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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by the Child Foundation, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[30 August 2015]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).



Children in War-affected Zones

This year marks a decade since the UN Security Council Resolution 1612 was passed unanimously, establishing a monitoring and reporting mechanism to gather accurate, timely and objective information on six grave violations committed against children in armed conflict. In recent years, however, there have been signs that political interests of powerful states are increasingly threatening the integrity of this mechanism. Parties to conflict, which should be monitored, named and held accountable for committing egregious violations against children, are being let off the hook and scrutiny on contexts that should be monitored is being prematurely lifted. At a time when a growing number of complex conflicts around the world are posing new challenges to child protection, this ten-year anniversary marks an important opportunity to look back at some achievements and identify impediments.

Today, millions of children and young people worldwide are affected by armed conflicts. They are confronted with physical harm, violence, danger, exploitation, fear and loss. Many children are forced to flee and some witness the death of their loved ones. War-affected communities, in many cases, are ripped apart and can no longer provide a secure environment for children. As a consequence of these conflicts, children and young people's rights to be protected from violence, abuse and neglect, to live in dignity and be supported to develop to their full potential are violated on a massive scale.

Last year was one of the worst in history for the world's children: an estimated 230 million children live in countries and areas torn by armed conflicts, according to UNICEF. The disturbing reality is that while children account for more than half the population in war zones, less than three percent of humanitarian funding is spent on their protection.

Also, according to UNICEF estimates, 6 million children have been severely injured or permanently disabled in armed conflicts, an estimated 20 million children are living as refugees in neighboring countries or are internally displaced within their own national borders as a result of conflict and human rights violations, and some 14 million children across the middle east are now suffering from the escalating conflict sweeping Syria and much of Iraq.

Also in Yemen, An average of eight children are being killed or maimed every day as a direct result of the conflict gripping the country, according to a report released by UNICEF. Disrupted health services, increased levels of child malnutrition, closed schools and higher numbers of children recruited by fighting groups are among the effects of the conflict now ravaging the Arab world's poorest country.

In Gaza, by the end of the last year's 51-day conflict, 551 Gaza children had lost their lives and many more lost their family and friends. The UN estimates that nearly 400,000 Gaza children need psychological counseling, but therapy doesn't stand much chance as long as children are acutely aware that the conflict isn't over. In fact, repeated Israeli military offensives and Israel's complete disregard for international law have thwarted any meaningful efforts toward implementing comprehensive protections for these Palestinian children. We believe that the international community must demand an end to Israel's illegal blockade of Gaza and challenge systemic impunity by investigating allegations of war crimes and holding the perpetrators accountable.

Child Foundation urges longer-term investments to meet the needs of children and adolescents, and to equip them with the skills and motivation to build a more stable future for themselves. Such investments should include:

- Opportunities for education and recreation for children and adolescents.
- Formal and informal learning opportunities for children impacted by conflict.

- Services for vulnerable children, including survivors of violence, those provide psychosocial care and assistance.
 - Strengthening education and health systems, as well as livelihood support, in host communities so all children affected in some way by the conflict are supported.
 - Holding all the perpetrators accountable for grave human rights violations against war zone children and bringing an end to their impunity.
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