

SUDAN

Bombing, shelling, arson, and looting damaged and destroyed hundreds of schools and killed and injured students and school personnel in Darfur and in Southern Kordofan, Abyei, and Blue Nile. School and university students, as well as school teachers, were also reportedly targeted for their perceived opposition, and were attacked with live and rubber bullets, teargas, batons, and other means.

Context

Conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan began in 2003 and continued through the period covered by this report. In 2014, violence and battles between government and rebel forces, in addition to intertribal conflict, reached a level of intensity that had not been seen since 2004, displacing nearly half a million people in Darfur in that year alone.²⁰²⁸ Attacks by government forces in Jebel Marra, the rebel stronghold in Central Darfur, intensified in the first half of 2016, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. The Sudanese government also blocked access to Jebel Marra by the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID).²⁰²⁹

Government security forces and their supporters in Darfur included the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, and the police, as well as armed community groups. Anti-government non-state armed groups in Darfur included the Justice and Equality Movement and the Sudan Liberation Army, both of which claimed to be fighting against social injustice.²⁰³⁰ The government declared a unilateral ceasefire in Darfur in June 2016, but skirmishes continued.²⁰³¹ In June 2017, the UN Security Council approved the reduction of UNAMID's peacekeeping forces by approximately one-third, despite ongoing violence in the region.²⁰³²

In addition to the conflict in Darfur, after the 2011 secession of South Sudan, territorial conflicts broke out in Southern Kordofan, Abyei, and Blue Nile states, all of which bordered the new nation to the south. In 2011, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement North (SPLM-N), an armed opposition group, began fighting government forces in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile.²⁰³³ Infighting continued from 2012 through 2014, and in 2015, the SPLM-N launched increasingly powerful attacks in these two states, including shelling.²⁰³⁴ In December 2016, the parties to the conflict declared a ceasefire.²⁰³⁵ Aerial bombardment reportedly decreased in Darfur and in Southern Kordofan, Blue Bile, and Abyei states in the first half of 2017, possibly as a result of the ceasefires which were widely seen to be linked to a decision by the United States to lift economic sanctions on Sudan.²⁰³⁶

Sudan's conflicts severely impacted children's access to education in all affected areas. Indiscriminate bombing by the government and opposition groups killed and maimed children, and damaged and destroyed schools.²⁰³⁷ In Darfur, OCHA reported that 680,000 children were out of school in 2013 alone. In addition, enrollment rates were lower than 75 percent in Blue Nile, Southern Kordofan, and Abyei states.²⁰³⁸ In 2014 the Minister of Education reported to local media that conflict-related insecurity led many students and teachers to leave school.²⁰³⁹

From 2013 to 2016, the number of attacks on education remained comparable to levels reported in *Education under Attack 2014,* and they continued to take similar forms. Reports of all types of attacks began to decrease in 2017, possibly due in part to the ceasefires declared in Sudan's conflict zones. Information on attacks on education came from UN, NGO, and media sources. Restricted access to conflict-affected regions of Sudan made it challenging to verify data.

Sudan endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration in October 2015.

Attacks on schools

Aerial bombings by government forces damaged and destroyed dozens of schools during the reporting period. The Darfur region and Southern Kordofan state were most heavily affected by these attacks. Attacks in Darfur were reported at similar rates to those found in *Education under Attack 2014*, and those in Southern Kordofan were reported at rates similar to the years 2011 and 2012. GCPEA found no reports of attacks on schools in 2017, possibly due in part to the government's 2016 ceasefire in Darfur and the ceasefire between the government and the SPLM-N, which was active in Southern Kordofan, Abyei, and Blue Nile states.



