

Army Peace Council, and the Karenni Army and Shan State Army, with the United Nations, including the release of 25 children (17 boys, 8 girls) by KIA, and urge them to sign joint commitments to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children.

134. I am extremely worried by persistent access restrictions in some States and call upon all parties to allow access to the United Nations and child protection actors for humanitarian and monitoring purposes.

135. I urge all parties to engage in national peace dialogues and use the “Practical guidance for mediators” to place children at the heart of discussions.

### **Somalia**

136. The United Nations verified 3,709 grave violations against 2,959 children (2,436 boys, 523 girls).

137. The recruitment and use of 1,442 boys and 53 girls was verified, with some children as young as 8. Al-Shabaab remained the main perpetrator (1,169); followed by government security forces, including the Somali Police Force (100) and the Somali National Army (74); and regional forces, including Puntland forces (40), Galmudug forces (30), Jubbaland forces (19), Galmudug police (4) and Jubbaland police (1). Violations were also attributed to clan militia (56) and the Westland militia (2). A total of 300 children were used in support roles such as escorts, guards at checkpoints and for cleaning, and 269 children were used as fighters.

138. A total of 236 children, between the ages of 13 and 17, were detained for alleged association with armed groups by the Somali Police Force (164), the Somali National Army (37), Jubbaland forces (24), the National Intelligence and Security Agency (7) and Galmudug forces (4).

139. A total of 703 children were killed (222) or maimed (481) (518 boys, 185 girls). The casualties were attributed to Al-Shabaab (252); government security forces, including the Somali National Army (43) and the Somali Police Force (35); and regional forces, including Jubbaland forces (19), Galmudug forces (10), Puntland forces (5), Jubbaland police (3), Galmudug police (2) and Southwest forces (1). Violations were also attributed to clan militias (28), the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) (5), the Kenya Defence Forces (3), the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (1) and unidentified armed elements (296). The main causes of child casualties were improvised explosive devices (158), crossfire between armed forces and armed groups (155), gun shots (127) and explosive remnants of war (54).

140. Responsibility for rape and other forms of sexual violence against 227 girls was attributed to government security forces, including the Somali National Army (25) and the Somali Police Force (14), and to regional forces including Jubbaland forces (16), Galmudug forces (5), Southwest forces (3) Puntland forces and Jubbaland police (1 each). Al-Shabaab (26), clan militias (17) and the Westland militia (1) were also responsible for violations. One violation each was attributed to the Ethiopian National Defence Forces and AMISOM, respectively. In 116 cases, perpetrators could not be identified. The cases of sexual violence included rape (148), attempted rape (42), forced marriage (19), sexual harassment (17) and sexual assault (1).

141. A total of 76 attacks on schools (64) and hospitals (12) were attributed to Al-Shabaab (60), government security forces (including Somali National Army (5) and Somali Police Force (1)), clan militia (4), Galmudug forces (2), AMISOM (1) and unidentified perpetrators (2). Incidents included the abduction of teachers and pupils, the killing of and threats against teachers, and the destruction and looting of facilities. In addition, one school was used for military purposes by the Somali Police Force and one health centre was used by clan militias.

142. A total of 1,158 children (1,065 boys, 93 girls) were abducted, the overwhelming majority by Al-Shabaab (1,142), mainly for the purpose of recruitment and use. Other perpetrators include unidentified armed elements (11), Westland militia (4) and clan militias (1).

143. Responsibility for 50 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were attributed to Al-Shabaab (22), clan militias (12), unidentified armed elements (6), Galmudug forces (4), Jubbaland forces (2), as well as the National Intelligence and Security Agency, Southwest forces, Puntland police and Puntland administration (1 each). Incidents included threats and violence against humanitarian personnel and assets, the abduction or detention of personnel and beneficiaries, entry restrictions, disruption and looting.

#### *Developments and concerns*

144. I welcome the signature between the Federal Government and my Special Representative, in October, of a road map to expedite the implementation of the 2012 action plans on ending and preventing the recruitment and use and the killing and maiming of children. It includes renewed commitments to protect children, and I call upon the Federal Government to fully implement the commitments, including at the level of the federal member states.

145. High numbers of grave violations committed against children by all parties to conflict in Somalia are concerning, in particular the staggering numbers of child abductions and the recruitment and use of children by Al-Shabaab. Also concerning is the growing number of violations attributed to government security forces, in particular the sharp increase in the recruitment and use and the killing and maiming of children, as well as sexual violence perpetrated against children and attributed to the Somali Police Force and regional forces, and the detention of children for their actual or alleged association with armed groups. I call upon all parties to immediately cease all violations and abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

146. I urge the Federal Government to treat children formerly associated with armed groups primarily as victims in line with the best interests of the child, according to the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (the Paris Principles), as endorsed by Somalia, and to fully apply the 2014 standard operating procedures for the handover of children, including at the federal member state level. I urge the Government to fast-track the adoption of legislation, including the child rights bill.

147. I reiterate the recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in Somalia ([S/2020/174](#)).

#### **South Sudan**

148. The United Nations verified 270 grave violations against 250 children (188 boys, 62 girls).

149. Responsibility for the recruitment and use of 161 children (149 boys, 12 girls) was attributed to the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO) (80), government security forces (30), including the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (20), South Sudan National Police Service (6) and National Security Services (4). Violations were also attributed to the South Sudan United Front/Army (SSUF/A) (21), the National Salvation Front (NAS) (19), the South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA) (10) and the National Democratic Movement (NDM) (1).

150. A total of 51 children (39 boys, 12 girls) were killed (25) and maimed (26). Casualties were attributed to government security forces (12) (including South Sudan