humanitarian access. Where available, the report contains information on perpetrators. It also outlines information on the progress made in addressing grave violations against children, including through dialogue with parties.

The report provides a series of recommendations addressed to all parties to the conflict aimed at ending and preventing grave violations against children and strengthening child protection in the Syrian Arab Republic.

¹ 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.



I. Introduction

1. The present report, prepared pursuant to Security Council resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#) and subsequent resolutions on children and armed conflict, covers the period from 1 October 2022 to 31 December 2024. It is the fifth report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Syria to be submitted to the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. It outlines information on trends and patterns of grave violations committed against children in the country, as well as progress made and challenges encountered in addressing those violations since the previous report ([S/2023/805](#)). The report also contains specific recommendations aimed at strengthening and promoting child protection.
2. The terminology used for all parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic pertains to the period from 1 October 2022 to 8 December 2024.
3. In the most recent report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict ([A/79/878-S/2025/247](#)), five parties to the Syrian conflict remained listed for grave violations against children, among which are the Kurdish People's Protection Units and Women's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ), which remained listed for recruitment and use, and the opposition Syrian National Army (SNA), including Ahrar al-Sham and Army of Islam, which remained listed for recruitment and use and killing and maiming. Both parties have signed action plans with the United Nations. The other parties were the Syrian government forces, including the National Defence Forces and pro-government militias, which remained listed for recruitment and use, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and attacks on schools and hospitals; Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, which remained listed for recruitment and use and killing and maiming of children; and Da'esh, which remained listed for all five listable grave violations.
4. The information contained in the present report was verified by the United Nations country task force on monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children in the Syrian Arab Republic, co-chaired by the resident coordinator and the representative of the United Nations Children's Fund. Owing to monitoring and verification constraints, the information presented herein does not represent the full extent of grave violations committed against children in the Syrian Arab Republic. Where incidents were committed earlier but verified only during the reporting period, the information is qualified as relating to an incident that was verified at a later date.

II. Overview of political and security developments

5. The conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, which began 14 years ago in 2011, continued to have an enduring effect on children. During the reporting period, hostilities and military operations continued, affecting civilians and key civilian infrastructure, such as hospitals, schools and water facilities, in the northern part of the Syrian Arab Republic in particular.
6. At the end of 2024, the level of verified grave violations against children, mainly killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals, increased significantly. That increase in grave violations coincided with intensified fighting among the parties to the conflict and heightened violence that affected civilians, in particular in Idlib and Aleppo Governorates in the north-west and in Dayr al-Zawr Governorate and along the banks of the Euphrates River in the north-east. After Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham and allied armed opposition groups launched the Fath al-Mubin offensive on 27 November, capturing Aleppo, Hama, and Homs and advancing towards Damascus, Bashar al-Assad, then President of the Syrian Arab Republic, left the country on 8 December. As a result, interim authorities, under the

leadership of Ahmed al-Sharaa and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, were installed on 8 December. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Geir Pedersen, urged all Syrians to give priority to dialogue, unity and respect for international humanitarian law and human rights as they seek to rebuild their society.

7. Throughout the period preceding that major change, the situation for civilians, including children, remained extremely volatile. Following an escalation of hostilities in the country at the end of 2022, violent incidents were reported in the Idlib de-escalation area between non-State armed groups, namely, the opposition SNA and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, on one side, and government and pro-government forces, on the other side, across front lines in the north-west of the country, causing civilian casualties. In 2024, civil society members continued to protest against Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham in Idlib and western Aleppo, demanding the release of political detainees and calling for changes in Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham governance.

8. In the north-eastern part of the country, the security situation also remained a matter of concern, with violent incidents across front lines, including rocket fire and mutual shelling, reported in northern rural Aleppo Governorate and in Raqqah and Hasakah Governorates. Operations against the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) by pro-government forces, Da'esh, the opposition SNA, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham and the armed forces of Türkiye intensified, resulting in civilian casualties, including children, critical damage to civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, internal displacement and the disruption of key services.