In 2013 the UN reported three government air strikes on schools, which took place in Dursa village, Central Darfur state; Um Dadeti town, South Darfur state; and Tabit village, North Darfur state. Each air strike damaged schools and injured a combined total of six school children. The UN also reported that unknown armed attackers looted schools in Labado, East Darfur in April 2013.²⁰⁴⁰

Meanwhile, during the first half of 2013, reports collated from UN, NGO, and media sources in Southern Kordofan state indicated that government forces damaged three schools and an SPLM-N mortar damaged one:

- The UN reported that an SPLM-N mortar shell hit the yard of El Manar Primary School for Boys in Kadugli, injuring a 10-year-old boy.²⁰⁴¹
- An NGO report stated that in February and March 2013, government aircraft bombarded villages in Delami and Al Buram counties, Southern Kordofan state, damaging several buildings, including two schools.²⁰⁴²
- On May 16, 2013, four SAF bombs hit the Father Cliff Primary School for Orphans while the students were eating lunch, according to *Nuba Reports*. A 9-year-old boy was reportedly injured in the attack, when shrapnel struck his leg.²⁰⁴³

Similar attacks continued to affect education in 2014. The UN documented 10 cases of schools being damaged or destroyed in Darfur.²⁰⁴⁴ Among these, the UN reported that two schools were looted and burned following fighting between government security forces and the Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi (SLA-MM) in Umgonia village, South Darfur state, in February 2014.²⁰⁴⁵

Also in 2014, government bombs reportedly damaged or destroyed schools in Southern Kordofan state. Human Rights Watch reported that government armed forces bombed five school areas at least three times between 2014 and 2015.²⁰⁴⁶ *Nuba Reports* separately reported three attacks on schools:

- A school in Kauda in the Nuba Mountains was hit by rockets dropped by SAF jets on January 1, 2014.²⁰⁴⁷
- Nuba Reports documented an attack in which the SAF reportedly dropped bombs on the Tabanya Primary School.²⁰⁴⁸
- On December 20, 2014, bombs reportedly hit a school in Katcha during fighting between the SAF and SPLM-N.²⁰⁴⁹

Attacks on schools continued in 2015, with the UN reporting 13 incidents throughout the year in Darfur.²⁰⁵⁰ For example, the UN documented the looting of six schools by government security officers in villages around eastern Jebel Marra in January 2015, and the destruction of one school in East Dafur state during fighting between the Rizeigat and Habania tribes on an unknown date.²⁰⁵¹

Schools in Southern Kordofan state were also reportedly damaged by aerial bombing and looting in 2015. For example:

- Amnesty International confirmed the indiscriminate aerial bombing of four schools in Southern Kordofan state in 2015, resulting in deaths, injuries, extensive property damage, and displacement.²⁰⁵²
- On March 28, 2015, a school was burned down and looted during clashes between the SPLM-N and government security forces in Habila, Southern Kordofan state, according to the UN.²⁰⁵³

The UN documented 20 attacks on schools in Darfur in 2016, an increase from the 13 incidents reported by the UN in 2015.²⁰⁵⁴ It was unclear when in 2016 the attacks occurred and whether they took place after the government's ceasefire in June.

Also in 2016, the UN received but could not verify reports of attacks on three schools in Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile, and Abyei states.²⁰⁵⁵ Media sources reported separately on three attacks on schools in the Nuba Mountains, Southern Kordofan state:

- Several media sources reported that on May 25, 2016, government forces dropped two parachute bombs into the compound of St. Vincent Primary School in the Nuba Mountains, damaging its classrooms and library and wounding a Kenyan teacher.²⁰⁵⁶
- *Radio Dabanga* reported that, in April 2016, a government plane bombed a school in Dalami, Southern Kordofan state, destroying classrooms, killing the headmaster, and injuring two boy students who were 8 and 11 years old.



The article stated that this was the fifth school in the area to be damaged by aerial bombardment in March and April.²⁰⁵⁷

• According to *Nuba Reports*, another school was destroyed in the Nuba Mountains on May 28, 2016, during fighting between the SAF and SPLM-N.²⁰⁵⁸

At the time of writing, GCPEA had not identified reports of attacks on schools in 2017.

Attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel

Throughout the reporting period, students, teachers, and other education personnel were caught in the crossfire during fighting, as they had been during the 2009-2013 period covered in *Education under Attack 2014*. As also reported in *Education under Attack 2014*, the government used force in responding to student protests and perceived political opposition, mostly in the Darfur region. Sporadic incidents were reported in the Darfur region, and in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile.

