



# A CRITICAL FRIEND?

HOW THE UK USES ITS INFLUENCE  
TO PROTECT CHILDREN'S RIGHTS  
IN CONFLICT

**WAR**  
child

# CONTENTS

<b>Acronyms</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>8</b>
1.1 Children affected by armed conflict	8
1.2 The role of the UK in relation to children in armed conflict	10
1.3 About this report	12
<b>2. Case Studies</b>	<b>14</b>
2.1 Afghanistan	14
2.2 Iraq	20
2.3 Nigeria	26
2.4 Saudi Arabia-led coalition operating in Yemen	32
2.5 Somalia	40
<b>3. A New Deal for Children Affected by Armed Conflict</b>	<b>46</b>

# ACRONYMS

AMISOM	African Union Mission to Somalia
ANDSF	Afghan National Defence and Security Forces
CAAC	Children and Armed Conflict
CSSF	Conflict, Stability and Security Fund
CJTF	Civilian Joint Task Force
DFID	Department for International Development
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FGS	Federal Government of Somalia
ICAI	Independent Commission for Aid Impact
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IED	Improvised Explosive Devices
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISIL	Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
MRM	Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OPAC	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict
PMF	Popular Mobilization Forces
PSVI	Prevention of Sexual Violence Initiative
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SNA	Somali National Army
SRSg	Secretary-General's Special Representative
UNAMA	UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNSOM	UN Assistance Mission in Somalia

۱ - ۰ - ۳ - ۲





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In many violent conflicts around the world children are not bystanders but are centre stage. In addition to facing death or injury, children are separated from their families, exposed to violence and cannot access education or healthcare. They are exploited through child labour, sexual abuse and tens of thousands of children are recruited and used by government armies and non-state armed groups. Some of the states committing these rights' violations - such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia and Saudi Arabia - are close allies of the UK. The UK has the potential to have significant influence on such states when it comes to the rights of children in armed conflict, building on its leadership as a major donor of international aid, its strong record on championing human rights and gender equality, as well as its extensive trade relationships and military commitments.

And yet there are a number of countries closely allied to the UK in which children's rights in conflict settings have been deprioritised in favour of other UK interests. This inconsistency undermines the legitimacy of the UK in upholding values that as a nation we should be proudly defending and points to the need to urgently redraw priorities so that the world's most vulnerable children are squarely at the top of the agenda.

This report reviews the extent to which the rights of children in armed conflict are promoted and protected by the UK government in Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia and with Saudi Arabia and Gulf partners. These five countries have been selected because they have state forces or state-aligned militia listed by the United Nations for committing 'grave violations' against children. War Child also considers these countries are of significant strategic, diplomatic and political importance for the UK government, and as such the UK has the opportunity to play an important role in promoting children's rights. The report examines the record of action or inaction in the spheres of development, diplomatic, defence and trade measures - areas where the UK has a legal and moral imperative to act as well as the influence and the ability to make a real difference for children caught up in conflicts.

There is a great deal that is positive in terms of the UK's engagement and support - most notably in terms of development aid - but there are stark inconsistencies in approach. The unavoidable explanation for these inconsistencies is that the rights of children caught up in armed conflict are readily put to one side when they are seen to conflict with other considerations - primarily those of trade and national security. Such an approach detracts from the very positive contribution that the UK has made in the past and can make in the future. It detracts

significantly from the excellent work done on the prevention of sexual violence in conflicts and from the UK's global standing as a champion for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), for gender equality and as a lead in the fight against modern slavery in all its forms.

Using a traffic lights scoring system this report assesses the UK government's commitment to preventing grave violations and holding perpetrators to account. The criteria used includes: the level of the UK's influence; the extent to which ending grave violations is prioritised in different areas of engagement; and the extent to which arms transfers are prohibited where there is a risk they will be used to commit human rights abuses. It is worth emphasising that at times it was difficult to find publicly-available information in relation to some of these criteria, and that this lack of transparency itself presents a challenge. A recent study has suggested that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office – a major focus department of this study – ranks well below average when it comes to the transparency of how it spends international aid<sup>1</sup>.

Recognising the constraints represented by this transparency deficit, and basing our analysis on publicly-available information, we found that the UK's performance in these five countries could not be considered as strong when it comes to the prevention of grave violations and actively holding states accountable. Mostly the results are mixed and in the case of the Saudi led coalition in Yemen, the UK's actions are undermining the prevention of grave violations.

Children living in armed conflicts are far away from Whitehall, they are largely voiceless and reliant upon others to articulate their rights. Given the facts on the ground, complacency and turning a blind eye for the sake of expediency is not an option. These children need a new deal whereby the UK deploys its many strengths – leadership on aid and development, global influence, expertise and diplomacy – to prioritise their rights. War Child recommends six key actions that the UK should implement:

- **Develop a cross-governmental strategy for protecting children affected by armed conflict – to address policy incoherence and inconsistencies that undermine children's rights.**
- **Strategically use the levers of humanitarian assistance, military presence, trade measures and diplomatic relationships to put more pressure on state and non-state armed groups that commit grave violations against children.**
- **Make better use of all international channels and UN bodies to promote the rights of children in armed conflict.**
- **Support mechanisms that hold the perpetrators of grave violations to account to deter future violations – such as tying economic sanctions to persistent breaches.**
- **Increase training of UK armed forces on the rights of children in armed conflict and ensure that these issues are embedded in training provided to military forces in other countries.**
- **Only permit arms exports when they adhere to international law – and do not approve arms exports to countries who are listed by the UN as committing grave violations.**

1 Publish What You Fund, Aid Transparency Index 2018, <http://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/reports/2018-Aid-Transparency-Index.pdf>

COUNTRY	RATING AGAINST KEY CRITERIA	OVERALL RATING	POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES
<p><b>AFGHANISTAN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ UK has a high level of influence and strategic interests</li> <li>■ Grave violations are a priority in development projects, programmes or initiatives</li> <li>■ Grave violations are a priority in relation to military missions</li> <li>■ Diplomatic and political measures ensure prevention of and accountability for grave violations</li> <li>■ Arms transfers are prohibited where there is significant risk that arms will be used to commit human</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Largest provider of donor aid to Afghanistan with a strong focus on girls' rights</li> <li> Licensed £29 million arms despite evidence of Afghan National Forces committing grave violations</li> </ul>
<p><b>IRAQ</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ UK has a high level of influence and strategic interests</li> <li>■ Grave violations are a priority in development projects, programmes or initiatives</li> <li>■ Grave violations are a priority in relation to military missions</li> <li>■ Diplomatic and political measures ensure prevention of and accountability for grave violations</li> <li>■ Arms transfers are prohibited where there is significant risk that arms will be used to commit human</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Largest contributor to the Iraq Humanitarian Pooled Fund; one of the largest donors towards the UN's Mosul Flash Appeal</li> <li> UK military training to Iraqi and Peshmerga forces has no explicit focus on child protection. Government aligned Popular Mobilization Forces militia are under direct command of the Iraqi Prime Minister have committed grave violations. UK licensing of £23 million arms exports despite these violations</li> </ul>
<p><b>NIGERIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ UK has a high level of influence and strategic interests</li> <li>■ Grave violations are a priority in development projects, programmes or initiatives</li> <li>■ Grave violations are a priority in relation to military missions</li> <li>■ Diplomatic and political measures ensure prevention of and accountability for grave violations</li> <li>■ Arms transfers are prohibited where there is significant risk that arms will be used to commit human</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> DFID aid programme in Nigeria third largest in the world. Support for multinational joint taskforce on Boko Haram</li> <li> No clear or evident focus on child protection in security or stabilisation training</li> </ul>
<p><b>SAUDI-LED COALITION IN YEMEN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ UK has a high level of influence and strategic interests</li> <li>■ Grave violations are a priority in development projects, programmes or initiatives</li> <li>■ Grave violations are a priority in relation to military missions</li> <li>■ Diplomatic and political measures ensure prevention of and accountability for grave violations</li> <li>■ Arms transfers are prohibited where there is significant risk that arms will be used to commit human</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Fourth largest humanitarian donor in Yemen – strong focus on children's education. Funding provided for office of UN Special Envoy on Yemen</li> <li> Continued sales of arms to Saudi Arabia despite Saudi-led coalition being listed for grave violations. Failure to use diplomatic influence and UN Security Council role as penholder on Yemen to condemn Saudi-led coalition grave violations</li> </ul>
<p><b>SOMALIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ UK has a high level of influence and strategic interests</li> <li>■ Grave violations are a priority in development projects, programmes or initiatives</li> <li>■ Grave violations are a priority in relation to military missions</li> <li>■ Diplomatic and political measures ensure prevention of and accountability for grave violations</li> <li>■ Arms transfers are prohibited where there is significant risk that arms will be used to commit human</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Supports pre-deployment training for peace-keeping mission with focus on sexual and gender-based violence; and training on child soldiers for Somali National Security.</li> <li> Insufficient consideration of children's rights in development programming – particularly CSSF funding. Support for counter-terrorism law without adequate protections for children</li> </ul>

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 CHILDREN AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT

The past decades have seen a rise in intense, complex and protracted conflicts which have had disastrous impacts on civilian populations. Children are not at the side-lines of these conflicts – on the contrary, they are frequently exploited for military, economic, propaganda, political and strategic gain. Too often children have become “accessible, expendable commodities they keep the engines of war running.”<sup>2</sup>

The UN has defined six ‘grave violations’ of children in armed conflict.

1. Killing and maiming of children
2. Recruitment or use of children as soldiers
3. Sexual violence against children
4. Abduction of children
5. Attacks against schools or hospitals
6. Denial of humanitarian access for children

The six grave violations were established because of their egregious nature, the severity of their consequences on the lives of children and because they are suitable to be monitored and quantified<sup>3</sup>. The UN Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) gathers evidence of grave violations against children in reporting to the UN Security Council.<sup>4</sup> Yet progress in preventing and addressing these grave violations has been alarmingly slow, and there is widespread impunity.

Research by Save the Children<sup>5</sup> states that the number of children verified by the UN as killed or maimed has risen drastically in the last 10 years. Reports of life-saving aid such as food, water and medicine being blocked are up more than 1,500 percent since 2010. Reported incidents of attacks on schools and hospitals have roughly doubled in the last decade and there is a growing trend in sexual violence and abductions. According to the annual reports produced by the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative (SRSG) for Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC), there were at least 49,640 verified cases of boys and girls

2 Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (2017), Stop the use and abuse of children in and for armed conflict, 17 November 2017 [Post](#)

3 Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict (2013), Working Paper No 1 – The Six Grave Violations Against Children During Armed Conflict: The Legal Foundation Updated November 2013, [Working Paper](#)

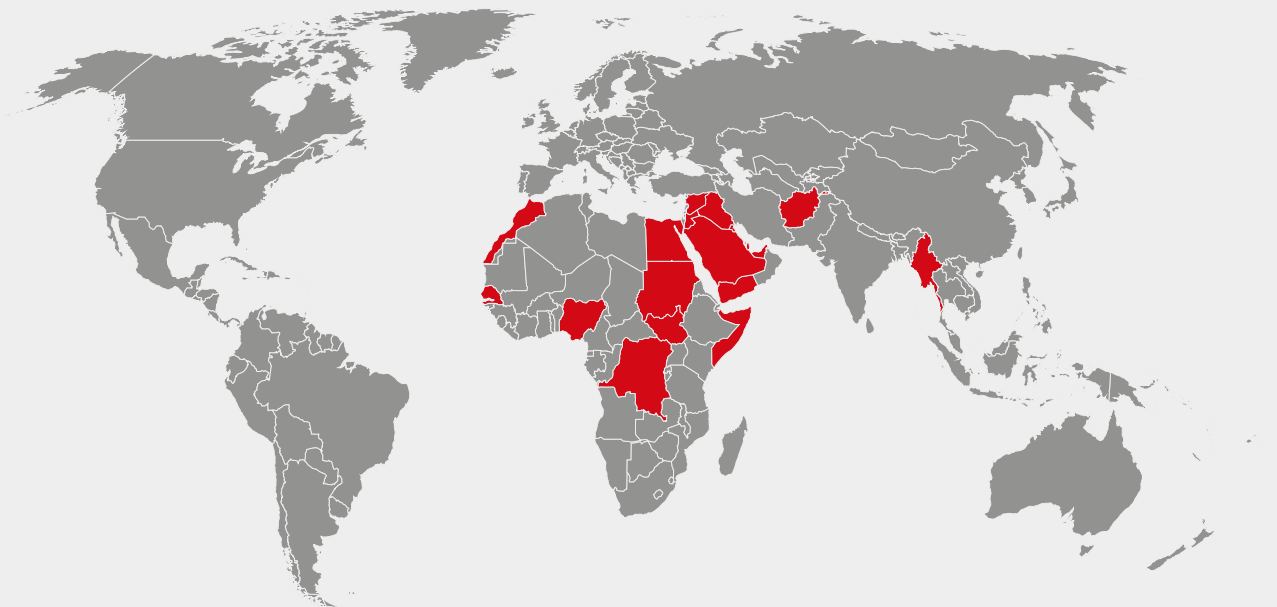
4 The MRM is a process managed by country-based task forces co-chaired by the highest UN representative in the country and the UNICEF country representative. It is designed to systematically monitor, document and report on abuses of the rights of children in situations of armed conflict.

