



# Security Council

Distr.: General  
12 March 2025

Original: English

## Children and armed conflict in Myanmar

### 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 seventh report on the situation of children and armed conflict in Myanmar and covers the period from 1 July 2020 to 31 December 2023.

The report documents the effects of conflict on children in Myanmar, 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,<sup>a</sup> the abduction of children and the denial of humanitarian access. Where available, the report contains information on perpetrators. It also outlines 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 Myanmar.

<sup>a</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.



## I. Introduction

1. The present report is prepared pursuant to Security Council resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#) and subsequent resolutions on children and armed conflict and covers the period from 1 July 2020 to 31 December 2023. It is the seventh report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Myanmar to be submitted to the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. The report highlights trends and patterns of grave violations committed against children by parties to the conflict in Myanmar and provides details of the progress made to end and prevent such violations since the previous report ([S/2020/1243](#)). It also contains information on progress and challenges in the engagement with parties to the conflict and the implementation of action plans and road maps. Where possible, parties to conflict responsible for grave violations are identified.

2. In annex I to the most recent report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict ([A/78/842-S/2024/384](#)), the Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias<sup>1</sup> were listed for recruitment and use, killing and maiming, sexual violence, attacks on schools and/or hospitals and abduction. The Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), the Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council (KNU/KNLA-PC), the Karenni Army (KA), the Shan State Army (SSA) and the United Wa State Army (UWSA) were listed for recruitment and use. The Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias, and the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army, were also listed as parties that have signed an action plan with the United Nations.

3. The information contained in the present report was verified by the United Nations country task force on monitoring and reporting in Myanmar, co-chaired by the Resident Coordinator and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) representative. Challenges relating to insecurity, interruptions to telecommunications and access to conflict-affected areas significantly hampered the documentation and verification of grave violations against children since the military takeover on 1 February 2021. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and related response measures, including restrictions on movement, further exacerbated those challenges. Therefore, the information contained in the present report does not represent the full extent of grave violations committed against children in Myanmar, and the actual number of violations is likely to be higher. 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, security and humanitarian developments

4. On 8 November 2020, a general election was held.<sup>2</sup> The National League for Democracy won approximately 80 per cent of the elected seats in Parliament.

5. On 1 February 2021, on the eve of the swearing in of the newly elected parliament, the Myanmar armed forces took power, annulled the results of the elections and declared a state of emergency. The Vice-President nominated by the military transferred all powers to the Commander in Chief, who formed the State

<sup>1</sup> See [A/77/895-S/2023/363](#), para. 347; and [A/78/842-S/2024/384](#), para. 358. In [A/77/895-S/2023/363](#), the reference to "Tatmadaw" was changed to the "Myanmar armed forces" to align with other reports of the United Nations.

<sup>2</sup> Additional information on the context and political developments can be found in the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar ([A/76/312](#)).

Administration Council in which he assumed the office of its Chairman and Prime Minister.

6. The President, Win Myint, the State Counsellor, Aung San Suu Kyi, and hundreds of officials and Members of Parliament affiliated with the National League for Democracy were detained and prosecuted on various charges. In response, Members of Parliament who were elected in 2020, most of whom were affiliated with the National League for Democracy, established the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw as a legislative body opposing the military takeover. They also established the National Unity Government, comprising members of the National League for Democracy and ethnic representatives.

7. Strikes by civil servants to protest military rule, coupled with an erosion of public trust in national institutions, affected the delivery of and access to public services, including healthcare and education. Meanwhile, peaceful protests nationwide were violently repressed by the Myanmar armed forces and the Myanmar Police Force. Subsequently, new armed groups emerged all around the country, although most prominently in the centre of the country. These groups included the People's Defence Forces, at times under the command and control of the National Unity Government, as well as local defence groups, some of them aligned with the National Unity Government.

8. On 8 May 2021, the State Administration Council designated the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, the National Unity Government and People's Defence Forces as "terrorist organizations". On 7 September 2021, the National Unity Government called upon all armed groups to join a "people's defensive war" to oppose the military takeover.

9. Following the military takeover, several ethnic armed organizations, some of which had signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement of 2015 and other bilateral ceasefire agreements, resumed intense fighting against the Myanmar armed forces. Those that resumed the fighting included KNU/KNLA, which refused to participate in peace talks organized by the State Administration Council in 2022 and 2023. These talks were attended by 10 other ethnic armed organizations, including UWSA, KNU/KNLA-PC, DKBA and the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA).

