

members also increased the number of staff dedicated to monitoring and reporting mechanism activities. A child protection unit was established in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in March 2009, consisting of a child protection adviser and a monitoring and reporting officer, although greater field presence is urgently required. Focal points on child protection were appointed in four of the Mission's eight regional offices to work with the regional task forces. In eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, under the leadership of the MONUC child protection section and UNICEF, several working groups established pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005) have been set up, which act as sub-branches of the country task force in the field to ensure the regular reporting on grave violations of child rights. The Nepal country task force expanded its scope to monitor and report on armed groups, especially in the Tarai region and the eastern hills.

45. Given the presence of two distinctive peacekeeping operations in the Sudan, an agreement has been reached to establish a national task force on monitoring and reporting co-chaired by African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and the United Nations Mission in the Sudan Deputy Heads of Mission with the UNICEF Country Representative. This unique arrangement of three co-chairs is intended to facilitate coordination and fulfil the requirements as outlined in my report on children and armed conflict in 2005 (A/59/695-S/2005/72), which specified the significance of the role of Special Representatives in any given conflict situation. Furthermore, to facilitate more effective monitoring of violations, UNAMID will enhance its existing capacities on the ground through the establishment of child protection field presence in the three states of Darfur.

46. In Côte d'Ivoire, the persistence of sexual violence against children across the country has resulted in the need to reactivate and strengthen the country task force in order to monitor and report on such violations with immediate urgency. Efforts in that regard are currently under way.

#### **IV. Information on grave violations committed against children in armed conflict**

##### **A. Information on grave violations against children in situations on the agenda of the Security Council**

###### **Developments in Afghanistan**

47. While detailed documentation is still difficult to obtain, available information indicates that a number of children were recruited or used by armed opposition groups throughout the country, including the Taliban, the Haqqani network, Hezb-i-Islami, the Tora Bora Front and Jamat Sunat al-Dawa Salafia. Cases were documented of children as young as 13 and 14 years of age who carried out suicide attacks or were used to plant explosives. This was further reinforced by the documentation of cases of children in Government custody allegedly under national security-related charges, which confirmed that a number of such children detained had been lured into carrying explosives or trained in conducting suicide-type attacks against national and international security forces or Government officials. Two children revealed that they had been kidnapped from Afghanistan and taken to Pakistan, where they underwent military training. Several cases of Pakistani

children used to conduct military-related operations in Afghanistan were also confirmed. Children also continue to be associated with the Afghan National Police.

48. During the reporting period, more than 1,000 children were killed or injured in conflict-related violence, victims of, inter alia, improvised explosive devices, air strikes, rocket attacks and mines and unexploded ordnance accidents. This is a marked increase from last year and is due mainly to the growth and spread of the insurgency, with armed groups being responsible for the vast majority of incidents. The southern region of Afghanistan (Helmand, Uruzgan, Kandahar) remains the most volatile, with the highest number of civilian casualties, including children, closely followed by the south-east (Khost, Ghazni) and east (Kunar, Nangarhar). A total of 128 children were killed by armed opposition groups, including the Taliban, in 2009. The reported child casualties were caused by suicide attacks, assassinations and improvised explosive devices, including at least five children who were killed while positioning or using explosives against pro-Government targets. Furthermore, from January to December 2009, 55 children were killed and 199 injured in mine accidents, the vast majority (205) of whom were boys. While the number of deadly air strike incidents remains limited overall, aerial bombings by international military forces caused the death of 131 children in 2009.

49. Available information points to sexual violence, including that against children, as a widespread phenomenon. The practice of *bacha bazi* and sexual abuse against boys is also a matter of concern. The general climate of impunity and the vacuum in rule of law has adversely affected the reporting of sexual violence and abuse against children to the authorities and the prosecution of perpetrators. According to the July 2009 report entitled *Silence is Violence*, drafted by UNAMA and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, perpetrators also include and are linked to local power holders, such as Government or elected officials, powerful commanders, members of illegal armed groups and criminal gangs.

50. The burning of schools or school equipment, forced closure, use of school facilities, damage from attacks, fighting or explosions from improvised explosive devices in the vicinity of school buildings or targeted military attacks and threats against pupils and educational staff have increased since my last report. A total of 613 incidents were recorded from January to November 2009 compared to 348 incidents reported in 2008. Those incidents were largely perpetrated by groups opposing the Government, but also by conservative elements in some communities that are opposed to the education of girls. Such incidents have spread throughout the country, with a notable increase in areas around Kabul, Wardak, Logar and Khost, and in the eastern provinces of Laghman, Kunar and Nangarhar. The situation in the southern region remains of great concern, while attacks have further spread to northern provinces previously considered relatively safe, such as Takhar and Badakhshan. Reports indicate alarming figures of schools closed in certain areas, such as in Helmand (more than 70 per cent) or in Zabul (more than 80 per cent). During the reporting period, at least 23 pupils were killed and 342 suffered serious or minor injuries from such incidents, while 24 teachers and education personnel lost their lives and 41 were injured throughout the country.

51. There were also continued attacks on health workers and facilities, forcing many to close or scale down services, effectively cutting off hundreds of thousands of Afghan children from basic health care, in particular in Kandahar, Nimroz,

Kunar, Khost, Helmand, Wardak, Nangahar and Kunduz. While 31 incidents were reported in 2008, the number of incidents nearly tripled to 115 in 2009 and includes the abduction, killing and assault of medical staff, personal threats from armed groups, burning, looting and forced closure as well as the use of explosives in and around health facilities by armed groups. Abduction of health workers by armed groups, including vaccinators and support staff, was by far the most reported violation. Search operations conducted by national and international military forces in health facilities, and occupation of health facilities were also denounced as a serious breach of international standards.

52. Increased incidents targeting the aid community continue to adversely affect the delivery of humanitarian programmes throughout the country, with significant peaks in Kunduz, Kandahar and Herat. A total of 163 incidents attributable to armed groups, including complex attacks against humanitarian agency compounds and aid vehicle/convoy ambushes, and numerous threats to aid personnel were recorded in 2009.

53. Countrywide, approximately 110 children have been detained by the National Directorate of Security and international military forces on charges related to national security, including their alleged involvement or association with the Taliban and other armed groups. Access to detention facilities continues to be difficult and information on children detained by pro-Government forces remains limited. The use of harsh interrogation techniques and forced confession of guilt by the Afghan National Police and the National Directorate of Security was documented, including the use of electric shocks and beating.

#### **Developments in Burundi**

54. The United Nations has verified that all children associated with the Forces nationales de libération (FNL) were released through a formal disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process in June 2009, and reunified with their families.<sup>5</sup> It has also been confirmed that FNL has ceased recruitment and since June no new reported cases of recruitment or use of children by the group have been recorded. On the basis of this information, FNL will be removed from the lists annexed to my report this year. The country task force will continue to monitor compliance by FNL and its alleged dissident groups to ensure that continuous efforts are made to prevent the recruitment or re-recruitment of children.

55. However, sexual violence against children continued to be of serious concern during the reporting period. An increase was noted with regard to the number of rape cases committed by civilians, while cases committed by members of security and defence forces have decreased since July. From January to November, four cases of rape were committed by members of the Burundi National Police, 7 by the National Defence Forces and 4 by FNL members. This is a marked decrease compared to the 42 cases attributed to those actors in 2008.

56. In addition, I remain concerned by the reports on militant activities of youth groups allegedly associated with certain political parties that are generating fear and suspicion. The United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi has received reports about members of the youth wing of the ruling Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD) party, the

<sup>5</sup> See para. 17 above for the total number of children released from FNL.