9. Meanwhile, the reporting period witnessed a growing presence of Da'esh in areas under the control of the then-Syrian government and in the north-east. Da'esh activities, including attacks on civilians, in the central and northern parts of the Syrian Arab Republic demonstrated the group's ability to conduct attacks against opposing parties and civilian infrastructure. In that context, the international counter-Da'esh coalition continued to carry out sporadic air strikes on targets in the north-east and north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic.

10. Clashes and security incidents across Dar'a and Qunaytirah Governorates in the southern part of the Syrian Arab Republic continued, with attacks, exchanges of fire and limited clashes involving a range of actors, including unidentified elements. In 2024, the armed forces of Israel intensified air strikes in Syrian territory, including in Damascus, directed against military installations, pro-government militias and other facilities, including civilian infrastructure. In addition, the Israeli armed forces conducted military activities in the Israeli-occupied Golan, in the areas of separation and limitation and across the ceasefire line, in violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution [2737 \(2024\)](#) (S/2024/875). Those developments led to child casualties.

11. Increased hostilities in the Syrian Arab Republic have deepened the humanitarian crisis, displacing thousands of Syrians. Beginning in October 2023, the situation was compounded by regional developments that had a spillover effect on the Syrian Arab Republic. For example, more than 562,000 persons crossed the land border with Lebanon and entered the Syrian Arab Republic in 2024, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Meanwhile, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that, as at 31 December 2024, more than 1.1 million people, nearly half of whom were children, had been newly displaced across the country, while nearly 522,000 had returned to their areas of origin as at 2 January 2025.

III. Grave violations against children

12. During the reporting period, the United Nations verified 3,343 grave violations against 3,209 children (2,653 boys, 428 girls, 128 sex unknown) aged from a few months to 17 years. Of these, 431 violations occurred in the final quarter of 2022, 1,611 occurred in 2023 and 1,301 occurred in 2024. Compared with the previous reporting period, the total number of verified grave violations decreased by 36 per cent. A total of 17 children (7 boys, 10 girls) were affected by multiple violations, including abduction and recruitment and use (10), recruitment and use and sexual violence (3), recruitment and killing (3) and recruitment and maiming (1). Recruitment and use (1,981) and killing and maiming (1,223) were the two most prevalent violations.

13. Almost half of the violations were verified in Idlib Governorate (1,579), followed by the Governorates of Aleppo (723), Hasakah (442), Dayr al-Zawr (376), Dar'a (69), Raqqah (60), Hama (32), Damascus (24), Qunaytirah (12), Homs (8), Rif Dimashq (7), Suwayda' (5), Ladhikiyah (5) and Tartus (1). Approximately 69 per cent of violations were verified in the north-west of the country and 26 per cent in the north-east of the country.

14. Grave violations were attributed to at least 32 parties to the conflict, including armed groups that are under sanctions enacted by the Security Council. Syrian government forces and pro-government forces and militias were responsible for 917, or 27 per cent, of the total number: pro-government forces (508), pro-government air forces (233), government forces (73), pro-government militias (65) and National Defence Forces (38). Other perpetrators included Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (729); the opposition SNA (629) (unidentified factions (442), Faylaq al-Sham (52), Jabhah al-Shamiyah (42), Ahrar al-Sham (38), Faylaq al-Rahman (17), Nasr Army (11), Hamzah Division (11), Sultan Murad (5), Suqur al-Sham (3), Jaysh al-Izzah (2), Samarqand Brigade (2), Jabhah al-Sharqiyah (1), Faylaq al-Amshat (1), Jabhah al-Islamiyah (1), Sahil Brigade (1)); SDF (534) (YPG/YPJ (491), the Internal Security Forces under the umbrella of the self-administration in northern and eastern Syrian Arab Republic (33), other SDF components (10)); and the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (64). The remaining violations were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (419), Da'esh (15) and Ansar al-Tawhid (3). Thirty-three violations occurred during cross-border military operations and were attributed to the Turkish Armed Forces (20) and the Israeli armed forces (13).