Students and teachers in Darfur were harmed in attacks on education in 2013 and 2014. During that period, *Radio Dabanga* reported in September 2014 that basic school teachers in North Darfur were protesting the killing of seven colleagues in the past year. They accused a pro-government milita group of being responsible for the latest attack.²⁰⁵⁹ In addition, government security forces reportedly fired live ammunition at groups of students during two incidents in the Darfur region in 2013, and unidentified attackers targeted students in at least one incident in 2014. Examples of attacks included:

- Local media reported that on July 7, 2013, a soldier fired live bullets at students who became impatient over delays and perceived corruption while waiting to obtain a seal required for university applications in Nyala, South Darfur. One student was killed and four were wounded.²⁰⁶⁰
- According to Sudanese news sources, on September 29, 2013, police shot teargas and live ammunition at secondary students protesting the increased cost of national exams in North Darfur, killing at least one student and injuring at least ten.²⁰⁶¹
- Media sources found that on July 16, 2014, a teacher in Darfur was abducted, with *Radio Dabanga* attributing the event to pro-government militia members. The outcome of the abduction was unknown.²⁰⁶²
- *Radio Dabanga* reported that a secondary school teacher was beheaded in September 2014, attributing responsibility to pro-government militia members.²⁰⁶³
- According to the *Sudan Tribune*, government security forces arrested nine teachers in Darfur in September 2014 for participating in a strike to protest unpaid salaries.²⁰⁶⁴
- *Radio Dabanga* reported that on an unknown day during the week of November 23-30, 2014, men in military uniforms abducted a female secondary school student on her way home from school in North Darfur. It was not clear why she was kidnapped or where she was taken.²⁰⁶⁵

Violence affected teachers in West Kordofan beginning in 2015, which coincided with the SPLM-N's broader operations in the area and the government's increased response. For example, the UN reported an unspecified incident in April 2015 in which the SPLM-N killed an unknown number of education personnel in West Kordofan state.²⁰⁶⁶

Also in 2015, the Asylum Research Consultancy (ARC) reported that government security forces used teargas and live ammunition to disperse primary school students protesting for unknown reasons in Blue Nile state in October 2015.²⁰⁶⁷

Incidents impacting teachers and students occurred in both the Darfur region and Southern Kordofan state in 2016, with just one reported incident in each area:

- In the first quarter of 2016, the ARC reported that one student was killed during clashes between the SPLM-N and government forces in a village in Southern Kordofan state during primary school exams.²⁰⁶⁸
- The *Sudan Tribune* reported that on September 15, 2016, unidentified gunmen shot and killed three students and injured two others in Kass, South Darfur. Local leaders alleged that non-state armed groups operating in the area were responsible for the attack.²⁰⁶⁹



Violence in Darfur continued to affect students occasionally in 2017, with at least two incidents that year, according to media sources:

- Chadian forces reportedly kidnapped a student from a Quran school in Sirba locality, West Darfur, on October 29, 2017, taking him in the direction of the Chadian border. A witness told the media that the motivation for the attack was unclear.²⁰⁷⁰
- On November 10, 2017, unidentified gunmen stormed a teacher dormitory at a school in Muglad town, Central Darfur, killing two teachers. The motive for the attack was unknown.²⁰⁷¹

Military use of schools

Government security forces and non-state armed groups used schools as barracks or bases of operation in both Darfur and Southern Kordofan during the reporting period, with at least eight such cases between 2013 and 2017. GCPEA found more reports on this activity from 2013 to 2017 than from 2009 to 2013, when the UN reported the use of three schools in Southern Kordofan state and none in Darfur. This difference could be due to stronger monitoring and reporting in the more recent period.