5 Save the Children (2018) The War on Children: Time to end grave violations against children in conflict [Report](#)

recruited and used by armed forces and groups from 2005 to 2016 – this is often a bigger problem in protracted conflicts where troops are needed to replace adult fighters and there are strong economic pushes for child recruitment.

In addition to being directly exposed to killing, physical harm and illegal recruitment, children also suffer because their lives are upended by war, resulting in hunger, disease, lack of education and healthcare, broken child protection systems, displacement and disturbing levels of psychological trauma. The treatment they receive when detained and prosecuted for their association with non-state armed groups is also a growing problem.

The 2018 annual report of the UN Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict<sup>6</sup> lists ten state security forces and government aligned militia which are guilty of committing grave violations.<sup>7</sup> A large proportion of these violations are committed by non-state armed groups<sup>8</sup> who have recruited and exploited children in Syria, Iraq, Mali, Nigeria, Yemen, Central African Republic, Libya and elsewhere. Many of these groups are fluid, fast-changing and their objectives are poorly understood. The picture is further complicated by the fact that they often receive funding and training from foreign governments.



Violations of children's rights are not an inevitable consequence of war, and are perpetrated only by some armed actors. States and non-state armed groups are obliged to undertake security operations in accordance with the Geneva Conventions and other elements of International Humanitarian Law (IHL).<sup>9</sup> Children must also be protected by international human rights law<sup>10</sup> and international criminal law.<sup>11</sup> It is concerning that the growing prevalence of this kind of asymmetric warfare between states and non-state armed groups has seen an overall decrease in compliance with IHL in the theatres of conflict.

6 Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary General, 16 May 2018, A/72/865–S/2018/465.

7 The countries listed in 2018 are: Afghanistan, DRC, Iraq, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Yemen, Saudi-led coalition, Nigeria.

8 Most current armed conflicts are non-international. In the SG's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict for 2018, there were at least 6,000 verified violations by government forces and more than 15,000 verified violations by a range of non-State armed groups.

9 These include: The Four Geneva Conventions (1949); Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions (1977); the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998) and Customary international humanitarian law.

10 Including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and its Optional Protocols; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966); Regional human rights instruments such as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; ILO Conventions 29 (1930) and 182 (1999); the Convention against Torture (1984) and customary international human rights law.

11 International criminal law is a body of international law that prohibits certain categories of conduct viewed as the most serious crimes of concern to the international community (as defined in the preamble to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court).



## **1.2 THE ROLE OF THE UK IN RELATION TO CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT**

This report looks at the role of the UK in preventing grave violations from occurring and holding states and others accountable when they do take place. The starting premise is that the UK is a significant world power and has considerable influence over key players in this arena. This influence is derived from its military clout, trade relations and from 'soft' power that emerges from historic connections, cultural influence and on-the-ground diplomacy. It also derives from being a major contributor to humanitarian aid around the world – it is committed by law to spending 0.7 per cent of gross national income on Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) and in 2017 was the third largest donor of ODA in the world. It was also the largest provider of core contributions to multilateral organisations in 2016 and is a significant donor for UNICEF.

This political, diplomatic, military, economic and humanitarian influence is amplified by the UK's privileged structural advantages through membership of, amongst others, the G7, the G20, NATO, the Commonwealth and in its status as one of five permanent members of the UN Security Council. The UK currently has a seat on the UN Human Rights Council and is a permanent member of the UN Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. It is one of the largest financial contributors to UN peacekeeping and as part of the UN Security Council plays an important role in the creation and configuration of missions.

The UK has a track record of positive action in protecting the rights of children in armed conflict at the international level. It has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC). It has endorsed the Paris Principles which aim to combat the unlawful recruitment or use of children by armed forces or armed groups through prevention, securing the release of children concerned and supporting their social reintegration. It has endorsed the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers which seek to prioritise and further operationalise child protection within UN peacekeeping missions. The UK has also signed up to the Safe Schools Declaration and has agreed thereby to take specific steps to reduce the risk of attacks on education.

The UK has also played an important role in the development of international laws and frameworks that help to protect children caught up in war. The UK led the way to secure international support for the Arms Trade Treaty, which prohibits states parties from authorising arms transfers where there is significant risk that arms will be used to commit human rights abuses. It played an important role in the development of the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development and has committed to their implementation including on Goal 16 regarding building peaceful, just and inclusive societies. It also promotes accountability to these frameworks and standards – for example through supporting the work of the Office of the SRSG on Children and Armed Conflict, and increased funding for their work from 2016-2020.<sup>12</sup> The UK has also provided support for the International Criminal Court, other human rights accountability mechanisms at regional and national levels and compliance with financial sanctions against individuals and groups listed for grave violations such as the Taliban.

Other positive action includes the UK's strong lead on women, peace and security and the Prevention of Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI)<sup>13</sup> which supports survivors of sexual violence in conflict around the world and aims to deliver justice for them. At regional and country levels, the Department for International Development (DFID) is engaged in preventing and addressing Violence Against

---

<sup>12</sup> Human Rights and Democracy, FCO (2016) p.19 [Report](#)

<sup>13</sup> For more information on this initiative, [see here](#)

Women and Girls including in conflict situations.<sup>14</sup> The Ministry of Defence has delivered pre-deployment training to peacekeepers from African countries as well as training and support to security forces in many different countries. The UK was the largest contributor to the Education Cannot Wait fund in 2017 which supports learning for children in emergency and conflict settings.<sup>15</sup> It has also been instrumental in pushing for the issue of modern slavery, which encompasses addressing the recruitment and use of children,<sup>16</sup> to be a priority globally.<sup>17</sup>

“

*The rules-based system we helped to develop has enabled global cooperation to protect shared fundamental values of respect for human dignity, human rights, freedom, democracy and equality. As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, a leading contributor to NATO, a European country sharing fundamental values with our partners and a champion of the Commonwealth, we are committed to upholding and renewing the rules-based international system.*

”

UK National Security Capability Review, March 2018

There is much that is positive and commensurate with the UK's global standing as a staunch supporter of the rules-based international order. So why is this report scrutinising the UK's record on this issue?

The wider context is a growing unease that the UK is slipping in its commitment to international human rights and that the direction of travel is towards prioritisation of national economic and security interests. In 2015, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's (FCO) Permanent Under-Secretary stated to the Foreign Affairs Committee that *"I would dispute that [human rights are] low down, but I would not dispute that right now the prosperity agenda is further up the list."*<sup>18</sup> The UK Aid Strategy for 2015 does not mention human rights at all, and the International Development Committee has questioned the wisdom of this given the concomitant focus on fragile and conflict-affected states.<sup>19</sup> Supporting arms exports was made a core task of the Ministry of Defence for the first time in the 2015 National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review, which suggests that it is increasingly a priority.

The Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) was established in 2015 and operates in over 70 countries. The fund is intended to combine and 'bridge' defence, diplomacy and development assistance and has a generous budget of £1.2 billion for 2017/18 (including £300 million to peacekeeping initiatives). Yet the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy has concluded that the way in which CSSF is spent is opaque and un-transparent.<sup>20</sup> The Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) has expressed concern at the way in which the CSSF has funded support for security forces in other countries, particularly for counter-terrorism initiatives, given the significant risks of legitimising them and their actions, or even becoming complicit in human rights violations.<sup>21</sup> ICAI finds that the CSSF has a 'high risk appetite' when working with such counter-parts and that the process of assessing risk was problematic and typically had "a stronger analysis of the UK's reputational risks than of the risk of CSSF support aggravating human rights violations."<sup>22</sup>

Children living in armed conflicts are far away from Whitehall, they are largely voiceless and reliant upon others to articulate their rights. Their rights are not sufficiently prioritised in contexts where the clamour of security and trade imperatives take precedence. The net result is that the UK government currently has relatively

14 See actions set out in [UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace & Security 2014-17, Report to Parliament, HMG, December 2017](#)

15 See DFID [Annual Review](#) Education Cannot Wait (2018) p.3

16 Article 3 of ILO Convention No.182 defines forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict as a worst form of child labour [ILO Convention No.182](#)

17 Prime Minister urges international action to stamp out modern slavery, 20th September 2016 [Press Release](#)

18 Cited in Foreign Affairs Committee (2016) [The FCO's administration and funding of its human rights work overseas](#) p.5

19 International Development Committee (2017) UK aid: allocation of resources, Seventh Report of Session 2016-17 [Report](#)

20 Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy in 2017 [Report](#)

21 ICAI (2018) Report: The Conflict, Stability and Security Fund's aid spending: A performance review, 29 Mar 2018, [Findings](#)

22 As above

uncritical relationships with states that have either been listed themselves in the Annexes of the Secretary-General’s Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict for committing grave violations, or that support listed armed groups. This report seeks to put these children back on the agenda and encourage the UK to use its many strengths – leadership on aid and development, global influence, expertise and diplomacy – to prioritise their rights.

### **1.3 ABOUT THIS REPORT**

This report reviews the extent to which the rights of children in armed conflict are promoted and protected by the UK in Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia and with the Saudi led coalition in Yemen. These five countries have been selected because they have state forces or state-aligned militia listed in the UN Secretary General’s Annual Report for 2018 and are the listed states which we judge to have the greatest strategic, diplomatic and political importance for the UK government. The report examines the record of action or inaction in the spheres of development, diplomatic, defence and trade measures - areas where the UK has a legal and moral imperative to act as well as the influence and the ability to make a real difference for children caught up in conflicts.

The report focusses primarily on the UN Security Council codified grave violations. This is because there is international consensus about their importance and because the verified findings cited in the SG’s Annual Reports are robust. Given the challenges of monitoring and reporting in conflict settings, it should be recognised that the real scale of violations is likely to be in excess of the numbers cited in these reports. Other pressing issues such as the detention and prosecution of children associated with non-state armed groups are also referred to in this report.

For each of the five countries, key indicators are used to track the UK’s government progress in relation to protecting the rights of children affected by armed conflict:

■ UK objectives and level of influence

■ Extent to which issue of grave violations is a priority in development projects, programmes or initiatives

■ Extent to which issue of grave violations is a priority in relation to military missions

■ Extent to which diplomatic and political measures ensure prevention of and accountability for grave violations

■ Extent to which arms transfers are prohibited where there is significant risk that arms will be used to commit human rights abuses.

Information for each indicator was sourced through a desk review and interviews with informants. Inevitably the picture is incomplete not least because records of security relationships, diplomatic interventions and trade agreements are not always publicly available. Nonetheless, the aim of the case studies is to provide a snapshot of what the UK has done and what more it could and should do in the context of five conflicts where the lives of children are at stake. The real picture in each of these countries is by nature highly complex, nuanced and in constant flux, but a simple traffic lights scoring system is used for each country to assess the UK's direction of travel relating to the prevention of grave violations and holding states accountable for grave violations.



### **GREEN**

The UK is helping to strengthen the prevention of grave violations and is actively holding states accountable by swift and committed actions which prioritise children's rights.



### **AMBER**

The UK's record is mixed; in some regards the UK's conduct reinforces the prevention of grave violations and holds states accountable; on others, it doesn't.



### **RED**

The UK's actions are undermining the prevention of grave violations and steps are not taken to hold states accountable - a course correction is urgently needed.