10. Armed clashes broke out across the country between the Myanmar armed forces and some ethnic armed organizations, as well as hundreds of People's Defence Forces and local defence groups, including in areas previously unaffected by conflict. These conflicts escalated further after October 2023 when the Three Brotherhood Alliance, which comprised the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Arakan Army (AA), launched "Operation 1027", initially in northern Shan State, which quickly escalated to involve People's Defence Forces and other ethnic armed organizations. In November, AA broke its informal ceasefire, launching attacks against the Myanmar armed forces in Rakhine State and exacerbating the pre-existing vulnerabilities of all communities, including the Rohingya. By December 2023, the Myanmar armed forces had lost control over dozens of towns, especially in northern Shan, Rakhine, Kayah, Kayin and Kachin States. Since February 2021, Myanmar has experienced Internet shutdowns, the erosion of civic space and restrictions on human rights. In addition, the military has struggled to consolidate control across the territory of Myanmar. The National Defence and Security Council has extended the state of emergency every six months, applying martial law in a total of 60 townships where more than 9 million people reside. As a consequence, the authority of military tribunals has been expanded, with further infringement on the rights of children, who faced arbitrary detention and other violations.

11. The escalation of the conflict and deterioration of the security situation generated increased risks for children and for their protection. The United Nations reported a pattern of excessive use of force and indiscriminate attacks by the Myanmar armed forces and the Myanmar Police Force, involving indiscriminate air strikes, the indiscriminate use of heavy weapons such as artillery shells, the indiscriminate use of light weapons and incidents involving arson attacks on civilian property, which affected children and caused a surge in forced displacement. In addition, the Myanmar armed forces reportedly frequently deployed its so-called “four cuts” strategy to cut off non-State organized armed groups from food sources, funds, information and recruits. Albeit not on the same scale, ethnic armed organizations and People’s Defence Forces /local defence groups also took action that affected civilians, which included the killing of some village and ward administrators appointed by the State Administration Council, as well as other civil servants of the State Administration Council and people believed to be informants. As of December 2023, Myanmar counted more than 2.6 million displaced persons nationwide, 2.3 million of whom were displaced after the military takeover. There were also 5.8 million children in need of humanitarian assistance.

12. In April 2021, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) adopted the “five-point consensus” on Myanmar, which included a call for an immediate cessation of violence and the commencement of constructive dialogue. ASEAN observed that no substantial progress had been made by the State Administration Council in implementation of the five-point consensus by the end of 2023.

### **III. Update on the main actors involved in the armed conflict in Myanmar**

13. The Myanmar armed forces and the Myanmar Police Force conducted joint actions and operations, a practice that was reinforced with the enactment on 25 March 2022 of the Myanmar Police Act, which established the full control of the military over the police force. Military control was also established over the border guard forces, which are part of the Myanmar Police Force. The BGF also operated in northern Rakhine State and was particularly active along the Bangladesh–Myanmar border. In addition, the Myanmar armed forces supported the emergence of militias, such as the people’s militia and the Pyu Saw Htee.

14. While estimates vary regarding the number of new armed groups created, most estimates point to at least 200 People’s Defence Forces formed by pro-democracy activists, including youth, many of which came under the command and control of the National Unity Government, as well as over 400 local defence groups, mostly independent of the National Unity Government. Some of these groups include the Chin National Defence Force, the Chinland Defence Force and the Karenni Nationalities Defence Force. The Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the Chin National Front/Chin National Army (CNF/CNA), the Karenni Army (KA), and KNU/KNLA provided training and support to People’s Defence Forces and local defence groups.

15. In north-western Myanmar, particularly in the Sagaing and Magway Regions and Chin State, clashes between the Myanmar armed forces and ethnic armed organizations, such as CNF/CNA and KIA, alongside the People’s Defence Forces and local defence groups, were recurrent. Armed clashes increased in northern Shan and Kachin States, especially between KIA and the Myanmar armed forces. This was also the case for armed clashes between the Myanmar armed forces and the Northern Alliance, which comprises AA, KIA, MNDAA and TNLA. Similarly, armed clashes in these areas increased between ethnic armed organizations, such as the RCSS/SSA, the Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA) and TNLA.

16. Frequent clashes took place in Kayah, Kayin, southern Shan, Mon, Bago and Taninthayi states and regions, especially between KNU/KNLA and KA, alongside People's Defence Forces and local defence groups, against the Myanmar armed forces. KNU/KNLA was also actively engaged in the fight against the Myanmar armed forces. KNU/KNLA-PC continued its operation in Kayin State.