The UN reported the military use of five schools in Darfur between 2013 and 2016.²⁰⁷² This may have included the following four incidents reported separately by the UN:

- The UN received credible information regarding military use of one school in South Darfur in 2014. 2073
- The UN reported the use of three schools in Darfur by national security forces in 2016.²⁰⁷⁴

The UN also reported military use of schools by government forces in Southern Kordofan:

- A UN report documented the use of two schools as military camps in September of 2014: the Gadid Basic School in Abu Jibeha locality, and the Suq al-Jabal Basic School in Abbasiyya locality.²⁰⁷⁵
- The UN documented the use of a school in Kadugli, Southern Kordofan state, by the National Intelligence Security Service in March 2016.²⁰⁷⁶ The school was reportedly closed for vacation at the time, and it was quickly vacated because of advocacy by the UN and Ministry of Education.²⁰⁷⁷

Sexual violence by armed parties at, or en route to or from, school or university

According to information received by the UN, children in Darfur were raped in various settings, including en route to and from school.²⁰⁷⁸ The UN also reported that government and affiliated forces allegedly perpetrated individual and mass rapes against women and girls in Darfur.²⁰⁷⁹ At least two cases of sexual violence, or threats of sexual violence, by government forces against students were reported, including the following:

- On October 5 and 6, 2014, government security forces violently and forcibly evicted approximately 70 female Darfuri students from the Zahra dormitory complex at the University of Khartoum, beating numerous students and arresting 18 who refused to leave. The students told Human Rights Watch that they were hit and interrogated at the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) offices before being taken to Omdurman prison for women.²⁰⁸⁰ The US Department of State received reports that the government security forces accused the students of supporting rebel groups in Darfur and subjected them to sexual and other physical violence.²⁰⁸¹ Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International reported that government security forces raped one student during this incident.²⁰⁸²
- Both the Sudan Social Development Organization (SUDO), a UK-based NGO, and *Radio Dabanga* reported that in March 2015, ten girls and seven boys were attacked as they walked along a road to take their final exams in Central Darfur. Between two and five girls were raped and eight girls abducted. SUDO attributed the attack to the Rapid Support Forces, while *Radio Dabanga* attributed it to government troops.²⁰⁸³

Attacks on higher education

Violence occurred at university protests, with government security forces allegedly using excessive force against protesters.²⁰⁸⁴ Protests were sometimes peaceful, but at other times student protesters reportedly wielded weapons, including metal bars, stones, and chains.²⁰⁸⁵



According to Human Rights Watch, police reportedly stood in front of dormitories and harassed female students as they entered and exited.²⁰⁸⁶ Amnesty International also highlighted a government crackdown on university students who spoke out against the humanitarian situation in Darfur, which was usually carried out by the NISS and with students affiliated with the ruling National Congress Party.²⁰⁸⁷ Other violence in the context of higher education included outbreaks of fighting between supporters of different political parties on campuses, and attacks with unknown motivations.

There were at least 30 reported attacks on higher education during the reporting period. These reports peaked in 2015, when several hundred were reportedly arrested and approximately one dozen killed.²⁰⁸⁸ Overall, however, the level of violence was lower than in the 2009-2013 reporting period, when hundreds of students were injured and more than a thousand arrested across the country.

Various sources documented the following six incidents affecting university students in 2013, the majority perpetrated by security forces and related to government suppression of protests about the situation in Darfur. More than 100 students were reportedly arrested in these attacks and at least 15 were injured:

- Human Rights Watch and other sources reported that in May 2013, nine students sustained injuries at El Fasher University in North Darfur. Students were attending a meeting when 70 student members of a pro-government armed group entered the campus. Clashes broke out and militia members fired into the air, wounding one student. As students attempted to flee, police and NISS members at the campus gate fired into the crowd, wounding eight more.²⁰⁸⁹
- Human Rights Watch found that on June 16, 2013, intelligence officers arrested five Darfuri student activists in three separate locations in Khartoum and Omdurman. The students were held in detention for at least one month.
- Also on June 16, 2013, a violent outbreak allegedly occurred at Omdurman's Ahlia University between student supporters of the ruling National Congress Party and student members of the United Popular Front, a group linked to the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army faction.²⁰⁹¹
- Local media reported that in September 2013, 22 Darfuri students were arrested and several were injured during
 a sit-in at the University of Peace in West Kordofan. This was part of ongoing nationwide protests against a university policy requiring Darfuri students to pay tuition, despite a political agreement that Darfuri students were
 exempt from such payments. Police used live ammunition, batons, air rifles, and teargas against the student
 protesters.²⁰⁹²
- Scholars at Risk reported that on October 29, 2013, government security forces raided a meeting held at the Ahfad University in Khartoum to establish a unified position against the government crackdown on protests related to the situation in Darfur. Nine professors were arrested and detained until the next day.²⁰⁹³