## CASE STUDY ONE

# AFGHANISTAN







## 1.1 SITUATION FOR CHILDREN AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT IN AFGHANISTAN

A 2017 strategic review of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) stated that Afghanistan is not yet in a post-conflict situation but is still “undergoing a conflict that shows few signs of abating.”<sup>23</sup> Key parties include the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF), pro-government militias, NATO forces, the Taliban and other non-state armed groups such as so-called Islamic State. Levels of insurgency are closely interlinked with illicit drug production and trafficking, activities that reached record levels during 2017.<sup>24</sup>

Civilians continue to be the people most affected<sup>25</sup> and children are disproportionately bearing the brunt of the conflict. In 2016, more than 90 per cent of Afghan children lived in conflict zones – unless there is a significant decline in hostilities, it is predicted that the number will remain very high for years to come.<sup>26</sup> During 2017, 3,179 child **casualties** were verified by the UN,<sup>27</sup> with ground engagements and explosive remnants of war the leading causes. A large number were attributed to armed groups, whilst 772 children were killed or injured by the ANDSF/ pro-government militias. UNAMA concludes that in 2017, children accounted for 30 per cent of all civilian casualties.<sup>28</sup>

The government criminalized military recruitment of children in 2015, but the practice continues. The UN verified 84 cases of **recruitment and use** of children during 2017. Most of the recruitment was by armed groups but 23 verified cases were attributed to the ANDSF. The Afghan National Police, including the local police were listed in the UN Secretary General’s 2018 report for recruiting and using children and there is a National Action Plan in place with the UN. There were reports that the Afghan local and national police used children in combat and non-combat roles including as personal servants, support staff and body guards and that some members of the Afghan security forces sexually abuse and exploit young girls and boys.<sup>29</sup> Both the ANDSF and the Taliban have occupied or used **schools** for military purposes in contested areas, affecting the access

23 Report of the Secretary-General (2017) [Special report on the strategic review of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan](#) A/72/312–S/2017/696, 10th August 2017, para 9

24 Security Council Report (June 2018) [Monthly Forecast Afghanistan](#)

25 UN General Assembly and Security Council (2017) [The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security](#) A/72/392–S/2017/783, September 15, 2017, para. 38.

26 Peace Research Institute Oslo (2017) Children and Armed Conflict: What Existing Data Can Tell Us, December 15, 2017 [Report](#). The definition of Conflict Zone in this report is an area within which people live at a distance of 50km or less from where the fighting actual takes place in a given year.

27 Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary General, 16 May 2018, A/72/865–S/2018/465

28 UNAMA and Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (2017) [Afghanistan: protection of civilians in armed conflict – annual report 2017](#).

29 US State Department (2017) [Trafficking in Persons Report Afghanistan 2017](#) p.58, 27 June 2017



to education of thousands of children, especially girls. UNOCHA has reported that more than 1,000 schools have been destroyed, damaged, or occupied in incidents related to conflict and insecurity.<sup>30</sup> In 2016 the Ministry of Education promulgated two directives instructing the ANDSF to stop using schools for military purposes and Afghanistan endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration in 2015.

As of December 2017, the government reported that 171 boys were held in juvenile rehabilitation centres on national security-related charges, including for association with armed groups. Human Rights Watch states that in 2017, almost half of the **children detained** in relation to the conflict reported being tortured or mistreated.<sup>31</sup> The UN Committee against Torture expressed concern that children were being detained with and under the same regime as adults and that they were being punished instead of rehabilitated.<sup>32</sup>

There have been positive initiatives by the Afghan government to address grave violations including establishing child protection units in police recruitment centres, criminalising various forms of abuse of children, including the phenomenon “bacha bazi”<sup>33</sup> and a new child protection policy for the Ministry of Defence which focuses on the prevention of six grave child rights’ violations in armed conflict and the use by the military of education and health facilities.

## **1.2 UK OBJECTIVES AND LEVEL OF INFLUENCE IN AFGHANISTAN**

The UK’s stated policy with regards to Afghanistan is to promote “a stable and secure Afghanistan, able and willing to counter terrorism, further development and play a constructive role in the region.”<sup>34</sup> UK interests have also included a fluid combination of counter-narcotics, nation-building, alliance solidarity (primarily with the US) and wider regional stability.<sup>35</sup> DFID focuses on poverty reduction but also on reducing migration and national level threats: “[c]reating a more stable environment...will also reduce threats to the UK from violence and extremism, and discourage illegal migration.”<sup>36</sup> The Afghan government views the UK “as a key partner in the Counter-Taliban and Counter-Daesh Coalition, as a major humanitarian donor, and as a vital mediator in regional disputes.”<sup>37</sup>

30 UNOCHA (2017), [Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018: Afghanistan](#) p.20

31 Human Rights Watch (2018) Afghanistan – World Report 2018

32 UN Committee Against Torture (CAT), Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Afghanistan, 12 June 2017, CAT/C/AFG/CO/2, para. 17

33 This was part of the revised Penal Code (5 May 2017) that includes a chapter on criminalizing Bacha Bazi which is a practice in which men exploit boys for social and sexual entertainment.

34 [Government Policy on Afghanistan](#)

35 Shashan, J. (2015) [Assessing Britain’s Role in Afghanistan](#)

36 [DFID, Afghanistan, March 2017](#)

37 Afghanistan Embassy, 20 February 2018, [Afghan Minister of Defence Visits London](#)



### **1.3 EXTENT TO WHICH GRAVE VIOLATIONS ARE A PRIORITY FOR THE UK**

The UK provides Afghanistan with generous levels of ODA and in 2015-16 was its largest donor. The focus of this aid is on economic development, basic services and humanitarian relief and building institutions to combat corruption. Over 50 per cent of annual bilateral spend is through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, administered by the World Bank. In addition, the UK supports global and regional programmes such as the Girls Education Challenge. The UK has also made a significant contribution to clearing land of mines which are a leading cause of child casualties.

In 2016-17, Afghanistan received more CSSF funding than any other country. This was allocated to programmes including de-mining, support for migrants and security sector support<sup>38</sup>- specifically training within the Afghan National Army Officer Academy and payment of police salaries.

The UK has had a long-standing military deployment in Afghanistan since 2001 - at their peak in 2012, approximately 10,000 British troops were based in Afghanistan, the second largest foreign contingent in the NATO-led coalition. British forces formally ended their combat mission in 2014 and as of May 2018 there were around 650 troops stationed in Kabul. The UK military are primarily engaged in force protection and have a training and advisory role to the Afghan National Army Officer Academy (which they helped establish) and Afghan National Police as well as to assist in counter-terrorism. Information regarding the scope and nature of the training and advice provided within the Academy or to the National Police was not found whilst researching this report making it challenging to assess if it adequately covers much-needed training on child protection including international standards regarding the care and treatment of children in conflict with the law that security forces must abide by.

However, the UK's military activities are conducted under a UN Mandate as part of NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) whose mission is to train, advise and assist the ANSDF and related institutions. It is encouraging that the NATO mission, of which the UK is an important part, has actively sought to integrate child protection in its work, including by establishing the position of Senior Child Protection Adviser in Kabul, funded by Germany and by supporting the Afghan Ministry of Defence in developing its own child protection policy.<sup>39</sup> It has also developed a system for tracking children's rights violations and established Child Protection Focal Points in each of the Resolute Support commands and task forces to monitor and report any violations related to children in armed conflict, including sexual abuse.

The UK licensed Arms Exports to Afghanistan worth over £29 million between 2015 and 2017.<sup>40</sup> The government's arms export licensing regime is opaque and it is very difficult to assess the extent to which grave violations against children are taken in to account as part of the decision making process – this is vitally important information to be included in any risk assessment given that Afghanistan is a Human Rights Priority Country for the FCO and the UN has listed the Afghan National Police for recruitment and use.

---

38 [Conflict, Stability and Security Fund: programme summaries for Afghanistan, 2017 to 2018](#)

39 [Resolute Support's Role in Helping to Protect Children in Armed Conflict](#), NATO Resolute Support, March 2018

40 Campaign Against Arms Trade (2018) [UK Arms Export Licenses - Afghanistan since 2015](#)



## 1.4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Many children are killed and maimed each year by the ANDSF and pro-government militias. The Afghan National Police, including the Afghan Local Police, were listed for the recruitment and use of children in 2018. Schools have been destroyed and occupied by all sides and children are being detained and prosecuted on security grounds in violation of international human rights standards - a 2017 UNAMA report disclosed that 45 per cent of the children detained on security related charges whom they interviewed gave credible accounts of being subjected to torture or ill treatment whilst in the custody of ANDSF.<sup>41</sup>

The UK provides generous support to the government of Afghanistan politically, as a donor of ODA, through military support and in the provision of arms export licenses. It is in a strong position to use this leverage more effectively to push for action to prevent and address these grave violations.

### **The UK must use its close relationship with Afghanistan, and especially with Afghan security forces, to prevent and address grave violations, and other violations of children's rights**

- Urge the Afghan security forces to comply with their obligations under IHL, including distinguishing between military objectives and civilians and civilian objects, complying with the principle of proportionality and taking all feasible precautions to minimize civilian casualties. They must take into account that, in situations where armed groups hold territory, a significant number of children may be in close proximity to military positions or may even be used as human shields.
- Urge the Afghan government publicly to ensure that children associated with non-state armed groups are considered primarily as victims who are likely to have been coerced and exploited. Demand commitments that the detention and prosecution of these children is carried out in accordance with international standards, including that detention is used only as a measure of last resort, that children are detained separately from adults, that they have access to legal counsel, and that rehabilitation and reintegration and the best interests of the child are a priority.
- Support the Afghan government to strengthen overall child protection efforts, including demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration programmes for children, particularly those formerly associated with non-state armed groups, that include vocational training programmes, education programmes, medical and psycho-social counselling activities including for survivors of sexual violence and that avoid stigmatisation of these children when returning to their communities.
- Support the government in implementation of the Action Plan on grave violations and on the Ministry of Defence's Child Protection Policy.
- Support the implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration at all levels of education.

### **Promote child protection in UNAMA mandate renewal**

- The UN Security Council has extended UNAMA's mandate until March 2019 and has expressed concern over the high levels of recruitment and child casualties, especially by armed groups. However, references to child protection in the UNAMA mandate have reduced compared to previous years. The UK has played a significant role in configuring the role of UNAMA - in the next discussion of UNAMA's mandate, it should strengthen child protection further by pushing for children's protection in armed conflict to be included.

41. UNAMA and OHCHR (2017) [Treatment of Conflict-Related Detainees: Implementation of Afghanistan's National Plan on the Elimination of Torture](#) p.7








**Strengthen child protection aspects of military training**

- The UK is in a very privileged and influential position in terms of its training and advisory role to the Afghan National Police and the Afghan National Army Officer Academy (the ‘Sandhurst’ of Afghanistan). It must ensure that issues relating to children affected by armed conflict are integrated comprehensively in training with all Afghan security forces and institutions, taking in to account the existing Resolute Support Mission’s child protection structures.

**Strengthen the framework for accountability**

- Fully cooperate with the UN-led Country Task Force on the MRM and ensure that British military forces provide information regarding child rights violations in line with NATO Standard Operating Procedure 307.
- Support the work of the International Criminal Court in Afghanistan in investigating alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Afghanistan since 1 May 2003.

**OVERALL SCORE: AMBER**

UK objectives and level of influence.	
Extent to which issue of grave violations is a priority in development projects, programmes or initiatives.	
Extent to which issue of grave violations is a priority in relation to military missions.	
Extent to which diplomatic and political measures ensure prevention of and accountability for grave violations.	
Extent to which arms transfers are prohibited where there is significant risk that arms will be used to commit human rights abuses.	



## CASE STUDY TWO

# IRAQ





## 2.1 SITUATION FOR CHILDREN AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT

After the US-led ouster of Saddam Hussein in 2003, Iraq has enjoyed only brief periods of respite from high levels of sectarian violence exacerbated by weak governance and widespread corruption. The so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) emerged as a major force in the region and seized large parts of Iraq. By December 2017, the Iraqi government had declared military victory over ISIL. Small pockets of resistance remain but the focus of coalition<sup>42</sup> efforts is now on stabilisation. Since the 2017 referendum in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) (administered by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG))<sup>43</sup> there are ongoing tensions and fighting between the Iraqi central government and the KRG.