17. The Zomi Revolutionary Organization/Zomi Revolutionary Army (ZRO/ZRA) has been operating in Chin State since 2021. The group has reportedly engaged in clashes with local resistance groups, which have affected children.

#### IV. Grave violations against children

18. The country task force verified 5,141 grave violations against 4,089 children (3,238 boys, 721 girls, 130 sex unknown), some as young as three months old. Of these, 557 violations occurred in the second half of 2020, 544 in 2021, 1,241 in 2022 and 2,799 in 2023. The cumulative total represents an over 400 per cent increase compared with the previous report of the Secretary-General.<sup>3</sup> Recruitment and use of children (2,195) was the predominant grave violation verified by the task force, accounting for some 40 per cent of the total, followed by killing and maiming (1,635; over 30 per cent) and abduction (519; 10 per cent). It is of particular concern that the number of abductions of children sharply increased, by 2,953 per cent. Grave violations against children significantly increased owing to the emergence of new armed actors and the spread of violence across the entire country.

19. Violations were verified in Rakhine (2,163), Sagaing (632), Shan (460), Kachin (377), Kayin (349), Chin (339), Kayah (269), Magway (155), Mon (129), Bago (83), Taninthayi (70), Yangon (47), Mandalay (23), Ayeyarwady (3) states and regions and other locations (42). The number of violations increased dramatically, in formerly affected states and regions (Rakhine, Kachin, Shan, Kayin and Chin) and newly affected states and regions (Sagaing, Kayah, Mon, Magway, Bago and Taninthayi).

20. The Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias, such as Pyu Saw Htee, were responsible for close to 80 per cent of the verified violations (4,058). Some 10 per cent were attributed to armed groups, including the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups and ethnic armed organizations (532), while 10 per cent were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (551).

21. The country task force verified 13 grave violations against 10 children (9 boys, 1 girl) that had occurred in the previous reporting period. Violations included the killing (2) and maiming (5) of 7 children, the use of 2 children, the rape of 1 child, the abduction of 2 children and an attack on one school.

22. In addition, the country task force verified violations against children during political unrest or protests against the military takeover that fall outside the scope of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict. Violations, which occurred mostly in Yangon and Mandalay, included the killing (71) and maiming (27) of 98 children, 127 attacks on schools (85) and hospitals (42), as well as 193 uses of schools (153) and hospitals (40). These violations were perpetrated by the Myanmar armed forces (397), Pyu Saw Htee (1), the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (2) and unidentified perpetrators (18).

<sup>3</sup> S/2020/1243, which covered the period from 1 September 2018 to 30 June 2020.

## A. Recruitment and use

23. The country task force verified the recruitment and use of 2,195 children (2,097 boys, 92 girls, 6 sex unknown) between the ages of 12 and 17. Of these cases, 471 occurred in the second half of 2020, 313 in 2021, 240 in 2022 and 1,171 in 2023. In addition, 51 boys who had been recruited before the reporting period continued to be associated with the Myanmar armed forces. Cases are likely significantly underreported due to monitoring challenges and the fear of retaliation, as well as owing to “voluntary” recruitment and use not being perceived as a grave violation at the community level, especially for children from 15 to 17 years of age.

24. Violations were attributed to the Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias (1,919) (including the Myanmar armed forces (1,860), border guard forces (35) and militias (24)), KIA (176), local defence groups (62), SSPP/SSA (8), MNDAA (7), RCSS/SSA (6), AA (3), TNLA (3), DKBA (3), CNF/CNA (2), ZRO/ZRA (2), KNU/KNLA (2) and UWSA (2). Violations occurred in Rakhine (1,737), Kachin (157), Shan (75), Chin (73), Kayin (44), Sagaing (16), Mon (14), Kayah (12), Magway (9), Yangon (5), Bago (4), Ayeyarwady (3), Mandalay (2) and Taninthayi (2) states and regions and other locations (42).

25. Most verified incidents of the use of children took place in Rakhine State. Recruitment and use declined by over one third in Rakhine in 2021 compared with 2020 and by less than half in 2022 compared with 2021. However, recruitment and use in Rakhine increased in 2023 by over 1,000 per cent compared with 2022, in line with the resumption of conflict. Following the military takeover, the recruitment and use of children extended to all states and regions, in contrast to four states and regions prior to the military takeover. Violations were perpetrated by an increased number of armed actors, from 3 in the second half of 2020 to at least 13 in 2023.

