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On World Children's Day: Tenth Annual Report on Violations against Children in Syria

At Least 29,661 Children Have Been Killed in Syria Since March 2011 Including 181 Due to Torture, with 5,036 Forcibly Disappeared

Saturday 20 November 2021

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, independent group that is considered a primary source for the OHCHR on all death toll-related analyses in Syria.

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SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
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I. Introduction and Methodology:

From the earliest days of Syria's popular movement for freedom in March 2011, hundreds of children participated, along with their parents and other family members, in the peaceful protests across the country, representing symbols of the early hope and innocence of the uprising. By July 2012, however, as a direct result of the Syrian regime's relentless, brutal and indiscriminate mass arrests and targeting, shooting and killing of unarmed protesters, including children, the popular movement had become an internal armed conflict, as the International Committee of the Red Cross noted¹. By that stage, the Syrian regime's equally indiscriminate aerial bombardment was already increasing, and children were killed in their homes along with their parents. This deliberate and calculated targeting of civilians and residential neighborhoods, which has been and remains a constant Syrian regime policy and a measure of the regime's character, explains the terrible high numbers of child victims in the Syrian conflict.

Through issuing this report annually, the Syrian Network for Human Rights sheds light on this part of the catastrophic situation of Syria's children.

On the occasion of the World Children's Day every year, we issue [an extensive report](#) that includes the most notable violations against the children of Syria during the past year (since World Children's Day the previous year up to the same date in the present year), focusing particularly on the broader, more harmful violations, such as extrajudicial killing, arbitrary arrest/ detention, torture, sexual violence, forced conscription, displacement, and deprivation of education; these reports do not address the profound psychological trauma suffered by children as a result of the violations perpetrated against them and its effects on their lives, with this issue requiring a special report, as do other types of violations such as forced marriage of minors, forced labor and exploitation of children in violation of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention.

Syria's leadership has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1993², as well as ratifying the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution, child pornography and involvement in armed conflict in 2002³. Whilst it's true that all the parties to the conflict have violated the rights of the child, the Syrian regime has far exceeded all other parties, individually or collectively, in terms of the amount of crimes the regime perpetrated in a regular and systematic manner, in particular those violating the rights defined in Articles 6, 37 and 38⁴ of the inherent right to life and survival, the prohibition of torture and deprivation of liberty, and the ensuring of respect for the rules of international humanitarian law relevant to the child, which amount to crimes against humanity. The United Nations' Committee on the Rights of the Child, established by the Treaty Body for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, bears legal and ethical responsibilities to follow up on the situation of children's rights in Syria and to help in bringing an end the violations perpetrated by the Syrian regime.

¹ ICRC, Syria: ICRC and Syrian Arab Red Crescent maintain aid effort amid increased fighting, 17 July 2012, <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/update/2012/syria-update-2012-07-17.htm>

² The United Nations, List of Countries party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-11&chapter=4&lang=en

³ The United Nations, Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict ><https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/opacrcr.aspx><The United Nations, Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, ><https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/opscrcr.aspx><

⁴ The United Nations, Convention on the Rights of the Child, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crcr.aspx>>

Methodology:

The report is based on the Syrian Network for Human Rights' archive, which has grown steadily since March 2011 through daily monitoring and documentation of violations, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, torture, conscription, sexual violence, attacks with various types of weapons, and attacks on vital civilian facilities, with all the statistics included in the archive being documented in accordance with [our methodology](#) and with all the information and details that we have been able to access and verify.

This report outlines the record of violations against children by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria between March 2011 and November 20, 2021 which SNHR's team has been able to document, highlighting the most notable of these violations, particularly those which took place between November 20, 2020, and November 20, 2021.

According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights database, we can distribute the arrest/detention cases according to the governorate where the arrest incident took place, and according to the governorate to which the detainee belongs as well.

In this report and in most of our reports, we distribute the toll of arrest cases according to the place where the arrest took place, not according to the governorate to which the detainee belongs, and we note that sometimes we distribute the arrest cases according to the governorate to which the detainee belongs; to show the extent of the loss and violence suffered by the people of that governorate compared to other governorates, and we refer to this in the report.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights team investigates violations observed through various sources such as print and broadcast media, social media, cooperating activists, witnesses and survivors, collecting evidence and data about these events, verifying and cross-referencing all information, and visiting the site of each violation if possible. We rely on the first-hand testimonies of survivors, whom we try, as much as possible, to contact directly, and to a secondary degree on those who witnessed or photographed these violations. The report also relies on the accounts and interviews that we conducted with eyewitnesses, surviving children in different Syrian regions, or victims' family members, either by visiting them directly or via alternative means of communication such as phone calls or online communication apps. In this report, we include 10 accounts that we obtained through direct conversations with witnesses, rather than using any taken from open sources. In some of these accounts, we have used pseudonyms to protect witnesses' identity and confidentiality and to prevent them from being subjected to potentially lethal persecution by security forces. The witnesses did not receive any compensation or promises in exchange for these interviews. We explained the purpose of the report beforehand to all the interviewees, and obtained their consent to use the information they provided for this purpose and the documentation processes, acting at all times in keeping with our internal protocols that we have maintained for years, which we constantly strive to develop in order to uphold the best interview practices and show the highest consideration for the victims' psychological wellbeing.

In addition to analyzing the materials available from open sources such as the Internet and print and broadcast media, we also strive to obtain as much information as possible from medical personnel who treated the injured, examined the bodies of the victims and determined the cause of death in incidents of armed attacks and extrajudicial killings. We keep copies of all videos and photos cited in this report on a confidential electronic database, as well as maintaining backup copies on hard disks. We emphasize that we do not claim to have documented all cases, in light of the blanket ban on independent media and human rights organizations' work and persecution of anyone investigating violations by Syrian regime forces and some other armed groups.

Some of the video clips we have obtained show images of victims and wounded children, some of whom died under the rubble, while others show equally distressing images of children who died due to starvation and disease or as a result of chemical weapons attacks. We keep copies of all this footage, some of which are used in this report.

All the attacks committed by the parties to the conflict in Syria which are cited in the report targeted civilian areas, where we did not document any military presence or weapons depots during or even before the attacks, and were carried out with no warning being given beforehand by the aggressor forces to civilians prior to the attacks, as is required by international humanitarian law.

This report represents the bare minimum that we have been able to document of the magnitude and seriousness of the violations perpetrated, and does not include any analysis of the grave social, economic and psychological ramifications.

In the words of Fadel Abdul Ghany, executive director of the Syrian Network for Human Rights:



This report reminds us that many violations against children are still being perpetrated by the Syrian regime at such a level that they amount to crimes against humanity, including enforced disappearance, torture, and forced displacement. As the report confirms, hundreds of thousands of children have suffered and are still enduring the most intolerable humanitarian conditions, as they have done for years. This situation and these atrocious conditions can only continue because the reason for this continuing conflict - the existence of the ruling dictatorship, and the international community's failure to find a political solution since 2012 - has not changed, indicating that new generations of Syrian children are facing a similar dark fate.

II. The Syrian Network for Human Rights' cooperation with UNICEF's Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) and the United Nations' Enforced Disappearance Team:

Since 2014, UNICEF's Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism in Syria has documented grave violations of the rights of children in the context of the armed conflict which it has methodically investigated. The Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism in Syria is mandated by the UN Security Council in accordance with [Resolution 1612 \(2005\)](#) and subsequent resolutions, having been established following the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict listed the parties to conflict responsible for committing grave violations against children.

The SNHR cooperates with the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism in Syria through constant monthly sharing of the SNHR data which our team has been able to document, showing multiple types of violations against children, including killing and maiming of children, military recruitment, kidnapping, arrest/detention, attacks on schools, hospitals, health or educational personnel, sexual violence, and denial of humanitarian access to children.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights is keen to stress the vital importance and the essential nature of the work of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism in Syria, and to add that the SNHR will continue to cooperate and share data with this body, as we do with a number of other United Nations agencies operating in Syria, which we consider to be essential components in the course of attaining justice by exposing the perpetrators of violations and putting pressure on them and on their backers, as a basis for holding them accountable; this will pave the way for progress in leading the way to a transitional justice process moving towards long-awaited stability, freedom, democracy and human rights, and thus ensuring that these horrific violations against Syria's children can never be repeated in the future.

The SNHR also periodically [submit special forms](#) to the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, the Special Rapporteur on Arbitrary Detention and the Special Rapporteur on Torture, and we have received many official responses through letters showing the cases that the Enforced Disappearance Team contacted the Syrian regime about, which are included in the special annex related to the report prepared by the United Nations team on enforced disappearance in Syria. We always ensure that all cases regarding children forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime and other parties are submitted to this team.

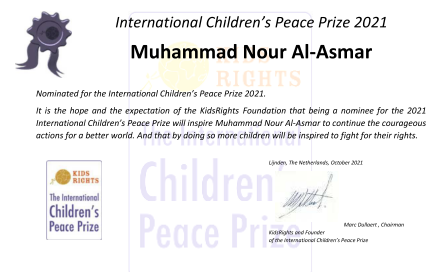
In addition, we regularly brief the United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, and the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, regarding these cases and issues.

We also provide a [form on our official website](#) that families of those detained and forcibly disappeared in Syria can fill out and submit automatically to the team at our Detainees and the Forcibly Disappeared Department, which follows up on every case and communicates with the families in order to complete the documentation and registration process. We periodically receive documents from the United Nations Team on Enforced Disappearances on a number of cases provided to it by SNHR, and the Syrian regime has been asked to disclose and report on these individuals' fate.

In this regard, the Syrian Network for Human Rights is requesting greater cooperation from families in order to convey the largest possible number of cases of forcibly disappeared children to the United Nations Team on Enforced Disappearances, with our team working constantly to build strong relationships with the families of the forcibly disappeared collecting the largest possible amount of data on forcibly displaced children and other forcibly displaced people and storing this within our database. We have ensured that every safe, secure and confidential method of communication is available to family members on communication applications and provided designated phone numbers for family members to help the work of our team in facilitating the process of reaching victims' families.

III. The Syrian Network for Human Rights nominates the Syrian Child, Mohammad Nour Al-Asmar, for the International Children's Peace Prize 2021:

Based on the many years of close coordination and the warm cooperative relationship between the international [KidsRights Foundation](#) and the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), the SNHR this year nominated the Syrian child [Muhammad Nour al Asmar](#) for the [International Children's Peace Prize for the year 2021](#), in appreciation of his exceptional efforts in raising awareness of the suffering of the Syrian community, especially its children, due to the violations they have suffered at the hands of the Syrian regime and its Iranian and Russian allies. Several months after the nomination, Muhammad Nour's nomination was accepted along with those for 162 other children from around the world, and [he was able to reach the next stage, along with 28 other children](#), the only Arab child to reach this stage, and the only Arab candidate in the peace category for this year's award. This year, however, Mohammad did not reach the finalists' stage, which was attained by four children from India and the United Kingdom. Despite this, though, [Muhammad Nour's candidacy in itself is an important achievement for the cause of the children of Syria](#), underlining his status as an inspirational child, and a living symbol of what the heroic children of Syria can offer to their country and their families, despite all the violations and brutal conditions they have been subjected to and are still subjected to, of which this report only represents the bare minimum. In October 2021, we issued [a detailed statement](#) defining the award and supporting Muhammad Nour's nomination.



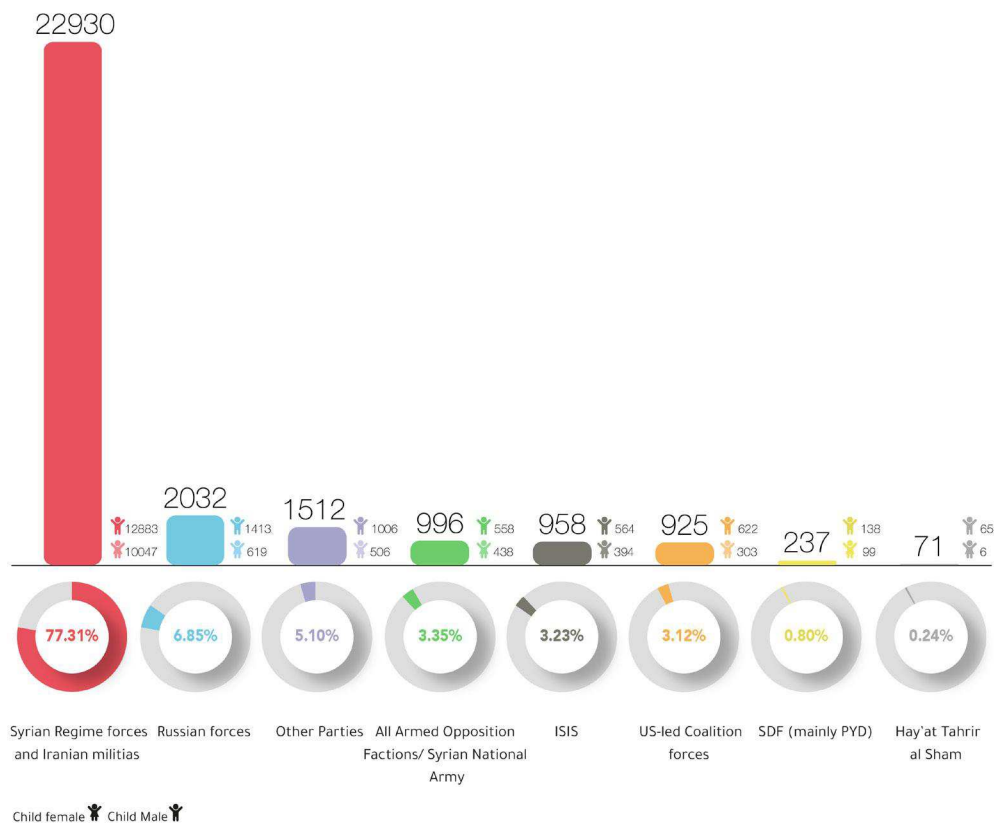
In the previous year, the SNHR nominated another inspirational Syrian child, [the girl Enar Al Hamrawi](#), and we seek to increase our efforts to nominate similarly inspirational children who are active in their local communities annually, as part of our goals in supporting Syrian children and their personal participation in defending children's rights.

IV. A Record of the Most Notable Violations against Children according to SNHR's Database:

Children in Syria are subjected to many constant and repeated types of violations, varying in severity and prevalence, which have serious present and future repercussions for every Syrian child. At the Syrian Network for Human Rights, we focus on categories of grave and life-threatening violations identified by the United Nations Security Council, which we work tirelessly to document, always using our rigorous methodology. The killing of children is the greatest of these violations and the most severe in Syria due to the high percentage of child victims, with the second being arrest/abduction, which in the vast majority of cases turns into enforced disappearance, followed by torture. We also focus on child recruitment, attacks on educational centers, etc. and on the resulting abandonment of education and falling behind in the educational process.

Extrajudicial killing

SNHR documented the deaths of 29,375 children at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria between March 2011 and November 20, 2021, distributed as follows:



- **Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias⁵):** 22,930 children, including 12,883 male children and 10,047 female children.
- **Russian forces:** 2,032 children, distributed to 1,413 male children and 619 female children.
- **ISIS (the self-proclaimed 'Islamic State'):** 958 children, distributed to 564 male children and 394 female children.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham ⁶(an alliance composed of Fateh al Sham Front and a number of factions of the Armed Opposition):** 71 children, distributed to 65 male children and six female children.
- **Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party):** 237 children, distributed to 138 male children and 99 female children
- **All Armed Opposition factions/ the Syrian National Army⁷:** 996 children, distributed to 558 male children and 438 female children.
- **US-led coalition:** 925 children, distributed to 622 male children and 303 female children.
- **Other parties:** 1,512 children, distributed to 1006 male children and 506 female children.