Since 2014, mostly Shia armed groups under the authority of a government body known as the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), have also played a significant military and security role in the conflict with ISIL. Iraq's parliament passed a law in 2016 to bring the PMF into the state apparatus, with the militias reporting directly to the Prime Minister and in 2018, their inclusion in to the country's forces was formalised by decree.<sup>44</sup> The PMF are listed for the recruitment and use of children whilst ISIL is listed for recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, abductions, and attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

The intensive conflict over the past four years has taken its toll on children. The fighting during 2017 displaced at least 3.2 million Iraqis, over one million of them to KRI.<sup>45</sup> It is anticipated that as many as two million displaced Iraqis are likely to return to their homes during 2018. Many of Iraq's IDP camps are operating beyond capacity and are overcrowded. Meanwhile, damaged and overstretched water and sanitation infrastructure and weakened health systems put children's health and survival in jeopardy.

During 2017, the Secretary General's Annual Report documented 523 boys being **recruited and used** by parties to the conflict, including ISIL, the People's Defence Forces of the Kurdish Workers Party and the PMF. The **killing and maiming** of children remained the most prevalent grave violation during 2017: 717 incidents

42 For more information, see [Global Coalition Website](#)

43 The KRI was legally established in 2005 by the Iraqi constitution as an autonomous area in the predominantly Kurdish north of the country and is administered by the KRG.

44 Iraq's Shi'ite militias formally inducted into security forces, 8th March 2018 [Reuters Article](#)

45 Human Rights Watch (2018): Iraq – World Report 2018





were verified, resulting in 279 children killed and 438 injured. Of these, 424 were attributed to ISIL, 109 to Iraqi security forces and the international counter-ISIL coalition, 34 to Peshmerga and 150 to unknown parties to the conflict. Over half of all incidents were the result of air strikes, shelling, sniper fire and rockets, resulting in 390 child casualties. Improvised explosive devices were the second leading cause.

The Iraqi government and KRI forces have **detained** more than 7,000 individuals on ISIL-related charges since 2014, including hundreds of children.<sup>46</sup> Human Rights Watch has found that children detained in these circumstances are not separated from adults and that due process standards are not upheld, in particular the right for children to be detained only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time.<sup>47</sup> During 2017, at least 1,036 children remained in detention on national security-related charges.

UNICEF reported in June 2017 that in the areas of Iraq most affected by conflict, more than 90 percent of children were out of school<sup>48</sup> and there were 153 verified **attacks on education and health facilities** and personnel during 2017, attributed to ISIL, Iraqi forces and the PMF. A UN commission of inquiry determined that sexual violence committed against Yazidi women and girls by ISIL, such as using schools as sites to sell women and girls into sexual slavery, were acts of genocide.<sup>49</sup> Only nine incidents of **sexual violence** were verified in the SG's report, while concerns of widespread sexual violence perpetrated by ISIL persisted, the violation remained underreported.

## 2.2 UK OBJECTIVES AND LEVEL OF INFLUENCE

The UK's objectives in Iraq emphasise trade, stability and security and include: "[i]ncreasing UK-Iraq trade and investment, realising Iraq's economic potential, supporting long-term stability and working with Iraq to build partnerships in the region and beyond."<sup>50</sup> The main focus is on military support to defeat ISIL and counter-terrorism; in November 2017, PM Theresa May committed the UK to invest £10m over the next three years to build Iraq's counter-terrorism capability: "This will allow us to spot and respond to terrorist threats against Iraq and ourselves, in partnership with Iraqi security forces."<sup>51</sup> The UK also actively promotes UK-Iraq trade and investment and a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Iraqi government in 2017 to support infrastructure development.<sup>52</sup> Large deals, particularly in the energy sector, are being underwritten by UK Export Finance although it is acknowledged that it is a challenging environment for UK businesses to operate in.<sup>53</sup> The level of support the UK government provides across the areas of trade and security makes it a highly influential partner.

46 Human Rights Watch (2017) [Flawed Justice, Accountability for ISIS Crimes in Iraq](#), December 2017.

47 As above

48 UNAMI and OHCHR (2013), Report on Human Rights in Iraq: January-June 2013 p. 3 and UNAMI and OHCHR (2014), Report on Human Rights in Iraq: July- December 2013 p. 18.

49 UN (2016) [New UN report lays bare widespread ISIL 'atrocities' committed against Yazidis in Iraq](#)

50 [Iraq and the UK "Our Mission"](#)

51 [UK ramps up counter-terror effort in Iraq as Daesh caliphate crumbles, 29 November 2017](#)

52 Press Release, 2018 [UKEF helps GE Global Services UK secure landmark turbine contract in Iraq](#)

53 See [Doing Business in Iraq, Iraq Britain Business Council](#)

## 2.3 EXTENT TO WHICH GRAVE VIOLATIONS ARE A PRIORITY FOR THE UK

Since 2014, DFID has committed £229.5 million to the humanitarian response in Iraq (excluding CSSF funding). It is the largest contributor to the Iraq Humanitarian Pooled Fund, which funds projects to meet the most urgent needs of displaced Iraqis and was one of the largest donors towards the UN's Mosul Flash Appeal.<sup>54</sup> The UK also supports local government reconstruction plans, restoration of basic services and job creation and economic reforms.<sup>55</sup> It contributes funds to the No Lost Generation Initiative which supports children and young people in Iraq and Syria mainly in education and protection as well as de-mining efforts which can be very beneficial for children's safety.

The CSSF in Iraq promotes security sector reform, explosive threat management and technical assistance to counter violent extremism, among other areas.<sup>56</sup> Available information regarding these programmes is limited in scope and it is not possible to determine if child protection is incorporated sufficiently in the support that the UK provides through this funding. Given that the UN has listed the PMF as a state actor for the recruitment and use of children - and that this armed group sits under the authority of the Prime Minister of Iraq and as such there is a clear line of command and control from the Federal Government - it is hoped that the rights of children affected by armed conflict are prominent in this programming.

Around 120,000 members of the British armed forces and civilians served in Iraq after the US-led invasion in 2003 until the UK's combat role ended in April 2009. Since September 2014, the UK has been conducting military operations in Iraq (and Syria) against ISIS as part of an international coalition of 75 partners. The UK provides air support to local forces on the ground and intelligence and surveillance. Strikes are conducted by manned Tornado and Typhoon aircraft, as well as by Reaper remotely piloted drones.<sup>57</sup> The UK maintains its position that there is no credible evidence of any civilian casualties arising from this air war (although has conceded casualties in Syria.<sup>58</sup>) The organisation Air Wars reflects that given the number of airstrikes made, it is a "statistical improbability" that no civilians have been killed.<sup>59</sup> Human Rights Watch concludes that "It is likely that Iraqi and coalition forces have killed many thousands of civilians in the course of their military operations against ISIS."<sup>60</sup>

The UK military trains both Iraqi and Kurdish Peshmerga forces in infantry, weapons maintenance, counter-IED, medical and engineering skills. In written evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee, the FCO clarified that over 57,000 members of the Iraqi Security Forces, including 9,000 Peshmerga fighters had been trained and that since September 2014 they had gifted £3million of arms and ammunition.<sup>61</sup> As of March 2018, there were 550 people with the UK's training contingent in Iraq.<sup>62</sup> No information was found to clarify whether the training provided to the Iraqi and Peshmerga forces adequately incorporates issues relevant for children affected by armed conflict.

The UK has been instrumental in the UN Security Council in pushing for a resolution to establish an investigative team in Iraq to support domestic efforts to hold ISIL accountable for alleged war crimes, crimes against humanity and

---

54 DFID (2017) [Iraq: Humanitarian Response Summary](#), 5 December 2017

55 [DFID in Iraq 2017/18](#)

56 [Conflict, Stability and Security Fund: programme summaries for Middle East and North Africa, 2017 to 2018](#)

57 Remote Control (2016) [Limited Accountability A transparency audit of the Coalition air war against so-called Islamic State](#) p17

58 [Syria war: MoD admits civilian died in RAF strike on Islamic State](#), BBC News, 2 May 2018

59 Remote Control (2016) [Limited Accountability A transparency audit of the Coalition air war against so-called Islamic State](#)

60 Human Rights Watch (2018): Iraq - World Report 2018

61 FCO (2017) [Written Evidence to Foreign Affairs Committee](#) para 8

62 ISIS/Daesh: what now for the military campaign in Iraq and Syria? Commons Library Briefing, 7 March 2018





genocide.<sup>63</sup> The UK has further pledged a £1 million voluntary contribution to help establish the investigative team.<sup>64</sup> This Resolution has been welcomed but there have also been criticisms that the investigation only looks at ISIL violations and that all sides in the conflict, including the PMF, Iraqi and KRG forces, should be included.<sup>65</sup>

The UK licensed arms exports worth £23 million to Iraq between 2015 and 2017.<sup>66</sup> As has already been noted, the government's arms export licensing regime is opaque and it is very difficult to assess the extent to which grave violations against children were taken into account as part of the risk assessment nor what level of risk of violations of children's rights might trigger the refusal of a licence.

## 2.4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The years of conflict in Iraq have thrown many children's lives into chaos, disrupting their education and healthcare and causing huge displacement. The UK's humanitarian response has been significant notably in relation to the protection of girls' education and de-mining. The security and humanitarian imperative for defeating ISIL's hold in Iraq is very powerful and the UK provides extensive military support to both Iraqi and KRI forces - including the gifting of weapons and ammunition to the KRI.<sup>67</sup> It should not be forgotten that verified incidents of killing and maiming and of attacks on education and health facilities have been attributed to both of these armed forces. They have also been implicated in violating the rights of children arrested, detained and prosecuted on security-related charges, including association with armed groups. The PMF is listed for the recruitment and use of children. Incidents of killing and maiming have also been attributed to the PMF and to the international counter-ISIL coalition.

The FCO has argued that the "Government of Iraq and KRG have both been clear that International Humanitarian Law must be respected, and that any allegations will be investigated in a transparent manner and those responsible held to account. We will continue to hold them to this commitment and our ministers continue to urge action at every opportunity."<sup>68</sup> The question remains if these assurances are sufficient and if the commitments made are actively pursued and verified by the UK.

### **The UK must use its close relationship with Iraq and the KRI to prevent and address grave violations, and other violations of children's rights**

- Urge the Iraqi and KRI authorities to comply with their obligations under IHL, by distinguishing between military objectives and civilians and civilian objects, complying with the principle of proportionality and taking all feasible precautions to minimize civilian casualties.
- Urge the Iraqi and KRI authorities to consider children associated with non-state armed groups as victims primarily and demand commitments that the detention and prosecution of children on security-related charges is only carried out in accordance with international standards: namely that detention is used only as a measure of last resort, that children are detained separately from adults, that they have access to legal counsel, and that rehabilitation and reintegration and the best interests of the child are a priority.
- Support the Iraqi authorities to develop an Action Plan with the UN to address the recruitment and use of children by the PMF.

63 [Security Council Requests Creation of Independent Team to Help in Holding ISIL \(Da'esh\) Accountable for Its Actions in Iraq](#) UN Meeting Coverage, 21st September 2017

64 [Iraq: Community Relations: Written question - HL2859](#) 2nd November 2017

65 Human Rights Watch (2017) [Iraq: Missed Opportunity for Comprehensive Justice](#)

66 Campaign Against Arms Trade (2018) [UK Arms Export Licenses to Iraq 2015-2017](#)

67 [Iraq: Arms Trade: Written question - HL4664](#) 16th January 2017

68 [Kurdish aspirations and the interests of the UK: Government response to the Committee's Third Report](#)



- Support the Iraqi and KRI authorities to strengthen overall child protection efforts, including demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration programmes for children, particularly those formerly associated with ISIL, that include vocational training programmes, education programmes, medical and psycho-social counselling activities including for survivors of sexual violence and that avoid stigmatisation of these children when returning to their communities.
- Urge the Iraqi government to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration.

**Closely monitor the treatment of children detained and prosecuted for national security related charges including association with non-state armed groups such as ISIL**

- The UK must closely follow ongoing trials to ensure they comply with international standards on justice for children, help to monitor the conditions of detention in which children are held and ensure that no children receive a sentence of the death penalty.