15. In addition, the United Nations conducted late verification of 150 grave violations against 148 children (126 boys, 22 girls) that occurred prior to the reporting period, notably recruitment and use (86), killing and maiming (61), attacks on schools and hospitals (2) and abduction (1), that were attributed to YPG/YPJ (39), the opposition SNA (30) (unidentified factions (29) and Jabhah al-Shamiyah (1)), unidentified perpetrators (27), Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (21), government forces and pro-government forces (32) (government forces (12), pro-government air forces (11), National Defence Forces (8) and militias (1)) and Da'esh (1).

A. Recruitment and use

16. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 1,981 children (1,900 boys, 81 girls) aged between 9 and 17 years. Of those, 345 children were recruited and used in the final quarter of 2022, 1,109 in 2023 and 527 in 2024. There was a 34 per cent decrease in child recruitment and use compared with the previous reporting period. That decrease can be explained by the implementation by SDF and the

opposition SNA of action plan commitments, as well as underreporting owing to constraints in gaining access to conflict-affected areas.

17. Violations were attributed to Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (728), the opposition SNA (602) (unidentified factions (416), Faylaq al-Sham (52), Jabhah al-Shamiyah (42), Ahrar al-Sham (38), Faylaq al-Rahman (17), Nasr Army (11), Hamzah Division (11), Sultan Murad Division (5), Suqur al-Sham (3), Samarqand Brigade (2), Jabhah al-Sharqiyah (1), Faylaq al-Amshat (1), Jaysh al-Izzah (1), Jabhah al-Islamiyah (1) and Sahil Brigade (1)), SDF (463) (YPG/YPJ (428), Internal Security Forces (32) and other components of SDF (3)), government forces and pro-government forces and militias (130) (pro-government forces (51), National Defence Forces (35), government forces (25), pro-government militias (17) and pro-government air forces (2)), the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (52), Ansar al-Tawhid (3) and Da'esh (3). Violations occurred in the Governorates of Idlib (900), Aleppo (407), Hasakah (380), Dayr al-Zawr (254), Raqqah (36) and Damascus (4).

18. Of the 1,981 children recruited, more than 95 per cent (1,883) were used in combat roles (1,725) and managing checkpoints (88) and served as armed guards at military sites (70). The remaining children (98) were used in support roles, including as cleaners or cooks. For example, in October 2022, four internally displaced boys aged 15 to 16 in I'zaz, Aleppo Governorate, were recruited and used at checkpoints by one faction of the opposition SNA for a monthly stipend. In another instance, in December 2023, four boys aged 14 to 16 were recruited and used by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham in Idlib Governorate. After they had received military training, they were used in combat roles at the front lines. Recruits were provided with stipends.

19. In a dire socioeconomic and humanitarian context, the underlying causes and motives for child recruitment were often financial incentives and privileged access to services and goods, as well as revenge for the killing of parents or siblings, ideological allegiance and increasing tensions between parties operating in the north-east and north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic. Methods of recruitment included persuasion by local leaders, peers and relatives, as well as abduction, in some cases.

20. In addition, the United Nations conducted late verification of 86 cases of recruitment and use of children (77 boys, 9 girls) that occurred in 2021 (5) and 2022 (81) and were attributed to YPG/YPJ (29), the opposition SNA (29) (unidentified factions (28) and Faylaq al-Sham (1)), Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (14), government forces (5), National Defence Forces (8) and Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (1). Most cases occurred in the Governorates of Hasakah (40), Idlib (18), Dayr al-Zawr (13), Aleppo (9) and Raqqah (6).

Deprivation of liberty of children for their alleged association with armed forces or armed groups

21. A total of 13 boys were verified to have been deprived of liberty on national security-related charges and for alleged association with opposing parties by SDF (10) and government forces (3) in the Governorates of Dayr al-Zawr (11), Rif Dimashq (1) and Homs (1). The United Nations conducted late verification of the detention of one child by YPG/YPJ in Dayr al-Zawr Governorate.