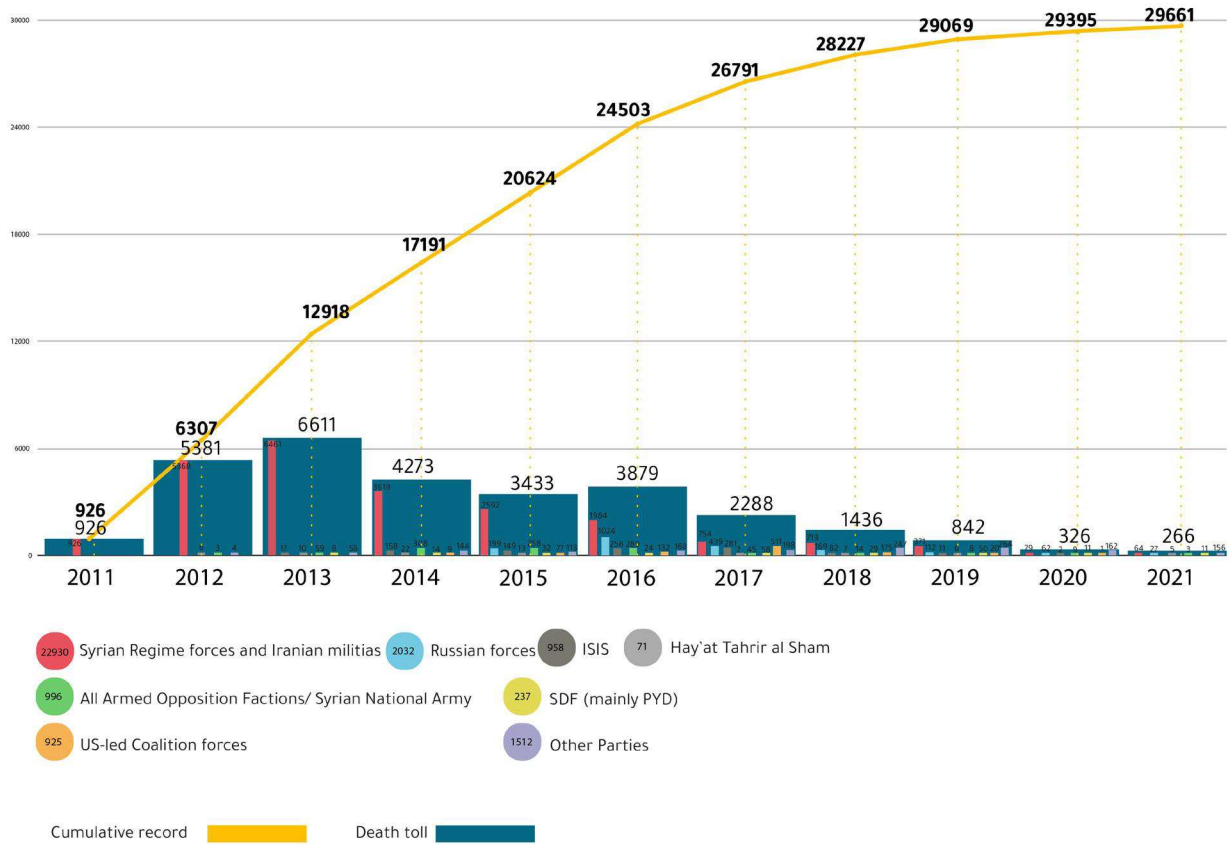
The chart shows that the Syrian regime is responsible for nearly 78% of extrajudicial killings, compared to the rest of the parties to the conflict. This indicates the deliberate and systemic targeting of children by the Syrian regime.

⁵ IWe generally use the term 'the Syrian regime' rather than 'the Syrian government', because the nature of the ruling power in Syria is a totalitarian dictatorship based on ruling the nation in an authoritarian fashion through a very limited group of individuals, primarily the President of the Republic and his selected leaders of the security services, while the ministers, including the Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior, play a restricted, largely ceremonial role, which is limited to implementing precisely what the ruling regime orders, without any decision-making power or active role; this means that the government's role is wholly subordinate and limited to serving the regime, with all the main powers being concentrated in the hands of the President of the Republic and the security services. Governance in Syria is wholly decided by the autocratic authority of the ruling family and there is no implementation structure. Rather, the government is an empty façade there for show; the Minister of Interior receives orders from the security branches over which he nominally presides which are in turn under the command of the President, while the Minister of Justice cannot summon a civilian-level security agent other than the head of a security branch; the security branches, along with the president, are the true power and the governing regime in Syria. Although we acknowledge that the United Nations and its agencies use the term 'the Syrian government' in general, we believe that this is a completely inaccurate and misleading term in the Syrian context

⁶ The United Nations has designated it as a terrorist organization

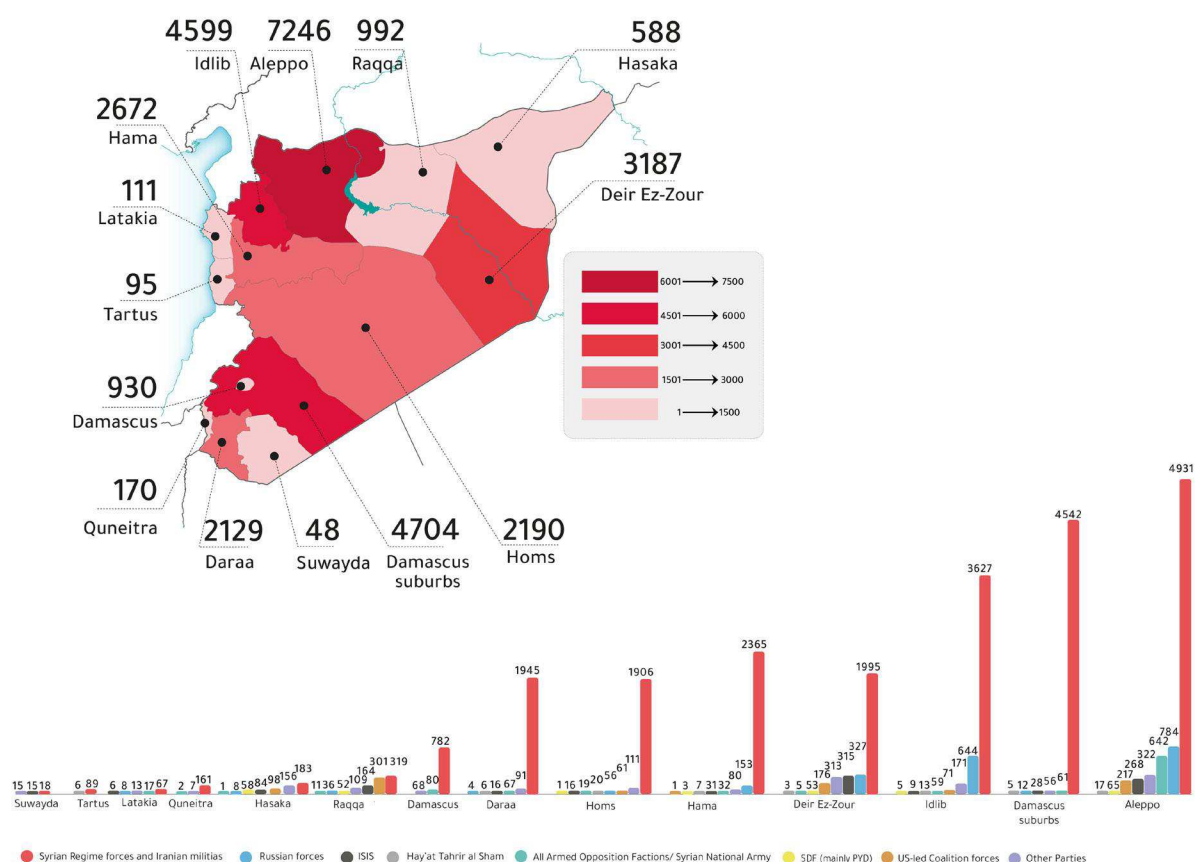
⁷ All armed opposition factions: all the factions that have emerged since 2011 in various neighborhoods and regions in Syria, many of them no longer exist, and many of them did not follow a central command. At the end of 2017, the National Army was established and the remaining armed opposition factions gathered under it.

The death toll of children at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria, distributed by years as follows:



Analyzing the above graphs shows that 2013 was the worst year in terms of targeting children with killings, and the highest toll was at the hands of the Syrian regime forces, followed by 2012, 2014 and 2016, and the Syrian regime was also responsible for more than half of the killings that we recorded against children all these years.

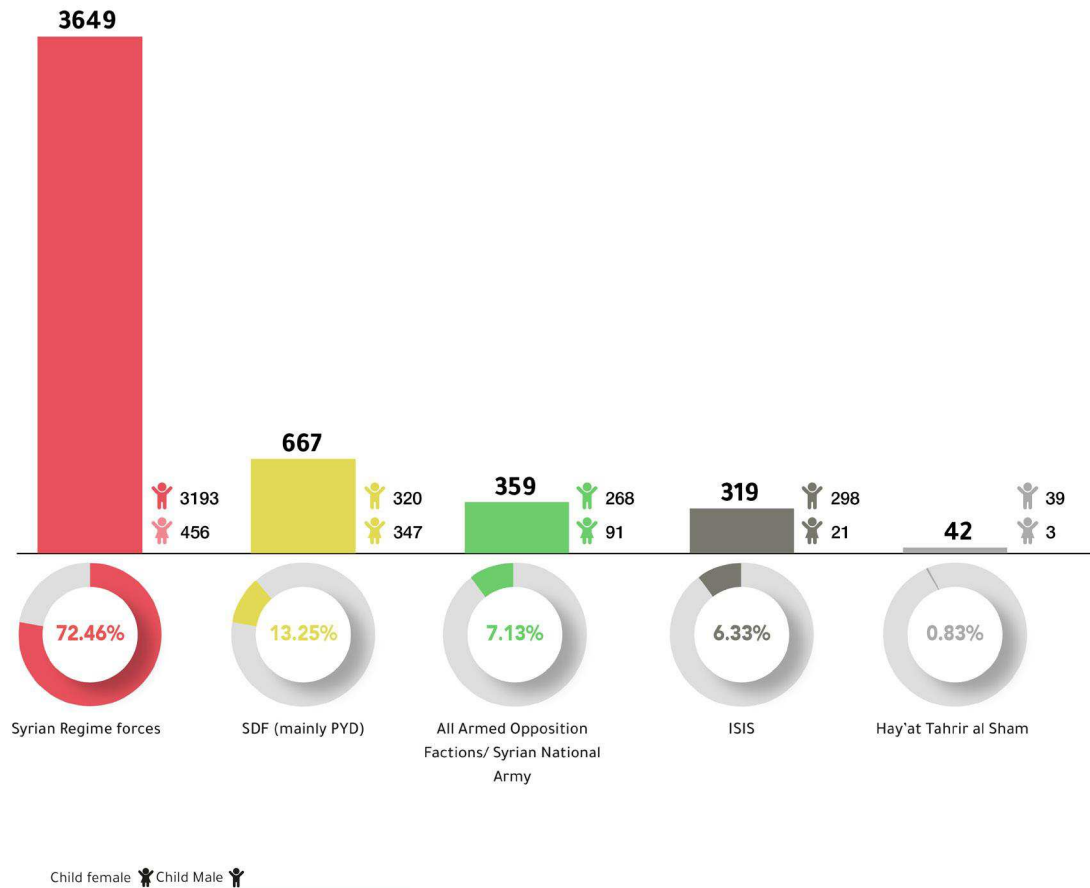
The death toll of children at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria, distributed across Syria's governorates as follows:



The previous map shows that the highest number of victims was in the Aleppo Governorate, followed by Damascus Suburbs, Idlib, and Deir Ez-Zour.

Arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance

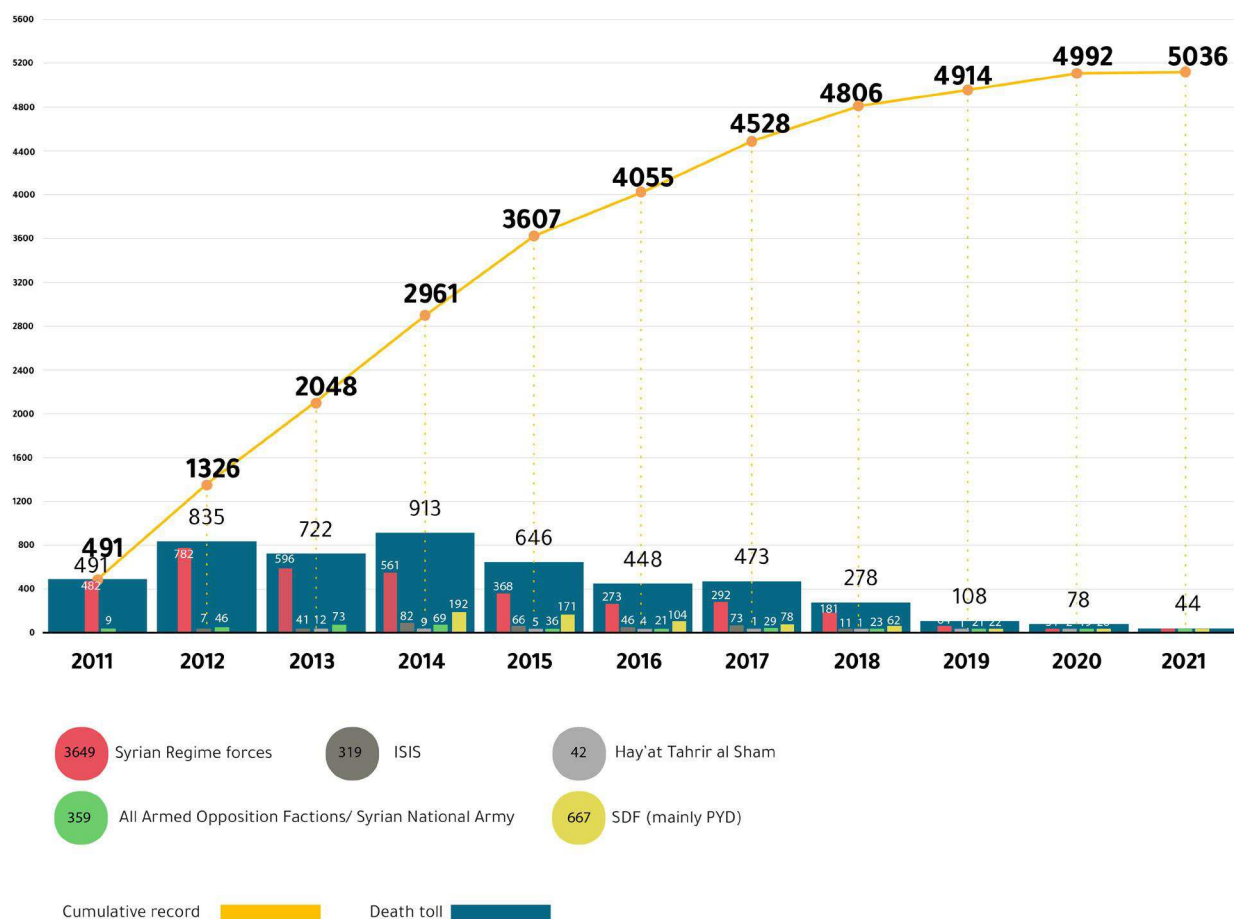
SNHR has documented that, as of November 20, 2021, at least 5,036 of the children arrested/ detained or forcibly disappeared at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria since March 2011 are still arrested/ detained or forcibly disappeared, distributed as follows:



- **Syrian Regime forces:** 3,649 children, distributed to 3,193 male children and 456 female children.
- **ISIS:** 319 children, distributed to 298 male children and 21 female children.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:** 42 children, distributed to 39 male children and three female children.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** 667 children, distributed to 320 male children and 347 female children
- **The Armed Opposition/ the Syrian National Army:** 359 children, distributed to 268 male children and 91 female children.

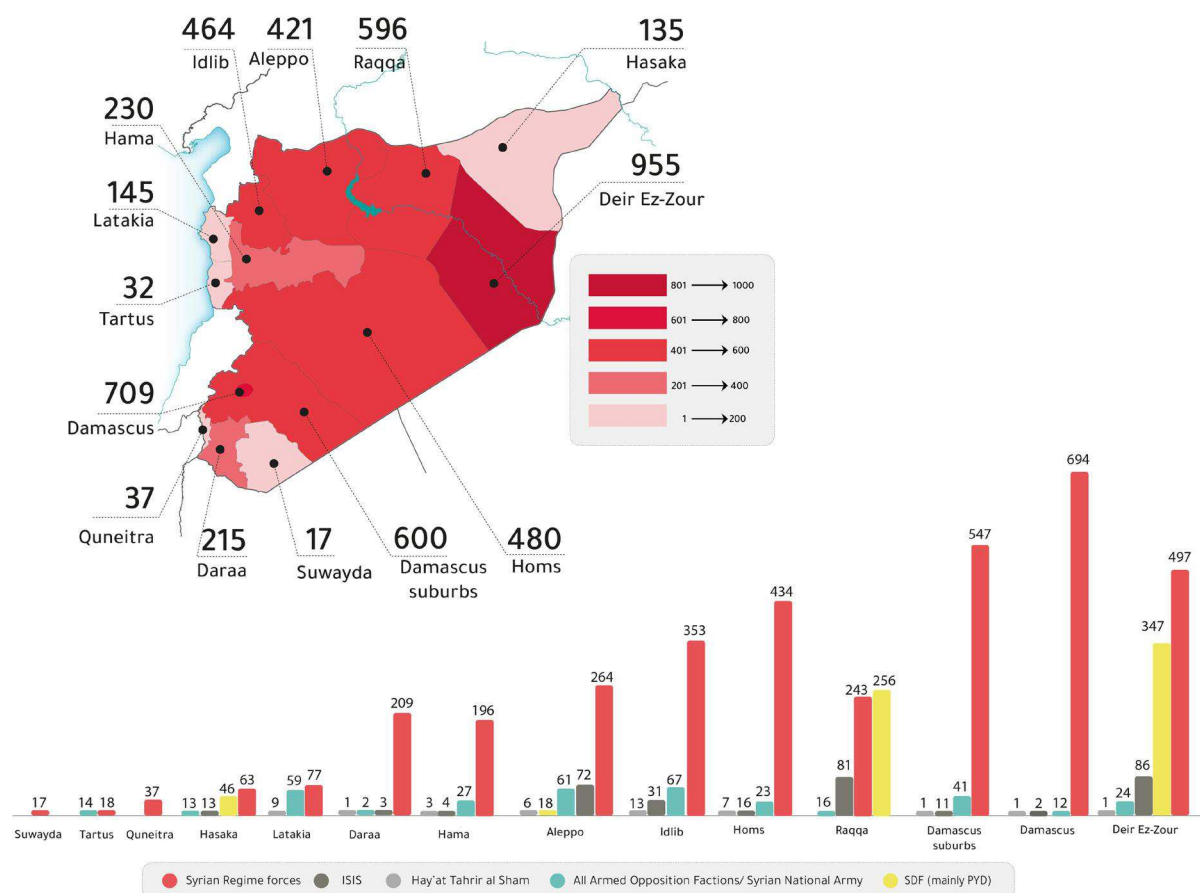
The chart for detained or forcibly disappeared children shows that the Syrian regime is responsible for about 73% of the cases of arrest and enforced disappearance compared to the rest of the conflict parties. This indicates the Syrian regime's deliberate pursuit, arrest and disappearance of children with multiple motives, in a planned and deliberate manner.