26. Methods of recruitment employed by the Myanmar armed forces included the abduction of children, economic incentives, pressure on families and the recruitment of displaced children. Abducted children were often forced to undertake military training. As an example, on 5 October 2020, in Buthidaung Township, Rakhine State, seven boys were abducted and used by the Myanmar armed forces as human shields to clear the path of landmines and protect soldiers from potential fire.

27. Similarly, the methods of recruitment of the People’s Defence Forces/local defence groups and ethnic armed organizations included forced recruitment and abduction of children while travelling or working. In both Kachin and Shan States, children were also often recruited directly from their homes, especially in areas where armed groups had issued conscription quotas. Such recruitment included forcing children to take the place of an adult who, at the time of the recruitment, was not present. Many children who were sent to military training by armed groups, were also used to cook, clean, fetch water and collect firewood. For example, in February 2022, a local defence group recruited two 15-year-old boys in Sagaing Region. When the Myanmar armed forces attacked their village, they were killed.

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

28. Since the military takeover and as at the end of December 2023, 256 children had been detained by the Myanmar armed forces and the Myanmar Police Force for their alleged association with the People’s Defence Forces/local defence groups and ethnic armed organizations. That total represents a 1,175 per cent increase in the number of children detained compared with the previous report. The length of detention was between 10 days and several weeks.

29. At least 80 of those children were subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. One child was killed while in detention, following torture. Children were often detained in settings where there was a lack of basic services, including healthcare. The United Nations provided legal aid support to detained children, at least 79 of whom were later released. At the end of the reporting period, at least 123 children remained detained in juvenile training schools and 53 were in different police stations, all awaiting trial.

30. Of particular concern, two children were initially tried by a court martial and sentenced to death, along with adults. Later, due to their underage status, they were referred to a local juvenile court for retrial.

## **B. Killing and maiming**

31. The country task force verified the killing (470) and maiming (1,165) of 1,635 children (1,053 boys, 570 girls, 12 sex unknown), some as young as a few months old. Of these, 69 children were killed or maimed in the second half of 2020, 176 in 2021, 529 in 2022 and 861 in 2023. Violations were attributed to the Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias (1,117), ethnic armed organizations, the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (32) and unidentified perpetrators (486). Violations occurred in Sagaing (372), Shan (239), Kayah (199), Rakhine (171), Kayah (146), Chin (118), Mon (97), Kachin (82), Magway (66), Bago (62), Taninthayi (38), Yangon (37) and Mandalay (8) states and regions. The main causes of child casualties were the use of explosive weapons (1,319), including artillery shelling and air strikes. The year 2023 witnessed a staggering surge in the number of casualties resulting from landmines and explosive ordnance, with 1,052 casualties reported throughout the country – a 270 per cent increase compared with the 390 casualties recorded in 2022. More than 20 per cent of the victims were children. The number of child casualties reported was affected by disruptions to the health system, which had an impact on record-keeping and information-sharing. Therefore, the actual number of child casualties may be higher.

32. For example, on 9 September 2021, the Myanmar armed forces raided a village in Gangaw Township, Magway Region, killing 10 boys between the ages of 15 and 17. On 28 November 2023, in Kale Township, Sagaing Region, a 7-year-old boy was injured in heavy weapon fire by a local defence group directed at a village where the Pyu Saw Htee group was stationed.

## **C. Rape and other forms of sexual violence**

33. The country task force verified the rape of 6 girls and 1 boy between the ages of 8 and 17. Two of these incidents occurred in 2021, two in 2022 and three in 2023. Violations were attributed to the people's militia (2), the Myanmar armed forces (2), the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (1), TNLA (1) and an unidentified perpetrator (1) in Kachin (2), Shan (2), Magway (1), Sagaing (1) and Rakhine (1) states and regions.

34. Accountability for sexual violence in Myanmar remains lacking. None of the perpetrators have so far been prosecuted. Sexual violence continued to be severely underreported owing to stigmatization, the fear of reprisals, harmful social norms, the absence or lack of access to services, impunity and safety concerns, as also reported in the report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence ([S/2021/312](#), [S/2022/272](#), [S/2023/413](#), [S/2024/292](#)).

## **D. Attacks on schools and hospitals**

35. The country task force verified 288 attacks on schools (211) and hospitals (77). The number of attacks represents a shocking increase (1,340 per cent) compared with the previous reporting period. This resulted in impaired access to education and health services. Attacks included the use of explosive weapons, including air strikes, arson, crossfire, raids and looting, as well as shooting at and the arrest of healthcare personnel. For example, in August 2023, a school in Kayin State where the Myanmar armed forces was stationed was attacked jointly by members of the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups and KNU/KNLA. Frequent crossfire occurred in the school area and the school building was damaged. On 20 November 2023, in Kayah State, the Myanmar armed forces conducted an air strike in a village that destroyed a school building, a clinic and a church, in which internally displaced persons were taking refuge, and severely injured a member of healthcare personnel and internally displaced persons.

