

On the Universal Children's Day: No fewer than 28,226 Children Have been Killed in Syria since March 2011

No Stability in Syria and the
Region Without Stability for its
Children



SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Tuesday, November 20, 2018

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.



Contents

- I. Introduction and Methodology
- II. Toll of Violations against Children according to SNHR's Database
- III. Patterns of Violations against Children by the Parties to the Conflict
- IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

I. Introduction and Methodology

One of the most significant, and unfortunate highlights of the eight-year long popular uprising for democracy in Syria, which has subsequently transformed into an internal armed conflict, is the international community's unprecedented abandonment of the Syrian people on all levels, which has vastly complicated the ramifications of this conflict and the form which the future of Syria will take. This can be seen in no starker way than in the case of the children of Syria.

We have documented the most notable violations to which the children in Syria, as well as in some of the refuting countries, have been subjected to in our database, including dozens of reports that reflect our database and which contain statistical data, accounts, photos, and documents on the most dangerous incidents that the children of Syria have experienced. We stress, however, that these risks affect not only the children's physical or mental health, and their education and medical care, but manifest themselves on a vastly more profound emotional and psychological level, leaving deep-rooted scars in their memories and shaping their identities in a distorted manner, which will surface ultimately in their futures. The states of the region must immediately begin work to help overcome the traumatic hardships that the children of Syria have suffered and are still suffering from. There will be no stability in Syria without stability for its children.

The issues of child recruitment and lack of education are among the most serious risks which a Syrian child faces - provided that he or she somehow survives the mass killing through bombardment, siege, or torture. In the early stages of the popular uprising, children participated in a number of activities, such as demonstrations, singing, and photography,



but as the popular uprising turned into an armed conflict, a proportion of those children shifted towards militarization in line with their communities; despite children being affected to a lesser extent than adults, a considerable number of children have been involved, with these numbers increasing due to the shifts in the patterns of engagement with the Syrian regime, influenced by relatives such as a father, brother, or even friend. Due to this, some children became directly involved in the conflict rather than being simply victims or eyewitnesses. This was apparent, to varying degrees, within the ranks of the armed opposition factions, as well as within the pro-Syrian regime militias, particularly after fighting became a more prevalent source of income. However, extremist groups remain the parties most actively involved in child conscription, along with the Kurdish Democratic Union Party forces which have normalized a child conscription policy.

Meanwhile, we have also recorded a decrease in children's school attendance rates which reached 0% in some areas. [As we have documented, school attendance rates in Syria are now amongst the lowest worldwide, with three million children currently out of school in the country](#), although the situation is slightly less dire for children refugees. This alarming figure can be traced back to a number of reasons – most prominently forced displacement, a fate that befell half of the Syrian people, as well as a lack of job opportunities and the deliberate bombardment of schools, primarily by the Syrian regime and secondly by Russian forces, since dismantling and punishing society has been always an objective of the Syrian regime. As such, the international community must hold those responsible for crimes against humanity committed against the children in Syria to account, most notably the Syrian regime, and prevent any possibility of rehabilitation or immunity.

Through frequently speaking with a vast number of Syrian children, we have noticed that a large proportion of them suffer from psychological issues caused by bereavement – particularly losing close family members, especially first-degree relatives such as fathers or mothers, as well as due to deprivation of education. The ongoing failure to address the need to rehabilitate those children will yield repercussions that are difficult to predict. Accordingly, the international community must urgently invest on the social, cultural, and economic levels as part of a long-term strategy.

Fadel Abdul Ghany, chairman of SNHR, says:

“As long as the regional and friendly states fail to uphold their responsibility to the children of Syria at the levels of rehabilitation, education, and in combating the phenomenon of child conscription, Syria will never be able to stand on its feet and find any modicum of stability, its society will never be coherent again, and the descent into a failed state will continue. This task requires redoubled efforts and far greater capabilities. Abandoning the children of Syria will have a destructive impact that will extend far beyond Syria, adversely affecting the stability of the whole region.”



Methodology

This report outlines the toll of violations against children by the parties to the conflict in Syria between March 2011 and November 20, 2018 which SNHR's team has been able to document, highlighting the most notable of these violations, particularly those which took place between November 20, 2017, and November 20, 2018.

The SNHR team carries out its ongoing monitoring of incidents via a wide network of activists within Syria, including dozens of various sources, that we have built up over an accumulation of extensive relations since first beginning our work. When we receive information or hear reports of a violation via the internet or media outlets, we work to follow up this news and try to verify and collect evidence and data. In some cases, researchers are able to rapidly visit the location of incidents. Such immediate access is rare, however, due to the incredibly high severe security risks, and given the frequency of daily incidents, and depends on the human and material resources available. Therefore, the possibility of obtaining evidence varies between one case and another, and thus in the degree of certainty in its classification. In cases where accessing the scene of the incident is problematic, the SNHR team relies on accounts from survivors who experienced the violation firsthand. We try to establish direct contact with these individuals and, secondarily, with other eyewitnesses who saw or recorded the violation, in addition to analyzing available materials from open sources such as the internet and media outlets. Thirdly, we try to speak to medical personnel who treated the wounded, assessed the symptoms, and, in cases where the violations resulted in the victims dying, determined the cause of death.

All of the attacks included in this report, which were carried out by parties to the conflict in Syria, targeted wholly civilian areas in nature. We didn't document any military presence or armories during or even before the attacks in these areas. Also, the aggressing parties failed to warn the civilians in the vicinity prior to the attacks as required by the international humanitarian law.

We have stored copies of all the photos and videos mentioned in this report in a secret online database, as well as keeping backup copies on hard drives. Nonetheless, we can't claim that we have documented all cases in light of the continuing media blackout and persecution imposed by Syrian regime forces and other armed groups.