22. As at the end of 2024, approximately 1,000 children, including foreign children, remained deprived of liberty without a legal basis and in poor conditions for their alleged association with armed groups, mainly Da'esh. In addition, approximately 25,500 children with suspected family ties to Da'esh continued to be held in Hawl and Rawj camps in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic, where the lack of coordinated and full access to detention facilities by the United Nations continued to significantly hinder documentation and the provision of services, including legal

assistance. Children and their families in those camps had limited contact with the outside world, because they were held in military prisons, rehabilitation centres and other detention centres and camps run by SDF and the self-administration in the northern and eastern Syrian Arab Republic, with restricted freedom of movement. A total of 4,235 Iraqi children (2,124 girls and 2,111 boys) were repatriated from the north-eastern Syrian Arab Republic to Iraq during the period under review.

B. Killing and maiming

23. The United Nations verified the killing (498) and maiming (725) of 1,223 children (755 boys, 340 girls, 128 sex unknown) aged from a few months to 17 years in the final quarter of 2022 (75), in 2023 (476) and in 2024 (672). The number of child casualties decreased by 35 per cent during the reporting period when compared with the previous reporting period (1,891). Casualties attributed to government forces and pro-government forces increased by 33 per cent compared with the previous reporting period (524). Child casualties accounted for 37 per cent of all verified violations during the reporting period.

24. Perpetrators of child casualties included government forces, pro-government forces and pro-government militias (699, or 62 per cent) (pro-government forces (413), pro-government air forces (218), pro-government militias (40) and Syrian government forces (28)), followed by unidentified perpetrators (400), SDF (66) (YPG/YPJ (58), Internal Security Forces (1) and other components of SDF (7)), the opposition SNA (23) (unidentified factions (22) and Jaysh al-Izzah (1)), the Turkish Armed Forces (18), Israeli armed forces (11), Da'esh (5) and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (1). The north-western Governorates of Idlib (614) and Aleppo (287) remained the most affected, followed by Dayr al-Zawr (114), Dar'a (65), Hasakah (44), Hama (31), Raqqah (22), Damascus (16), Qunaytirah in the occupied Syrian Golan (12), Homs (7), Rif Dimashq (5), Suwayda' (3), Ladhikiyah (2) and Tartus (1). Children were verified as having been killed (12) and reported as having been maimed (30) by rocket fire in the occupied Syrian Golan.

25. Ground-based shelling was the primary cause of child casualties, affecting 515 children (42 per cent), mainly in the Governorates of Idlib, Aleppo, Dayr al-Zawr and Hama. Explosive ordnance was the second leading cause (317 children, or 26 per cent), mainly in the Governorates of Dayr al-Zawr, Aleppo, Dar'a, Idlib and Hasakah. The third leading cause of child casualties was air strikes (268 children or 23 per cent). The remaining child casualties were the result of gunshots (47), improvised explosive devices and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (40), drone attacks (32), knife attacks (2) and being run over by military vehicles (2). For example, in October 2023, an unidentified perpetrator launched a drone strike against a military college in Homs during a graduation ceremony, killing and injuring more than 280 persons, including 3 girls.

26. In addition, the United Nations conducted late verification of the killing and maiming of 61 children (43 boys, 12 girls, 6 sex unknown) that occurred prior to the period under review. The casualties were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (27), government forces (7) and pro-government air forces (9), YPG/YPJ (9), Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (7), the opposition SNA (unidentified factions) (1) and Da'esh (1) in the Governorates of Hasakah (20), Idlib (18), Aleppo (15), Dayr al-Zawr (3), Homs (3) and Suwayda' (2).

C. Rape and other forms of sexual violence

27. The United Nations verified cases of sexual violence against four girls attributed to Da'esh (3) and the opposition SNA (unidentified faction) (1) in Hasakah (3) and Aleppo (1) Governorates. Sexual violence stemming from deep-rooted social norms and affecting girls and boys is believed to be underreported owing to fear of stigmatization, the risk of reprisals, weak rule of law and prevailing impunity, as well as a lack of relevant support services and the safety concerns of the survivors. In addition, no sustainable measures have been taken by the parties to the conflict to end and prevent sexual violence against children and hold perpetrators accountable.