The toll of detained/ forcibly disappeared children at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria, distributed by years as follows:



Analyses of the above graphs shows that 2014 was the worst year in terms of targeting children with arrests, and about 61% of the arrests recorded were at the hands of the Syrian regime forces, followed by 2012, 2013 and 2015, and the Syrian regime was also responsible for more than half of the arrests that we recorded against children during these years.

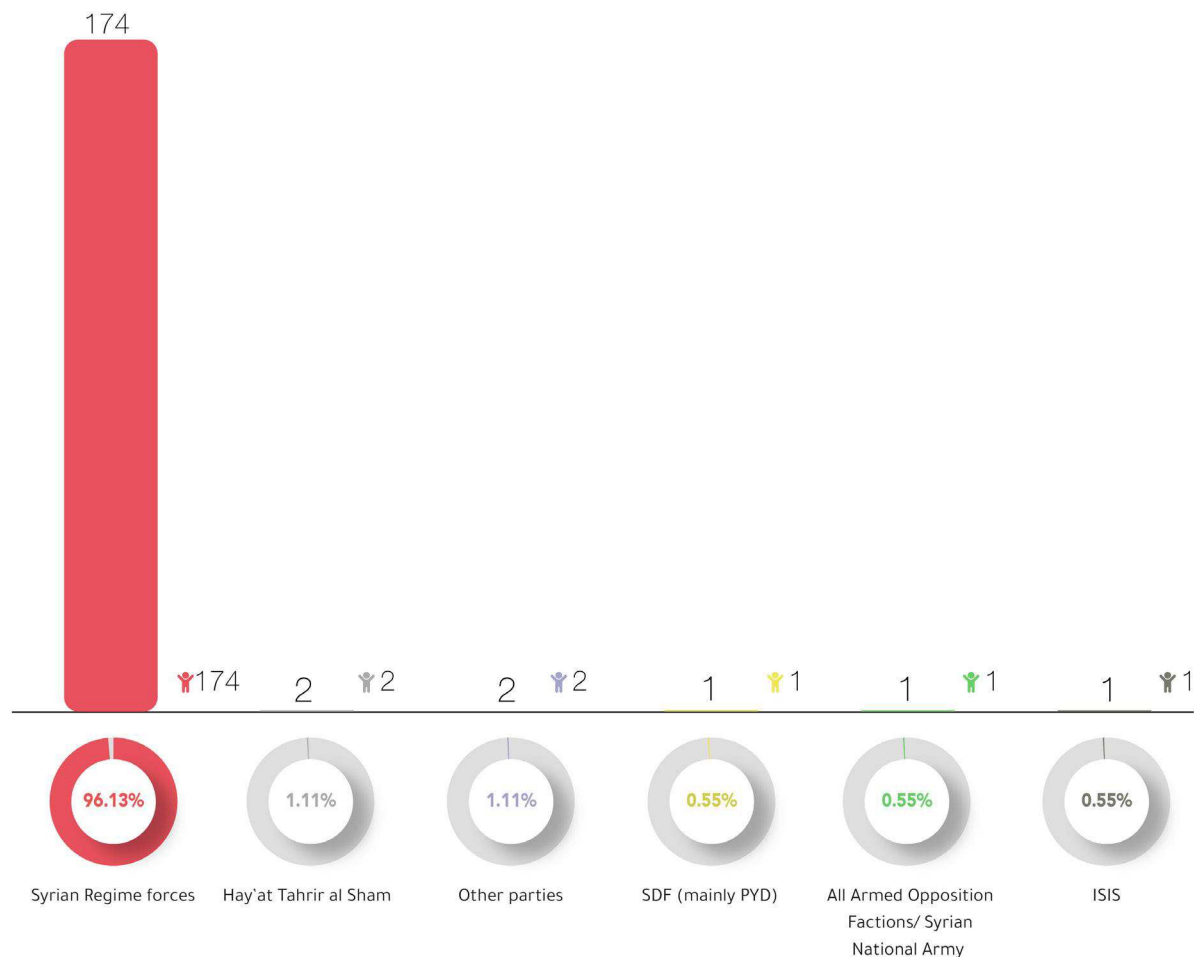
The toll of detained/ forcibly disappeared children at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria, distributed across Syria's governorates as follows:



The map shows that the highest number of detained/ forcibly disappeared children was in Deir Ez-Zour, then Damascus, followed by Damascus Suburbs, then Raqqā.

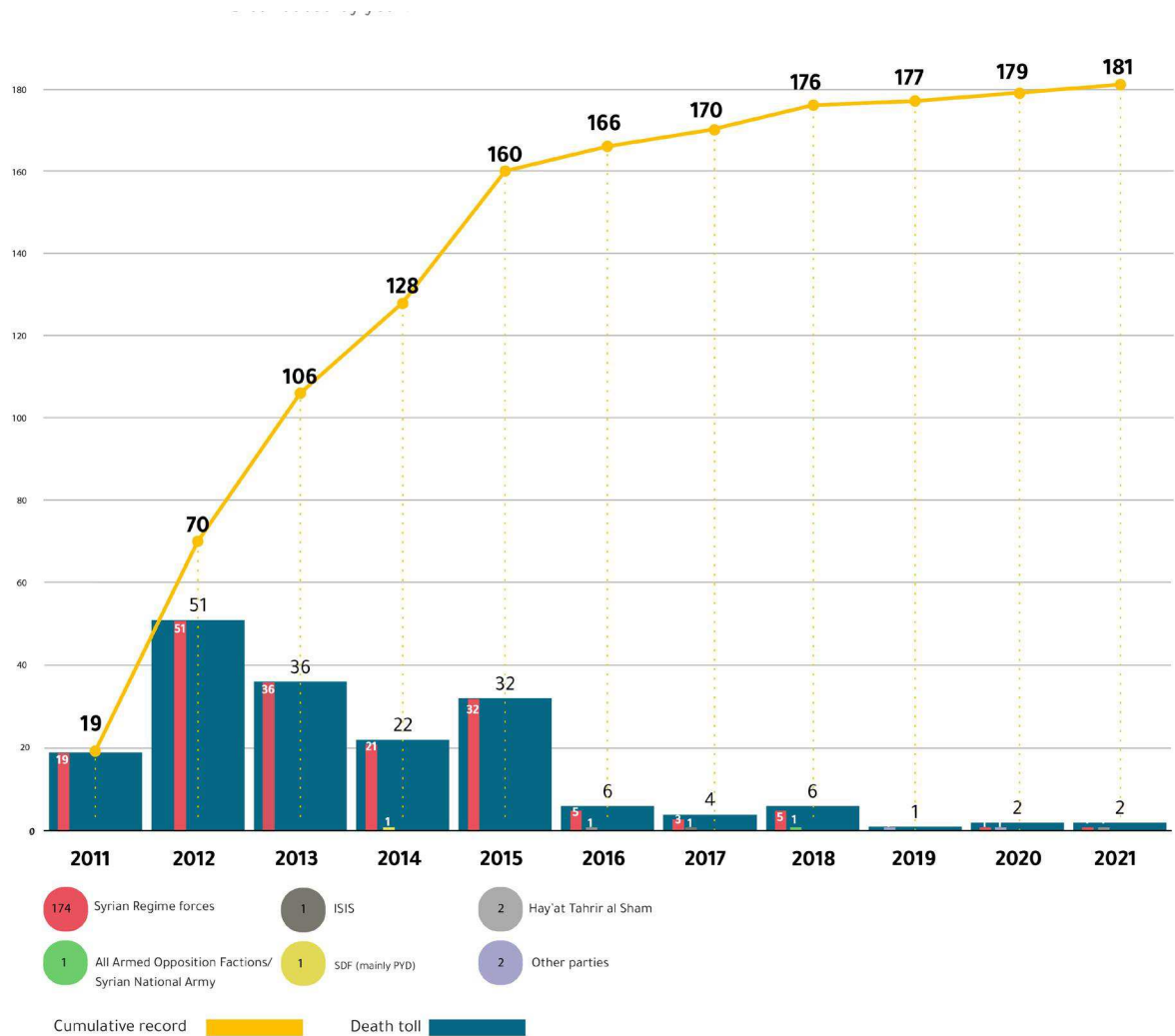
Victims who died due to torture

SNHR documented the deaths of at least 181 children due to torture at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria between March 2011 and November 20, 2021, distributed as follows:



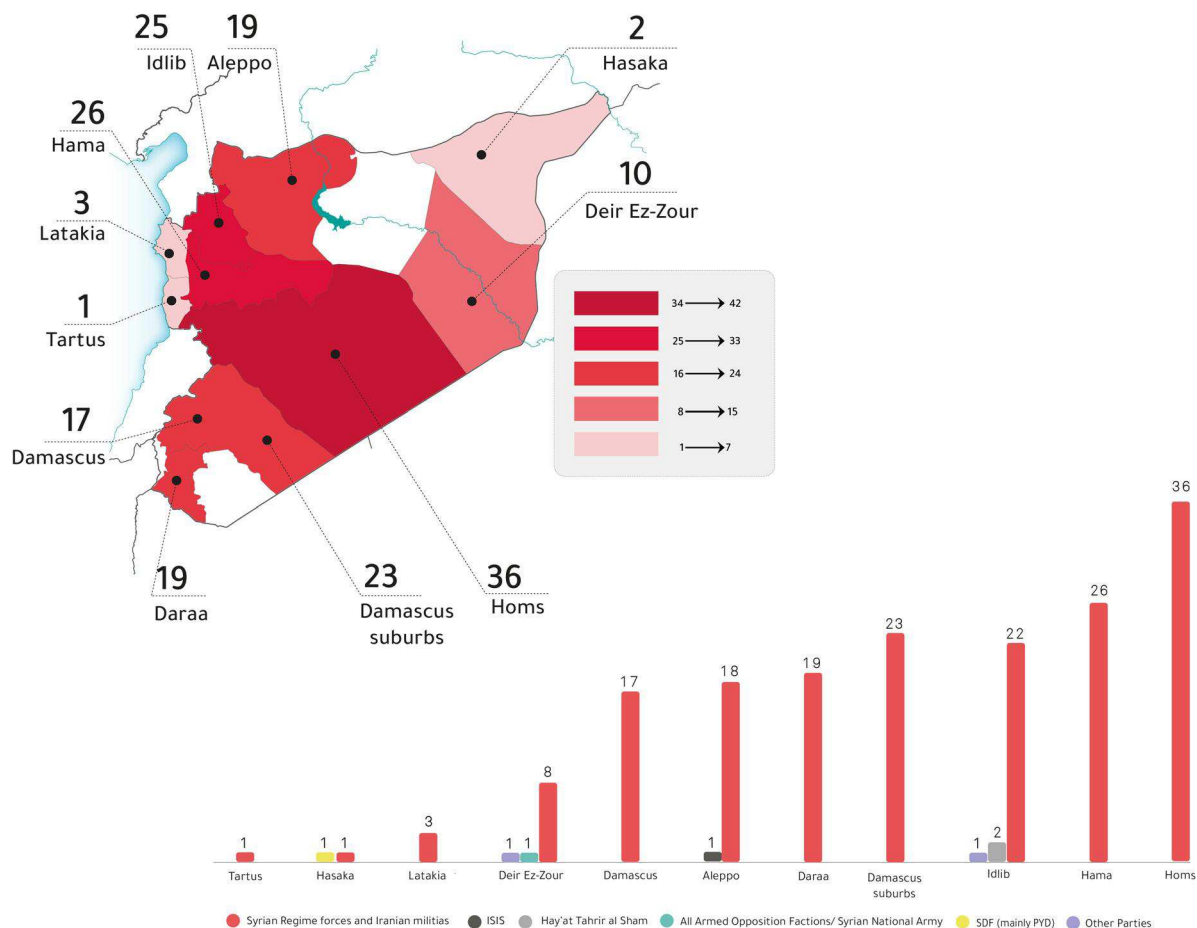
- **Syrian Regime forces:** 174.
- **ISIS:** One.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:** Two.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** One.
- **The Armed Opposition/ the Syrian National Army:** One.
- **Other parties:** Two.

The toll of children who died due to torture at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria, distributed by year as follows:



Analyses of the above graph, it becomes clear to us that 2012 was the worst year in terms of the number of victims of children due to torture, and all the cases recorded were at the hands of the Syrian regime forces, followed by 2013, 2015 and 2014, and the Syrian regime was also solely responsible for all deaths due to torture during these years, except one.

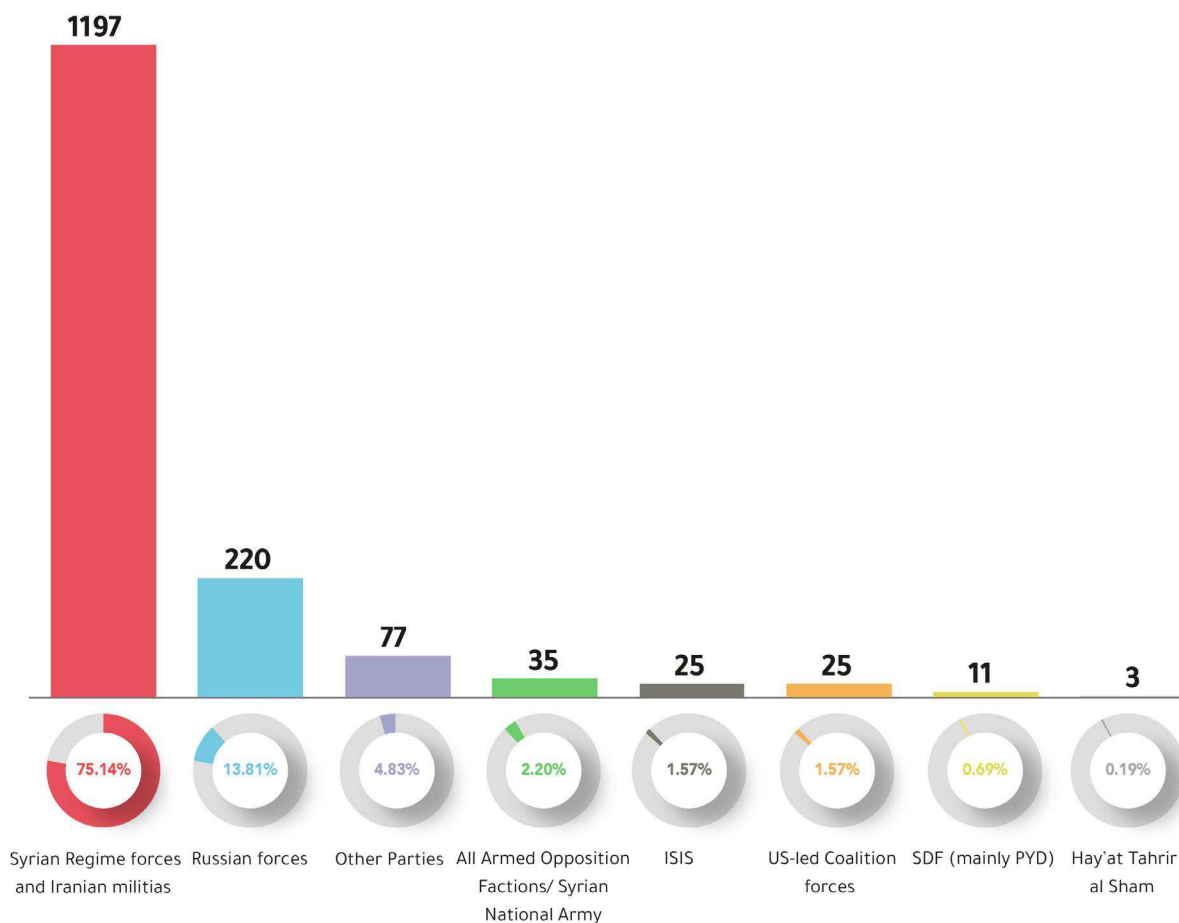
The toll of children who died due to torture at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria, distributed across Syria's governorates as follows:



The previous map shows that the highest number of child victims of death due to torture was in Homs, followed by Hama, then Damascus Suburbs, then Idlib.

