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The involvement and association of children in armed conflicts in the Philippines continues to increase, the UN said Wednesday.

“These children are not only casualties of explosions, shootings, and attacks but are also victims of kidnapping, killing, and maiming,” said a statement released by the UN Information Center in Manila.

Last year, 54 child soldiers were recruited by armed groups in the Philippines, more than double from the 24 cases in 2010, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in his report to the 66th session of the UN General Assembly.

Children were recruited by the Abu Sayaff group, the New People’s Army and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, mostly as combatants, the UN said.

Even government forces have used children as intelligence sources, the report said. It also noted 52 recorded attacks affecting schools and hospitals – a “significant increase,” and of that number, 16 attacks were verified as connected to the government’s military operations and exercises.

Ban called on the Philippine government and other groups to allow the UN access to areas where alleged violations against children's rights occur.

He also recommended that UN member states apply "targeted measures" to put pressure on persistent perpetrators of the violations.

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