D. Attacks on schools and hospitals

28. A total of 97 attacks on schools (76) and hospitals (21), including protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, were verified. That represents an increase of about 54 per cent compared with the previous report (63). Of those attacks, 7 occurred in the final quarter of 2022, 20 occurred in 2023 and 70 occurred in 2024. Violations were attributed to government forces and pro-government forces and militias (74) (pro-government forces (44), pro-government air forces (12), government forces (9), pro-government militias (7) and the National Defence Forces (2)), unidentified perpetrators (11), YPG/YPJ (4), Da'esh (3), the opposition SNA (unidentified factions) (3) and the Turkish Armed Forces (2). The violations occurred in the Governorates of Idlib (62), Aleppo (17), Dayr al-Zawr (5), Hasakah (3), Ladhqiyyah (3), Dar'a (2), Suwayda' (2), Hama (1), Homs (1) and Rif Dimashq (1).

29. In addition, the United Nations conducted late verification of one attack on a school and one attack on a hospital by pro-government air forces in Idlib (1) and Aleppo (1) Governorates.

30. The United Nations verified 76 attacks on schools (73) and on protected persons (3). The physical destruction of or damage to school infrastructure was caused by artillery shelling (48), air strikes (15), mortars and rockets (5), firearms (3) and explosions and improvised explosive devices (2). Protected persons were subjected to threats and violence. Six attacks occurred in 2022, 19 in 2023 and 51 in 2024 in the Governorates of Idlib (52), Aleppo (12), Dayr al-Zawr (4), Hasakah (3), Ladhqiyyah (2), Rif Dimashq (1), Dar'a (1) and Homs (1). Those attacks were attributed to government forces and pro-government forces and militias (63) (pro-government forces (39), pro-government air forces (12), government forces (9), pro-government militias (1) and the National Defence Forces (2)), unidentified perpetrators (6), YPG/YPJ (2), Da'esh (2), the opposition SNA (unidentified factions) (2) and the Turkish Armed Forces (1).

31. The number of attacks on schools doubled compared with the previous reporting period (39). There was a substantial increase in the number of attacks on schools from 2023 (19) to 2024 (51) owing to the escalation of the conflict in the final quarter of 2024.

32. The United Nations verified 21 attacks on hospitals (17) and protected persons (4) in 2022 (1), 2023 (1) and in 2024 (19), representing a slight decrease compared with the previous reporting period (24). Attacks were verified in Idlib (10), Aleppo (5), Suwayda' (2), Dayr al-Zawr (1), Dar'a (1), Hama (1) and Ladhqiyyah (1) Governorates and attributed to government forces and pro-government forces and militias (11) (pro-government militias (6) and pro-government forces (5)), unidentified perpetrators (5), YPG/YPJ (2), the Turkish Armed Forces (1), Da'esh (1) and the opposition SNA (unidentified factions) (1). The physical destruction was caused mainly by artillery shelling (6), air strikes (4) and mortars and rockets (4).

Military use of schools and hospitals

33. The United Nations verified 58 incidents of the military use of schools (55) and hospitals (3), which were used as military bases mostly in Hasakah (30), Dayr al-Zawr (23), Aleppo (3), Raqqah (1) and Idlib (1) Governorates. The violations were attributed to SDF (53) (YPG/YPJ (51) and the Internal Security Forces (2)), the opposition SNA (unidentified factions) (3), Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (1) and government forces (1).

34. Late verification was conducted in relation to six incidents of the military use of schools in Dayr al-Zawr Governorate, three involving YPG/YPJ and three involving pro-government forces and militias.

E. Abduction

35. The abduction of 18 children (5 boys, 13 girls) was verified. Of those, 4 occurred in 2023 and 14 in 2024. Abductions were attributed to Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (12), government forces (5) and YPG/YPJ (1). The incidents occurred in Hasakah (9), Aleppo (5) and Damascus (4) Governorates. The children were abducted mainly for the purpose of recruitment and use. In addition, late verification was conducted in relation to the abduction of one girl by YPG/YPJ in Hasakah. The girl was released in April 2022 after 20 days in captivity.