Targeting of Schools:

SNHR documented attacks on at least 1,593 schools at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria between March 2011 and November 20, 2021, distributed by the main parties, as follows:



- **Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias):** 1197
- **Russian forces:** 220
- **ISIS:** 25
- **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:** 3
- **All Armed Opposition factions/ the Syrian National Army:** 35
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** 11
- **US-led coalition:** 25
- **Other parties:** 77

V. Details and Incidents of the Most Prominent Types of Violations against Children in the Year Since Last Year's Annual Report Up to the Present:

1- Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, foreign Shiite militias):

A: Extrajudicial killing:

The main reason behind the horrific number of children killed in Syria is the deliberate, indiscriminate bombing of civilians and crowded residential neighborhoods, the siege of entire cities, towns, villages and regions, the deliberate bombing of schools and kindergartens, which doesn't differentiate between man, woman or child, and disregards any and all domestic or international laws, with the regime's routine use of barrel bombs and chemical weapons being among the more glaring examples of this deliberately lethal, indiscriminate bombing.

This bombardment, both indiscriminate and directed, has caused numerous horrific massacres, in which children were victims. We also documented many massacres of a sectarian and retaliatory character, some of which used 'white' weapons such as knives and machetes, targeting children for slaughter. These massacres were concentrated in the governorate of Homs and the city of Baniyas in the Tartus Governorate, Jdeidet Al-Fadl and Qalamoun in the Damascus Suburbs, the northern Hama suburbs and Aleppo suburbs. Often, after committing massacres, the Syrian regime forces burned bodies in basements and homes.

The repercussions of this bombardment with various types of weapons and other atrocities did not stop at killing children, tearing their bodies apart in unimaginably horrific ways, but also left tens of thousands of other children injured, maimed, severely burned or disabled, with the chemical weapons deployed causing birth deformities, and facing resulting suffering which does not end with medical treatment, if any is available, with the deep psychological and emotional trauma affecting every area of the survivors' lives, including children's ability to learn, play or integrate easily with healthy untraumatized peers. There is no doubt that hundreds of thousands of Syria's children face an unimaginably arduous path to full emotional and psychological recovery from the terrible trauma they've been subjected to, with these repercussions set to echo for decades.

From March 2011 to November 20, 2021, the SNHR documented the deaths of at least 22,930 children at the hands of Syrian regime forces, with 12,883 of these being male children and 10,047 females; all of these cases are registered on the SNHR's database, with SNHR retaining photos and documents detailing the attacks in most of these cases, as well as photos of the children before and after they were killed.

On Thursday, April 8, 2021, Syrian regime artillery forces, stationed in Shellef Castle in the northern suburbs of Latakia, fired an MD-type anti-tank guided missile, targeting a car in which a number of civilians were traveling whilst it was at an intersection in al Najeyya village in the western suburbs of Idlib, resulting in the deaths of [seven civilians](#), including [three children](#) (two females and one male) and two women. The area was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Wednesday, October 20, 2021, at around 08:01, Syrian regime artillery forces began [bombing](#) Ariha city in the southern suburbs of Idlib, coinciding with a Russian reconnaissance aircraft flying over the area, and while schoolchildren were on their way to school. The [shelling](#) lasted for about ten minutes, during which ten shells fell on separate areas in the city center, resulting in the [deaths](#) of 12 [civilians](#), including four [children](#) and one woman (a teacher), and injuring about 30 others, in addition to causing damage to four vital civilian facilities



B: Arrests, Enforced Disappearance, and Torture:

Arbitrary arrest/detention is one of the main violations that children have been subjected to since March 2011. Syrian regime forces have deliberately targeted children to force their parents to surrender or to extort them financially and to threaten Syrian society with the terrible consequences of opposing the Syrian regime, as well as using arrests, enforced disappearances and torture as a form of intimidation by showing that the regime will not hesitate to use these brutal strategies, even against children. The targeting of children has continued to expand and they have routinely been arrested with their mothers or fathers while passing through checkpoints or during raids and searches of homes and areas, or abducted as hostages to be used in prisoner exchanges. Often children remain detained for the duration of their mothers' mother's detention, and are used as a means to pressure their mothers to extract 'confessions', including through threatened or actual torture of the children or threats to kill them or separate them from their mothers and transfer him to an unknown destination. The conditions of detention are worse for babies born inside detention centers, who are deprived of the essential post-natal healthcare for themselves and their mothers. This has resulted in the deaths of at least seven newborn babies born in detention, though the real number is likely to be far higher.

Children have been subjected to the same dreadful conditions of detention as adults; in the vast majority of cases of arrest/detention of children, they are held in the same cells as adults and subjected to the same brutal mistreatment, whether within security branches or military and central prisons. The Syrian regime also routinely subjects children to kangaroo trials in military field courts and in the Counter-Terrorism Court, being tried by judges used to hearing cases against adult defendants rather than trying cases involving juveniles, with a very few exceptions.

Many children have received exceptionally cruel sentences, being imprisoned for many years on specious charges, with some sentenced to death. We have documented many cases in which children were arrested while they were aged under ten years old and released as adults.

Children are often subjected to torture from the first moment of arrest like other detainees, and Syrian regime forces do not distinguish between children and adults in the types and methods of torture inflicted. We have documented the most prominent methods of torture that detainees are exposed to in graphic detail in [a special report](#), with this barbaric torture routinely leading to the deaths of detainees, both adults and children. These heinous torture practices continue from the first moment of a child's arrest and throughout the period of their detention, with the physical and psychological effects and trauma often continuing long after their release.

In many cases in which children were arrested with their mothers, we documented that the Syrian regime forces separated children from their mothers, transferring the children either to other cells, to orphanages, or to unknown destinations, without informing the mothers of the destination as an additional way to keep them in a state of constant anxiety and fear over the fate of their children. Children who are transferred to an orphanage, remain there for the duration of their mothers' detention, with the Syrian regime forces forbidding other family members or guardians to remove them and usually depriving them of family visits, meaning that they are effectively in a situation similar to that of their imprisoned parents in detention centers.

Children who have experienced detention are, unsurprisingly, traumatized, suffering a marked deterioration in their physical and psychological wellbeing, and these damaging effects from the experience of detention, which are traumatic for an adult, let alone a child, remain with them even years after their release.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights team has documented that at least 3,649 of the children (3,193 male children and 456 female children) arrested by Syrian regime forces since March 2011 are still arbitrarily detained or subjected to enforced disappearance as of November 2021. We have also documented at least 174 children's deaths due to torture in Syrian regime detention centers during the same period.

The child Mahmoud Abdullah Hejazi, born in 1997, originally from al Qadam neighborhood in Damascus city, was living with his family in Sehnaya town in the west of Damascus Suburbs governorate and working in a clothing store in al Hariqa area of Damascus city when he was arrested by Syrian regime forces on Sunday, December 15, 2013, after a raid and arrest campaign in Sehnaya town, and taken to an undisclosed location.

The SNHR spoke with Mahmoud's mother, Ms. Khadijah Izz al Din Awad⁸, who told us:

"My son Mahmoud worked in a clothing store in al Hariqa area of Damascus city, and we live in Sehnaya town in Damascus Suburbs governorate. On December 15, 2013, Syrian regime personnel launched a widespread campaign of arrests in Sehnaya town, which lasted for three days, and they were arresting anyone from the Darayya, al Qadam or Sbeina areas in Damascus Suburbs governorate who was living in Sehnaya town, by raiding homes or at checkpoints. On that date, my son Mahmoud, who was born in al Qadam neighborhood - while he was at the al Tayyara stop in the town - the regime forces arrested him. My other son had seen how Mahmoud was arrested, as they put him in the trunk of the vehicle with a number of other children. Six months after his disappearance, his cousin saw him in Damascus city while he was being taken from the Justice Palace while he was tied to a chain (ganzeer) with six other people and boarded the bus belonging to the security forces. I visited al Qaboun Prison in Damascus city dozens of times without getting any results or finding out anything about his fate."

Ms. Khadijah added that she extracted a family record statement from the Civil Registry department at the end of 2020 to check whether he was alive or dead, **"The statement didn't mention that Mahmoud had died, but I was not able to obtain any information about his fate to date."**

Another child, Muhammad Abdul Rahman al Barmawi, from Daraa city, born in 1996, was a middle school student at the time of his arrest on Friday, January 3, 2014, when Syrian regime forces detained him after raiding his family's home in al Sabeel neighborhood in Daraa city, and took him to an undisclosed location.



The child, Muhammad Abdul Rahman al Barmawi

SNHR spoke with Mr. Anas Abdul Rahman al Barmawi⁹, the child Muhammad's brother, who told us:

"At seven am, Syrian regime personnel raided our house near the al Razi School in al Sabeel neighborhood of Daraa city, and arrested my 17-year-old brother, Muhammad, in front of his parents and brothers, then he was taken to an undisclosed location. We did not obtain any information about him or the place of his detention since that time, despite all our attempts to hire a lawyer and search for him in the security branches."

Anas added that they could not even find out the charges against his brother or any reasons for his arrest.

⁸ We contacted her via phone on May 12, 2021

⁹ We contacted him via e-mail in April 2020

The child, Mahmoud Salah al Malla, born in 1995, from al Qouriya city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was arrested by Syrian regime personnel on Thursday, May 10, 2012, while he was receiving treatment in a hospital in al Mayadeen city in Deir Ez-Zour governorate, after being hospitalized due to suffering a gunshot wound in al Qouriya city which was also inflicted by Syrian regime forces, with the arresting personnel taking him to an undisclosed location.



The child Mahmoud Salah al Malla

The SNHR spoke with Mr. Abdul Qader al Malla¹⁰, the child Mahmoud's uncle, who told us:

"The child Mahmoud was shot in the leg by a Syrian regime sniper in a street in al Qouriya city, and he could no longer stand on his feet, so a group of passers-by took him to the National Hospital in al Mayadeen city in the suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, when Syrian regime forces personnel in the hospital arrested him and took him to one of the security branches in Damascus city."

Mr. Al Malla further revealed that on November 10, 2012, Mahmoud was seen in Adra Central Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate by a fellow detainee who was subsequently released, and added **"we were unable to visit him or appoint a lawyer, and that, to this date, we've been unable to obtain any information about his fate"**.

The child, Muhammad Ahmad Yaser al Hajji, born in 1995, from Aleppo city, who had been living with his family in Salqin city in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, was an eleventh-grade student at the Industrial High School at the time of his arrest by Syrian regime forces on April Saturday, April 7, 2012, while he was passing through a regime checkpoint in Latakia city, after which he was taken to an undisclosed location.



Child Muhammad Ahmad Yaser al Hajji

¹⁰ We contacted him via e-mail in July 2020

The SNHR spoke with Mr. Abdullah Antar¹¹, a friend of the child Muhammad's family, who informed us on the incident:

"During the intensive bombardment of Salqin city in Idlib suburbs by Syrian regime forces, the child Muhammad fled with his family from Salqin city to Latakia city; upon their arrival in Latakia city, Syrian regime forces personnel stopped them at one of the checkpoints and arrested the child Muhammad, taking him to an undisclosed location." He also added: "We believe that his arrest was due to his coming from the bombed-out areas. During the years of his detention, we hired a lawyer and searched for Muhammad at the security branches, but we did not get any result."

The child, Abdul Rahman al Saleh, from Hama city, aged 12, was arrested by Syrian regime forces, along with his mother, Muna al Saleh, near Kwaire town in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate while they were traveling towards al Bab city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, on September 28, 2021, with both being released on October 21, 2021.

We spoke to Ms. Muna¹² who told us the circumstances of her and her son's arrest:

"For five years, I have been in Hama city, being unable to travel to my husband, who lives in al Bab city because there are no roads available and the regime has not allowed the people to travel to those areas. When I tried to travel, I was arrested by the [Syrian regime] Air Security Branch at Kwaire's Airbase, and I was transferred with my child to the Air Security headquarters in Aleppo city. From the first moments, we were subjected to cursing, insults and death threats. My child was also severely beaten all over his body because he tried to defend me in front of the personnel; throughout the period of our detention, the situation was bad and they put my child in a cell next to me where I did not see him until the day we were released." Muna added that she was not subjected to any trial and the investigating officer who ordered her release threatened to arrest her again if she tried to travel to al Bab city.

On Wednesday, January 6, 2021, personnel from the Syrian regime's Fourth Division arrested four children from Douma city in the Eastern Ghouta, east of Damascus Suburbs governorate, while they were passing through one of the regime's checkpoints in Mazarea al Mal'ab area on the outskirts of Douma city, as they were transporting a quantity of copper and electrical wires into Douma city to earn money, and took them to one of the regime's checkpoints in the city near al Kilani Station. We documented that they were released on Saturday, January 9, 2021.

On Saturday, May 1, 2021, Syrian regime forces personnel arrested 30 civilians, including three children, all from Kanaker village in the southwest of Damascus Suburbs governorate, in Tartus city on the Syrian coast, from where they had been trying to emigrate illegally to Cyprus, and took them to the Military Security branch in Tartus city. We documented their release on May 26, 2021, which took place after they had been subjected to severe torture inside the Military Security branch.

¹¹ We contacted him via e-mail in July 2020

¹² We contacted her via phone on November 2, 2021

On Saturday, September 4, 2021, a woman, her brother, and her five children, from al Matar neighborhood in Daraa al Mahatta area, all from Daraa City, were arrested by personnel from the Syrian regime's Military Security Force, over her husband joining a faction of the Armed Opposition in Daraa city. We documented that they were released on September 8, 2021.



Photo of one of the younger children

On Monday, September 20, 2021, Syrian regime forces personnel arrested five civilians, including a child, as they were passing through a regime checkpoint at the southern entrance of Deir Ez-Zour city while they were heading from Deir Ez-Zour city to Damascus city, taking them to an undisclosed location.

The child, Omar al Kurdi, from Bosra al Sham city, east of Daraa governorate, who was aged 17 at the time of his arrest, was arrested in 2012 by Syrian regime forces, along with his brother Mahmoud and their father Ali Mahmoud, in Bosra al Sham city. Almost since that date, they have been classified as forcibly disappeared, with the Syrian regime denying their detention and preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting them. On Thursday, June 17, 2020, their family received information of their deaths. SNHR's data from numerous sources confirms that they were in good health at the time of their arrest, indicating that they probably died due to torture in a regime detention center. SNHR confirms that Syrian regime forces failed to hand over their bodies to their family.

C: Sexual Violence:

Syrian regime forces have committed multiple sexual violence against children, targeting them specifically because they are more vulnerable and fragile than adults, motivated by revenge against them or to inflict the worst possible suffering on them and harm their families. Sexual violence occurred within detention centers and during raids and searches, and we have also documented several cases of sexual violence committed by unofficial forces inside or outside their headquarters, some of which ended with the killing of the child after he or she had been raped.

Sexual violence has been practiced in several forms, with the most widespread forms being harassment during searches, forced nudity, sexual blackmail, hitting the genitals, and verbal sexual violence, such as verbal insults with sexual connotations or sexual charges. We have documented several instances of the Syrian regime's official media broadcasting clearly coerced 'confessions from detained female children stating that they had sex with factions of the armed opposition; following these 'confessions', the girls are then forcibly disappeared.

Sexual violence has had long-term physical and psychological repercussions on the children subjected to it, who often refuse to disclose the violence they have been exposed to, even to family members; this can be due to a misplaced feeling of shame, fear of being shamed by others, fear of retaliation by the perpetrator of the violation, and often fear of being socially stigmatized and shunned by the community.

From March 2011 to November 20, 2021, the Syrian Network for Human Rights documented at least 539 incidents of sexual violence against children.

