

## Children and Armed Conflict

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### Implementation of recommendations from the previous period

In 2018, nine recommendations were issued to the Colombian state by Austria, Argentina, Costa Rica, Chile, Croatia, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, France, Italy, Turkey, and Ukraine to address the effects of the armed conflict on children, including:

- 1) Continue the dialogue process with the National Liberation Army (ELN) to ensure a satisfactory political solution to the conflict, paying special attention to the situation of children and adolescents; and
- 2) Take effective measures to address the protracted humanitarian crisis caused by the armed conflict that affects millions, especially women and children, as indicated in reports from UN agencies and civil society organizations. This recommendation was not accepted and caused an increase in the severity of the actions committed by armed groups against ethnic groups and peasants. Women and children continue to be those most impacted by the armed conflict in Colombia.

### Current status

Armed conflict disproportionately affects children: According to the seventh report by the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, 290 serious violations committed against 209 children were registered between January and December 2022. The most frequent violations were the recruitment and use of children (130 individuals); followed by homicide and mutilation (84 cases); kidnapping (23 cases); and rape and other forms of sexual violence (18 cases) (1).

Another concern were cases of revictimization of recruited children by high-ranking officials from the former government, ignoring their status as victims and referring to them as “war machines” to justify their murder.

All armed actors (legal and illegal) put the lives, liberty, and personal integrity of children and adolescents at risk and fail to comply with International Humanitarian Law: During this reporting period, military forces carried out bombings that killed minors.

According to information reported by the Institute of Forensic Medicine, between 2018 and 2022 at least eight FARC dissident camps were bombed, killing at least 30 children who had been recruited by these illegal armed groups. In some cases, the bombings were carried out even though military officials knew that children and adolescents were present in the camps.

(1) 1 United Nations. Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in Colombia. S/2023/363. Paragraphs 40 - 46. 5 June 2023.

High levels of recruitment and civic-military actions persist: This is demonstrated by the 82 early alerts on recruitment issued by the Ombuds' Office up to 2021.

These alerts were reaffirmed by the United Nations Secretary-General's report (2) and remain in impunity.

Despite the call for a reduction in state-imposed recruitment quotas and regulatory changes in this area, youth from the most vulnerable sectors are the main victims of arbitrary detentions for recruitment purposes.

This demonstrates how urgent it is that the government prioritize the rights of children in each action and accept Recommendation 121.27 of 2018 to "put in place legal measures that prevent the recruitment of children and adolescents."

(2) Taken from United Nations: Report of the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict in Colombia. S/2021/1022. Paragraph 9. 8 December 2021.

## Recommendations

1. Apply prevention and protection actions for children, especially in departments with the highest risks due to the permanent presence of both illegal and legal armed actors, in accordance with International Humanitarian Law.
2. Insist on the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement and guarantee the inclusion of differential and children's approaches, as well as comprehensive reparations for all children and adolescents who are or have been victims in the armed conflict. In addition, prioritize the incorporation of a children's approach in future peace agreements and negotiations.
3. Respect the Colombian state's national and international obligations to protect the rights of children who have been victims of serious crimes during any political negotiation or judicial submission process with illegal armed actors.