Some of the videos and photos we have included show children who were killed or wounded in bombing, some of whom died under the rubble. Other videos show children who died of starvation and illness. We have many such photos, only some of which are included in this report.



This report contains 11 accounts by surviving children, their families, or eyewitnesses. All accounts have been collected by speaking directly with the eyewitnesses, rather than citing accounts collected at second hand from any open sources. We explained the purpose of these interviews beforehand to the eyewitnesses who have given us permission to use the information they provided without being offered or given any incentives

SNHR has attempted to spare the eyewitnesses the agony of remembering the violations perpetrated against them. Guarantees were also given to conceal the identity of any eyewitnesses who preferred to use an alias.

This report only reflects the bare minimum that we have been able to document of the unimaginably immense severity and terrible magnitude of the violations taking place in Syria. It also doesn't cover the social, economic, and psychological ramifications.

II. Toll of Violations against Children according to SNHR's Database

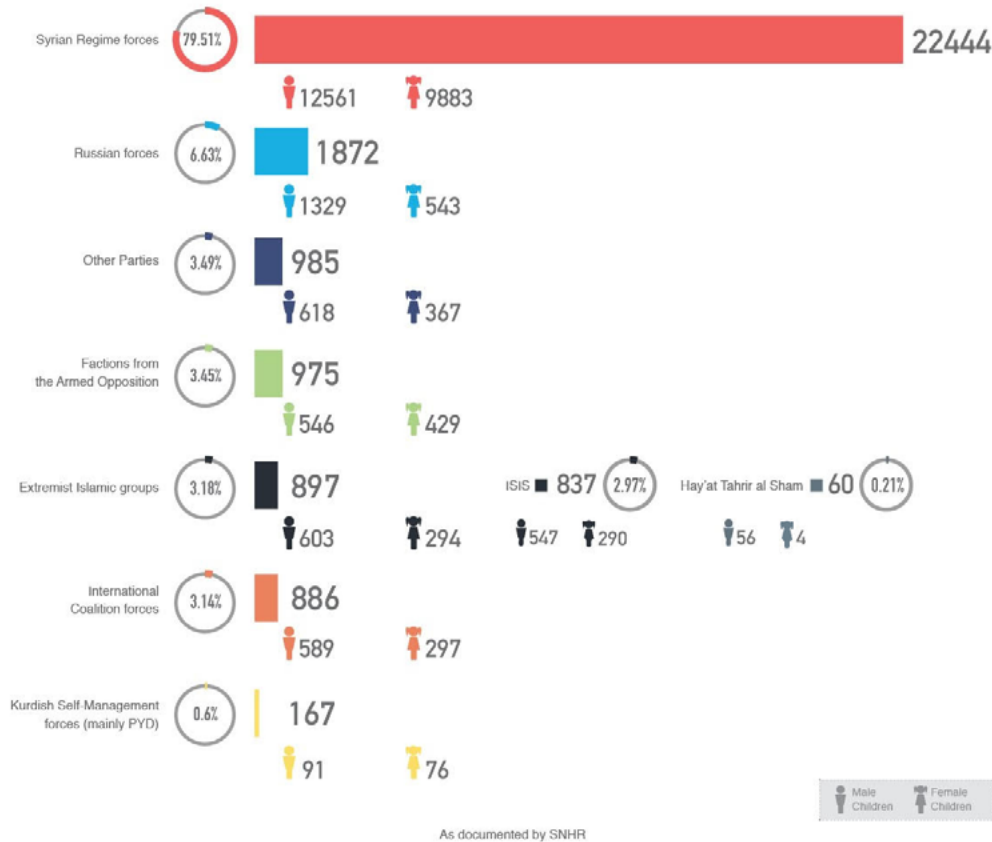
SNHR is concerned with documenting a wide range of types and patterns of violations to which the children of Syria have been subjected. Since murder is the gravest type of violation, we always strive to ensure that we shed light on the children whom Syria has lost to the crime of murder at the hands of the different parties to the conflict, mostly to the Syrian regime and Iranian militias who are responsible for 80 percent of the killings in the country, followed by Russian forces, who were responsible for approximately seven percent. Secondly, we shed light on the children who were arrested and imprisoned, many of whom have been classified as forcibly disappeared. It is worth noting that the Syrian regime is again the most prolific offender in this category as in all the other categories of violations. Thirdly, we focus on children who died due to torture, in which the regime is yet again the primary culprit. These three categories of violations are the gravest risks facing Syria's children, followed by child conscription and lack of education.

Extrajudicial killing

SNHR documented the killing of 28,226 children at the hands of the parties to the conflict in Syria between March 2011 and November 20, 2018, as follows:



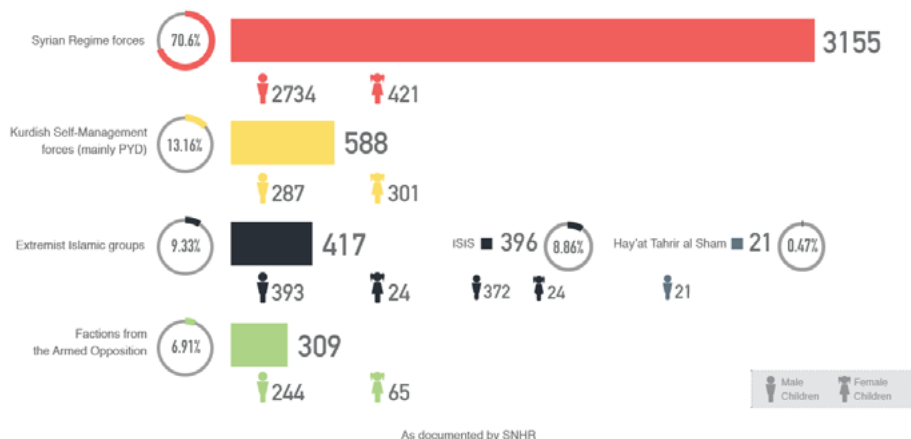
28226 children were killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict in Syria from March 2011 until November 20, 2018 as follows