F. Denial of humanitarian access

36. The United Nations verified 20 incidents of denial of humanitarian access. Of these, 1 occurred in the final quarter of 2022, 1 in 2023 and 18 in 2024. Incidents were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (8), government and pro-government forces and militias (government forces (6), pro-government air forces (1) and pro-government militias (1)), Israeli armed forces (2), YPG/YPJ (1) and Da'esh (1) in the Governorates of Aleppo (6), Idlib (3), Hasakah (3), Dayr al-Zawr (3), Raqqah (2), Dar'a (2) and Rif Dimashq (1). Verified incidents involved violence against humanitarian personnel, assets and facilities (11), restrictions or obstruction of children's access to services and assistance (6), movement restrictions (2) and disruption of the operation of water facilities resulting from attacks (1).

IV. Progress and challenges in addressing grave violations against children

A. Update on action plans and dialogue with the parties to the conflict

Follow-up on dialogue with the former Government of the Syrian Arab Republic

37. Until 8 December 2024, the United Nations had engaged with the former Syrian Government on strengthening the protection of children, including through the adoption of an action plan, which had not been developed by the end of the reporting period. Towards the end of December 2024, the caretaker authorities announced their intention to dissolve all armed groups and bring them under the command of a unified Ministry of Defence.

Follow-up on the implementation of the action plan with the Syrian Democratic Forces

38. The United Nations continued to support SDF in implementing the action plan that it had signed in 2019 to end and prevent violations against children. In November 2023, a review of the action plan was held in order to jointly assess progress and challenges and develop an eight-point road map to expedite implementation. Priorities under the road map include, inter alia, assigning focal points, redisseminating a military order prohibiting the recruitment and use of children, continuing awareness-raising and capacity-building activities, reactivating the complaints mechanism to investigate allegations of child recruitment and facilitating monitoring visits for the United Nations and mutually agreed humanitarian partners.

39. Following the adoption of the road map, new focal points were appointed, the military order prohibiting the recruitment and use of children was redisseminated and SDF reiterated that measures would be taken in response to breaches of the order. In addition, the self-administration in the northern and eastern Syrian Arab Republic re-established child protection offices in order to facilitate the release and reintegration of children separated from SDF.

40. The implementation of the action plan contributed to a decline in child recruitment and use (534) compared with the previous reporting period (874). In addition, SDF reported to the United Nations that the recruitment of more than 850 children had been prevented through the use of age assessment procedures at recruitment centres. SDF further reported that those children had been handed over to their families through the child protection offices and referred to humanitarian actors for reintegration services.

41. Separately, an international non-governmental organization conducted training sessions on the protection of children's rights that was attended by more than 50 members of SDF and of the eight child protection offices. The training sessions were aimed at strengthening knowledge and skills, with a focus on international humanitarian law and human rights, including child rights, child protection and age screening.

Follow-up on dialogue and implementation of the action plan with the opposition Syrian National Army

42. In June 2024, the opposition SNA signed an action plan with the United Nations to end and prevent the recruitment and use and killing and maiming of children, as well as other grave violations. Ahrar al-Sham and Army of Islam, as well as more than 35 legions and factions aligned with the opposition SNA, are covered by the action plan.

43. Following the signing, the opposition SNA appointed military and civilian focal points to interact with the United Nations. A five-member senior-level implementation committee was established to oversee implementation of the action plan. A three-member technical committee was also created to oversee compliance with the action plan. In addition, the opposition SNA reported that a military command circular had been endorsed and disseminated reiterating the prohibition of the recruitment and use of children by any faction or legion operating under their umbrella. The technical committee began to conduct visits of military facilities to verify compliance with the circular and whether any children were part of military units.

44. Within this framework, the United Nations facilitated a two-day workshop for the members of the two committees with a view to developing a detailed road map for the implementation of the action plan. Four child protection units were established in the legions and factions of the opposition SNA in order to identify, screen and

register children found among their ranks. The United Nations also organized training sessions on international humanitarian law and international human rights law and child protection for the two committees. In addition, the opposition SNA, with the technical support of the United Nations, drafted and endorsed exit procedures for children associated with the group, as well as terms of reference for the two committees and the child protection units.