36. The country task force verified 211 attacks on schools and protected persons in relation to schools attributed to the Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias (126), unidentified perpetrators (50), the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (33) and KNU/KNLA (1), as well as a joint group of KNU/KNLA and the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (1). The Myanmar armed forces were responsible for almost 60 per cent of the attacks. The attacks occurred in Sagaing (55), Chin (32), Kayin (26), Kayah (25), Kachin (18), Shan (10), Mon (9), Magway (9), Rakhine (8), Mandalay (7), Bago (7) and Taninthayi (5) states and regions.

37. The country task force verified 77 attacks on hospitals and protected persons in relation to hospitals attributed to the Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias (62), the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (7), unidentified perpetrators (6), the Karenni National People's Liberation Front (1) and TNLA (1). The Myanmar armed forces were responsible for 80 per cent of the attacks. The attacks occurred in Kayah (19), Sagaing (13), Chin (11), Kayin (8), Shan (7), Mon (4), Taninthayi (3), Rakhine (3), Kachin (3), Mandalay (2), Magway (2) and Bago (2) states and regions.

38. In addition, the country task force verified 127 attacks on schools (85) and hospitals (42) linked to the military takeover, which fall outside the scope of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict. These attacks were attributed to the Myanmar armed forces (125), the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (1) and an unidentified perpetrator (1) in Yangon (40), Mandalay (24), Sagaing (14), Ayeyarwady (13), Shan (8), Mon (8), Magway (6), Bago (6), Kayah (4), Kayin (2), Kachin (1) and Chin (1) states and regions.

### **Military use of schools and hospitals**

39. The country task force verified the military use of 248 schools by the Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias (236), the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (6), AA (4), a joint group of KIA and the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (1), as well as the Pa-O National Organization/ Pa-O National Army (PNO/PNA) (1). A total of 19 schools were used for military purposes in the second half of 2020, 51 in 2021, 96 in 2022 and 82 in 2023. As of December 2023, 92 schools and 6 hospitals had been vacated. Incidents took place in the Rakhine (93), Sagaing (50), Chin (23), Kayin (17), Magway (13), Kayah (12), Yangon (10), Shan (7), Mon (6), Kachin (5), Bago (4), Mandalay (4) and Taninthayi (4) states and regions.



40. 20 hospitals, including clinics, were used for military purposes by the Myanmar armed forces in Kayin (4), Sagaing (4), Chin (4), Rakhine (3), Mon (2), Kayah (2) and Taninthayi (1) states and regions. While the military use of hospitals may have taken place in the previous reporting period, it has been not possible to verify it.

## **E. Abduction**

41. The country task force verified the abduction of 519 children (292 boys, 109 girls, 118 sex unknown), between the ages of 2 and 17. The violations were attributed to the Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias (375), KIA (60), the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (32), TNLA (24), MNDAA (7), AA (6), SSPP/SSA (6), RCSS/SSA (5), DKBA (2) and the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (2). These incidents took place in Sagaing (141), Kachin (70), Chin (60), Rakhine (58), Kayin (57), Magway (52), Shan (48), Taninthayi (15), Kayah (11), Bago (4) and Mon (3) states and regions. The Myanmar armed forces were responsible for over 70 per cent of the cases of abductions. Children were abducted mainly for recruitment and use, including for information-gathering, use as guides or human shields, or to extort money. Periods of abduction lasted from one day to a few months.

42. As an example, in February 2022, the Myanmar armed forces conducted air strikes in Yin Mar Pin Township, Sagaing Region, causing 109 children and 6 teachers in a monastic school to hide in the basement of the monastery. The Myanmar armed forces occupied the monastery for three days, holding the children and teachers, as well as caregivers and other adults, captive, while seizing and occupying classrooms and destroying facilities. The Myanmar armed forces extorted money from the monks in exchange for the release of the children, which ultimately never occurred. The Myanmar armed forces eventually left the compound, releasing the children and adults.