**Promote child protection in the forthcoming UNAMI mandate renewal**

- Ensure that child protection remains a key priority for UNAMI in the next mandate renewal and that sufficient resources are allocated to carry this out.

**Strengthen child protection aspects of military training**

- Ensure that the UK’s ongoing training and capacity building with the Iraqi and KRI armed forces strengthens understanding and awareness of child protection issues relevant for children affected by armed conflict.
- Take steps to ensure that the new NATO military training mission planned in Iraq has child protection embedded within it.<sup>69</sup>

**OVERALL SCORE: AMBER**

UK objectives and level of influence.	
Extent to which issue of grave violations is a priority in development projects, programmes or initiatives.	
Extent to which issue of grave violations is a priority in relation to military missions.	
Extent to which diplomatic and political measures ensure prevention of and accountability for grave violations.	
Extent to which arms transfers are prohibited where there is significant risk that arms will be used to commit human rights abuses.	

<sup>69</sup> NATO (2018) [Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meetings of NATO Defence Ministers](#)

## CASE STUDY THREE

# NIGERIA







### **3.1 SITUATION FOR CHILDREN AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT**

The armed group commonly known as Boko Haram operates mainly in Northeast Nigeria and bordering countries including Niger, Chad and Cameroon. In March 2015, it declared its allegiance to so-called Islamic State and renamed itself the “Islamic State West Africa.” Between 2009 and 2017, the group claimed more than 35,000 lives, abducted thousands and plunged the region into a humanitarian crisis.<sup>70</sup> In August 2017, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that over 1.7 million people had been displaced as a result of the insurgency<sup>71</sup> which has also destroyed farming, water and sanitation and health facilities leaving many children severely malnourished and at risk of death.<sup>72</sup> Boko Haram has now been largely forced out of the territory it controlled but continues to commit crimes such as abduction and forced recruitment and increasingly has resorted to the use of women and children as suicide bombers.<sup>73</sup> Boko Haram is listed for recruitment and use, killing and maiming, attacks on schools and/or hospitals, sexual violence and abduction of children.

There were 1,092 verified cases of the recruitment and use of children in Nigeria in 2017, more than 8,000 children in total have been recruited by Boko Haram often for search operations, to guard outposts and to perform night patrols.<sup>74</sup> Nearly all the children who have been associated with the group report that they had been abducted.<sup>75</sup> The Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) is formed largely from vigilante groups who seek to protect communities from Boko Haram in areas poorly guarded by the military; it has also been accused of rape and human rights abuses.<sup>76</sup> The CJTF is listed for recruitment and use and an Action Plan was signed by the group in 2017 to address this.<sup>77</sup>

70 UNU (2018) [Cradled by Conflict: Child involvement with armed groups in contemporary conflict](#) p 178

71 IOM (2017) [Displacement Tracking Matrix: Round XVIII Report-Nigeria](#) p.2

72 UNICEF (2016) [Statement by Anthony Lake, UNICEF Executive Director, on the situation of children in northeast Nigeria](#)

73 Human Rights Watch (2018) Nigeria– World Report 2018

74 Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Nigeria, 10th April 2017

75 UNU (2018) [Cradled by Conflict: Child involvement with armed groups in contemporary conflict](#) p 179

76 Human Rights Watch (2016) [Nigeria: Officials Abusing Displaced Women, Girls](#)

77 UNICEF (2017) [Civilian Joint Task Force in Northeast Nigeria Signs Action Plan to End Recruitment of Children](#)



UNICEF estimates that from 2013 to May 2018, more than 1,000 children were abducted by Boko Haram, including 276 girls taken from their secondary school in the town of Chibok in 2014.<sup>78</sup> Research suggests that many women and girls who return to their families and communities after abduction are viewed with deep suspicion and mistrust either because they are carrying the children of Boko Haram fighters or because of fear they have become radicalised and may turn against their own communities.<sup>79</sup>

Many of the children encountered by state security forces during military operations are taken to Giwa barracks, the main military detention facility in Borno state (the state most affected by the conflict). While the exact number of child detainees is uncertain, in 2017, the UN Secretary General's Annual Report found that 1,903 children were detained for their, or their parents', alleged association with Boko Haram. The Annual Report also cites the killing and maiming of 881 children during 2017 attributed to Boko Haram and Nigerian Security Forces. Sexual violence including rape perpetrated by Boko Haram against 45 girls as young as nine was also verified. In addition, six girls were sexually assaulted by Nigerian security forces elements.

The UN estimated that the conflict between Boko Haram and security forces had destroyed 1,500 schools between 2014 and 2016, with at least 1,280 teacher and student casualties.<sup>80</sup> Only five attacks on schools and hospitals were documented by the UN in 2017 but it is suggested that the reason for this decline is that most of the schools in the northeast were already destroyed or closed.<sup>81</sup> Fourteen schools were verified as militarily used by the Nigerian security forces. The Nigerian government has endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration.

### **3.2 UK OBJECTIVES AND LEVEL OF INFLUENCE OVER NIGERIA**

Nigeria and the UK have close historical, commercial and cultural ties and there is a very large Nigerian community in the UK and British community in Nigeria. The UK has a complicated relationship with Nigeria which cuts across many different issues but prioritises a growing trade and investment relationship, particularly for extractive industries.

The UK's mission in Nigeria is described in the following terms: "[w]e support shared goals on prosperity, security, migration, development and co-operation in the international field and support the interests of British nationals working and living in Nigeria."<sup>82</sup> During the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in 2018, the Prime Minister said that "as the UK leaves the EU, our bilateral trade and investment relationship [with Nigeria] would continue to go from strength to strength."<sup>83</sup>

DFID describes the purpose of its programme as ensuring that "Nigeria is able to deploy its own resources effectively towards the delivery of services."<sup>84</sup> It aims to build on economic ties "to ensure the UK is the partner of choice for trade and investment" and another stated objective is to prevent migration and reduce the risk of violent extremism.<sup>85</sup>

78 UNICEF (2018) [More than 1,000 children in northeastern Nigeria abducted by Boko Haram since 2013](#)

79 International Alert (2016) ['Bad Blood'](#)

80 Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Nigeria, 10th April 2017

81 Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (2018) [Education Under Attack 2018](#)

82 [Nigeria and the UK](#)

83 [UK-Nigeria pledge to continue strong partnership](#)

84 [DFID Nigeria Profile: July 2017](#) Nigeria is defined as a Lower Middle Income Country for the purposes of ODA

See [DAC List ODA Recipients 2018 to 2020](#)

85 [DFID Nigeria Profile: July 2017](#)



Approximately 70 per cent of UK Aid is delivered by the private sector. The UK's Minister for Armed Forces explains the objectives of the military relationship thus: "With our world class military expertise, we are helping the Nigerian military develop the skills necessary to tackle the threat of Boko Haram."<sup>86</sup>

### **3.3 EXTENT TO WHICH GRAVE VIOLATIONS ARE A PRIORITY FOR THE UK**

DFID funding for Nigeria for 2016–17 is £266 million, up from £20 million in 2001–02, making it DFID's second largest programme in Africa and third largest in the world<sup>87</sup> (although relative to the size of the population, the size of the economy and the scale of poverty it is one of the smallest programmes). It does not provide any financial aid directly to the government because of fiduciary risk and to avoid substituting Nigeria's own resources.<sup>88</sup> It provides both development and humanitarian aid but the International Development Committee has pointed out that the amount given to the crisis in the North East is relatively small (compared for example to the response in Syria).<sup>89</sup>

The CSSF in Nigeria is worth about £20 million for 2017/18, and covers a range of security and stabilisation programmes including military training and capacity building as well as support with countering violent extremism.<sup>90</sup> As has been noted elsewhere in this report, there is limited information available and it is not possible to determine if child protection is incorporated sufficiently in to these CSSF funded programmes.

Defence cooperation is provided through the permanent British Military Advisory and Training Team and successive Short Term Training Teams which have an explicit focus on counter-terrorism to aid the Nigerian Armed Forces "to improve their readiness and forestall possible attacks from Boko Haram."<sup>91</sup> In total, more than 350 British troops currently train the Nigerian Armed Forces including the Air Force. According to the Ministry of Defence, the RAF helps to enhance the Nigerian Air Force's skills "in improvised explosive devices (IEDs), tracking insurgents, identifying weapons caches and navigation."<sup>92</sup> Over 28,500 members of the Nigerian military have received UK training and defence education.<sup>93</sup> The training provided includes civil-military relations and gender issues and the team encourages the Nigerian Ministry of Defence to mainstream gender issues.<sup>94</sup> Limited information was available regarding elements of children protection included in this vitally important training. The UK also supports the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram with coordination and intelligence sharing.<sup>95</sup>

The UK has licensed arms exports to Nigeria amounting to £10 million from 2015–17.<sup>96</sup> As has already been noted, the government's arms export licensing regime is opaque and it is very difficult to assess the extent to which grave violations against children are taken in to account as part of the risk assessment nor what level of risk of violations of children's rights might trigger the refusal of a licence.

---

86 [UK reiterates support to the fight against Boko Haram](#) 6th October 2017

87 International Development Committee (2017) [DFID's Programme in Nigeria](#) p.3

88 DFID, [Nigeria Operational Plan 2011–2016](#) December 2014

89 International Development Committee (2017) [DFID's Programme in Nigeria](#) Para 127

90 CSSF Programme Summary 2016–19 [North East Nigeria Security and Conflict and Stabilisation Programme](#)

91 [British Forces in Nigeria - A Long Partnership in West Africa](#) UK Defence Journal, August 29, 2017

92 As above.

93 [UK reiterates support to the fight against Boko Haram](#) 6th October 2017

94 [UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace & Security 2014–17, Report to Parliament, HMG, December 2017](#)

95 The AU Peace and Security Council [renewed the mandate](#) of the MNJTF to the end of 2018.

96 Campaign against the Arms Trade (2018) [UK Arms Exports to Nigeria 2015–17](#)





### 3.4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The CJTF is listed for recruitment and use. It is an umbrella group of pro-government militias and it has been estimated that upwards of 6,000 children may be associated with them, and likely more when including child membership in the less formal community self-defence vigilante groups.<sup>97</sup> The UK should ensure that the Action Plan agreed with the UN - in the presence of Nigerian officials - to prevent recruitment and use by CTJF is fully implemented.

Another critical issue is to challenge the security forces on the treatment of children targeted in counter-terrorism operations given the very real risks that ill-treatment will fuel the grievances that lead to children joining violent groups in the first place. Recent research examining the push and pull factors of why children become involved with Boko Haram concluded that: "Nigeria's counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency efforts are frequently indiscriminate; children orphaned or targeted in such operations are likely to be sympathetic to a narrative that delegitimizes the Government."<sup>98</sup> It is also imperative that military training and support to the Nigerian Armed Forces on all issues, but particularly with regards to counter-terrorist operations, prioritises the rights of children in armed conflict.

#### **The UK must use its close relationship with Nigeria to prevent and address grave violations, and other violations of children's rights**

- Urge the Nigerian Security Forces to immediately vacate any schools it is using for military purposes, in contravention of the Safe Schools Declaration.
- Urge the Nigerian government to ensure that children associated with non-state armed groups are considered as victims primarily and demand commitments that the detention and prosecution of children associated with Boko Haram is only carried out in accordance with international standards: namely that detention is used only as a measure of last resort, that children are detained separately from adults, that they have access to legal counsel, and that rehabilitation and reintegration and the best interests of the child are a priority.
- Support the Nigerian government in strengthening overall child protection efforts, including demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration programmes for children, particularly those formerly associated with Boko Haram, that include vocational training programmes, education programmes, medical and psycho-social counselling activities including for survivors of sexual violence and that avoid stigmatisation of these children when returning to their communities.

#### **Strengthen the framework of monitoring and reporting**

- Push the government to ensure the implementation of the Action Plan signed by the CJTF including facilitating the immediate release of all children associated with them and to end and prevent further recruitment and use of children, including re-recruitment of children who have been released.

#### **Strengthen child protection aspects of military training**

- Ensure that the UK's ongoing training and capacity building with the Nigerian armed forces strengthens understanding and awareness of child protection issues relevant for children in armed conflict and reinforces the child protection provisions in the revised code of conduct and rules of engagement of the Nigerian security forces.