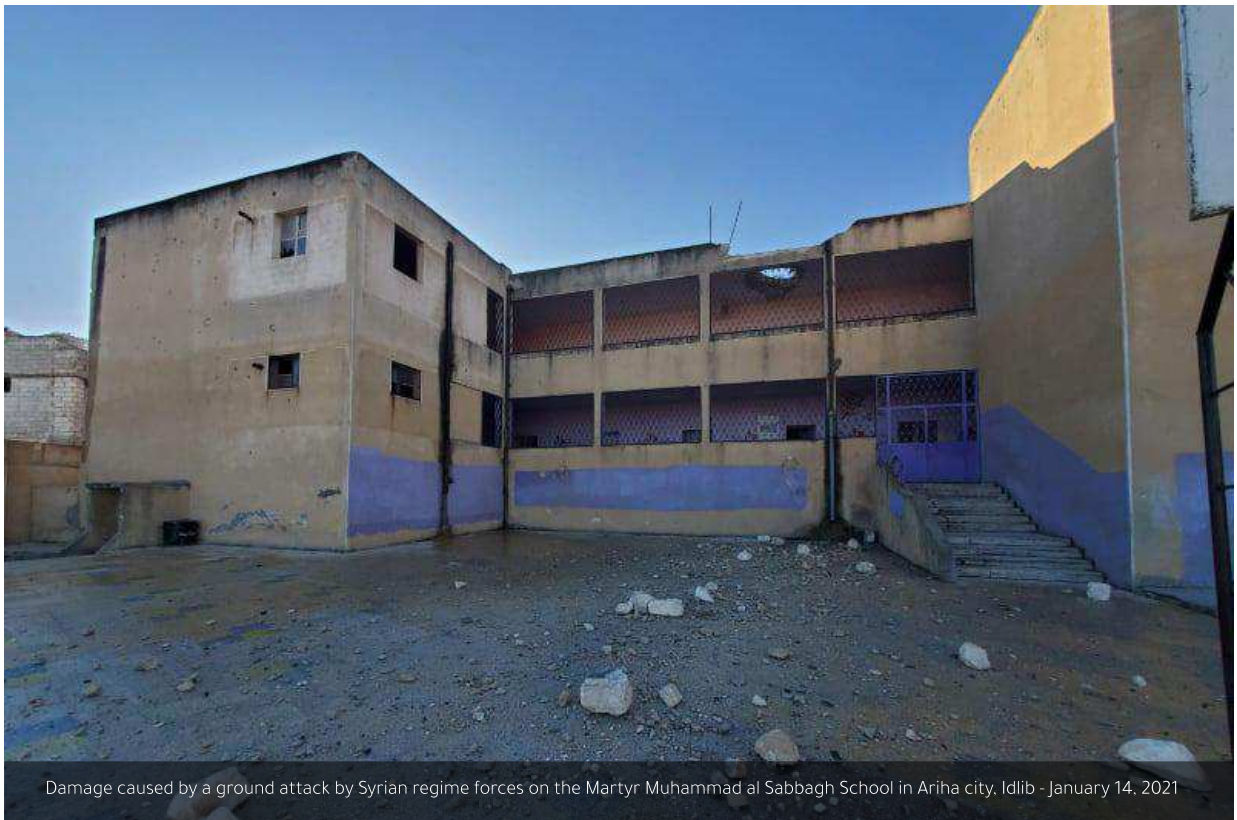
D. Deprivation of education, and child labor

The Syrian regime's years of indiscriminate and deliberately targeted bombardment of schools and kindergartens, and its many massacres of children while they were in their classrooms or in their playgrounds, or while they were on their way to their schools, have, unsurprisingly created a state of terror among parents and children in Syria. Many parents now refrain from sending their children to schools for fear of their being targeted. The Syrian regime has deliberately created this state of terror to deprive the communities in the areas outside its control of all their rights and to destroy the pillars of social stability, the first of which are children's schools and kindergartens. This deliberately inflicted bombardment of education facilities has led to the exclusion of hundreds of thousands of children from the educational process, putting these children at an even greater disadvantage, meaning their employment options in adulthood will be limited to menial work or military conscription, and that they will be vulnerable to the temptation of joining the ranks of extremist organizations.

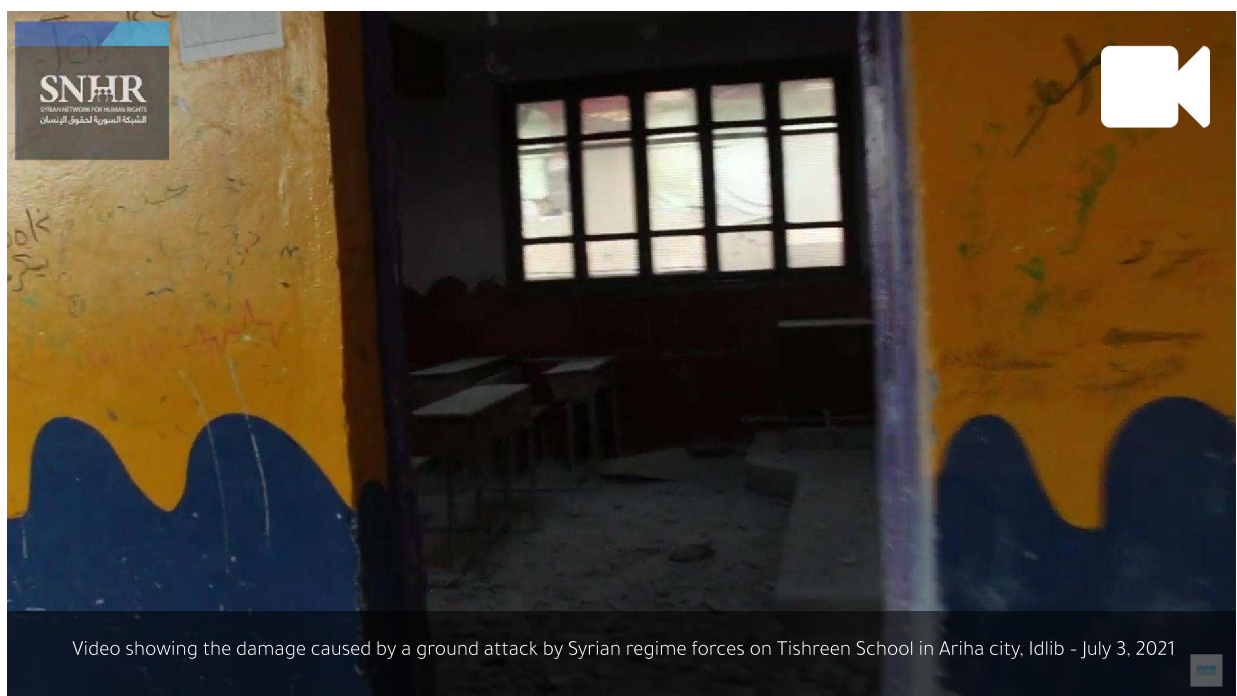
The Syrian regime's continuous bombing operations since March 2011 until now have caused the total or partial destruction of at least 1,197 schools and 29 kindergartens; as a result, most of these are out of service.

[According to figures issued by UNICEF](#) in 2019, at least 2.1 million children in Syria are outside the educational process; we believe that this number has increased significantly since then due to the displacement of hundreds of thousands more Syrians, including tens of thousands of children, in the interim period.

On Thursday, January 14, 2021, Syrian regime forces used a missile launcher to shell the Martyr Muhammad al Sabbagh School in Ariha city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, [partially destroying the school structure](#). Ariha city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



On Saturday, July 3, 2021, at around 14:45 local time, Syrian regime artillery forces fired a number of shells at Ariha city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, with some of the shells landing on the Tishreen School in al Gharbi neighborhood in the city, injuring four civilians, [in addition](#) to [partially destroying](#) a roof of one of the [school's rooms](#), as well as causing moderate material damage to the school's furniture. The city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



On Wednesday, July 21, 2021, Syrian regime artillery forces fired a number of shells at al Bara village in Jabal al Zaweya in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, with one of the shells hitting the Ismail Latah Elementary School, which is located in the same compound as a teacher training institute, partially destroying the school building and causing moderate material damage to its furniture. Al Bara village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Friday, August 27, 2021, Syrian regime forces used a missile launcher to fire heavy missiles at the [al Safsaf and Ein Karem schools](#), which are adjacent to each other, both affiliated with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) in Daraa Camp neighborhood in Daraa city, causing significant material damage to both school buildings and their cladding. The area was under the military control of armed opposition fighters at the time of the incident, according to a Russian local agreement with them.

On Tuesday, August 31, 2021, Syrian regime forces used heavy artillery and missile launchers to shell the elementary school in al Bhar neighborhood in Daraa al Balad area in Daraa city, [partially damaging](#) the school's [structure and perimeter](#) wall, and causing moderate material damage to its furniture. The area was under the military control of armed opposition fighters at the time of the incident, under the terms of a Russian local agreement with them.

On Thursday, September 2, 2021, Syrian regime artillery forces fired a number of shells at Ein Larouz village in Jabal al Zaweya in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. One of the shells fell near the Rasem al Omar complex, which contains two buildings, one a Preparatory School and the other a Secondary School, both within the same boundary wall, [partially damaging](#) the [schools' perimeter](#) fence, as well as causing [minor material damage](#) to [their furnishings](#). Ein Larouz village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Wednesday, October 20, 2021, at around 08:05 local time, Syrian regime artillery forces, coinciding with a Russian reconnaissance aircraft flying over the area, fired two shells that fell near [Abdul Hamid Ghnaimi School](#), known as the Banat Ariha School, located near Dawwar al Hezb in Ariha city in the southern suburbs of Idlib, while the schoolchildren were on their way to school. The first shell fell next to [a poultry shop](#) adjacent to the school, while the second shell fell 30 meters east of the impact site of the first shell; the shelling resulted in [casualties](#), including [school children](#), in addition to causing minor material damage to school's structure and perimeter wall. Ariha city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident. The Syrian Network for Human Rights issued a detailed [report](#) on this attack.



We have also documented that Syrian regime forces and allies have converted dozens of schools into military headquarters and barbarically looted and sabotaged their contents, mainly in the areas where the regime regained control. These forces have become a major threat and danger to schools and other educational facilities.

A photo shared widely online on February 15, 2021, show that the Syrian regime's al Ba'ath Brigade seized control of the Abdul Majid Haj Bakri Primary School in Khan Sheikhoun city in Idlib suburbs and converted it into a military headquarters affiliated with the brigade.



This photo, published in January 2021, shows members of the Syrian regime's Tarameeh militia using a school in the suburbs of Ma'aret al Numan as a military headquarters (Tarameih Militia's member Haider Na'san, who is from Qamhana, seen in the photo).



The repeated forced displacement caused by the attacks carried out by the Syrian regime forces and its allies, as well as the deterioration of the educational system has caused tens of thousands of children to drop out of the education process. And as extreme poverty spread child labor increased, with parents no longer able to bear the costs of education, and in some cases, the child became the breadwinner for his family after losing the main breadwinner to extrajudicial killing, or arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance. Children became more vulnerable to exploitation in the labor market, as they were assigned dangerous tasks that are not in proportion with their body structure, and put in life-threatening work such as working in fuel and oil burners and smuggling goods; this resulted in losing their right to education guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, International Human Rights Law and the provisions of International Humanitarian Law, which stipulate the protection of the education system, students and educational facilities, and prohibit targeting them and ensure their continued operation.

The phenomenon of the worst forms of child labor is considered one of the most widespread phenomena in all regions. The sight of children as street vendors or among garbage dumps became a regular sight with the continued deterioration of the living conditions of all Syrian families as hundreds of thousands of families are living below the poverty line, as well as an increase of homeless children that are exposed to all forms of exploitation, threatens the future of future generations and the future of Syria.

Images of a group of children, between the ages of 8-14 years, working within primitive oil burners in the suburbs of Aleppo Governorate - early 2021



E. Conscription

Syrian regime forces regularly conscript children, a practice which they began from the earliest days of the popular movement for democracy; since then, these child conscription operations have assumed a more organized and methodical character with the formation of the National Defense Forces¹³, with the regime conscripting children to compensate for the heavy losses in their ranks. Among the regime and regime-affiliated forces best known for this practice are the 'National Defense Force' and the battalions and brigades of foreign and local militias. Syrian regime forces have also established training camps for children, usually in the schools, gyms, or headquarters of these forces and militias where the children receive short training courses on carrying weapons before being sent to fight alongside adult soldiers and militiamen, and sometimes being conscripted directly without training.

The Syrian regime has also facilitated the recruitment of children in Syria into the ranks of the Iraqi, Iranian, Lebanese and Palestinian foreign militias. It has not conducted any investigations or accountability for any instances of child recruitment, instead normalizing the practice and turning a blind eye to what its local militias are doing by publishing advertisements that encourage would-be militia members, including children, to volunteer and fight in their ranks.

Following conscription, children are entrusted with various combat and non-combat duties with no distinction between juveniles and adults; usually, they're entrusted with the tasks of transporting ammunition, cleaning, building fortifications, and sentry duty for the group. During battles and attacks, however, children participate alongside adults in fighting and raids, with most of the child soldiers whose deaths we recorded within the ranks of the Syrian regime forces being directly pushed into active military engagement in battle.

The repercussions of the conflict on the economic situation, the spread of poverty, and the resulting escalating deterioration of living conditions, has pushed children to enlist with local or foreign forces; because this means that they receive a regular income on a monthly basis; many children are also keen to the child's desire to enlist and bear arms because of his feeling of power and overcoming his peers. The promotion and dissemination of the spirit of revenge through the Syrian regime's media has also contributed to influencing the children's beliefs and directing them towards choosing conscription to defend their country and fight against terrorism. The Syrian regime forces also offered privileges to the recruited child upon reaching the age of official assignment to recruit within their forces, such as remaining in his area and with his group.

After the Syrian regime took control of large areas that had previously been liberated for years, we observed an increase in the frequency of child recruitment in areas that have been subject to local settlements and reconciliations, mainly in the governorates of Damascus, Daraa and Aleppo. In most cases, these children were recruited into local militias and assigned to combat missions without undergoing training.

¹³ The National Defense Forces: Irregular forces fighting alongside the Syrian regime forces, formed in January 2013 and many groups and brigades emerged from it in all Syrian governorates, such as: the People's Committees and others. It included volunteers of different ages, including children and adolescents.

The recruitment of children by the regime forces has resulted in the death of at least 62 children on the battlefields from March 2011 until November 20, 2021.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights estimates that at least 1,374 children are currently serving in the Syrian regime's forces. We have also documented at least 78 children being recruited into Iranian militias or militias supported by Iran. These children were mainly recruited by the Fatemiyoun Brigade and Al-Quds Brigade, with 23 of them killed while participating in hostilities, especially in the Syrian Badia, and mainly during the clashes with ISIS.

The child, Mahmoud al Tawil, aged 14, from Aleppo city, was enlisted in the ranks of the Iraqi al Nujaba militia in the suburbs of Aleppo at the beginning of 2020, and is still a conscript with the militia to this day. His mother¹⁴ told us:

"My son left his school and joined the al Nujaba Brigade in the city after he and his friends got to know a commander in the brigade who tempted them with money and said that they could not join the regular army if they joined them; they gave him weapons, military uniforms and a military card. I have tried to persuade my son to leave them and go back to his school, especially since his uncle has been detained by the regime for years; we are a family that does not like to get involved with any party, but he has not listened to me. Since he was conscripted, he has gone out with them on missions and they give him an extra bonus on his salary for every task he undertakes, such as when they go out to sweep the eastern suburbs and others."

F. Remnants of explosive weapons threaten the lives of children

The remnants of the weapons used by the Syrian regime and its allies to bombard the areas not under its control in a massive and indiscriminate manner, which are of every form, type and size, are among the most prominent dangers that threaten the lives of civilians, especially children, and pose a grave danger of every kind from which the children of Syria will continue to suffer in the coming years. At the forefront of these are the remnants of cluster munitions used in a large-scale and indiscriminate manner; the submunitions or 'bomblets' from these weapons are spread across large areas, having been disseminated widely by the initial explosion after the main bomb's impact, with between 10 percent and 40 percent of these 'bomblets' remaining unexploded and posing a lethal threat; these submunitions which are spread in large numbers across agricultural lands, among the ruins of towns and villages, and even in refugee camps, are usually well hidden and can explode at any time, being triggered by any motion, however slight. It is extremely difficult to locate and defuse or collect them due the continuing instability in Syria, the ongoing nature of bombardment, the lack of available expertise, and the lack of comprehensive maps of the locations of minefields and of cluster munitions up to now.

¹⁴ We contacted her via phone on October 6, 2021

Since the first documented use of cluster munitions in July 2012 until November 20, 2021, the SNHR team has recorded at least 250 cluster munition attacks launched by the Syrian regime forces, which resulted in the death of at least 436 children, either in attacks where the Syrian regime used cluster munitions, or as a result of the explosion of old remnants of cluster munitions in areas previously bombed by the Regime using these weapons. Landmines planted by all parties to the conflict are the second most lethal threat in this category after cluster munitions, with the remnants of these weapons having caused a large number of civilian casualties, especially among children, who are the most vulnerable due to their inability to identify the remnants or realize their danger. Those injured as a result of the explosions of these remnants have often lost limbs, had to undergo amputation or been otherwise left permanently disabled as a result, and will have to live with these impediments for the rest of their lives.

On Saturday, August 21, 2021, Abdul Hai Ghazi al Nseirat, a 15-year-old child from Ibta' town in Daraa governorate, [was killed](#) and another child was injured by the explosion of a cluster bomblet left over from previous bombardment by Syrian regime forces in the vicinity of Ibta' town.

On Thursday, December 31, 2020, a cluster bomblet left over from previous bombardment by Syrian-Russian alliance forces on Sarmin city in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate exploded and wounded [3 children](#) (siblings), while they were playing with the cluster bomblet on the roof of their home in al Janoubi Neighborhood. On Friday, January 1, 2021, Ghaith Hasan al Allou 'al Assani', a 10-year-old child, had died of his wounds. The city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

This photo shows the [remnants of a cluster munition](#) incubator fired from a Syrian regime missile launcher which landed on agricultural land adjacent to Qastoun village in the Sahel al Ghab area in the western suburbs of Hama governorate on June 8, 2020.