Arbitrary arrest and enforced-disappearance

SNHR documented that no fewer than 4,469 children as being still under arrest or forcibly disappeared at the hands of the parties to the conflict in Syria between March 2011 and November 20, 2018, as follows:

No less than 4469 children are still under arrest or forcibly disappeared at the hands of the main parties to the conflict in Syria from March 2011 to November 20, 2018 distributed as follow:



III. Patterns of Violations against Children by the Parties to the Conflict

1. Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias)

A. Extrajudicial killing

The Syrian regime has been and remains the first and foremost offender responsible for the violations which take place in the territories under its control. It is important to draw a distinction between the Syrian state as an entity whose legitimacy is recognized by the UN, and the de facto hereditary regime that has ruled over the state for decades by use of an iron fist rather than through free election or popular consensus, which lacks any legitimacy. This ruling regime has not only failed to protect the very people it rules over but has also committed the most harrowing types of violations and crimes against them in order to retain power, including involvement in perpetrating crimes against humanity against the children of Syria. Although the present regime has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, despite its heinous crimes against children which have followed a consistent pattern, the relevant UN committee has failed to take any action to revoke the regime's signatory status to this treaty or to demand that the other signatory states put an end to its violations. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, which was one of the Convention's outcomes, is fully morally and legally responsible for upholding the terms of this legislation before the world's states, human rights groups, and Syrian society.

Syrian regime forces have targeted children with indiscriminate bombardment using missiles, artillery, cluster bombs, poison gases, and barrel bombs against homes, schools, displacement shelters, playgrounds, and, in many cases, even while the children are receiving treatment at medical facilities. Children have been slaughtered by regime militias using knives in a number of massacres of a sectarian-cleansing nature – in Homs governorate, Banyas city, Jdeidat al Fadel, al Qalamoun of Damascus suburbs, the northern suburbs of Hama, and the suburbs of Aleppo governorate. Between March 2011 and November 20, 2018, Syrian regime forces have killed at least 22,444 children who have been documented by SNHR by name, photo, video, and place and time of death.

On Tuesday, December 19, 2017, fixed-wing Syrian regime warplanes fired missiles at al Sha'fa city, which is administratively a part of al Boukamal city, in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, resulting in the deaths of nine civilians from the same family, including six children and one woman. The city was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.



On Tuesday, January 9, 2018, fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes fired a number of missiles at Hamouriya town of Eastern Ghouta in eastern Damascus suburbs governorate, resulting in [the deaths](#) of [25 civilians](#), including [13 children](#) and eight women, while around 50 others were wounded. The town was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

On Saturday, February 3, 2018, Syrian regime helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on al Shamali neighborhood of Ma'saran village in the eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, which resulted in the [deaths](#) of [seven civilians](#) from the [same family](#) (five children and their parents) as they were trying to flee their home towards a safer place in fear of the bombardment on the village. The village was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, March 11, 2018, Syrian regime helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on Douma city in the Eastern Ghouta region of the eastern Damascus suburbs governorate, resulting in the deaths of 28 civilians, including 11 children and seven women. The city was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

On Wednesday, April 11, 2018, fixed-wing Syrian regime warplanes fired two missiles at Qastoun village in the western suburbs of Hama governorate, resulting in the deaths of [six civilians](#) who were mostly from the same family (four children and two women). The village was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

Heba Hani Ramadan, a two-year-old female infant, and her eight-month-old infant brother Amir Hani Ramadan, from al Sherka town in the western suburbs of Hama governorate, were killed along with their mother Subhiya Ahmad al Ibeid on Saturday, May 5, 2018, in a barrel bomb attack by Syrian regime helicopters which dropped the bomb on the house where they lived.

SNHR spoke to Hani Ramadan¹, father of Heba and Amir, who was in Turkey when he learned of the deaths of his wife and children, **“I was told by a relative of mine that my wife and children were transferred to a local hospital after the helicopters dropped a barrel bomb on our house. On the next day, I left Turkey for Syria and arrived at the hospital, but they told me that my wife and children died instantly and I couldn't see their dead bodies since they were reduced to body parts which were buried directly after the bombardment. I was denied the chance to see them one last time.”**

¹ We contacted him via Phone



On Sunday, June 10, 2018, fixed-wing Syrian regime warplanes (Su-22) fired missiles in the vicinity of [al Noor Hospital for Children](#) in western Taftanaz town in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, resulting in the [deaths](#) of [12 civilians](#), including [four children](#) and [two women](#). In addition, the building housing the hospital, the furniture, and the equipment [were moderately damaged](#). The village was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Tuesday, July 17, 2018, Syrian regime helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs near a school housing IDPs in [Ein al Tina](#) village in the southern suburbs of Quneitra governorate, which resulted in the [deaths](#) of [nine civilians](#) all at once, including [five children](#) and [two women](#). The IDPs had been displaced from al Hara city in the northwestern suburbs of Daraa governorate. The village of Ein al Tina was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.