97 UN (2018) [Cradled by Conflict: Child involvement with armed groups in contemporary conflict](#) p. 179

98 As above, p.186

## OVERALL SCORE: **AMBER**

UK objectives and level of influence.	
Extent to which issue of grave violations is a priority in development projects, programmes or initiatives.	
Extent to which issue of grave violations is a priority in relation to military missions.	
Extent to which diplomatic and political measures ensure prevention of and accountability for grave violations.	
Extent to which arms transfers are prohibited where there is significant risk that arms will be used to commit human rights abuses.	





## CASE STUDY FOUR

# SAUDI-LED COALITION OPERATING IN YEMEN





#### **4.1 SITUATION FOR CHILDREN AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT**

Fighting in Yemen began in 2011, as protest movements, inspired by the Arab Spring, called for stronger human rights protections in the country. Eventually President Saleh stepped down and was replaced by President Hadi but the transitional process proved fragile and in September 2014, the Houthi armed group (also known as Ansar Allah), who were allied with Saleh, took over Sana'a and much of the country's north. In late 2017, the Houthi-Saleh alliance collapsed and Saleh was killed. Violence escalated in March 2015 after a Saudi-led coalition,<sup>99</sup> at the request of the internationally recognized Hadi government, launched a military operation against the Houthis and Saleh loyalists. Violent extremist groups like Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and the local ISIS affiliate have also carried out attacks against Houthi forces and the Hadi government in various cities. In November 2017, the Saudi-led coalition imposed a blockade on Yemen's air and sea ports leading to shortages and price hikes that make basic goods unaffordable.

It is challenging to document the full impact of the war on children since governance has largely collapsed<sup>100</sup> and insecurity has impeded access by journalists and NGOs. Nonetheless, the humanitarian need is now critical and the heads of UNICEF, WHO and WFP have judged the situation to be "the world's largest humanitarian crisis."<sup>101</sup> UNICEF states that more than 11 million children in Yemen now need humanitarian assistance; more than half of the country's children don't have access to safe drinking water or adequate sanitation; an estimated 1.8 million children are acutely malnourished; suspected cholera and acute watery diarrhoea have affected over 1 million people, with children under

99 The Saudi-led coalition consists of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, the UAE, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Sudan and Senegal; Qatar withdrew in June 2017. The military campaign is primarily led by Saudi Arabia and UAE.

100 Peter Salisbury describes Yemen as a 'chaos state' in Salisbury, P., Yemen: National Chaos, Local Order, Chatham House, London, 20 December 2017 [Report](#)

101 [Statement](#) by UNICEF Executive Director, WFP Executive Director and WHO Director-General, following their joint visit to Yemen. Reliefweb, 26 June 2017





5 years old accounting for a quarter of all cases; and three quarters of all girls are married before the age of 18.<sup>102</sup>

The UN verified the killing and maiming of 1,316 children - 51 per cent of those casualties were caused by air strikes. Of the total number of verified child casualties, 670 were attributed to the coalition (370 killed, 300 injured); 324 to the Houthis (83 killed, 241 injured); 41 to the Popular Resistance; 19 to other international forces fighting for the Government of Yemen; 10 to AQAP; and 4 to the Yemeni Armed Forces, among other parties.

The Saudi-led coalition is listed for killing and maiming children for the second year running and intensive Saudi-led coalition airstrikes have been widely criticised. The Yemen Data Project shows that nearly one-third of coalition air raids from March 2015 to March 2018 targeted non-military sites.<sup>103</sup> The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) documented 16,432 civilian casualties between 26 March 2015 and 10 May 2018 and the vast majority were as a result of airstrikes carried out by the Saudi-led coalition.<sup>104</sup> Saudi's airstrikes have also targeted Yemen's infrastructure with the destruction of roads, bridges and factories.

During 2017, several organisations reported that the Saudi-led coalition had killed children during apparently unlawful air strikes.<sup>105</sup> The Panel of Experts on Yemen reviewed ten airstrikes conducted during 2017 and concluded that "even if the Saudi Arabia-led Coalition had targeted legitimate military objectives it is highly unlikely that the principles in international humanitarian law of proportionality and precautions in attack were respected."<sup>106</sup> Further, it found that: "[m]easures taken by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition in its targeting process to minimize child casualties, if any, remain largely ineffective, especially when it continues to target residential buildings."<sup>107</sup>

The UN verified 842 cases of the recruitment and use of boys as young as eleven by all parties during 2017. This was a substantial increase since 2016. There were also 23 instances of boys being arrested and detained for their suspected association with an opposing party to conflict, attributed to the Yemeni Armed Forces and one to the Saudi-led coalition.

An estimated two million children are currently out of school and more than 1,650 schools are unfit for use due to damage, presence of displaced people or occupation by militants.<sup>108</sup> The Saudi-led coalition was listed in the 2017 SG report for attacks on schools and hospitals. This listing was removed in 2018. The justification given in the Annual report for 2018 was that there had been a "significant decrease" in such attacks and preventive measures put in place. This is surprising given that the coalition was responsible for attacks on at least 19 schools and five hospitals in 2017 and 28 attacks on schools and 10 attacks on hospitals in 2016. According to the Global Coalition to protect education from attack, there has been a marked increase in attacks on schools during 2017, largely due to Saudi-led coalition air strikes.<sup>109</sup> Human Rights Watch states that both factions are unlawfully impeding the delivery of desperately needed humanitarian aid.<sup>110</sup>

102 UNICEF (2018), [Born into War](#) January 2018

103 Yemen Data Project cited in APPG for Yemen, [Yemen the Continuing Tragedy](#), 22nd May 2018

104 [Press Briefing Note](#) on Yemen, Cambodia, Cuba, Nicaragua and Montenegro, Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva, 11 May 2018

105 See for example, [Human Rights Watch, Yemen: Coalition Airstrikes Deadly for Children](#); see also [joint letter to the UNSG signed by 44 organizations](#) 2 June 2017

106 UN Security Council, Final report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen S/2018/68, 26th January 2018

107 As above, para. 162

108 UNICEF (2018) [If Not in School: The Paths Children Cross in Yemen](#) March 2018

109 Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (2018) [Education Under Attack 2018](#)

110 Human Rights Watch (2018) Yemen – World Report 2018

## 4.2 UK OBJECTIVES AND LEVEL OF INFLUENCE

UK priorities with regards to the conflict in Yemen include maintaining their long-standing relationship with their close ally Saudi Arabia, particularly in terms of trade and investment, and minimising the threat posed by the presence of Al-Qaeda and so called Islamic State. At the same time, DFID is providing funding to respond to the alarming humanitarian crisis and is the fourth largest humanitarian donor in the country.<sup>111</sup>

In 2018, Saudi Arabia and the UK jointly “celebrated a defence partnership of over half a century of cooperation on issues such as countering terrorism, developing joint capabilities and strengthening regional security.”<sup>112</sup> This relationship has been closely fostered by the current UK Government and since the start of her premiership in July 2016, Theresa May has made two visits to Saudi Arabia to discuss security and trade. In January 2018, the Foreign Secretary visited Saudi Arabia and in March 2018, Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman made his first official overseas trip to London. The outcomes of this meeting included a partnership to pool development expertise of DFID and the Saudi Fund for Development to boost infrastructure in the poorest countries,<sup>113</sup> and trade deals including a letter of intent to finalise talks on a multi-billion-pound order for 48 Typhoon aircraft made by BAE Systems.<sup>114</sup>

## 4.3 EXTENT TO WHICH GRAVE VIOLATIONS ARE A PRIORITY FOR THE UK

The UK has played an active role in responding to Yemen’s humanitarian crisis – a crisis that the coalition has substantially contributed to. The UK committed £139 million in aid to Yemen in 2017/18 and has urged other foreign donors to follow its lead. This is on top of £112 million in 2016/17 and £90 million in 2015/16. These contributions make the UK the fourth largest aid donor to Yemen.<sup>115</sup> Programming is through multi-lateral channels and includes food security and cholera response. DFID provides a large amount of funding for two multilateral funds: Education Cannot Wait and the Global Partnership for Education. DFID is also providing expertise and funding to UN shipping inspectors to facilitate import flows into Yemen.<sup>116</sup> The CSSF has supported a project working with the Yemeni Women Pact for Peace and Security to promote and increase Yemeni women’s leadership in peace-building and reconstruction.<sup>117</sup>

The UK has a privileged role as the pen-holder on Yemen at the UN Security Council but it has faced criticism for a lack of balance in this role and stalling on addressing the conflict.<sup>118</sup>

---

111 [Saudi Arabia: Written statement - HCWS716, 23rd May 2018](#)

112 United Kingdom-Saudi Arabia Joint Communiqué, 10th March 2018, [Communique](#)

113 UK-Saudi Arabia development partnership, 13th March 2018, [Press Statement](#)

114 Saudi Crown Prince signs off UK visit with push for fighter deal, 9th March 2018 [Reuters Article](#)

115 [Saudi Arabia: Written statement - HCWS716, 23rd May 2018](#)

116 All Party Parliamentary Group for Yemen (2018), Yemen the Continuing Tragedy [Report](#)

117 [Conflict, Stability and Security Fund: Annual Report 2016/17](#)

118 See [Joint Letter](#) sent by INGOs to Ms. Karen Pierce in March 2018. See also [Security Council Report \(April 2018\)](#) “Dismayed by the inaction of the Council in the face of persistent violations of international humanitarian law and the greatest of the world’s extreme humanitarian crises in Yemen, elected members have pressed for greater Council action and threatened to move forward if the UK as penholder continued to stall.”





There has only been one substantive Security Council resolution on Yemen since 2015 as well as some non-binding Presidential Statements and press statements. This is despite widespread recognition of problems with Resolution 2216<sup>119</sup> which was adopted in April 2015 at the onset of the coalition intervention. In early 2018, the UK drafted a non-binding Presidential Statement at the UN Security Council that would have condemned Iran for its “noncompliance” with the arms embargo on Houthi leaders and called for targeted sanctions<sup>120</sup> but which made no mention of violations by the Yemeni government or the Saudi-led coalition. Ultimately, a Russian version was approved by the Council instead. The UK has also been criticised for not actively supporting motions at the UN Human Rights Council to have an independent investigation into violations in Yemen.<sup>121</sup>

The UK government has argued that the “best opportunity for progress” is currently through the newest UN Special Envoy to Yemen and have provided funding to this office.<sup>122</sup>

The UK is the second largest exporter of arms transfers to Saudi Arabia after the USA. According to the Department for International Trade, around £1.1 billion worth of licences were granted for exports to Saudi Arabia in 2017 alone – 98 per cent of this value was for arms.<sup>123</sup> UK arms sales continue to be dominated by substantial aircraft deals and accompanying maintenance and servicing contracts, with BAE Systems the dominant supplier.<sup>124</sup> The sales of arms to Saudi Arabia for use in Yemen is the subject of ongoing litigation – a High Court judgment concluded that exports could continue but this judgment is subject to appeal, likely to be heard in late 2018.<sup>125</sup> Human Rights Watch has reported that they have found UK arms linked to coalition bombing of factories and housing in Yemen<sup>126</sup> and it is a matter of public record that UK arms have been used directly by the coalition in the conflict.<sup>127</sup>

Saudi Arabia does not host any UK military facilities nor major equipment but, as of 2017, there were around 100 UK personnel based there as trainers with the British Military Mission to the Saudi National Guard, as technicians supporting British arms exports and as liaison advisors on targeting in the Saudi air operations centre.<sup>128</sup> The Saudi air force is heavily reliant on British aircraft, weapons and technical support for their operations.<sup>129</sup>

#### **4.4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The conflict in Yemen has led to misery for millions of children. There is clear and documented evidence of grave violations with the killing and maiming of children, particularly in air bombings by the coalition, as amongst the most severe. In this context, the UK government should be doing all that it can to prevent these grave violations and to hold those responsible accountable. Aside from funding humanitarian and development assistance, there is scant evidence to suggest that this is happening in practice. The UK has provided trade, diplomatic, political, military, technical and logistical support for the Saudi-led bombing campaign in Yemen and in doing so has conferred legitimacy on the coalition’s conduct during the conflict.

