
EU Council: “Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict”. Situation exacerbated by uprooting, violence, injury and death

“The Council is gravely concerned about the rise of violations of children’s rights in the context of armed conflict, exacerbated by the proliferation of wars, including Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine and its unlawful deportation and forcible transfer of Ukrainian children”. This is according to a statement issued by the European Council today announcing the adoption of the updated “Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict”. First adopted in 2003 and then updated in 2008, the guidelines are “intended to strengthen the EU’s contribution to the respect, protection, and fulfilment of rights of children in armed conflict and other situations of armed violence”. According to the UN Secretary General’s latest annual report on children and armed conflict, grave violations against children in conflict situations increased by 21% in 2023, with the highest numbers being recorded in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as well as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, Nigeria, and Sudan. In almost every conflict zone, children represent as much as half of the affected population. Children are the most heavily affected as they face violence, injury and death, recruitment, displacement and uprooting, interrupted education, lack of health care and long-lasting physical and mental trauma. The Council has also adopted a tool which helps verify that the protection of children affected by armed conflict is integrated into the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations and provides guidance for planning and conducting activities in those contexts.

Sarah Numico