A female child who was killed in a barrel bomb attack by Syrian regime air force on a school housing IDPs in Ein al Tina village in Quneitra – July 17, 2018

B. Arrest, enforced-disappearance, and torture

Syrian regime forces have resorted to arresting and imprisoning children since the very first day of the popular uprising which broke out in March 2011 as a way of punishing and retaliating against them due to their involvement in the uprising. Children were subsequently used as a means of putting pressure on their families to surrender themselves or to extract confessions from them. In addition, children were detained along with their mothers when they were present during their mothers' arrest. Between March 2011 and November 20,



2018, we have recorded no fewer than 123 incidents of arrest in which children were detained along with their mothers, and no fewer than 84 incidents of births taking place inside detention centers, all of which suffered from lack of essential post-natal medical care, as well as a failure to secure their needs, resulting in the deaths of seven of those children. Syrian regime forces have carried out mass arrests of children during their raids on cities and towns outside the areas of their control or at checkpoints that separate Syrian regime forces' areas of control and other parties', particularly armed opposition factions to use these children in prisoner exchanges and to force the opposition to engage in negotiations. We recorded no fewer than 3,155 children who are still under arrest or forcibly disappeared between March 2011 and November 20, 2018

Osama Khaled al Qash, a 14-year-old child, from Hama city, was arrested by Syrian regime forces on Friday, July 13, 2018 in a raid on Janoud al Mal'ab neighborhood while the regime troops were searching for people wanted for reserve military service. He was taken to an undisclosed location.

Maha. B., an 11-month old female infant from Bab al Qebli neighborhood of Hama was detained along with her mother on Wednesday, October 3, 2018, by officers from the regime's Military Security Intelligence division at a checkpoint at the entrance of Kazo neighborhood in western Hama city. She and her mother were taken to the Military Security branch on the Hama-Homs road in southern Hama city. The fate of both mother and baby remains unknown to SNHR as well as to their family.

SNHR spoke to M.B., the girl's grandfather, via Skype. He witnessed the arrest and told us, **"As my daughter and her daughter were passing the Kazo checkpoint, they were arrested by the checkpoint's officials immediately since she was returning from Idlib governorate."** He added that although he pleaded with officials to at least release the infant, they refused, **"About 15 minutes later, a security car came and took my daughter and her daughter to the Military Security branch. They haven't been released and we don't know anything about them except for some news that we receive from fixers that suggest that they were transferred to the security branches in Damascus city."**

Mohammad Mahmoud Fathi al Hader, a 16-year-old child, from al Boukamal city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was arrested by Syrian regime forces on Sunday, November 4, 2018, in al Boukamal city. He was taken to an undisclosed location.



Syrian regime forces practice a range of torture methods that include severe beatings, pulling out nails, incineration, electrocution, and food deprivation, all of which are used against children as well as adults. Between March 2011, and November 20, 2018, we recorded the death of 172 children due to torture, medical negligence, and horrendous conditions inside regime detention centers.

[Ali Omar Shamma](#), a child, from Salamiya city in the eastern suburbs of Hama governorate, was born in 1994. On July 30, 2011, he was arrested by Syrian regime forces in Salamiya city. He appeared in an obviously forced recorded confession on the official state TV channel on September 10, 2011, in which he confessed to committing acts of terrorism. Following this coerced statement, SNHR and his family were unable to find out his whereabouts and he was documented as forcibly disappeared. On September 11, 2011, Syrian regime forces arrested Ali's father, [Omar Ali Shamma](#) the imam and preacher at al Tawhid Mosque in Salamiya city. The justification given for his arrest was his status as Ali's father. On May 10, 2018, we received information confirming that they both died due to torture inside a detention center. Their family were shocked to learn accidentally of their deaths at the civil registration office in Salamiya city.

D.S., a relative of the victim Omar Shamma and his son Ali, told us via phone that a friend of his told him about an official notification of death that arrived to the civil registration in Salamiya city under the name of Ali Shamma, **“When I went to check on this news, I saw the death statement for Ali, and I was surprised by another one for his father Omar. Their death date was the same according to the records. They [regime officials] didn't let us have a death statement or know of any details. We haven't done any paperwork to certify his death at the civil registration office. The death statement did not say where and how he died either, and they didn't even mention that they had him detained. We suspect that they were executed.”**

[Wael Mohammad Ali Dqouri](#), a child, from the Rukn al Din neighborhood of northern Damascus city, was 12 years old at the time of his arrest by Syrian regime forces on Friday, October 25, 2013. On Thursday, July 12, 2018, we learned that he had been registered as dead at the civil registration office. We suspect that he died due to torture inside a regime detention center.



Ahmad Nabil Shmiti, a child born in 1996 whose mother's name is Najah, came from Yabroud city in western Damascus suburbs governorate. He was arrested by Syrian regime forces in 2012. On Friday, July 20, 2018, we learned that he had been registered as dead at the civil registration office. We suspect that he died due to torture inside a regime detention center.

[Hamidi Abbas Metras al Hamidi](#), a child, from al Ashra village in the western suburbs of Hasaka governorate, was 14 years old at the time of his arrest by Syrian regime forces in 2014. On Wednesday, August 1, 2018, we learned that he had been registered as dead at the civil registration office. We suspect that he died due to torture inside a regime detention center.

[Odai Sabri al Hillo](#), a Palestinian-Syrian child from al Yarmouk Camp in southern Damascus city, was 17-year-old at the time of his arrest by Syrian regime forces on Friday, June 6, 2014 at a regime checkpoint in al Yarmouk Camp. On Monday, September 24, 2018, we received information that he had died due to torture inside a regime detention center.

C. Use of prohibited weapons (cluster munitions and chemical weapons)

Chemical weapons

Syrian regime forces used chemical weapons on a large scale against the areas that broke free of their control. Due to their physical vulnerability, children were the worst affected and harmed by the effects of these weapons. These attacks were often accompanied by other assaults targeting rescue workers administering medical aid to the injured, which further raised the tally of injuries among children. We recorded that no fewer than 196 children have suffocated to death in attacks involving the use of chemical weapons since the regime first used them on December 23, 2012.