119 Adopted by the Security Council at its 7426th meeting, on 14 April 2015

120 Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2402 (2018), Security Council Renews Sanctions against Yemen, Rejects Alternate Draft after Veto by Russian Federation, 26th February 2018 [UN Press Statement](#)

121 Foreign Affairs Committee, 6th March 2018 [Oral Evidence of Natalie Samarasinghe](#)

122 [Letter from Ms. Karen Pierce to INGOs](#), 4th April 2018

123 House of Commons Library (2018) [UK Defence Industry Exports](#) 15th May 2018

124 Arms Industry Statistics, Briefing Paper 2016

125 The basis of the claimant’s case was that Criterion 2c of the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria says that licences should not be granted if there is a clear risk the equipment might be used in a serious violation of IHL.

126 Human Rights Watch (2016) [Bombing Businesses Saudi Coalition Airstrikes on Yemen’s Civilian Economic Structures](#)

127 [Written Evidence from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office \(UKY 13\)](#) para. 35

128 [Saudi Arabia: Military Aid Ministry of Defence written question – 8th November 2017](#)

129 Oxford Research Group (2018) [The UK Military in the Arabian Peninsula](#)



The UK cites inter alia UN Security Council Resolution 2216, the legitimacy of the Hadi regime, national security concerns and the Saudi right to self-defence as justification for their actions. It argues that the Saudis have their own internal processes for investigating alleged violations of IHL since they have the “best insight into their own military procedures.”<sup>130</sup> In an oft-quoted claim it states that the UK has one of the most robust arms export control regimes in the world and asserts that it is supporting the UN-led peace process, most recently through vocal support to the UN Special Envoy. It suggests that there are significant advantages to maintaining a close relationship with Saudi Arabia in terms of mitigating the impact of the conflict particularly through applying pressure to reduce the blockade.<sup>131</sup>

The UK has publicly highlighted the right of Saudi Arabia to defend itself against attacks launched across the border from Yemen and evidence of Iranian support to Houthi forces but has never criticised coalition arms strikes.<sup>132</sup> It has also stated that for the purposes of risk assessment for arms control, the Ministry of Defence doesn’t analyse whether the coalition is observing IHL but instead assesses “that Saudi processes and procedures have been put in place to ensure respect for the principles of international humanitarian law; and that the Saudis both have been and continue to be genuinely committed to compliance with international humanitarian law.”<sup>133</sup>

The UK has faced extensive criticism from a wide range of actors for this largely uncritical support to an ally that is widely believed to have caused grave violations of children’s rights in the course of its military campaign in Yemen. Aside from civil society, parliament has been active on this issue by way of parliamentary questions and debates and a joint report by the Business, Innovation and Skills and the International Development Committees which concluded that an arms embargo was needed pending an independent inquiry (the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committees did not agree to this report).<sup>134</sup>

It is telling that other European states have moved towards freezing arms transfers to coalition members in response to allegations of violations of IHL. Norway has suspended exports of arms to the UAE having already stopped permits to Saudi Arabia<sup>135</sup> and Germany announced it would halt all arms exports to countries involved in the ongoing war in Yemen.<sup>136</sup>

The UK should not be arming and giving diplomatic cover to any of the parties to this conflict. This support sustains and extends a protracted and chaotic conflict that inflicts untold damage on children in Yemen. The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Yemen has concluded that “there is currently little inclination for either the US or UK to exert genuine political influence to end the war....the UK is keen to avoid alienating allies in the Middle East due to its need for favourable post-Brexit relations.”<sup>137</sup> It is time to re-think a policy that is increasingly damaging to the UK’s international reputation, that compromises its status as a world leader of international development cooperation and above all that exacerbates and deepens grave violations of children’s rights in Yemen.

---

130 Letter from Alistair Burt to War Child 8th May 2018

131 For example, the PM [stated](#) that during her December 2017 visit to Saudi Arabia she raised the need to open the port of Hodeidah to humanitarian and commercial supplies. “I am pleased to say that Saudi Arabia then did just that.”

132 [Foreign Secretary statement](#) UN Panel of Experts report on Yemen, 19th February 2018

133 [Corrections to Parliamentary Questions and Westminster Hall Debates: Written statement - HCWS125 21st July 2016](#)

134 [The use of UK-manufactured arms in Yemen 15th September 2016](#)

135 Defense News [Norway suspends arms exports to UAE amid Yemen conflict, 3rd January 2018](#)

136 Independent [Germany set to ban arms sales to Saudi Arabia and Turkey amid fear of human rights abuses](#) 28th April 2018

137 All Party Parliamentary Group for Yemen, Yemen the Continuing Tragedy, 22nd May 2018, p54.



**Suspend arms exports to Saudi-led coalition**

- Given the extensive evidence that the coalition is responsible for grave violations of children’s rights, including the killing and maiming of children in the course of aerial bombardments, the UK must immediately suspend arms exports to members of the Saudi-led coalition.

**Use its close relationship with Saudi Arabia to prevent and address grave violations**

- The UK must urge the Saudi government to immediately lift the ongoing blockade and allow unimpeded humanitarian access. Influence should be exerted to push them towards peace negotiations and to develop and implement an Action Plan with the UN to end grave violations on behalf of the coalition.

**Actively fulfil its mandate as pen-holder at the UN Security Council**

- It is a privilege to have responsibility as the pen-holder for Yemen-related issues at the UN Security Council. For the UK to be perceived as lacking balance in this role is damaging to the UK’s influence within the UN as a whole (which arguably will have increased significance as a vehicle for UK foreign policy after exiting the EU). The UK should table a new resolution condemning the violations of international law committed by all parties to the conflict and highlighting applicable IHL principles.

**Provide full support to the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts**

- The UK should provide full support for all international inquiry mechanisms into the conflict in Yemen, including the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts, to carry out their mandate to investigate and monitor human rights violations, including against children, since 2014.

**OVERALL SCORE: RED**

UK objectives and level of influence.	
Extent to which issue of grave violations is a priority in development projects, programmes or initiatives.	
Extent to which issue of grave violations is a priority in relation to military missions.	
Extent to which diplomatic and political measures ensure prevention of and accountability for grave violations.	
Extent to which arms transfers are prohibited where there is significant risk that arms will be used to commit human rights abuses.	







## CASE STUDY FIVE

# SOMALIA





## **5.1 SITUATION FOR CHILDREN AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT**

Somalia is in the process of emerging from the prolonged period of state collapse that followed the civil war of 1988-91. Since 2012, the post-transitional Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) has been internationally recognized and Mohamed Abdullah Mohamed's 'Farmajo' election as President in 2017 was met with cautious optimism. The government, backed by the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM)<sup>138</sup> and other regional and international armed forces, is fighting with the Islamist armed group Al-Shabaab.

Widespread violence and weak governmental control in many parts of the country has had a devastating impact upon children. The UN verified that 931 children were killed and maimed primarily by unknown armed elements but also by Al-Shabaab, the Somali National Army (SNA), clan militias and others during 2017. Most child casualties resulted from crossfire during military operations, mortar shelling, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war.

The number of children recruited and used in military operations increased largely as a result of an aggressive campaign of child recruitment by Al-Shabaab.<sup>139</sup> The UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) reported that recruitment of children increased from 903 cases in 2015 to 3,335 cases in 2017 - 71.5 per cent of the recruitment was attributed to Al-Shabaab, 14.6 per cent to clan militia and 7.4 per cent to the SNA.<sup>140</sup> There were incidents of sexual violence and abductions attributed to state and non-state armed forces. Between 2013 and 2017, Al-Shabaab, the SNA and other armed groups attacked more than 100 schools.<sup>141</sup> Al-Shabaab is listed for the recruitment, use, killing maiming, and abduction of children as well as for sexual violence and attacks on schools and hospitals. The SNA is listed for the recruitment and use and killing and maiming of children.

Another area of increasing concern is that Somali security forces have arrested children suspected of association with Al-Shabaab, prosecuted them in military courts and sentenced them to heavy penalties for terrorism-related offenses in trials that do not meet international standards on criminal justice for children.<sup>142</sup>

138 By the end of 2020, AMISOM is expected to withdraw all its 20,000 soldiers from Somalia and have turned security responsibility over to Somali government forces.

139 Human Rights Watch (2018) [Somalia: Al-Shabab Demanding Children](#) 14th January 2018

140 UNSOM (2017) Protection of Civilians: Building the Foundation for Peace, Security and Human Rights in Somalia, December 2017 [Report](#)

141 Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (2018) [Education Under Attack 2018](#) p205

142 Human Rights Watch (2018) [Somalia: Detained Children Face Abuse](#) 21st February 2018





The FGS signed two Action Plans in 2012 regarding children associated with the SNA and halting the killing and maiming of children by the SNA.<sup>143</sup> To implement them, a Child Protection Unit has been established at the Ministry of Defence, working closely with UNICEF and UNSOM. In 2014, standard operating procedures were developed for the reception and handover of children formerly associated with armed groups. These stipulate that children, whether having escaped, been captured, or having been otherwise separated from armed groups, or in government custody should be handed over to UNICEF for rehabilitation within 72 hours of having been taken into government custody.<sup>144</sup>

## 5.2 UK OBJECTIVES AND LEVEL OF INFLUENCE

Somalia has long been prominent on the UK's foreign policy agenda owing to its continued instability, the rise of Al-Shabaab and because the UK has a significant UK Somali community – one of the largest in Europe. The UK's cross-departmental strategy for Somalia is unpublished but has as its overarching aim to: "[r]educe the threat that Somalia poses to UK national interests by building a more stable, peaceful and prosperous Somalia."<sup>145</sup> DFID's programming in Somalia has a slightly different emphasis on "promoting longer-term stability and of transforming the lives of poor Somalis."<sup>146</sup>

The UK provides significant amounts of ODA which, according to ICAI generates diplomatic influence and has contributed to achieving a viable political settlement.<sup>147</sup> The UK also contributes logistical and funding support to AMISOM and provides pre-deployment training for troop contributing countries with a focus on sexual and gender-based violence.<sup>148</sup> It provides training and capacity building to the SNA and as of June 2018, there were approximately 85 UK military personnel in Somalia working with AMISOM and the SNA.

The UK is the pen-holder on Somalia at the UN Security Council and has played an important role in political developments through international diplomacy. In May 2017, the UK, together with Somalia, the AU and the UN, hosted an international conference to address Somalia's key governance, state-building and security challenges which culminated in agreement on the architecture for a new partnership for Somalia.

143 Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict (2017), [Conclusions on children and armed conflict in Somalia](#) S/AC.51/2017/2, 13 July 2017

144 Human Rights Watch (2018) Somalia – World Report 2018

145 UK Government Strategy – Somalia (including Somaliland) 2014-17, unpublished, cited in ICAI (2017) UK aid in a conflict-affected country: Reducing conflict and fragility in Somalia A performance review June 2017, p.11 [Report](#)

146 [Operational Plan 2011-2015 DFID Somalia Updated June 2013](#)

147 ICAI (2017), [UK aid in a conflict-affected country: Reducing conflict and fragility in Somalia A performance review](#)

148 CSSF Programme Summary 2016-20 [Improving African Responses to Crises](#)

### 5.3 EXTENT TO WHICH GRAVE VIOLATIONS ARE PRIORITISED

According to DFID's Country Operational Plan (2011-2016), its programming contributes to promoting security through investments in policing, security sector reform and alternative livelihoods for disbanded militia, and by directing aid to stabilise areas newly liberated from Al-Shabaab. UK aid also provides humanitarian assistance to Somalis. A performance review of DFID in Somalia concluded that: "inclusion, human rights and gender equality were not sufficiently mainstreamed across the aid programme. In a few instances, we also encountered tensions between UK security needs and development goals, particularly around the approach to institution-building in the security sector."<sup>149</sup>

In 2016/17, Somalia was one of the five largest CSSF country programmes with a total spend of £33.5 million<sup>150</sup> for programmes on the rule of law, the security sector, stabilisation, reconciliation, state formation and elections, and human rights. This includes direct support to security forces through provision of infrastructure and equipment; training by UK military of SNA and AU forces; police mentoring, and work on stabilisation and Countering Violent Extremism.<sup>151</sup> In 2016/17, the CSSF funded regular stipend payments to around 3,000 SNA personnel and supported the development of a Mogadishu Security plan.<sup>152</sup> A positive move is that since 2016, the British Embassy in Somalia and the British Peace Support Team – East Africa have collaborated with the Romeo Dallaire Initiative to provide a Training of Trainers Course on the recruitment and use of child soldiers for members of the FGS, Somali National Security Forces and AMISOM.<sup>153</sup> The UK is also supporting the biometric profiling of the SNA which helps ensure that child soldiers are not recruited.