The government was responsible for further violence against university student protesters, particularly students from Darfur or those protesting the violence in Darfur throughout 2014. As in 2013, more than 100 students were arrested by security forces and at least a dozen were injured. In addition, at least one student was reportedly killed by government forces in 2014. These violent attacks included the following:

- Scholars at Risk and Amnesty International reported that on March 11, 2014, government security forces reportedly
 fired live ammunition and teargas at students engaged in a demonstration at the University of Khartoum, killing
 one student and injuring seven. They also arrested more than 100 student protesters. The students were protesting the escalating violence in Darfur.²⁰⁹⁴ *Radio Dabanga* reported that government security forces also reacted
 violently at a memorial service held for the dead student a few days later.²⁰⁹⁵
- Scholars at Risk reported two additional incidents in 2014 in which multiple university students were wounded when government security forces dispersed student protests.²⁰⁹⁶
- Scholars at Risk also reported that on May 21, 2014, university lecturer and activist Sidig Noreen Ali Abdalla had been detained incommunicado and without charges at El Obeid prison for more than four months.²⁰⁹⁷ He was thought to have been detained due to his advocacy around the situation in Darfur.²⁰⁹⁸



A university student activist told Amnesty International that NISS officers arrested him five times, once each in 2003, 2007, 2008, and in March and September 2014. In the last incident, the NISS severely beat him and kept him in solitary confinement for 10 days. The NISS also forced him to provide a blood sample, and he suspected that NISS agents purposefully infected him with Hepatitis B while he was detained, as a doctor found that he was newly infected with the virus a week after he was released. After his release, NISS agents continued to monitor his movements and sent him threatening messages, so he fled to Egypt in February 2015.²⁰⁹⁹

In 2015, Amnesty International reported that government security forces arbitrarily arrested and detained 200 students from Darfur and killed at least 13 at universities across the country that year.²¹⁰⁰ The US Department of State also reported detentions and the possible torture of Darfuri students by government forces in September 2015.²¹⁰¹ Attacks on higher education included the following:

- Scholars at Risk and other international sources reported that on April 14, 2015, riot police used teargas to disperse student protesters at El Fasher University who were calling for a boycott of the general elections for president and national assembly. At least 18 students were detained and charged with criminal offenses. Many of them reportedly appeared in court in the following days with blood on their clothes and other signs that they had been beaten.²¹⁰²
- Amnesty International stated that in October 2015, the Holy Quran University imposed retroactive tuition fees on Darfuri students. In response, approximately 500 Darfuri students organized a public seminar on campus on October 13, 2015, which was attacked by 70 to 100 ruling party-affiliated students, police, and NISS agents wielding explosive devices and iron bars. The attack injured six students.²¹⁰³ On October 25, 2015, Darfuri students at the Holy Quran University reportedly organized another protest, but government security forces and ruling party-affiliated students attacked them again, injuring 15 students, according to Amnesty International. The next day police arrested twelve students, releasing three the same day and detaining the other nine until an unknown day in November 2015.²¹⁰⁴

In 2016, rights groups, the UN, and other sources documented continued violence by government forces against university students across the country, including the use of teargas, rubber bullets, batons, and live ammunition to break up protests.²¹⁰⁵ Much of this violence occurred in April 2016.²¹⁰⁶ Two students were killed and dozens arrested, which was a frequency similar to that in 2013 and 2014. For example:

- Amnesty International reported that in January 2016, government security forces and students affiliated with the ruling party attacked a peaceful assembly of Darfuri students at the University of El Geneina. They beat multiple students with metal bars and other instruments, killing one. Government security forces also arrested 27 students from the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa ethnic groups.²¹⁰⁷
- According to the UN, on March 24, 2016, a female university student was assaulted by NISS officers while she was on her way to the University of El Geneina in West Darfur.²¹⁰⁸
- *Al Jazeera* reported that in April 2016, government security forces opened fire on around 200 students protesting the sale of a University of Khartoum building for use as a tourist attraction, killing one student.²¹⁰⁹
- According to Scholars at Risk and media sources, on April 19, 2016, NISS personnel attacked students participating in elections at the University of Kordofan, killing one student and injuring 27 more.²¹¹⁰
- The UN reported that on April 26, 2016, seven students from Nyala University, South Darfur state, were arrested for demonstrating against increased public transport fees. They were reportedly beaten while in detention for an unknown period of time.²¹¹¹
- Media sources indicated that pro-government armed groups shot and killed one student and wounded three at Omdurman Ahlia University in Omdurman, Khartoum state on April 27, 2016.²¹¹²
- Scholars at Risk reported that on May 5, 2016, NISS officers raided a meeting at the University of Khartoum where students were discussing how to appeal the university's decision to dismiss them for their involvement in student-led demonstrations. The officers beat and detained nine students.²¹¹³

The number of reported attacks on higher education decreased in 2017. Examples included the following:



- On May 9, 2017, armed police entered the dormitories of Bakht El Rida University in White Nile state and ordered all students to leave, after a student group held a protest over the possibly fraudulent process surrounding the election of a student union committee. Three students were allegedly shot in the incident, and 19 were arrested and detained for an unknown period of time.²¹¹⁴
- On May 15, 2017, the Darfur Student Association at El Zaeem El Azhari University in Khartoum North met to discuss the right to a free education. NISS agents stormed the campus and arrested 15 Darfuri students, including two females, and injured two others. It was not clear how long the arrested students were kept in detention.²¹¹⁵
- Amnesty International reported that NISS agents arrested Naser Aldeen Mukhtar Mohamed, the former chairperson of the Darfur Students' Association at the Holy Quran University, at the campus gates on August 22, 2017.²¹¹⁶ He was released without charge on January 28, 2018.²¹¹⁷

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- 2034 UN Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Sudan," S/2017/191, March 6, 2017, paras. 11-13.
- ²⁰³⁵ UN Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General," S/2017/191, paras. 12-13.
- ²⁰³⁶ "Human Rights Benchmarks for Sudan," Human Rights Watch news release, May 3, 2017. Human Rights Watch, *Letter regarding the human rights situation in Sudan during the 36th session of the UN Human Rights Council* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2017).
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- 2042 Sudan Consortium, The impact of aerial bombing attacks on civilians in Southern Kordofan, Republic of Sudan: A Briefing to the Summit of the African Union (Kampala, Uganda: May 2014), p. 7-8.
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- 2014 UN Security Council, "Report of the Secretary General," S/2017/191, para. 43. Information provided by a UN respondent, June 13, 2017.
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- ²⁰⁵⁰ UN Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General," S/2017/191, para. 43.
- ²⁰⁵¹ UN Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General," S/2017/191, para. 43.
- 2052 Amnesty International, Don't We Matter? Four Years of Unrelenting Attacks against Civilians of Sudan's South Kordofan State, (London: Amnesty International, August 18, 2015), p. 25.
- ²⁰⁵³ UN Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General," S/2017/191, para. 40.
- 2054 UN Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General," S/2017/191, para. 43. UN General Assembly and Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General," A/72/361-S/2017/821, para. 159.
- 2005 UN Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General," S/2017/191, paras. 40. UN General Assembly and Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General," A/72/361-S/2017/821, para. 165.
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²⁰²⁸ "Sudan: Conflict Profile," Peace Insight, n.d.

²⁰²⁹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2017*, Sudan chapter.

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²⁰⁷³ UN General Assembly and Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General," A/69/926-S/2015/409, para. 184.

²⁰⁷⁴ UN General Assembly and Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General," A/72/361-S/2017/821, para. 159.

²⁰⁷⁵ UN Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General," S/2017/191, para. 42.

²⁰⁷⁶ UN General Assembly and Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General," A/72/361-S/2017/821, para. 165.

²⁰⁷⁷ Information shared by a UN respondent via email, January 16, 2018.

²⁰⁷⁸ UN Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General," S/2017/191, para. 36.

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