On Saturday, April 7, 2018, at around 21:00, Syrian regime helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs containing poison gas near al Shuhada Square in Nu'man area in Douma city in the Eastern Ghouta region of the eastern Damascus suburbs governorate, resulting in the deaths of [41 civilians](#), [who suffocated](#) to [death](#), including 10 children and 15 women, with around 550 others injured and suffering from symptoms of suffocation. The city was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident. SNHR has released a [report detailing](#) the incident.





Child victims who suffocated to death in an aerial chemical weapons attack carried out by the Syrian regime on Douma city in Damascus suburbs – April 7, 2018

Cluster munitions

Syrian regime forces have used cluster munitions in an indiscriminate fashion. These attacks have targeted populated civilian areas and agricultural lands. More harrowingly, a large proportion of the bomblets contained by these bombs don't explode and are instead effectively turned into landmines capable of killing and disfiguring anyone who strays across them, posing a serious threat to civilians. These bomblets often have shiny, bright colors that might attract children, meaning that children are again the category most endangered by their presence.

SNHR recorded that no fewer than 394 children were killed in Syrian regime attacks using cluster munitions or in explosions of old cluster bomblets between their first documented use in Syria in July 2012 and November 20, 2018.

On Monday, August 13, 2018, Syrian regime rocket launchers, which we believe were stationed in the northern suburbs of Hama, fired three rockets [loaded with cluster bomblets](#) on al Tah village in the southern suburbs of Idlib, which resulted in the death of a male child identified as Hekmat al Brouk and a woman identified as Manar al Abdullah. The area was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

D. Siege

Since 2012, Syrian regime forces have imposed an encircling siege on a wide range of cities and neighborhoods that broke free of their control. In most of these areas, the sieges lasted for years during which access to food and medical supplies for those neighborhoods was impeded as a way to force the residents into submission. In addition, Syrian regime forces deliberately targeted vital facilities in the besieged areas such as hospitals, food warehouses, and drainage systems, which raised the number of severe malnutrition cases



and spread disease, while formerly eradicated diseases, such as poliomyelitis, returned, along with increased chances of birth defects and miscarriages amid a shortage or complete lack of necessary medications to treat these conditions. Syrian regime forces also barred the evacuation of serious medical cases into regime-controlled areas for treatment. In light of these sieges, the number of child victims, particularly newborns, sharply increased. Between March 2011 and November 20, 2018, SNHR recorded that no fewer than 301 children died due to lack of medication and food shortages across the besieged areas in the governorates of Homs, Damascus suburbs, Damascus, and Deir Ez-Zour.

Ahmad Mazen Ali, a two-month-old Palestinian-Syrian infant, from al Yarmouk Camp, died on Monday, February 12, 2018, due to a lack of incubators in the hospitals in al Yarmouk Camp caused by the Syrian regime's siege on the neighborhood.

E. Deprivation of education and child labor

Syrian regime forces have regularly and deliberately bombed schools and kindergartens at times when children were present, perpetrating massacres and inducing a widespread state of panic and terror among the children, with such attacks being a primary source of concern for parents, many of whom subsequently refrained from sending their children to schools, unenrolled them or had them prematurely drop out of the education system, depriving them of any potential educational opportunities. The continued bombardment since March 2011 has resulted in the partial or total destruction of no fewer than 1,173 schools and other education facilities for children, along with 29 kindergartens, with all these facilities being rendered out of service as a result. Meanwhile, the ongoing massive scale of displacement has robbed many children of their education.

Schools

On Thursday, December 28, 2017, Syrian regime helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on a school zone containing a middle school and high school in eastern [Babolin](#) village in the eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate. [Both school](#) buildings were [partially destroyed](#), while their furniture was heavily damaged. The village was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.





Damage to a school in eastern Babolin village, Idlib, caused by a barrel bomb attack by Syrian regime helicopters – December 28, 2017

On Thursday, February 8, 2018, fixed-wing Syrian regime warplanes fired a number of missiles at the area around the private al Ahliya School, which is affiliated with the Eastern Orthodox's Church of Saint George, in Irbeen city of Eastern Ghouta in eastern Damascus suburbs governorate. The school building was moderately damaged. The city was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.



Damage caused by bombing by Syrian regime in the area around the private al Ahliya School of the Eastern Orthodox's Church of Saint George in Irbeen city in Damascus suburbs – February 8, 2018



On Friday, February 16, 2018, at around 14:50, Syrian regime artillery forces fired an explosive cylinder near Teir Ma'la village in the northern suburbs of Homs governorate. The school fence was [partially destroyed](#), while the building and furniture were slightly damaged. The village was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

On Saturday, April 28, 2018, Syrian regime artillery forces fired a number of shells at the 1st Girls School in al Sha'fa City, which is administratively a part of al Boukamal city, in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. The school building was moderately damaged. The city was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

On Thursday morning, June 28, 2018, fixed-wing Syrian regime/Russian warplanes (the incident is still being investigated to accurately identify the perpetrator) fired a missile that landed in front of the Nawa 1st School for Girls, for elementary and female education, in Nawa city in the northwestern suburbs of Daraa governorate. [The school building was partially destroyed](#), while the furniture was heavily damaged. The town was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

On Monday, September 10, 2018, Syrian regime forces stationed in the eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, used rocket launchers to shell [al Nedal School](#), which is adjacent to al Quds School in [Jarjanaz](#) town in the eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, during school hours. A number of students were wounded in the attack, while the schoolyard was slightly damaged. The town was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On the night of Wednesday October 24, 2018, Syrian regime artillery fired a shell at Kafr Hamra Elementary School in southern [Kafr Hmara](#) village, in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate. [The school fence](#) and one of the school walls were [partially destroyed](#), while the furniture was heavily damaged. The village was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.