B. Advocacy and mainstreaming of child protection

45. The United Nations provided training for 166 humanitarian actors (131 women, 35 men) on the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict, with a view to strengthening reporting on grave violations committed against children in the Syrian Arab Republic.

V. Observations and Recommendations

46. I am encouraged by the decrease in the total number of grave violations against children in the Syrian Arab Republic, in particular recruitment and use and killing and maiming. I am concerned, however, at the increase in attacks on schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian access. I also remain concerned that grave violations against children persist at high levels. I call upon all the parties to the conflict to end and prevent such violations and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law.

47. Taking note of the political transition that began in the Syrian Arab Republic following the events of 8 December 2024 and the subsequent appointment of caretaker authorities, I reiterate the need for a Syrian-led and owned inclusive and credible political process, in line with the key principles of Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#), and for child rights to be included such a process.

48. I call upon the authorities and armed groups, including Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, to engage with the United Nations to adopt an action plan to end and prevent grave violations against children.

49. I welcome the commitment of the authorities to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and urge them to ensure that the Syrian Arab Republic complies with the Convention and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, including by recognizing and defining a child as anyone under the age of 18 years. I also urge them to release associated children and facilitate the implementation of reintegration programmes for children, in coordination with the United Nations.

50. I urge the authorities to ensure that, as part of the announced integration of armed groups under the authority of the Ministry of Defence, no children are integrated into any new forces. I call upon the authorities to work with the United Nations to develop and implement standard operating procedures for screening recruits and verifying their ages, as well as measures to end and prevent grave violations against children. I further call upon all parties to the conflict to provide access to the United Nations to military barracks, recruitment centres and other facilities, with a view to verifying whether any children are part of military units.

51. I exhort the authorities to conduct independent and credible investigations into incidents of grave violations against children and hold perpetrators accountable through fair trials and transparent judicial processes.

52. I am concerned that explosive ordnance remained the second leading cause of child casualties. I call upon the authorities to continue facilitating humanitarian mine

clearance, explosive ordnance risk education programmes and victim assistance. I also urge donors to support these efforts.

53. I commend SDF for its efforts and the progress made in implementing its action plan and road map, and for its commitment to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by its forces, including YPG/YPJ, the Internal Security Forces and other components of SDF. I welcome the renewed collaboration of SDF with the United Nations to that end. I urge SDF to fulfil its remaining commitments under the action plan, namely, separating and releasing all children from its ranks and preventing further recruitment and use and other grave violations. I urge the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement to cease the recruitment and use of children, release and hand over all children and engage with the United Nations on measures to protect children.

54. I commend the adoption by the opposition SNA of the action plan that it signed with the United Nations in June 2024 and its efforts and commitments to implement that plan. I call upon the opposition SNA to expedite the implementation of the action plan, including by endorsing age assessment procedures for screening and finalizing standard operating procedures for the identification and separation of associated children from their ranks, with a view to handing over those children to their families for community-based reintegration.

55. I remain alarmed by the high number of children deprived of liberty for their actual or alleged association with parties to conflict, including Da'esh. Children should be treated in line with international juvenile justice standards. I remain seriously concerned at the appalling humanitarian situation and violence affecting women and children in Hawl and Rawj camps and other places of detention in the north-east. I urge all parties and relevant authorities 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 reintegration centres, and to facilitate access to essential services and family reunification for these children.

56. I once again urge all concerned countries of origin and the relevant authorities in the Syrian Arab Republic to facilitate the safe and voluntary repatriation of women and children from Hawl and Rawj camps and 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, and 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.

57. I am concerned about children living in remote areas, including the north-eastern and north-western Syrian Arab Republic, who still lack access to identification documentation, including registration cards and birth certificates. I call upon the authorities to strengthen efforts to re-establish civil services and to recognize documents issued locally, in order to facilitate the issuance of birth certificates and ensure that the children are able to enjoy their right to an identity.

58. I urge donors to enhance their financial support for humanitarian programmes, including early recovery programmes, and child protection programmes, including for the continuation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict and for the reintegration of children.