F. Camps are not a safe environment for children and exacerbate their suffering

According to the UNHCR, there are currently [at least 2.5 million displaced children in Syria](#), most of whom live in camps or settlements of tents which cover large areas in most areas outside the control of the Syrian regime forces, and are especially concentrated around the Turkish-Syrian borders. The displaced suffer from the worst living conditions due to the lack of the most basic necessities of life such as sanitary facilities, privacy, bathrooms, and safe housing, being constantly exposed to extreme weather conditions, such as searing summer heat and freezing winter cold, as well as rainfall, snow and high winds at different times of year, all of which has caused hundreds of accidents, with tents being flooded, collapsing, being swept away, or damaged, due to the absence of safety and security measures or the most basic heat-insulating materials, which must be available when building camps, especially since these camps have become a permanent home for thousands of families displaced for many years. These tragic conditions are increasing, especially in the randomly established camps that lack the simplest elements essential for survival and decent living standards. The lack of healthcare facilities and educational centers in the camps has led to low levels of health, causing the children especially a lot of suffering, meaning that residents must travel for long distances or move simply to receive basic healthcare if any is available, and depriving them of access to education; all these factors have in turn caused steep increases in disease and illiteracy among the displaced children.

The harsh conditions in the camps, meanwhile, have also caused dozens of accidents involving children, including often flimsy tents collapsing due to extreme weather events, or being burnt as a result of using a heater or while cooking. Tragedies of this nature are witnessed in the camps on a regular basis, and we have issued [a detailed report](#) on Al Hol Camp, in which we indicated the extent of the suffering of the children there, with the camp becoming more like a detention center.

On October 23, 2021, a fire broke out as a [result of an electrical short](#) circuit in a charging battery used as an electricity generator in one of the displaced persons' tents in the Jaber Atharat Al Kiram Camp, located to the east of Atma village in the northern suburbs of Idlib, which led to the death of a child, in addition to completely burning the tent.

2. Russian forces:

A. Extrajudicial killing:

Since the first day of its military intervention in Syria on September 30, 2015, the Russian forces have carried out bombing operations using a variety of weapons that are more lethal and more advanced than those used by the Syrian regime forces. It targeted residential areas, markets, schools, camps, and vital facilities, and followed the same military strategy that the Syrian regime followed by using military force in a large and indiscriminate manner to displace civilians and re-subjugate the areas that are out of its control. Russia used the Syrian lands and people as an arena to test, develop and promote its weapons. The Russian regime has [announced](#) that Russian weapons were tested in Syria, including warplanes, helicopters, robots and various missiles. We have issued [92 thematic reports](#) on the most prominent Russian violations, and we analyzed in many of them examples of the most prominent weapons that Russian forces used in Syria. The Russian bombing of various types of weapons caused the killing of 2,032 children (1,413 males and 619 females) since its military intervention until November 20, 2021 according to the SNHR database.

The Russian forces have resorted to using cluster munitions extensively in most of the attacks they carried out on areas outside the control of the Syrian regime forces, and we note that they and the Syrian regime are the only ones to have used cluster munitions in the Syrian conflict, either by firing them from artillery and missile launchers or by dropping them from aircraft, as they targeted densely populated areas and camps, and we have noticed the expansion and increase in the use of cluster munitions since the beginning of the Russian intervention in Syria in military operations in which Russian and Syrian regime forces are participating together, which indicates that Russia is supplying the Syrian regime with more weapons loaded with newly manufactured cluster munitions. Since the beginning of 2018, we have recorded the expansion of the Russian forces use of ground-based cluster munitions in their military operations, and the Syrian Network for Human Rights team has recorded at least 237 cluster munition attacks launched by the Russian forces since their military intervention on September 30, 2015 until November 20, 2021. Those attacks killed 67 children.

On Thursday, July 15, 2021, Russian artillery forces, stationed in the areas controlled by Syrian regime forces, in conjunction with a Russian reconnaissance [aircraft overflying](#) the area, fired [a shell targeted](#) a group of workers who were [cutting rocks](#), near al Manar family swimming pool in [the outskirts](#) of al Fou'a town in the northeastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, resulting in [the deaths](#) of [six civilian](#) workers, [including](#) three [children](#). Al Fou'a town was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

B. Schools and Kindergartens are a main target for Russian Bombardment:

In their attacks, the Russian forces targeted schools and kindergartens, causing their partial or total destruction, and children were victims of these attacks. We have recorded that forces we believe are Russian have targeted at least 220 schools since their military intervention in Syria from September 30, 2015 to November 20, 2021.

3. Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (a coalition group composed of Fateh al Sham -formerly al Nusra Front- and factions of the Armed Opposition):

A. Extrajudicial killing

Hay'at Tahrir Al Sham followed a strategy of indiscriminate bombing in many of the military attacks it launched. This resulted in civilian casualties, including children, during the battles they waged with the rest of the parties to the conflict, or during the storming of areas under their control, which, according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights database, caused the killing of at least 71 children (65 males and 6 females) since the establishment of Jabhat al-Nusra (currently Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham) in January 2012 until November 20, 2021.

[Sirin Rayan al Qseibi](#), a female child from Na'our Jourin village in the western suburbs of Hama governorate, was killed on September 1, 2021, in artillery shelling of residential buildings in the village by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham. The village is under the control of the Syrian Regime.

B. Arrest, enforced disappearance and torture

Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) carried out arbitrary detention/abduction of children in its areas of control, under several pretexts, including violations of the teachings imposed by the HTS, such as preventing males and females mixing in certain areas, or insulting the God. We have also recorded cases of arbitrary detention/abduction of children that the HTS claimed to have links with ISIS members. In addition, the HTS carried out detentions of children; with the aim of taking them as hostages, during their attacks against areas outside their control. The HTS did not designate special detention centers for children, not even sections or cells. Rather, they were held with adults in the same cells, and with detainees on various criminal charges, including murder and theft. In many cases, the child remains detained for long months or years without trial.

During their detention, children are subjected to torture methods similar to adults, such as severe beatings, flogging, bastinado and shabeh. The child is also separated from his mother if he is arrested with her, and is deprived of communication with her. Members of the HTS shave children's hair and insult their dignity in front of crowds of people as a punishment for violating its teachings.

From January 2012 to November 20, 2021, the Syrian Network for Human Rights team documented at least 42 children (39 male and 3 female) who are still detained or forcibly disappeared by HTS, while two children died due to torture in HTS' detention centers.

On September 30, 2021, Hay'at Tahrir al Sham detained three children, as they were passing through one of the group's checkpoints in Atama village in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, which divide Hay'at Tahrir al Sham-controlled areas from Syrian National Army-controlled areas; the children were detained on charges of trying to smuggle cigarettes into HTS-controlled areas by hiding them under their clothes. The HTS personnel at the checkpoint filmed the children, and released them later the same day.

SNHR obtained information on the children, two of whom are orphaned brothers, while the third child is the breadwinner for his family; all are from Jozef village in south of Idlib governorate, and currently living in Deir Ballout IDP Camp, located in Deir Ballout village which is administratively a part of Afrin city in north of Aleppo governorate. Local activists told us that the children have resorted to smuggling because of the extreme poverty they suffer from.

[A photo](#) received by SNHR showed the three children while they were detained at the checkpoint, with fearful expressions clearly seen on their faces, leading us to believe that the HTS personnel who detained them and filmed the video intentionally published it with the aim of showing these traumatized children in a demeaning situation insulting to their human dignity, in order to intimidate the rest of the community's children and their families.

Hussein Muhammad al Alloush, a 16-year-old child from Ebleen village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, who was living in Sarmada city in the northern suburbs of the governorate, was arrested by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham on Wednesday, January 20, 2021, in Sarmada city, and taken to an HTS detention center, where he was tortured to death. On Wednesday, February 3, 2021, his body was handed over to his family bearing signs of torture.



Child Hussein Muhammad al Alloush

C. Conscription:

Since the announcement of the establishment of the Al-Nusra Front in January 2012, it has worked to recruit children into its ranks; To increase the number of its members, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham established training camps for children and attached them to legal courses to influence their beliefs and direct them to take up arms and fight in imitation of the approach of ISIS, then pushed them to the front lines, and in other cases assigned them the tasks of guarding, transporting ammunition, or stationing on points Inspection, taking advantage of the poverty that the people suffer from in its areas of control, and offered low financial salaries to those who join its ranks. Through monitoring and control operations, we noticed that HTS was carrying out extensive recruitment campaigns whenever the Syrian regime and its allies escalated their military operations towards the areas under its control.

Muhammad Nour Hussein Abdul Qader, from al Bashiriya village in the suburbs of Idlib governorate, born in 2005, was conscripted into Hay'at Tahrir al Sham's ranks in August 2021. On Tuesday, August 24, 2021, he died due to the explosion of a mortar shell in a military training camp run by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham on the outskirts of Ram Hamdan town in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, during HTS' personnel training in the camp, with the blast killing ten fighters and injuring some 12 others. The location is a training area for HTS' artillery regiments.



Photo of the child after his death

D. Targeting schools and kindergartens

HTS has also taken control over many schools in areas under its control, and converted them into affiliated civilian and military headquarters; we have documented a number of instances of the group ending the educational process in these schools and converting them to sharia institutes. According to the SNHR database, as of November 20, 2021, HTS had attacked three schools.

4. Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party)

A. Extrajudicial killing:

Since its establishment - since the establishment of the Autonomous Administration forces of the Kurdish Democratic Union Party - in January 2014, the Syrian Democratic Forces have carried out indiscriminate bombings on areas outside their control, and they have engaged in clashes in residential areas, and we have often observed the firing of bullets by their patrols randomly from checkpoints, in markets, or during raids, and we also documented victims who were killed by snipers, for which the Syrian Democratic Forces were responsible. All of this resulted in the killing of at least 237 children (138 males and 99 females) who were documented in the SNHR database from January 2014 to November 20, 2021.

On August 18, 2021, [three civilians](#), including a child and a woman, were killed when Syrian Democratic Forces used a missile launcher to shell al Mazout Street in west Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. The city is under the control of the Syrian National Army at the time of the incident.

Osamah Adnan al Hamed, [a child](#) from al Jamous village in the eastern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, was shot dead by Syrian Democratic Forces personnel during a raid on a house in the village on July 21, 2021.

[Two civilians](#), including an infant, were killed and about 12 others were injured when Syrian Democratic Forces used artillery to fire shells at al Ziadiya neighborhood in Afrin city in the northwestern suburbs of Aleppo governorate on July 15, 2021.

Ayah Adnan al Omar, a 13-year-old [female child](#), was killed while five other civilians were injured in Syrian Democratic Forces' artillery bombardment of al Kreidiya village which is administratively a part of al Bab city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate on August 18, 2021.

B. Arrest and enforced disappearance

The Syrian Democratic Forces carried out detention and abductions against children on a large scale in their areas of control; with the main objective is to forcibly recruit children into the ranks of its forces, where they are taken to training camps by abducting them from the roads and schools and while they were playing in front of their homes, and they have also detained/abducted children during their raids to pressure their families to surrender themselves, or to make these children hostages for the negotiations with the tribes of the region. We have recorded a number of detentions on the pretext that the child being part of ISIS in the areas controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces after ISIS withdrawal. We also observed detentions of children by the Syrian Democratic Forces during aerial support by the International Coalition forces. We also recorded several cases where children were detained at its checkpoints; after they came from areas under the control of other parties to the conflict, and then released a number of them in exchange for sums of money.

From January 2014 to November 20, 2021, the Syrian Network for Human Rights team documented at least 667 children (320 males and 347 males) were still under arrest or forcibly disappeared in the detention centers of the Syrian Democratic Forces. We have recorded the death of 1 child due to torture and neglect of health care in its detention centers.

On Wednesday, January 6, 2021, members of the Military Council' intelligence service in Manbej city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, which is affiliated with the Syrian Democratic Forces arrested/ detained nine members of the Ibou family from their home in Manbej city, including the father of Nedal Ibou, who is wanted by Syrian Democratic Forces, three of Nedal's brothers, his wife and his three children; the family members were named as Mahmoud Nedal Ibou (aged 66 years), Ms. Haifaa Hoshou, Rizan, Ahmad and Muhammad Ibou, Amirah Mutran (23 years old), and the children Mahmoud, Lazkin and Aryn Nedal Ibou, aged between 3 and 6 years, all of whom were taken to an undisclosed location, being held as hostages to pressure Nedal into surrendering himself to Syrian Democratic Forces.

Nedal Mahmoud Ibou, from Ein al Arab city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, aged 30, worked in the Finance and Control Department of the Manbej City Board of Directors since 2016; after he was assigned to head an anti-corruption committee in the Manbej Board of Directors, in performing his duties, he uncovered various instances of serious corruption, which he revealed in videos published on social media pages. As a result, Nedal received death threats from the people whose names were mentioned in the videos; on December 20, 2020, Nedal Ibou submitted his resignation from his position, but it was rejected. Meanwhile, the Manbej Military Council of Syrian Democratic Forces refused to provide him with protection from these threats, forcing him to go into hiding and then to leave the area on January 2, 2021, while the rest of the family members were released at the end of June 2021.



Female child Aryn Nedal Ibou, aged 3



Child Lazkin Nedal Ibou, aged 4



Child Mahmoud Nedal Ibou, aged 6

The SNHR contacted Dr. Lazkin Mahmoud Ibou¹⁵, a relative of the family members who were arrested. He told us: "One of our family members, Nedal Ibou, had been working for 4 years as a civil servant at the Manbej Board of Directors - Finance and Control Department. According to Nedal Ibou's testimony, he was assigned to head an anti-corruption committee, and many corruption files were opened. Nedal Ibou mentioned them and their names in videos that spread on social media. According to Nedal, these groups threatened to kill him if the work of this committee did not stop. On December 20, 2020, Nedal submitted his resignation, which was rejected. Meanwhile, the Manbej Military Council refused to provide him with protection, forcing him to disappear and then leave the area on January 2, 2021. When the Manbej Military Council intelligence learned of Nedal's disappearance, it illegally arrested nine members of my family, including women and children, and held them hostage to pressure Nedal to surrender to them. Then they released them after a detention that lasted about six months; they were released in batches - first his mother, then his brothers, then Nedal's wife and his three children."

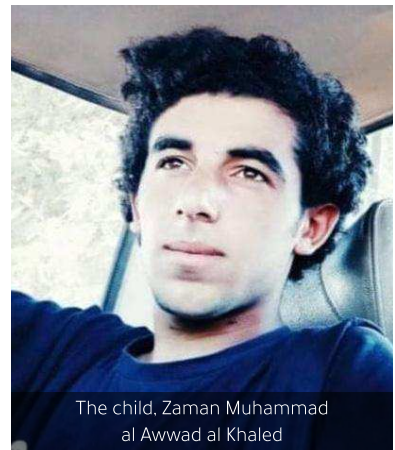
Doctor Mahmoud added, "During the period of detention of the family members, we could not communicate with them or find out where they were being held. After their release, we learned that they were taken to al Maliya Prison in Manbej in the suburbs of Aleppo. During their detention, they were not investigated or questioned, and upon their release, they were not brought before a judge or court."

¹⁵ We contacted him via phone on June 29, 2021

Zaman Muhammad al Awwad al Khaled, a 15-year-old child, from al Sh-heil city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was arrested/ detained by Syrian Democratic Forces on Sunday, February 21, 2021, in a raid on his family's house in al Shabaka neighborhood in the city, on charges of affiliation to ISIS cells, and taken to an undisclosed location.

The SNHR contacted Mr. Muhammad al Khaled¹⁶, a cousin of the child Zaman, who told us:

"At around two p.m., several cars belonging to the Syrian Democratic Forces' HAT (Anti-Terrorism Division - HAT) raided our house and the homes of my cousins in al Shabaka neighborhood in al Sh-heil city, looking for any weapons or ammunition. While searching, they found a rifle in my uncle Muhammad al Awwad's house, along with two magazines of bullets (ammunition); at that time, only my cousin, the child Zaman, his mother, and his younger brothers were present. When they asked to whom this rifle belonged, my uncle's wife told them that it was an individual weapon that they used to protect the house. Then they said, "We will take Zaman to the Asayish center in al Bseira city in the suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, and we'll release him following investigation after some hours." He was tied up and put in a car. They also stole a sum of money from my uncles' homes (approximately one million Syrian pounds). The next day, my uncles went to the Asayish center in al Bseira for Zaman, but we were surprised when they said that he was not in al Bseira." Mr. Muhammad added that after several contacts, they obtained information that Zaman was in one of Syrian Democratic Forces' prisons in Hasaka governorate, but they have not been able to visit him or secure his release to this day, despite constant attempts to do so using every available way.



The child, Zaman Muhammad al Awwad al Khaled



Photo of the child Zaman Muhammad al Awwad al Khaled, which was published by Syrian Democratic Forces, showing him with a military uniform and weapons

Abdul Rahman Mahal al Mheisen, a 15-year-old child from al Hajna village in the northern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was arrested/ detained by Syrian Democratic Forces in a raid on his home in the village on Wednesday, May 5, 2021, and taken to an undisclosed location.