## **F. Denial of humanitarian access**

43. The country task force verified 497 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access,<sup>4</sup> which were attributed to the Myanmar armed forces (455) (including Pyu Saw Htee (1)), the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (16), AA (7), SSPP/SSA (4), KNU/KNLA (3), PNO/PNA (2), the Three Brotherhood Alliance comprising AA, MNDAA and TNLA (1), the CNF/CNA (1) and unidentified perpetrators (8). These incidents took place in Rakhine (185), Shan (79), Kayah (56), Chin (45), Kachin (45), Sagaing (34), Magway (16), Kayin (15), Taninthayi (7), Yangon (5), Bago (4), Mandalay (4) and Mon (2) states and regions. Of these incidents, 2 were verified in 2021, 77 were verified in 2022 and 418 in 2023. Incidents included restrictions related to travel approvals, such as refusal of travel authorizations and bureaucratic impediments (284); items and/or staff being denied passage and causing interference in programme implementation (114); attacks on humanitarian facilities and personnel, including shooting, injury, violence, intimidation, robbery or abduction and being caught in fighting while providing assistance (37); arrest and detention of aid personnel (27); confiscation of materials (19); attacks on facilities or assets, including raiding of offices and damage due to explosive weapons (11); denial of movement of children seeking medical treatment (3); and aid personnel being extorted (2). These

<sup>4</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.

verified incidents do not represent the full extent of the overall access constraints experienced by humanitarian actors.

44. While humanitarian access in 2020 was already challenging, especially in Rakhine, Shan, Kachin and southern Chin States, the situation steadily worsened following the military takeover in 2021, particularly in newly affected areas, with a dramatic escalation in humanitarian needs. The situation also worsened in May 2023 when Cyclone Mocha hit western Myanmar and the State Administration Council suspended humanitarian access in Rakhine State and other cyclone-affected areas. In parallel, humanitarian workers and conflict-affected populations faced increasing access restrictions, imposed predominantly by the Myanmar armed forces, but also by ethnic armed organizations and the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups. In Kayah, Kayin, Sagaing, Magway, Chin, Kachin, Shan and Rakhine states and regions, the Myanmar armed forces cut off access to food, water, medicine, electricity and communications. The restrictions on the transportation of essential goods only worsened the situation of a population in dire need of humanitarian assistance and basic services, particularly exacerbating food insecurity and the lack of shelter and medical care.

## **V. Progress and challenges in ending and preventing grave violations against children**

### **A. Progress in the legislative and policy framework**

45. The United Nations provided technical and multilateral coordination support to the then Government of Myanmar in developing the rules and procedures for the implementation of the 2019 Child Rights Law. A technical working group composed of the relevant ministries was established and was tasked with overseeing the drafting of the rules and procedures, with a series of national consultations held in 2020. The aforementioned law and its rules and procedures were expected to improve the legal protection of children by introducing specialized child-sensitive judicial procedures. The law and the related rules and procedures include specific provisions for children affected by armed conflict, including the criminalization of grave violations. These legislative and regulatory efforts were put on hold following the military takeover.

46. The State Administration Council amended various legislative frameworks, including the Counter-Terrorism Law, the Legal Aid Law and the Myanmar Police Act, and has enacted orders to exercise martial law, such that they would potentially allow for the arrest and detention of children. There has been no meaningful accountability for perpetrators of grave violations or justice for child victims.

### **B. Follow-up on dialogue and implementation of action plans**

47. In November 2020, the country task force, alongside the Special Representative, maintained their collaboration with the then Government of Myanmar, as well as the Myanmar armed forces, and developed a 12-point road map to finalize the implementation of the joint action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children. While military directives prohibiting the recruitment and use of children were reissued in July and August 2020, other identified actions remained limited or were delayed, including pursuant to pandemic-related restrictions and the military takeover, such as the training of military troops on the prevention of underage recruitment and joint efforts to resolve the backlog of cases on suspected minors within the ranks of the Myanmar armed forces.

48. On 20 November 2020, DKBA signed a joint action plan with the United Nations to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children. It was the first joint action plan signed between an ethnic armed organization in Myanmar and the United Nations. In October and November 2021, the country task force provided training to 136 members of DKBA on preventing underage recruitment. Engagement with other armed groups, including KNU/KNLA-PC, KNU/KNLA and KIA was maintained regarding the signature of joint action plans to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children. In addition, the country task force had regular interactions with other listed ethnic armed organizations, including RCSS/SSA and KA, on the protection of children as well as the prevention of the recruitment and use of children. The country task force also engaged with non-listed parties, namely AA and CNF/CNA, to end and prevent grave violations against children.