Destruction in Kafr Hamra Elementary School caused by an artillery attack by the Syrian regime, Kafr Hamra, Aleppo – October 24, 2018

Kindergartens

On Tuesday, February 6, 2018, at around 11:30, fixed-wing Syrian regime warplanes fired a number of missiles at the Teachers' Union Kindergarten in the center of Kafr Batna town in Eastern Ghouta in eastern Damascus suburbs governorate. [The kindergarten building](#) was [partially destroyed](#), while the furniture was moderately damaged. The city was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.



Damage caused by a bombing by Syrian regime forces on the Teachers' Union Kindergarten in the center of Kafr Batna town in Damascus suburbs – February 6, 2018



Anas² Abu Ayman, a media worker from Kafr Batna, told us that a residential neighborhood in southwestern Kafr Batna was targeted in an airstrike by the Syrian regime air force at approximately 10:00 on February 6, inflicting a massacre. About an hour later, another warplane carried out a second airstrike, firing two missiles at the center of the town, **“I headed to the site, the public road, with the paramedics and Civil Defense - White Helmets - members, where I saw the great destruction to the Teachers’ Union Kindergarten. The first missile hit it directly, while the second missile landed on a house, under which were two wounded people who were evacuated.”** Anas added that the regime’s military offensive, which had gone on for three months at the time, resulted in a general suspension of the educational process in Eastern Ghouta, **“The airstrike killed two people and wounded about 70 others. The Women’s Center was also heavily damaged in the same airstrike.”**

On Thursday, June 28, 2018, fixed-wing Syrian regime/Russian forces warplanes (the incident is still being investigated to accurately identify the perpetrator) fired a number of missiles at a [kindergarten](#) in [Nawa](#) city in the northwestern suburbs of Daraa. The kindergarten building was partially destroyed and the furniture was heavily damaged, with the kindergarten being bombed out of service. The city was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

With no means for the children to return to school and their families having no source of income or losing their main providers amid widespread poverty and frequent, repeated displacement, and with children, in some cases, being orphaned or separated from their families, many children have found themselves forced to work to provide for their families or themselves and siblings, either as street vendors or in other fields. Some of the forms of labor which the children are forced to take up are dangerous for children, such as working at gas stations or physically demanding work, such as construction, which are wholly inappropriate for children due to their strenuous physical nature.

Fadel Ar’our, a 12-year-old boy from Khan al Asal village in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, works at a car maintenance shop, where he has been working to provide for his family for three years. SNHR spoke to Fadel who revealed that he had to assume the role of his family’s main provider in the wake of his father’s death in 2015, **“My father died of a heart attack almost two years after my mother died during clashes between the [Syrian] regime and the opposition in our village. I am the oldest of my three siblings. I dropped out of school and started working in car maintenance, while my brother Mahmoud worked at a halva factory.”** He adds, **“My younger brother and I would have preferred to stay in school, but there was no-one to provide for us after my father’s death.”**

² We contacted him via WhatsApp on February 13, 2018



Mohammad Ashour, a 10-year-old child from Qebtan al Jabal village in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, had to leave school due to his family's crippling poverty. We met Mohammad, who works at a car maintenance shop, at his place of work where he told us that he had to leave school and take up a job because his father's income is not enough to sustain the family: **"I would have been in fourth grade now. I left school when I was in the third grade. I work here every day from morning until night. I don't have any time to play with my friends. The circumstances forced me to leave school, and I am not happy about it."**

F. Child conscription

In 2014, we began noticing Syrian regime forces conscription of children for use as fighters. Previously, children's involvement in regime fighting had been limited to indirect tasks such as cleaning, bringing food, and sometimes spying, with these forces exploiting the children's need for money. In light of the severe shortage of manpower within their ranks, however, the number of local pro-regime militias which rely heavily on children younger than 18 years of age has risen steadily, with the Syrian regime increasingly feeling compelled to use child soldiers in hostilities. We have recorded many incidents where children soldiers were arrested or killed during battles and clashes.



Russian fighters next to a child fighting with Syrian regime forces.
We acquired the photo in February 2018.





Children wearing military uniform with Syrian regime forces in Deir Ez-Zour city. We acquired the photo in March 2018

Even though children are viewed as voluntarily enlisting themselves with Syrian regime forces, a number of reasons compel them to take this decision – most importantly poverty, or following in the footsteps of their fathers who were originally conscripted, or being indoctrinated or persuaded by adults who take advantage of children's trusting natures and promise money or power in return for enlisting. We have also documented instances of forced conscription of children arrested in areas close to combat zones, which have occurred routinely in Deir Ez-Zour city and the Eastern Ghouta region in Damascus suburbs governorate.

G. Sexual violence

The forms of sexual violence perpetrated against children by Syrian regime forces vary, from molesting them during raids and inspections, to forced marriage to their fighters, to verbal sexual harassment (accusing children of sexual promiscuity amongst other sexual slurs), to physical sexual exploitation (forcing the child to undress and touching his or her body) during imprisonment or abduction, to the most severe category of sexual violence, namely rape. In 2018, we recorded an increase in the rates of sexual violence against children in areas under Syrian regime control by senior officials or influential figures within the local militias.

Between March 2011 and November 20, 2018, SNHR documented no fewer than 532 incidents of sexual violence against children.



2. Russian forces

A. Extrajudicial killing

The incidents of aerial bombardment by Russian forces have been largely similar to those of the Syrian regime forces, specifically targeting densely populated residential areas. We also have documented deliberate bombardment of schools during school hours by Russian forces, which led to the deaths of children inside their classrooms. In addition, Russian aerial attacks have destroyed a massive number of homes, shops and other buildings, displacing tens of thousands of children across the areas bombed by Russian forces, whose populations fled in fear of death or injury.

Between the start of the Russian intervention in Syria on September 30, 2015, and November 20, 2018, we recorded the killing of 1,872 children in attacks carried out by forces believed to be Russian.