Detail around the UK's support on Countering Violent Extremism in Somalia is hard to come by, however, the UK has been involved in development of a new anti-terrorism law. According to Human Rights Watch, the current draft law does not adequately specify the procedural requirements to be followed for children suspected of terrorist-related offending and fails to spell out that detention and imprisonment of children must be a measure of last resort, alternatives to imprisonment should be available and rehabilitation and social reintegration must be prioritised.<sup>154</sup> The UK government has also financially supported two rehabilitation centres for disengaged former Al-Shabaab combatants – these centres are for adult males but the procedure for handover should a child be placed in one requires further clarification.<sup>155</sup>

There were two main outputs from the Somalia Conference in May 2017, a Conference Communiqué and Security Pact. There was a commitment in both for the international community to support human rights and reference to the recruitment of children by armed groups, to combatting impunity for human rights violations and concerns were raised about sexual violence.<sup>156</sup> These commitments could have been far stronger and children's rights were not recognised as a stand-alone concern. There was focus on reform of the security sector but much less emphasis was given to the importance of strengthening justice mechanisms for children. This is vitally important in the absence of a specialised law and system of criminal justice for children in Somalia and is a missed opportunity.

---

149 ICAI (2017), [UK aid in a conflict-affected country: Reducing conflict and fragility in Somalia A performance review](#)

150 [Conflict, Stability and Security Fund Annual Report 2016-17](#)

151 [UK announces new support for security reform in Somalia, 21 April 2017](#)

152 [Conflict, Stability and Security Fund Annual Report 2016-17](#)

153 [UK funding empowering Somalis to prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers 14th January 2018](#)

154 Human Rights Watch (2018) Somalia – World Report 2018

155 As above

156 For example the [Security Pact](#) noted "the particular need for increased cooperation to support....Somalia's action plans on children and armed conflict".





Overall, the ICAI found that the UK is not pushing directly for human rights reform with state actors in Somalia. One of the National Security Council's objectives is to promote the duty of the FGS to answer under its international human rights obligations. ICAI found "[f]ew opportunities to promote such "top-down" accountability were being taken by programmers, despite widespread human rights problems and evidence from interviews that the Somali elite were responsive to such external pressures."<sup>157</sup>

UK has licensed £3.2million of arms exports to Somalia between 2015-17.<sup>158</sup> Although a relatively small amount, it is somewhat surprising given the high levels of corruption, the entrenched and protracted nature of the conflict and that Somalia is a Human Rights Priority Country for the FCO. Given the lack of transparency about the arms export licensing process, it is hard to know if evidence of grave violations against children was taken in to account when assessing the risk that these arms might be used in contravention of IHL.

## 5.4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Reflecting the prioritisation of security interests, the UK has a mixed record of protecting the rights of children in armed conflict in Somalia and has the political status and influence to do much more given that the SNA has been listed for the recruitment and use and killing and maiming of children. The protection of children's rights should be more systematically mainstreamed across the UK's interventions so that, for example, when assisting with developing anti-terrorist legislation, the specific aspects of how this legislation will impact upon children is not over-looked.

The UK government should also be pressing the FGS for concerted efforts to prevent the recruitment and use and killing and maiming of children by its security forces and should be calling for an end to all prosecutions of children under 18 in Somalia's military courts and for commitments that the prosecution of children is only carried out in accordance with international standards on justice for children.

### **The UK must use its close relationship with Somalia to prevent and address grave violations, and other violations of children's rights**

- Urge the Somali security forces to comply with their obligations under IHL, including distinguishing between military objectives and civilians and civilian objects, complying with the principle of proportionality and taking all feasible precautions to minimize civilian casualties. They must take into account that, in situations where armed groups hold territory, a significant number of children may be in close proximity to military positions or may even be used as human shields.
- Urge the Somali government publicly to ensure that children associated with non-state armed groups are considered primarily as victims who are likely to have been exploited and coerced. Demand commitments that the detention and prosecution of these children is carried out in accordance with international standards including that detention is used only as a measure of last resort, that children are detained separately from adults, that they have access to legal counsel, and that rehabilitation and reintegration and the best interests of the child are a priority.
- Support regular, independent monitoring by humanitarian agencies, including child protection agencies, of all places of detention in which children are held in custody, including intelligence facilities, and including during the screening process of children alleged to have been formerly associated with Al-Shabaab.

157 ICAI (2017), [UK aid in a conflict-affected country: Reducing conflict and fragility in Somalia A performance review](#)

158 [UK Arms Export Licences in Somalia 2015-17](#)

- Support the Somali government to strengthen overall child protection efforts, including demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration programmes for children, particularly those formerly associated with non-state armed groups, that include vocational training programmes, education programmes, medical and psycho-social counselling activities including for survivors of sexual violence and that avoid stigmatisation of these children when returning to their communities.
- Support the implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration.

**Promote child protection in UNSOM mandate renewal**

- Ensure that child protection remains a key priority for UNSOM in the next mandate renewal and that sufficient resources are allocated to carry this out.

**Strengthen child protection aspects of military training**

- The UK must ensure that children in armed conflict issues are integrated comprehensively in training with all Somali security forces and institutions.

**Strengthen the framework for accountability**

- Urge the Somali government to ratify and implement the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.
- Fully cooperate with the UN Country Task Force on the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism to implement Somalia’s existing Action Plans regarding grave violations.

**OVERALL SCORE: AMBER**

UK objectives and level of influence.	
Extent to which issue of grave violations is a priority in development projects, programmes or initiatives.	
Extent to which issue of grave violations is a priority in relation to military missions.	
Extent to which diplomatic and political measures ensure prevention of and accountability for grave violations.	
Extent to which arms transfers are prohibited where there is significant risk that arms will be used to commit human rights abuses.	



### 3. A NEW DEAL FOR CHILDREN AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT

Children are not marginal bystanders but are centre stage in many of the ongoing conflicts around the world. In addition to facing the physical dangers of death or injury, children experience emotional and developmental challenges because they are separated from families, are exposed to violence and cannot access education or healthcare. They are exploited in depressingly familiar ways in conflict settings and subject to child labour, sexual abuse, early marriage and human trafficking.

Of real concern are the tens of thousands of children who are recruited and used by government armed forces, pro-government militias and non-state armed groups. Children who are part of these armed groups or living under their control not only experience trauma and violence, they frequently find themselves labelled as security threats instead of as victims of exploitation who have been abducted, coerced and manipulated. Minimum protections under international standards on justice for children are swept away and children find themselves detained alongside adults and sentenced to disproportionate terms of imprisonment. On release, they are not supported with the unique issues they face in reintegrating back into their communities, including high levels of stigmatisation.<sup>159</sup>

War Child is concerned that the UK's aid, military, trade and foreign policies are not delivering for children affected by conflict. The UK does not obtain an overall green rating in any of the case studies in this report. Whilst there are positive elements in terms of engagement and support – most notably in terms of development aid – in certain contexts there are stark inconsistencies in approach. The unavoidable explanation for these inconsistencies is that the rights of children caught up in armed conflict are readily put to one side when they are seen to conflict with other considerations – primarily those of trade and national security.

Such an approach detracts from the very positive contribution that the UK has made in the past and can make in the future. It detracts significantly from the excellent work done on preventing sexual violence in conflicts and from the UK's global standing as a champion for the SDGs, for gender equality and as a lead in the fight against modern slavery in all its forms.

Children need a new deal whereby the UK deploys its many strengths – leadership on aid and development, global influence, expertise and diplomacy – to prioritise their rights. In the words of the UK Minister to the UN, “[c]hildren....are the innocent victims of conflict. Let us today renew our determination to work together to protect the many children caught up in the conflict, to get them back to school and give them hope of a brighter future free from fear, free from conflict.”<sup>160</sup> In addition to the country-specific recommendations, the following are suggested actions for the UK to take at national, regional and international levels to deliver a new deal for the rights of children affected by armed conflict:

159 See UNODC (2017) [Handbook on Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The Role of the Justice System](#) for further explanation on the rights of children suspected of terrorist-related offending to due process.

160 Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, UK Minister for the United Nations, statement at the Security Council open debate on Children in Armed Conflict, 31 October 2017

■ **Develop a cross-governmental strategy for protecting children affected by armed conflict – to address policy incoherence and inconsistencies that undermine children’s rights.**

If the government is serious about focussing on long-term causes of instability and on preventing threats to UK territory, citizens and interests, then it needs to have a much better understanding of how children are used as military and propaganda instruments to drive and sustain conflicts. There is currently no evidence of any strategic analysis being done within government of how the rights of children affected by armed conflict directly relate to the UK’s development, counter-terrorism, security, military, trade and diplomatic agendas, nor of how accountability mechanisms can be optimally applied.

The government needs to develop a coherent and integrated strategy to ensure that the rights of children affected by armed conflict are taken into account at different levels of decision-making and across different government departments. In all settings, efforts to prevent violent extremism and terrorist activity should be underpinned by an understanding of how they will impact upon children’s rights. The risk otherwise is that, paradoxically, they will fuel the grievances that lead to children and young people joining violent groups in the first place.

---

■ **Strategically use the levers of humanitarian assistance, military presence, trade measures and diplomatic relationships to put more pressure on State and non-State armed groups that commit grave violations against children.**

The UK provides often generous levels of military, political and humanitarian support to states that are listed themselves for committing grave violations against children or that support listed armed groups. This leverage should be used to prevent and address grave violations. States do respond to reputational pressure and condemnation should not always take place ‘behind closed doors.’ Clear public statements regarding grave violations should be used to bring about positive change.

---

■ **Make better use of all international channels and UN bodies to promote the rights of children in armed conflict.**

The UK should be unequivocal in its support for the UN Security Council architecture on children and armed conflict and use platforms such as the Working Group on Children Affected by Armed Conflict and the annual Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict to push for strong and coordinated responses by the UN. It should encourage allies to ratify OPAC where they haven’t already done so and to endorse the Paris and Vancouver Principles and Safe Schools Declaration. The UK mission to the UN should be primed to push for the inclusion of child protection and child protection advisors in mandates of peace-keeping operations.



- **Support mechanisms that hold the perpetrators of grave violations to account to deter future violations – such as tying economic sanctions to persistent breaches.**

The UK should support accountability mechanisms for alleged violations of IHL and international human rights law, such as the International Criminal Court, and lead by example by ratifying the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure. The UK should ensure that when the UN Security Council is deliberating on whether to impose sanctions, it takes grave violations into account and employs the recruitment and use of child soldiers as a designation criteria as consistently and effectively as possible.

---

- **Increase training of UK armed forces on the rights of children in armed conflict and ensure that these issues are embedded in training provided to military forces in other countries.**

Before UK military personnel are deployed on overseas missions, they should receive specialised training on the protection, welfare and rights of children. The UK is engaged in training and capacity building of often newly formed military forces in a range of countries where grave violations are committed. The Ministry of Defence should take advantage of this opportunity and consider establishing a small cadre of military personnel who are able to offer specialised training on child protection issues in such contexts.

---

- **Only permit arms exports when they adhere to international law – and do not approve arms exports to countries who are listed by the UN as committing grave violations.**

The government has obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty, as well as European and domestic law, to ensure there is no risk that arms it has licensed might be used in contravention of IHL and international human rights law. It also has a moral obligation to ensure it plays its role in preventing the risk that UK arms could be used to commit grave violations. Arms exports to Saudi Arabia should be suspended given the extensive evidence of violations of IHL in Yemen.

---



Handwritten notes on a lined notebook page. The word "Livre" is written at the top. Below it, there are two lines of numbers: "2-2-2" and "2-2-2".



Handwritten notes on a lined notebook page. The text is mostly illegible but appears to be a list or series of lines of writing. A yellow highlighter is visible on the page.





**War Child UK**

Studio 320, Highgate Studios  
53-79 Highgate Road, London, NW5 1TL, UK  
+44 207 112 2555  
info@warchild.org.uk  
warchild.org.uk  
UK registered charity no. 1071659

