

# **Amnesty International**

## **Joint NGO Letter**

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### **An Open Letter to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon**

As organizations working to protect the rights of children and health workers in armed conflict, we are shocked by your [decision](#) announced on June 6, 2016 to remove the Saudi Arabia-led Coalition from the “list of shame” annexed to your published [2016 annual report](#) to the United Nations Security Council on children and armed conflict, “pending the conclusions of [a] joint review” of the cases and numbers included in the text.

The evidence of grave violations against children in Yemen by the Saudi-led Coalition is overwhelming. The UN Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism, which operates at multiple levels and gathers, reviews, and verifies information from all relevant UN agencies operating in a country, has documented over a thousand children killed and injured as a result of Saudi-led aerial attacks in Yemen, as well as dozens of airstrikes on schools and hospitals. The listing was based on this information.

These findings come in the context of widespread violations of international humanitarian law by Coalition forces in Yemen over the past year. The [UN Panel of Experts](#) identified 119 separate coalition sorties that it determined were unlawful. Nongovernmental organizations have similarly documented over 50 cases of indiscriminate or disproportionate airstrikes against civilian objects, including houses, markets, schools, hospitals, and clinics, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of children. Although the exact numbers may be disputed, the responsibility of the Saudi-led coalition for grave violations against children in many of these attacks is not in doubt. Moreover, Saudi Arabia and other Coalition members have shown no willingness to credibly investigate alleged war crimes, as they are obligated to do under international humanitarian law.

Since the Secretary-General’s “list of shame” was first instituted in 2002, it has been an invaluable tool in efforts to curb violations against children in armed conflict. By stigmatizing perpetrators, whether governments or non-state armed groups, the list creates pressure on parties to armed conflict to comply with international law. Over 20 governments and armed groups have signed UN action plans and taken steps to end violations against children in order to be considered for “de-listing.”

Your decision to remove the Saudi-led Coalition from the list – even temporarily pending “review” – following protests by the Saudi government sets a damaging precedent and undermines the list’s credibility. It sends a message to parties to armed conflict that if they apply sufficient political pressure, they can manipulate their exclusion from the list and avoid scrutiny and accountability. Instead, your message should be that all parties to armed conflict—without exception-- are held to the same standard, and that the only route to de-listing is by ending violations against children.

If the Saudi-led Coalition wants to be removed from the list, it should stop killing and maiming children and bombing schools and hospitals in Yemen—the violations for which it was listed.

By capitulating to the demands of Saudi Arabia, you undermine your Human Rights Up Front initiative and taint your legacy as a proponent of human rights. We urge you to place the Saudi-led

Coalition back on the list annexed to your report, and state publicly that your office is committed to an impartial list, based on evidence, not politics. Children whose lives are devastated by armed conflict deserve nothing less.

Sincerely yours,

11.11.11

Alkarama Foundation

Amnesty International

Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress

Article 36

Center for Public Health and Human Rights, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Child Rights International Network

Child Soldiers International

Colombian Campaign to Ban Landmines

Defenders of Medical Impartiality

Defense for Children International

Doctors for Human Rights (UK)

FOMICRES (Mozambique)

FundiPau

Global Justice Center

Human Rights Agenda Network

Human Rights Watch

InterAction

International Council of Nurses

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

International Fellowship of Reconciliation, Austria

International Health Protection Initiative

IntraHealth International

Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation

Maternal & Childhealth Advocacy International

Oxfam

Physicians for Human Rights

Protection against armaments

RISE Pakistan

Romeo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative

Saferworld

Terre des Hommes International Federation

Vision-GRAM International

War Child International

World Voices Uganda