49. Following the military takeover, the country task force continued to engage with the Myanmar armed forces as a listed party on the joint action plan and on the prevention and ending of all grave violations, albeit in a limited manner. As part of the joint action plan, children were expected to be granted documents and benefits at the time of their release from the ranks of the armed forces. As of December 2023, age verification confirmation was still ongoing for 117 of the suspected minors previously identified as having been recruited by the Myanmar armed forces. Some cases have been pending for up to seven years and have been delayed in part due to COVID-19 restrictions and the military takeover, and most suspected minors were still in their battalions, except for 33 minors who were absent without leave.

50. Meetings between the United Nations and the interministerial committee on prevention of underage recruitment resumed in May 2022, including on the implementation of the 12-point road map to complete the joint action plan.

51. Since the military takeover, engagement with the Myanmar armed forces and armed groups listed in the annexes to the most recent report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict ([A/78/842-S/2024/384](#)) to implement preventive measures or advocate the signing of joint action plans to end and prevent all grave violations against children has been delayed, due to pandemic-related restrictions and an increase in hostilities across the entire country.

52. In May and July 2021, and pursuant to Security Council resolution [1460 \(2003\)](#) and subsequent resolutions, the United Nations engaged with 10 armed groups (KNU/KNLA, KNU/KNLA-PC, KIA, RCSS/SSA, UWSA, AA, CNF/CNA, TNLA, MNDAA and SSPP/SSA). These engagements were used to advocate for utmost restraint to keep children safe and away from the conflict. Two meetings were also held with the National Unity Government at the technical level in 2022. In addition, in 2023, the United Nations held five meetings with ethnic armed organizations, namely AA, RCSS/SSA, KA, DKBA and KNU/KNLA. The meetings allowed for renewed advocacy concerning and explored concrete ways of achieving the protection of children.

### **C. Advocacy and mainstreaming of child protection**

53. Since the military takeover, the country task force has developed different awareness-raising communication materials on the prevention of grave violations against children that are adapted to the changing context. In addition, partners have pivoted to provide psychosocial support, including in remote areas, to address the impact of the conflict on children. Child protection was mainstreamed throughout the 2022 and 2023 humanitarian response plans with a gender analysis for considering the specific needs of girls and children with disabilities.

## **D. Release of children and programmatic response**

54. The Myanmar armed forces released 51 underage recruits who were above 18 at the time of verification or writing, all of whom benefited from reintegration services from relevant ministries, the United Nations and implementing partners. Within the framework of the joint action plan, in collaboration with the country task force, the Myanmar armed forces released 126 boys, including some who were released before the reporting period and including 28 children released in May 2022, after they were verified as minors at the time of recruitment by the Myanmar armed forces. They are receiving long-term reintegration support that is based on findings of a needs assessment by UNICEF and its partners. In addition, in 2023, the Myanmar armed forces unilaterally released 12 underage recruits, outside the framework of the joint action plan. They will be provided with reintegration services upon verification by the United Nations. In formal recruitment centres, the Myanmar armed forces continued its efforts to prevent underage recruitment.

55. The Kachin Independence Army released 73 children (57 boys, 16 girls), including 57 children released in collaboration with the country task force. These children were receiving reintegration support, in addition to 25 children released before the reporting period. Other children were released soon after being recruited, but the country task force was not informed of these cases and no protection assistance could be provided.

56. Reintegration services for children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups included mental health and psychosocial support, as well the issuance of discharge letters and citizenship scrutiny cards. In addition, the United Nations and implementing partners provided long-term reintegration services to 224 children (208 boys and 16 girls) to support family reunification and reconciliation, as well as community reconciliation to address the stigma of association with armed forces or armed groups. Children benefited from education, vocational training and socioeconomic reintegration through career counselling, work placement and support to develop income-generating activities.

57. The reintegration of children released from armed groups can be challenging as a result of the prosecution of children under the Unlawful Associations Act (1908), the challenges for caseworkers in obtaining access to contested areas and the lack of socioeconomic opportunities, especially for those who are displaced. In 2021, the country task force conducted an analysis to understand the drivers of underage recruitment and the specific needs of boys and girls associated with armed groups. The analysis highlighted the importance of appropriate, coordinated, timely and safe case management support and services to ensure the sustainable reintegration of children, as well as the contribution that communities may make to mitigating the risk of underage recruitment and use.

58. The spread of conflict has resulted in explosive ordnance contamination in all 15 states and regions, including the presence of improvised explosive devices and landmines, which exposes children to a high risk of killing and maiming. In August 2021, the mine action area of responsibility was activated nationwide under the inter-cluster coordination group, to support the interventions of different mine action actors, including awareness-raising and explosive ordnance risk education. Survivors of grave violations were referred to specialized services through child protection case management, with the support of the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and other partners. The inter-cluster coordination group worked to mainstream explosive ordnance risk education across all clusters.