On Sunday, November 26, 2017, at around 01:30, fixed-wing warplanes which we believe were Russian fired a number of missiles at a residential building in [al Sha'fa](#) city, which is administratively a part of al Boukamal area, in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, which resulted in the death of 44 civilians, who were mostly members of the same family, including 20 children and nine women. The village was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

On Tuesday, December 19, 2017, at around 23:58, fixed-wing warplanes which we believe were Russian began a series of air raids on residential buildings in a neighborhood located on the western outskirts of Ma'ar Shoreen village, which is administratively a part of Ma'aret al Nu'man city, in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. A total of nine missiles were fired within a 300-meter area, resulting in the [death](#) of [19 civilians](#), including [seven children](#) and [six women](#), while about 15 others were wounded. It is worth noting that the bombardment lasted until 00:02 of Wednesday, December 20, 2017. The village was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

Media worker Hafez Terman³, who is from Ma'ar Shoreen village, told us that observatories monitoring the warplanes' movements announced that two warplanes have taken off from Hmeimim Airbase at around 23:00 on Tuesday. According to the observatories, the warplanes were headed for Ma'aret al Nu'man area where they flew above the area, **"The warplanes carried out the first airstrike on Ma'ar Shoreen village at a site that was about one kilometer away from where I was at the time. This was followed by continuous airstrikes and explosions. One of the missiles targeted a house where IDPs**

³ We contacted him via Facebook on December 20, 2017



were living. I rushed to evacuate and aid the wounded who were mostly children in the eight-to-fourteen age group, and women, many of whom were relatives of mine.” Hafez added that Civil Defense members removed the dead bodies from under the rubble, **“Three houses were destroyed completely. The roofs fell on the heads of the people living there and killed them.”**

On Wednesday, March 21, 2018, at around 09:50, fixed-wing warplanes which we believe were Russian fired two missiles at a bunker where residents were taking shelter. The bunker was a cave, located near Kafr Batikh School for Elementary Education in the center of Kafr Batikh village in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The attack resulted in [the deaths of 20 civilians](#), including [16 children](#) who were [mostly pupils](#) at [the school](#), and three women. The village was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay’at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Children killed in an aerial attack we believe were Russian on Kafr Batikh village in Idlib – March 21, 2018



We spoke to a media worker Hasan al Mukhtar⁴ who learned that Russian warplanes carried out airstrikes on Kafr Batikh town from the central signal operators. Hasan rushed there to document the incident, **“When I arrived, Civil Defense members were removing the rubble from the cave which residents told us women and children were inside. I remained at the site for several hours, during which the Civil Defense members were able to pull out the dead bodies of 20 martyrs most of whom were women and children.”** Hasan added that the site was very close to the Kafr Batikh School for Elementary Education, **“The residents told us that the children left the school in the wake of the first airstrikes fearing that the school might be targeted. Some of them took shelter in a cave for their relatives near the school, but the Russian warplanes targeted the cave and killed them.”**

On Wednesday, May 9, 2018, fixed-wing warplanes which we believe were Russian fired a missile at a cave being used as a shelter for civilians in Ma’ar Zita village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, resulting in [the deaths](#) of [eight civilians](#), [all members](#) of the [same family](#), including [five children](#) and two women. The village was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

SNHR spoke with a media worker Bilal Byoush⁵ from Kafranbel city who told us that a reconnaissance aircraft was flying over the villages of Ma’ar Zita and al Maghir when local observatories announced that Russian warplanes had taken off from Hmeimim Airbase and were heading towards the area. The announcement was made at approximately 19:30, with the observatories warning that the target site might be the one scouted earlier by the plane, **“I watched the Russian warplanes arriving from the roof of my house. The observatories announced that the warplanes had carried out their first airstrike in Ma’ar Zita area, which was followed by a second airstrike in the same area. The targeted site was about three kilometers away from my house, and I took photos of it.”** Bilal added that the first airstrike didn’t result in any injuries unlike the second one, **“I rushed to the site to cover the incident, and I found that the missile had landed on a cave where a family took shelter as they were fleeing the first airstrike. The Civil Defense members were digging with their hands until the loader arrived. After two-and-a-half hours of tireless work, they reached the victims. They pulled out a two-month-old infant and then his mother and the rest of the family, except for a girl. They had to continue work for a few more hours until they reached her and pulled her out.”**

⁴ We contacted him via Facebook on March 21, 2018

⁵ We contacted him via Facebook on June 5, 2018



On Friday, August 10, 2018, at around 18:30, fixed-wing warplanes which we believe were Russian carried out consecutive missile attacks on a residential gathering in Urm al Kubra in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, resulting in [the deaths](#) of [36 civilians](#), including [20 children](#) and seven women, while round 70 others were wounded. The village was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

[We have previously released a report detailing the incident](#)



Hussein Badwi⁶, the director of the Civil Defense in the village, told SNHR that he heard an announcement from the local observatory tracking warplane movement about warplanes flying in the sky, **“I didn’t expect that our village would be targeted since the area is generally quite unlike the villages and towns of Idlib governorate, especially since there are no military headquarters or a place from which shells are fired at Syrian regime forces’ areas of control. Suddenly, the warplane carried out an airstrike, after which we headed for the north of the city where the targeted site was. On our way, the warplanes carried out a second airstrike, and then a third.”** Hussein instructed his Civil Defense team colleagues to wait until after the warplanes left the area before starting work to ensure the planes did not carry out a ‘double-tap’ airstrike targeting rescue workers. **“After the warplanes left, we arrived at the site and we saw something we have never seen before; it looked like the end of days. The entire place was completely destroyed, and more than 25 houses were flattened to the ground, and dead bodies were everywhere. We pulled out approximately 35 martyrs and about 70 wounded. It was a horrifying massacre perpetrated by Russia’s warplanes against civilians.”**

⁶ We contacted him via WhatsApp on August 11, 2018



B. Use of prohibited weapons (cluster munitions)

Rates of cluster munitions use in Syria increased following the start of Russia's military intervention in Syria on September 30, 2015. We monitored new types of munitions that haven't been used this frequently in earlier years. We've also noted an expansion of Russian forces' use of ground cluster munitions since the start of 2018.