Child Abdul Rahman Mahal al Mheisen

¹⁶ We contacted him via phone on October 2, 2021

The SNHR spoke with Mr. Muhammad al Mheisen¹⁷, an uncle of the disappeared child Abdul Rahman, who told us: "At around 13:00 in the afternoon, two cars belonging to Syrian Democratic Forces raided my brother's house (Mahal al Mheisen) in al Hajna village. They searched the house completely and destroyed its furniture, looking for any weapons or tools related to ISIS cells. At that moment, my brother's wife, her daughters, and her son, Abdul Rahman, were in the house; then they arrested Abdul Rahman and told his mother that security measures were in place and that he would be released after interrogation regarding spreading rumors promoting ISIS cells in the village. Some of our relatives tried to follow the two cars in order to know where he was to be held, as they took the road to al Soor city in the northern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour, and we expected that he'd be in the prison in al Soor city. The next day, one of my brothers and one of the village dignitaries went to al Soor city to meet an SDF official there. They were told that Abdul Rahman had been transferred to al Shaddadi city in the Hasaka suburbs, and he was charged with promoting the ISIS group by spreading rumors in the village; then we tried through many dignitaries and mediators in the area to get him released, and we even paid large sums of money, but we only heard promises. To this moment, we have not been able to find out the place of his detention or know his fate." Mr. Muhammad added that after searching, it was discovered that a person had written a malicious report about the child after he heard Abdul Rahman telling someone else in front of a shop in the village, "The Islamic State will kill everyone who cooperates with the SDF," and he believed that this was the main reason for the child's arrest.

Basel and Maher Abeid Mtairan, two child brothers from al Takht village, which is administratively a part of Tal Barrak town in the eastern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, aged 11 and 13 respectively, were arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces, backed by a US-led coalition helicopter, on Sunday, April 11, 2021, in a raid on their family's home in the village, and taken to an undisclosed location.

Adnan Badr al Khalaf, a 16-year-old child from al Sh'afa town in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces personnel on Monday, May 17, 2021, in al Shaddadi city in the southern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, over his participation in a protest against Syrian Democratic Forces demanding a reduction in fuel prices, he was taken to one of the SDF's detention centers.

Bandar Adnan al Sakran, a 15-year-old child from al Ezba village in the northern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was arrested/ detained on Friday, September 3, 2021, by gunmen affiliated with Syrian Democratic Forces in a raid on his family's home in the village, and taken to an undisclosed location.



Child Adnan Badr al Khalaf

¹⁷ We contacted him via phone on October 10, 2021

On Monday, January 11, 2021, Syrian Democratic Forces, backed by a US-led Coalition forces' helicopter, carried out a campaign of raids and arrests/ detentions in al Sejr village, which is administratively a part of al Bseira city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. SNHR documented the arrest of 15 civilians, including three children, who were taken to one of the SDF's detention centers in al Bseira city.

On Sunday, April 11, 2021, Syrian Democratic Forces, backed by a US-led Coalition forces' helicopter, carried out a campaign of raids and arrests/ detentions in al Takht village, which is administratively a part of Tal Barrak town in the eastern suburbs of Hasaka governorate. SNHR documented the arrest of six civilians from one family, including two children, who were taken to an undisclosed location.

C. Conscription

The Syrian Democratic Forces have used children in forced recruitment on a large scale, as they sought to recruit children, whether voluntarily or forcibly, in all areas of their control, either by attracting children and encouraging them to join its forces and granting them privileges, or through abductions that targeted children while they were in schools, streets and neighborhoods, and established training camps for child soldiers in areas far from their original areas, preventing them from communicating with their families and isolating them from the outside world until the end of their training period and after affecting their beliefs and loyalty to wards the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK).

The Revolutionary Youth (Joanne Schurchkar¹⁸), the Women's Protection Units and the People's Protection Units are considered among the most prominent parties responsible for the recruitment of children and their inclusion in the training camps and combat units of the Syrian Democratic Forces. We have noticed an increase in cases and incidents of kidnapping of female and male children by these parties at the beginning of 2020. Many parents of children who are recruited have informed us that they have searched and asked about their children at the headquarters of the Syrian Democratic Forces, but they did not get a response or an answer to their inquiries, and a number of them were threatened if they reported that their child had been recruited.

Despite the fact that the Kurdish Autonomous Administration signed [a joint action plan with the United Nations](#) in June 2019 to stop the recruitment of children into its forces and release those who were recruited, and the People's Protection Units and Women's Protection Units signing a deed of commitment with Geneva Call in June 2014 to ban the use of children in wars, the recruitment operations did not end, on the contrary, they increased in an unprecedented levels from previous years, and the Syrian Democratic Forces established [the Office of Child Protection from Armed Conflicts](#) on August 30, 2020 to receive complaints about the recruitment of children in their areas of control, but many families of child soldiers haven't received any response or information about the fate of their children. The report of the United Nations Secretary-General on "Children and Armed Conflict" for 2019, issued in June 2020, confirmed that [the Syrian Democratic Forces were the worst parties to the conflict](#) in the recruitment of children.

¹⁸ An armed organization that operates in the Syrian Democratic Forces territory, and receives instructions from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

The Syrian Network for Human Rights team has documented at least 136 cases of child recruitment carried out by the Syrian Democratic Forces since its establishment, about 29 of whom were killed in the battlefields.

Shahbaz Sidou, a child whose nom de guerre was Jan Feddan Hasaka, from Kherbet al Jamous village in the suburbs of Hasaka governorate, was 13 years old when he was conscripted. Shahbaz was kidnapped by Syrian Democratic Forces on Friday, March 3, 2017, in Kherbet al Jamous village. On Friday, May 7, 2021, his body was handed over to his family, who were informed of his death in Mount Qandil, northern Iraq, in an airstrike by Turkish aircraft.



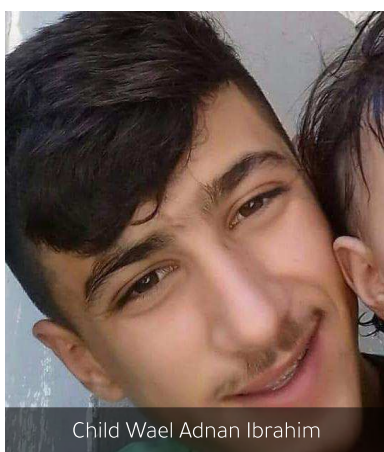
Child Shahbaz Sidou

Muhammad Ibrahim al Sadeq, a child from Herbisan village, which is administratively a part of Ein al Arab 'Kobani' city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, born in 2005, was conscripted by Syrian Democratic Forces on Tuesday, May 25, 2021, and enlisted in one of the SDF training camps in Hasaka governorate.



Child Muhammad Ibrahim al Sadeq

Wael Adnan Ibrahim, a child from al Qameshli city in the suburbs of Hasaka governorate, born in 2007, was kidnapped for forced conscription by Syrian Democratic Forces personnel on July 24, 2021, and taken to one of SDF recruitment centers in al Qameshli city.



Child Wael Adnan Ibrahim

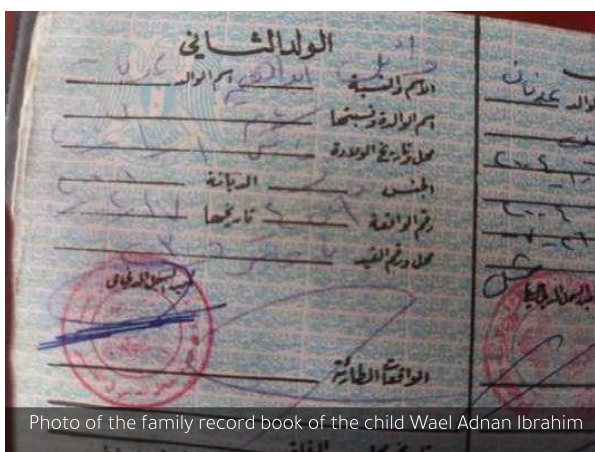


Photo of the family record book of the child Wael Adnan Ibrahim

Ahmad Abdul Baqi Rammou, a child from al Qameshli city in the northeastern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, born in 2005, was conscripted by Syrian Democratic Forces and enlisted in one of SDF's training camps in Hasaka governorate on Thursday, August 12, 2021.



Child Ahmad Abdul Baqi Rammou

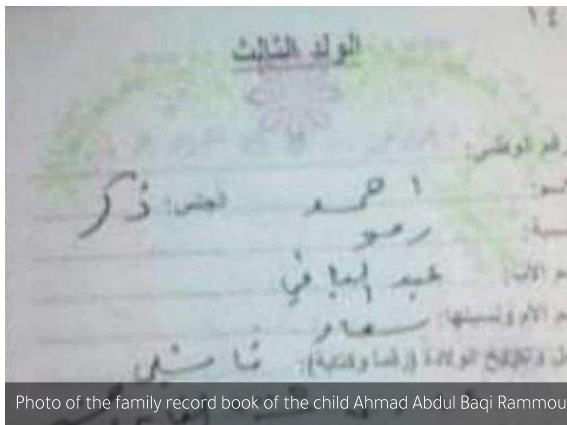


Photo of the family record book of the child Ahmad Abdul Baqi Rammou

Ahed Abdul Ghani Amin, a female child born in 2005, from Tai neighborhood of Qameshli city in the northeastern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, was conscripted by Syrian Democratic Forces and enlisted in one of the SDF's training camps in Qameshli on Monday, August 2, 2021.



Female child Ahed Abdul Ghani Amin

Fatimah Idris Na'san, a female child born in 2006, from Qoujman village, which is administratively a part of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate who currently lives in al Shahbaa area in north of Aleppo governorate, was kidnapped for forced conscription by Syrian Democratic Forces on Friday, August 13, 2021, in al Shahbaa area, and taken to one of the SDF's recruitment centers.



Female child Fatimah Idris Na'san

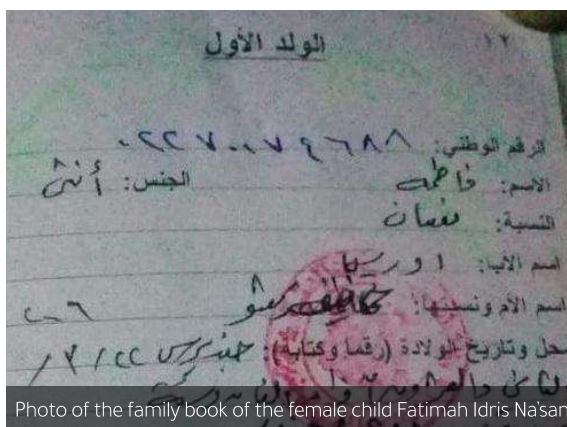


Photo of the family book of the female child Fatimah Idris Na'san

Dana Emad Suleiman, a female child from al Qameshli city in the north-eastern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, born in 2006, was kidnapped for forced conscription by Syrian Democratic Forces personnel on Thursday, August 26, 2021, in al Qameshli city, and taken to one of the SDF recruitment centers.



Female child Dana Emad Suleiman

Rama Ali Othman, a female child from Aqeiba town, which is administratively a part of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, born in 2007, was kidnapped for forced conscription by Syrian Democratic Forces personnel on Thursday, June 10, 2021, with the aim of forced recruitment, and taken to one of the SDF recruitment centers.



Female child Rama Ali Othman

Discharge of children after recruitment, which prove they were involved in recruiting them previously:

On Saturday, February 13, 2021, [the Child Protection Office in Armed Conflicts](#) affiliated with Syrian Democratic Forces in Hasaka governorate handed over six minor children aged between 14-16 to their families in Hasaka governorate, after they had been conscripted into the ranks of Syrian Democratic Forces for several months.

On July 3, 2021, the [Child Protection Office in Armed Conflicts affiliated](#) with Syrian Democratic Forces in Hasaka governorate announced that it was returning 12 children from Hasaka governorate to their families in the governorate, after they joined the ranks of Syrian Democratic Forces, since they are aged between 15 to 17 years old. The co-chair of the Child Protection Office added that 70 children were excluded from the military forces from October 20, 2020, until July 2021.

D. Targeting schools and kindergartens

The indiscriminate bombardment inflicted by Syrian Democratic Forces has caused damage to a number of educational facilities' buildings. Also, Syrian Democratic Forces have seized many schools in areas under their control and turned them into military headquarters for their forces. We have documented that at least 11 schools were attacked by Syrian Democratic Forces as of November 20, 2021.

On Monday, August 30, 2021, Syrian Democratic Forces fired a number of artillery shells at Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. One of the shells fell near al Ittihad al Araby School in the city, causing the [partial destruction](#) of the school perimeter wall. Afrin city was under the control of the Syrian National Army at the time of the incident.

5. Factions of the Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army¹⁹:

A. Extrajudicial killing

Armed opposition factions perpetrated killings through indiscriminate bombardment on areas under the control of other parties to the conflict, and killings of children occurred during clashes between the factions as well. The Syrian Network for Human Rights documented until November 20, 2021 the killing of at least 996 children (558 males and 438 females) at the hands of the armed opposition factions.

On August 3, 2021, at least four civilians from the same family, including three children, were killed while four others were [injured](#) when Syrian National Army artillery forces fired mortar shells at al Safaweya village, which is administratively a part of Ein Eisa district in the northern suburbs of Raqqqa governorate.

B. Arrest, enforced disappearance and torture

Factions in the armed opposition targeted children with abductions, especially when they attacked areas outside their control, and when children passed through their checkpoints. They also resorted to abductions/detentions of children and released them in exchange for huge sums of money from their families, and opposition factions practiced detention and enforced disappearance, some of which carried an ethnic tone, especially in the Afrin area in the northern suburbs of Aleppo Governorate.

As of November 20, 2021, the Syrian Network for Human Rights team documented at least 359 children (268 males and 91 females) who are still under arrest/detention by all armed opposition factions/ the National Army, and most of the registered arrest cases amount to Enforced disappearance rank.

On Wednesday, February 3, 2021, the National Army forces carried out a raid and arrest campaign in the city of Ras al-Ain in the northwestern suburbs of al Hasaka, after the explosion of two explosive devices of unknown source in the center of Ras al-Ain on the same day. The Syrian Network for Human Rights documented the detention of 10 civilians, including 3 children and 5 women, for appearing in security cameras' recordings as they passed through the area around the time of the explosion, and they were taken to a detention center affiliated with the National Army in Ras al-Ain. The children and women were then released the following day, Thursday February 4, 2021.

¹⁹ All armed opposition factions: all the factions that have emerged since 2011 in various neighborhoods and regions in Syria, many of them no longer exist, and many of them did not follow a central command. At the end of 2017, the National Army was established and the remaining armed opposition factions gathered under it.

Factions of the armed opposition practiced torture against children. Children were mainly subjected to severe beatings, bastinado and suspension. They were also forced to labor such as cleaning and transporting food within the detention centers of opposition factions.

We spoke with Mr. Abdul Aziz al Khalifa²⁰, an activist and friend of a number of detainees, who told us:

"On February 3, 2021, an explosion occurred near the post office roundabout in the center of Ras al Ein city in the suburbs of Hasaka governorate, so the civil police reviewed the footage from the surveillance cameras in this area and arrested everyone who appeared in the recording during the period of the explosion, including children and women; among the detainees were three children and five women who were released the next day; all these detainees had been on their way to get identification cards from the local council for themselves and their children." Abdul Aziz added, **"The area where the explosion occurred is the center of Ras al Ein city and extends from the al Jouz roundabout to the post office roundabout, and it is impossible for anyone visiting Ras al Ein city not to pass through this area. They arrested a large number of people."**

Mirvan Muhammad Ali Sheikho, from Haj Khalil village, which is administratively a part of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, aged 14, was arrested/ detained by Syrian National Army personnel on Monday, July 26, 2021, over a charge dating back to 2018, when he was accused of burning houses in Haj Khalil village in the suburbs of Rajo district of Afrin city. We recorded his release on August 4, 2021.

D. Conscription:

The armed opposition factions/National Army forces recruited children within their ranks, taking advantage of the difficult living conditions experienced by the children, including the loss of the breadwinners, as they involved the children in various tasks such as; guarding, transporting ammunition, cleaning, and stationing at checkpoints, as well as engaging in battles. We recorded the killing of 9 children during their participation in the battlefields alongside the armed opposition factions. Also, involved a number of them in the military operations in which it participated in Libya and Azerbaijan.

On Sunday, January 10, 2021, Syrian regime forces and their allies launched a surprise attack (in which it is believed that elements of the Russian Wagner mercenaries also participated) on contact lines with factions of the Syrian National Army in al Enkawi village northwest of Hama governorate, killing a number of Syrian National Army fighters; we found out that among the dead was a 16-year-old child, Muhammad Sfouk al Salloum, from Shahrana village in the suburbs of Hama governorate, who had been a conscript since mid-2019 with the Jaish al Nasr faction, one of the armed opposition factions forming the Syrian National Army.



Muhammad Sfouk al Salloum

²⁰ Via phone on February 12, 2021

E. Targeting schools and kindergartens

SNHR documented that at least 35 schools were attacked by the Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army, between March 2011 and November 20, 2021.

