

UN calls for more protection for children in conflict situations

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United Nations, June 29 (RHC)-- The United Nations is calling for more protection for children. UN Secretary General António Guterres has called for prioritizing the prevention of violations against children

in conflict situations, and demanded more protection for this vulnerable population.

Speaking at the Security Council's virtual Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict, Guterres presented his latest report on the issue, which he described as "very grim."

According to the UN chief, the disregard for the rights of minors in times of conflict and upheaval is "appalling and heartbreaking." He noted that during 2020, almost 24,000 grave violations were committed against 19,300 children in the 21 situations covered by this UN mandate.

Recruitment and use of children in hostilities remains among the top violations, followed by killing and maiming and denial of humanitarian access, he said.

"In addition, new and deeply disturbing trends emerged: an exponential increase in the number of abducted children and sexual violence against children." The UN head warned that schools and hospitals are also constantly being attacked, looted, destroyed or used for military purposes, with educational and health facilities for girls disproportionately attacked.

Conflict devastates societies and hits children particularly hard, and the beginning of 2021 has been no exception, the UN secretary general stressed. The COVID-19 pandemic brought new challenges and tensions to the work of safeguarding children living in war situations, the Portuguese diplomat said, emphasizing the need to fund child protection posts on the ground.

As armed conflicts evolve and children face multiple threats, the framework for their protection must also adapt, he stressed. In this regard, there is an urgent need to raise the voice of children and their best interests in peace processes and decision-making.

There is no place for children in wars, said the UN Secretary General, and we must not allow conflicts to trample on their rights. According to the UN report, the pandemic turned schools into easy targets for occupation and military use, and during the last year there was an increase in these phenomena while such centers remained temporarily closed in the context of the health crisis.

Faced with such a scenario, UN authorities insist on the need to ensure resources for child protection at a time of extreme suffering for children, given the numerous setbacks in democratic processes and the increase in violence between warring parties.

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