

08/2016

28, September 2016

Report of the Special
Representative of the Secretary
General for Children and Armed
Conflict 2016

[Visitar la WEB](#)

[Recibir BOLETÍN ELECTRÓNICO](#)

This document has been translated by a Translation and Interpreting Degree student doing work experience, MÓNICA VILA ROUCO, under the auspices of the Collaboration Agreement between the Universidad Pontificia Comillas, Madrid, and the Spanish Institute of Strategic Studies.

Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict 2016

Abstract:

On the past 25th of July of 2016, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Algerian Leila Zerrougui, has presented its annual report to the General Assembly of the United Nations in compliance with the provisions of Resolution 70/137. This report informs about her visits on the ground, on the progress made in the last two decades and the problems that still remain in relation to children and armed conflict. This document summarized the most important issues: the general situation in the period revised -August 2015 to July 2016 0151, the new challenges and highlight some reflections on the 20th anniversary of the program on children and armed conflicts.

Keywords:

Children, armed conflict, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, Colombia.

Introduction

This report is presented to the General Assembly in accordance with the provisions of its Resolution 70/137, "On the rights of the children", in which the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict is requested to report annually, the Algerian expert Leila Zerrougui, to do it annually, including the activities undertaken in the fulfillment of her mandate, with information about her field visits, about the progress made and the problems that still remain in relation to the issue of children and armed conflict.

The report covers the period between August 2015 and July 2016. It describes current trends and also reflects on the 20 years since the Assembly, in its resolution 51/77, established the mandate concerning children and armed conflict.

General Outlook

- In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, according to the Special Envoy for Syria, the conflict has killed more than 400,000 people, including thousands of children.
- In **Afghanistan**, the highest number of child casualties has been recorded in 2015, since the United Nations began to give systematically documentary evidence of them in 2009.
- In **Somalia**, the number of registered violations of rights showed no signs of diminishing in 2016, and hundreds of children were abducted, recruited, brutally used, killed and mutilated.
- The report notes **South Sudan**, as an extremely disturbing example. The deterioration of the situation in July 2016 is particularly troubling because of the plight of the children.
- In **Iraq**, the intense armed conflicts and the attacks against civilians perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and in the Levant have killed thousands of civilians, including many children.
- In **Yemen**, the conflict has intensified, with alarming levels of recruitment, mutilation and death of minors and attacks against schools and hospitals.

New Challenges

Attacks against health care personnel and protected personnel

In recent months, numerous attacks against medical establishments, including aerial bombardments, have increased concerns about the protection of health care in conflict situations. The attacks against hospitals and humanitarian personnel are becoming a war strategy, violating systematically the International Humanitarian Law.

In the last six months, Aleppo has suffered a series of air strikes against hospitals and the children that live over there are almost unable to obtain health care to survive.

Displacement of children due to armed conflicts

In the course of the past year, more and more people have fled armed conflicts and they have sought refuge. The most recent estimates made by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees indicate that 65.3 million people around the world have been forced to leave their homes. Of these people, almost 21.3 million are refugees, more than half of them are under the age of 18.

Protection problems posed by violent extremism

Children are being increasingly affected by the violent extremism and often are a direct target of acts conceived to provoke the maximum number of civilian casualties and also to terrorize communities. The recruitment and use of children seems to be a rising trend.

Beyond recruitment, the responses of Member States in terms of security, particularly during military operations, have also affected children directly and indirectly. The proliferation of air strikes is a matter of particular concern with regard to the protection of children due to the high number of civilian casualties they cause.

Considerations about the 20th anniversary of the program about children and armed conflicts

Since the year 2000, more than 115,000 children connected to conflicting parties have been released thanks to the coordinated dialogue and the awareness raising by the United Nations. A worldwide agreement has been reached among Member States which establishes that children should not be recruited or used in conflict. This achievement has consolidated with the campaign "Children, not soldiers"². Most of the non-state armed groups included in the list, operate in countries where government forces are involved in the campaign. Thanks to the momentum generated by the campaign, stronger frameworks have been developed for the

¹ FUENTENEbro, María. "Cuando bombardear hospitales se convierte en un arma de guerra", Esglobal, 21 de septiembre de 2016. Available in: <http://www.esglobal.org/cuando-bombardear-hospitales-se-convierte-en-un-arma-de-guerra/>

² Visit the web page of the campaign: <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/children-not-soldiers/>

protection of children in most of these countries. Only in 2015, the campaign has helped more than 8,000 children to be separated from non-state armed groups.

Rape and other forms of sexual violence against children are a major concern in most of the situations of armed conflict. According to the report, there is an agreement among Member States that establishes that sexual violence against children must be stopped and in recent years, progress has been made in the area of accountability, particularly in Colombia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

An important advancement in the protection of schools and hospitals is the collective promotion of activities like the right to education in emergency situations. The elaboration of the Statement on Safe Schools, which had been endorsed by 54 Member States when this report was being written, in July 2016, is an important step forward in that sense.

The peace process in Colombia

With regard to the recruitment and the use of children, following the announcement made by the FARC-EP on February 2016 that stated that they would no longer recruit children under the age of 18, an agreement was reached between the Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP on the 15th of May of 2016. The agreement includes the development of a protocol for the immediate departure of children under the age of 15 from the FARC-EP, a road map and a comprehensive program for the reintegration of all the children under the age of 18. The United Nations will act in support of the process as an observer and guarantor.

Blanca Palacián de Inza
IEEE Analyst