VI. The Reports of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict Shows that Syria is the Worst and One of the Worst Countries in the World in Several Types of Violations:

The Secretary-General of the United Nations submitted his [report on children and armed conflict in Syria](#), the third report of its kind to the UN Security Council. The report, issued in April 2021, covers the period from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2020, and highlighted the trends and patterns of the grave violations committed by parties to the conflict against children in Syria, and identify those responsible for the attacks, where possible. The Syrian Network for Human Rights reviews the report given its status as a primary source on violations against the rights of children in Syria, through cooperation and partnership with the UNICEF Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM)

The United Nations verified 4,724 grave violations against children²¹ including; killing and maiming, conscription, rape, sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, abduction, denial of humanitarian access affecting, at least 4,474 children in the reporting period. In our review of the report, we noticed the following:

1. The Syrian regime and its allies were at the forefront of the perpetrators of violations when it came to killing and maiming, attacking schools, and denial of humanitarian access. The Syrian Democratic Forces came second with regard to attacks on schools and the denial of humanitarian access.
2. Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham was first among the conflict parties with regard to recruitment and use of children, followed by the Syrian Democratic Forces.
3. The Syrian Democratic Forces was first among the conflict parties in terms of deprivation of freedom and the use of schools for military purposes, the Syrian regime forces came second in these two violations.
4. In terms of recruitment and use of children, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham was the first among of the conflict parties, followed by the Syrian Democratic Forces.

The report used the term "government and pro-government air forces", we, at the SNHR, believe it would've been better to name the Russian forces, as it is known that they are the only Syrian regime ally that uses air force. This has been proven in dozens of reports issued by the SNHR, and Russia itself has repeatedly admitted, through hundreds of official statements, that it has carried out hundreds of thousands of flights in Syria.

²¹ United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, Para 6, <https://undocs.org/en/S/2021/398>

Most Notable Violations Mentioned in the Report:**First: Recruitment and Use:**

The report stated that recruitment and use of children continued to be widespread and systematic, with 1,423 verified cases²². The report added that some 1,388 of the children served in a combat role. Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham was the worst party to the conflict in this regard with 507 cases, followed by the Syrian Democratic Forces (People's Protection Units / Women's Protection Units / Internal Security Forces under the authority of the Autonomous Administration in north and east Syria) with 488.

In regards to deprivation of liberty of children for their alleged association with armed groups²³, the report verified 258 cases, 246 of which at the hands of the Syrian Democratic Forces. 8 at the hands of government forces, as 211 incidents verified in Hasaka Governorate.

Second: Killing and Maiming:

The report verified the killing of 1,557 children, and the maiming of 1,160 children²⁴. Most incidents occurred in Idlib (1,152). Government forces were the worst perpetrator of these violations, as 36 % of the verified casualties were caused by air strikes, and 93 % of the incidents occurred in the north-western region of Syria²⁵. The report added that 27 % of child casualties resulted from explosive remnants of war, constituting the second main cause after air-strikes²⁶.

Third: Attacks on Schools and Hospitals:

The report verified 236 attacks on schools²⁷, 210 of which at the hands of government forces and pro-government forces (15 at the hands of government forces and 195 at the hands of pro-government forces), including 121 attacks by government and pro-government air-forces²⁸ -we point out that Russia is the only Syrian regime ally that uses air force- and 94% of these attacks were in the north-western region of Syria. The Syrian Democratic Forces came second with 5 attacks.

In regard with the military use of schools, the report verified 67 incidents where schools were used for military purposes²⁹, most of which occurred in Hasaka (23), Raqqa (21), and Aleppo (13). And 34 of which were at hands of the Syrian Democratic forces, followed by Syrian Regime forces with 15 incidents.

²² United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, Para 7, Para 8, <https://undocs.org/en/S/2021/398>

²³ United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, Para 14, <https://undocs.org/en/S/2021/398>

²⁴ United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, Para 17, <https://undocs.org/en/S/2021/398>

²⁵ United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, Para 19, <https://undocs.org/en/S/2021/398>

²⁶ United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, Para 20, <https://undocs.org/en/S/2021/398>

²⁷ United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, Para 28, <https://undocs.org/en/S/2021/398>

²⁸ United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, Para 29, <https://undocs.org/en/S/2021/398>

²⁹ United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, Para 30, <https://undocs.org/en/S/2021/398>

The report also verified 38 incidents in which parties to the conflict interfered with education through various measures³⁰. The report pointed out the autonomous administration control over most schools in the north-east of Syria, and forcing a local curriculum. At SNHR, we issued a report in February 2019 discussing the policies and decisions imposed by the Syrian Democratic forces on educational institutions, threatening the future of half-million students in the governorates of Raqqa, Hasaka, and Deir Ez-Zour.

The report verified 135 attacks on medical facilities and protected persons³¹, 90 % of which occurred in the north-western region of Syria. 101 attacks on medical facilities and personnel were attributed to the Syrian regime and its allies (two attacks by government forces and 99 attacks by pro-government forces), making it the worst party to the conflict with regards to this violation. Of these 101 attacks 83 were by government and pro-government air forces³².

Medical facilities were also used for military purposes, with a total of five incidents³³ verified and attributed to Syrian armed opposition groups (3) and SDF (2).

Fourth: Abductions:

The report verified the abduction of 70 children³⁴ with Suwayda registering the highest number of verified incidents (18), followed by Hasaka (14) and Idlib (12) ISIS was the worst party to the conflict with regard to this violation as 28 incidents were attributed to it, followed by the Syrian Democratic forces with 19 (13 of which related to forced recruitment), and thirdly was Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham with 9 incidents.

Fifth: Denial of Humanitarian Access:

The report verified 137 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access³⁵. Of these incidents, 67 were attributed to government (3) and pro-government forces (64), including government and pro-government air forces (32). While Syrian Democratic forces are the second worst as 19 incidents were attributed to them.

Syria is the worst and one of the worst countries in the world in the Secretary General report on Children and Armed Conflict, in the following violations:

In May 2021, the Secretary-General of the United Nations presented to the Security Council his annual report on "[Children and Armed Conflict](#)" for the year 2020. The report highlighted trends related to the impact of armed conflict on children, and included violations committed by parties to the conflict, including government forces and armed groups affiliated with the government, or opposing it, against children in several countries, including Syria, in 2020. The report stated that the United Nations had verified that 2,388 grave violations had occurred in Syria against 2,250 children, primarily killing, maiming, detention and deprivation of liberty, followed by recruitment³⁶.

³⁰ United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, Para 31, <https://undocs.org/en/S/2021/398>

³¹ United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, Para 32, <https://undocs.org/en/S/2021/398>

³² United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, Para 33, <https://undocs.org/en/S/2021/398>

³³ United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, Para 34, <https://undocs.org/en/S/2021/398>

³⁴ United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, Para 36, <https://undocs.org/en/S/2021/398>

³⁵ United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, Para 40, <https://undocs.org/en/S/2021/398>

³⁶ United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict, Para 178, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/437>

We note that the report has classified Syria according to the following patterns of violations as:

1. The worst country in the world in terms of deprivation of freedom and the use of schools and hospitals for military purposes.
2. The second worst country in the world in terms of killings and maiming.
3. The third worst country in the world in terms of the recruitment and use of children.
4. The fourth worst country in the world in terms of denial of humanitarian access and attacks on schools and hospitals.

One: The worst country in the world in terms of deprivation of freedom and the use of schools and hospitals for military purposes:

Deprivation of freedom: The report verified that 870 children were deprived of their freedom in Syria in 2020³⁷, making Syria the worst country in the world in this regard. Most incidents were at the hands of the Syrian Democratic forces.

Use of schools and hospitals for military purposes: The report verified 35 incidents where schools were used for military purposes, and 4 incidents where medical facilities were used for that purpose³⁸, making Syria the worst country in the world in this regard followed by Yemen. The Syrian Democratic forces (People's Protection Units/ Women's Protection Units) were the worst party to the conflict with regard to using schools for military purposes. Syria is also the fourth worst country in the world with regard to attacks on schools and hospitals, as the report verified 90 incidents (61 on schools, 29 on hospitals) in 2020³⁹.

Two: The second worst country in the world in terms of killings and maiming:

Killings and maiming: The report verified that 8,422 children were killed or maimed in 2020⁴⁰, 1,229 of which were in Syria, as 518 children were killed and 711 were maimed⁴¹. Making Syria the second worst country in the world with regard to killings and maiming of children after Afghanistan. Syrian regime forces are the worst party to the conflict in this regard after killing and maiming 568 children.

Third: The third worst country in the world in terms of the recruitment and use of children:

The recruitment of children: The report stated that the highest numbers of violations were the recruitment and use of 8,521 children⁴². Syria was third worst in the world after the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia, as 837 children were recruited in Syria in 2020⁴³. Hay'at Tahrir al Sham was the worst party to the conflict with regard to the recruitment and use of children, while the Syrian Democratic forces (People's Protection Units/ Women's Protection Units) were second worst.

³⁷ United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict, Para 180, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/437>

³⁸ United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict, Para 184, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/437>

³⁹ United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict, Para 183, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/437>

⁴⁰ United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict, Para 4, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/437>

⁴¹ United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict, Para 181, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/437>

⁴² United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict, Para 4, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/437>

⁴³ United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict, Para 179, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/437>

Four: The fourth worst country in the world in terms of denial of humanitarian access:

Denial of humanitarian access: The report verified 4,156 incidents where children were denied humanitarian access⁴⁴. Syria was the fourth worst country in the world in this regard as 48 incidents were verified in the report⁴⁵. The Syrian regime forces and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham were the worst, as nine incidents were attributed to each of them.

VII. Conclusions and Recommendations:

The Convention on the Rights of the Child⁴⁶ defines what the rights of the child are and aims to protect children's rights at all times. International humanitarian law provides general protection for children as persons taking no part in hostilities⁴⁷, and special protection as persons who are particularly vulnerable and unarmed individuals⁴⁸. Rule 135⁴⁹ of International Humanitarian Law states that "Children affected by armed conflict are entitled to special respect and protection" in both international and non-international armed conflicts.

The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the two Additional Protocols of 1977 also recognize that "Children must be the object of special respect and must be protected against any form of indecent assault. The parties to the conflict must provide them with the care and aid they require, whether because of their age or for any other reason"⁵⁰. Common Article 3⁵¹ states that children, as persons taking no active part in the hostilities shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction. The provisions of the agreements focus on protecting children from hostilities, and ensuring that they are provided with the necessary care, relief and protection, especially for children in areas of armed conflict.

The prohibition on the recruitment of children under the age of 15 has attained the status of customary international law, and this prohibition, which was initially stipulated in regard to international armed conflicts, has been expanded to include non-international armed conflicts. The statute of the International Criminal Court clarifies that both in cases of international armed conflict and of non-international armed conflict, forcibly conscripting or recruiting children under the age of 15 and enlisting them in armed forces or armed groups or using them in conflicts is a war crime⁵².

⁴⁴ United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict, Para 4, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/437>

⁴⁵ United Nations, The UN Secretary General Report on Children and Armed Conflict, Para 186, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/437>

⁴⁶ The United Nations, Convention on the Rights of the Child, <<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>>

⁴⁷ ICRC, Geneva Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War 1949, Article 3, <<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ihl/INTRO/380>>

⁴⁸ ICRC, Geneva Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War 1949, Article 14, <<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ihl/INTRO/380>>

⁴⁹ ICRC, Customary International Humanitarian Law, Rule 135, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule135>

⁵⁰ ICRC, Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions (Protocol I) 1977, Article 77(1), <<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ihl/INTRO/470>>

⁵¹ ICRC, Geneva Convention (I) for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field 1949, Article 3, <<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/INTRO/365>>

⁵² ICRC, Geneva Convention (I) for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field 1949, Article 3, <<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/INTRO/365>>

On May 25, 2000, the United Nations General Assembly adopted an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, raising the age at which participation in the armed forces is permitted from 15 to 18⁵³ and placing a ban on compulsory recruitment under the age of 18⁵³, but the criminal trial is still limited to recruiting children under the age of 15.

Non-state armed groups must abide by the rules of international human rights law, including Article 4-1 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which states that **"Armed groups that are distinct from the armed forces of a State should not, under any circumstances, recruit or use in hostilities persons under the age of 18 years."**⁵⁴

Despite the vast arsenal of aforementioned laws, violations of the right of children in Syria have not stopped for nearly ten years, and none of the parties to the conflict have respected these laws; although the Syrian regime has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it has treated the convention in practice as mere empty words on paper, which failed to deter it⁵⁵ from committing violations against children that amount to crimes against humanity through extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and torture, as well as war crimes through forced conscription, while many of the violations committed by the other parties to the conflict against children may also constitute war crimes in the context of being committed against the background of the conflict, and widespread violations of international human rights law if they are committed against children in areas controlled by these forces; arbitrary detention and torture are at the forefront of these violations, followed by forced conscription.

Recommendations:

All parties to the conflict:

- The regime must fulfill its obligations based on its ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the two International Covenants and the Geneva Conventions.
- The Syrian-Russian alliance and Iranian militias and their affiliates must stop deliberately shelling schools, kindergartens, and residential areas inhabited by children and their families, and killing and maiming children.
- All parties to the conflict should immediately release detained children, particularly those detained in the context of armed conflict, and abide by international laws on the detention of children, especially girls, including providing sufficient and adequate food, as well as providing education by allowing them to attend school either inside or outside the prison.
- All parties to the conflict must stop torturing detained children, and must separate children from adults, as stipulated in rules 8-d and 85 of the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners⁵⁶, and Article 10-2-b of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights⁵⁷.

⁵³ The United Nations, Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/opaccrc.aspx>

⁵⁴ The United Nations, Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/opaccrc.aspx>

⁵⁵ Syrian Network for Human Rights, The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Its Committee Are Helpless in Effectively Defending Children Rights in Syria and Around the World, <https://sn4hr.org/?p=56576>

⁵⁶ The United Nations, The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/Nelson_Mandela_Rules-E-ebook.pdf

⁵⁷ The United Nations, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>

- Adopt the Beijing Rules⁵⁸ when prosecuting children, which clarify the principles relating to the criminal responsibility of juveniles and the principles governing the penalties imposed against them. These principles have been supplemented by the adoption of the United Nations rules for the protection of juveniles deprived of their liberty⁵⁹.
- Permanently end the recruitment of children, and release all children under the age of 15 from all military formations and duties.

International community and UN Security Council:

Provide protection and assistance to forcibly displaced children, including IDPs and refugees, especially girls, and take into account their specific needs, primarily for protection.

All countries worldwide must ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, fulfill their obligations under it to hold the Syrian regime accountable, expose the regime's criminal practices against Syria's children, and make every possible effort to mitigate and stop them.

Expose all States backing the Syrian regime in their efforts to rehabilitate or support perpetrators of crimes against humanity and war crimes against the children of Syria.

Take all possible legal, political and financial measures against the Syrian regime and its allies, as well as against all perpetrators of violations in the Syrian conflict to pressure them to commit to respect the rights of children.

Fulfill the commitment of pledged financial contributions:

Assist neighboring countries and provide all possible support to increase the level of education and healthcare in these countries which host the largest number of refugee children.

Establish mechanisms to end the bombing of schools and kindergartens, protect these facilities, and work to create a safe learning environment, which is the least possible level of protection that could be offered for civilians.

The issue of Syrian children is a global one, and all countries must do their utmost to alleviate its repercussions by supporting schools and the educational and medical systems inside Syria, as well as by caring for refugee children.

United Nations:

OCHA:

- Coordinate humanitarian aid operations according to the areas worst affected and avoid pressure and blackmail by the Syrian regime which is working to harness aid to its advantage.
- Allocate adequate resources for the rehabilitation of children, taking into account the special needs of girls who have been directly affected by violations and who have been sexually exploited, giving priority to the areas worst affected.

⁵⁸ The United Nations, United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice ("The Beijing Rules"), <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/beijingrules.pdf>

⁵⁹ The United Nations, United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/JuvenilesDeprivedOfLiberty.aspx>

International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) and International Commission of Inquiry (COI):

- Investigate the incidents included in this report and further highlight the suffering of Syrian children.

The supporting States and the European Union:

- Syria is one of the worst affected countries in the world in terms of the perpetration of several types of violations against children, and therefore it needs a greater amount of assistance compared to other countries and regions, especially considering that these violations are still ongoing to date.
- Allocate greater resources to UNICEF in general and to the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism in particular, and rely on this database to begin rehabilitating child survivors.

Neighboring countries:

- Ensure that refugees fleeing Syria are able to seek asylum, respect their rights, including the prohibition of refoulement, and expedite reunification. EU states and other countries should alleviate the burden on neighboring countries and receive more Syrian refugees, while donor countries should increase their assistance to the UNHCR and civil societies organizations in countries of asylum.

UNHCR:

- Create a stable and safe environment for Syrian refugee children and intensify work for their reintegration into society through long-term psychological treatment.
- Increase investment in education and health.

Thanks

The Syrian Network for Human Rights extends its sincere thanks to everyone who sent news and information, especially survivor victims, eyewitnesses, and local activists, whose information has contributed to substantiating and strengthening the available data and the evidence in the various incidents included in this report.



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