## VI. Observations and recommendations

59. I am deeply alarmed by the surge in grave violations against children and the multiplication in the number of armed actors. I am appalled by the scale of recruitment and use and by the surge in the killing and maiming of children, notably as a result of the widespread use of indiscriminate air strikes and firearms, explosive ordnance, in particular landmines, and 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.

60. I urge all parties to conflict in Myanmar to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and to put in place measures to end and prevent violations against children. I urge all parties to engage with the United Nations to adopt concrete measures to that end, including through the adoption and implementation of action plans.

61. I reiterate the call set out in my last report on children and armed conflict for the People's Defence Forces to engage with the United Nations on measures to prevent all grave violations against children. I welcome the meeting with the National Unity Government. I also welcome engagement by AA, RCSS/SSA, DKBA and KNU/KNLA with the United Nations on child protection and call upon those parties to work closely with the United Nations and its country task force to develop and/or implement action plans and other prevention commitments.

62. I am concerned by the ongoing recruitment and use of children by armed groups and call upon all armed groups to take measures to prevent and end the recruitment of children and to further collaborate with the United Nations in that regard. I call upon all parties to release all children from their ranks. I welcome the implementation of the joint action plan on the recruitment and use of children by DKBA. I welcome the release of children by KIA. I call upon KIA to strengthen its engagement with the United Nations to release the children who are yet to be released.

63. 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 the 12-point road map. I welcome the release of children by the Myanmar armed forces in the context of the implementation of the joint action plan. Nevertheless, I am concerned by the continued high number of children used, predominantly in Rakhine. I urge the Myanmar armed forces to work with the United Nations and my Special Representative to ensure the sustainability of the mechanism to end the recruitment and use of children, systematically identify children in their ranks, secure their swift release, ensure their safe socioeconomic reintegration and hold accountable those responsible for those violations. The clearance of the backlog of cases should be treated as a priority.

64. I am deeply concerned by the spike in and the high number of children in detention, including by reports of torture and the practice of detaining children in order to exert pressure on parents. I call for the implementation of the 2019 Child Rights Law and act in line with international juvenile justice standards. I urge the Myanmar armed forces to immediately release detained children and recall that children should be treated primarily as victims. Children should only be detained as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible time, in line with international juvenile justice standards and the best interests of the child.

65. I am gravely concerned by the surge in the killing and maiming of children caused by indiscriminate air strikes and the use of heavy weapons and artillery shelling, as well as by explosive ordnance and arson attacks perpetrated by the Myanmar armed forces. I am furthermore concerned by the persistent occurrence of

rape and other forms of sexual violence against children. I urge all parties to refrain from the use of explosive weapons that cause death or injury to children. I strongly urge the Myanmar armed forces to adopt and implement a comprehensive joint action plan with the United Nations to end and prevent the killing and maiming of children, sexual violence against children and attacks on schools and hospitals, as well as abductions. I take note of the information provided by the Myanmar armed forces to the United Nations on the training conducted.

66. I am alarmed by the severe and increasing restrictions on humanitarian access and I reiterate my call upon the Myanmar armed forces and all other parties to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to children. I also call upon parties to conflict to facilitate unfettered access for the United Nations to all conflict-affected areas for the purposes of the monitoring and reporting of grave violations against children.

67. I call upon all non-listed armed groups in Myanmar to sign a comprehensive code of conduct dedicated to the prevention of grave violations and the protection of children in armed conflict, including a focus on the prevention of the recruitment and use of children in hostilities, on ensuring their safety and on guaranteeing their unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance.

68. I am alarmed by the increased number of children abducted, as well as by the rise in the number of attacks against schools and hospitals and protected persons in relation to schools and hospitals, and by the military use of these facilities. I call upon all parties to the conflict to immediately end and prevent such attacks and particularly end the military use of such facilities and restore such facilities for civilian use.

69. I urge donors to provide financial support to programmes that address humanitarian and basic human needs for children affected by conflict and facilitate their access to education and health services, and that aim to reintegrate children who have been recruited and used. I also call upon the international community to support life-saving explosive ordnance risk education and mine clearance action and to provide victim assistance, including through life-saving medical interventions.

70. I regret that the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict did not adopt conclusions after it considered my previous report on children and armed conflict in Myanmar ([S/2020/1243](#)). It is my hope that Security Council members can swiftly adopt conclusions on the present report.

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