Between the start of the Russian intervention in Syria on September 30, 2015, and November 20, 2018, SNHR recorded no fewer than 232 attacks by Russian forces using cluster munitions. These attacks resulted in the deaths of 46 children.

Muhab Mahmoud Aboud al Hloush, child, a 13-year-old, from Jdeid Bkara village in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was killed on Saturday, June 2, 2018, as a result of the explosion of a cluster bomblet which was a remnant of a previous Russian bombardment on Jdeid Bkara village.

C. Targeting schools and kindergartens

Between the start of the Russian intervention in Syria on September 30, 2015 and November 20, 2018, we recorded that forces which we believe were Russian targeted no fewer than 173 schools.

On Friday, January 12, 2018, fixed-wing warplanes which we believe were Russian fired a number of missiles at Khaled al Mousa High School on the northeastern outskirts of al Habeit village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The missiles penetrated the upper floors and exploded in the school's lower floors, [causing](#) a [fire](#) and [heavy damage](#) to the [school building](#) and furniture. The village was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

3. Self-Management forces (primarily consisting of the Democratic Union Party – a branch of the Kurdistan Workers' Party)

A. Extrajudicial killing

Self-Management forces' indiscriminate shelling operations, as well as the landmines they planted in the areas from which they withdrew, have killed no fewer than 167 children between January 2014 and November 20, 2018

[Rouhin Yaser Abdo](#), a two-year-old female infant, was killed along with her father and mother Hamida Khalil Hesso on Wednesday, April 11, 2018 by the explosion of a landmine which had been planted by Self-Management forces in Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate before the forces retreated from the city, which resulted in a massacre.



[Jan Mohammad Bero](#), a male child, was killed along with his father and mother Tulin Beru on Monday, October 22, 2018, by the explosion of a landmine which had been planted by Self-Management forces near Kemar village, which is administratively a part of Afrin city, in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate before they retreated from it.

B. Arrest and enforced-disappearance

Self-Management forces have practiced arrest against children by abducting them from thoroughfares or schools and subsequently forcibly disappearing them in order to take them to military training camps, where they are barred from contacting or visiting their families. We have also documented a number of arrests on ethnic grounds or under false accusations of the child being affiliated to ISIS in the areas these groups took over after ISIS's retreat.

SNHR's records contain the names of at least 588 children who have been forcibly disappeared or arbitrarily detained at the Kurdish Self-Management forces detention centers between January 2014 and November 20, 2018.

Majid Ebid al Eisa, a 16-year-old child, from Ekershi al Jabal village in the southeastern suburbs of Raqqa governorate, was arrested by Kurdish Self-Management forces on Friday, September 7, 2018 in Ekershi al Jabal village. He was taken to an undisclosed location.

C. Conscription

Self-Management forces were the first party to resort to conscripting children. These forces have enforced this policy in a widespread and systematic manner to compensate for manpower shortages in their ranks and increase their numbers. Special camps were established to train and indoctrinate children and induce them to fight, while isolating them from their families throughout the course of their training. In addition, Self-Management forces have threatened families who refused to allow their children to be conscripted, and even abducted children from schools or roads for the purpose of conscription. Self-Management forces refuse to give the families any information on the whereabouts of their children who were abducted for the purpose of conscription, even denying abducting them in the first place and preventing any mean of contact.

Self-Management forces deploy children directly in battles and clashes, as well as using them to man checkpoints. We have documented the deaths or arrests of many child soldiers conscripted by the Self-Management forces during clashes.



[Ali Hussein al Hamid al Farhan](#), a 16-year-old child, from al Shahil village in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, had been conscripted by the Self-Management forces, before he was arrested by ISIS on Friday, October 12, 2018, in Badiyat Hajin in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate.

[Hussein Ali Awar](#), a child, from Markada town in the southern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, born in 2000, was conscripted by Kurdish Self-Management forces, before he was arrested by ISIS on October 24, 2018, in al Susa town in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate.

[Musatafa Allo](#), a child, from Yadi Qawi town which is located to the south of Ein al Arab city in the northeastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was 12 years old when he was abducted by gunmen from the Self-Management forces on Tuesday, December 23, 2017, in Ein al Arab city. In October 2018, we received information confirming that he is at a children's military training camp in the county of Shyukh, which is administratively a part of Jarablos city in the northeastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. This camp, dedicated to providing military training and ideological indoctrination to children, houses dozens of abducted minor children.

[Salima Abdul Rahman Ali](#), a female child, from al Hasaka city, is an only child. Born in 2004, Salima suffers from nearsightedness and a disfigurement to her right hand. In September 2018, Self-Management forces conscripted her. Her family filed a complaint with the relevant division of the Self-Management forces, but have received no response.

4. Extremist Islamic groups

ISIS

A. Extrajudicial killing

In their attacks on the areas outside their control, ISIS has used indiscriminate shelling as an attempt to seize control of these areas. The group also adopted other methods, such as clashes, car bombs, and motorbike bombs in populated areas, and planted landmines before retreating from the areas previously under their control, resulting in the deaths of children when running or playing in the areas where the landmines were planted.

We also recorded a number of incidents where children were directly targeted with gunfire inside their homes or whilst walking along thoroughfares during the group's attacks on areas predominantly inhabited by religious minorities, such as al Mab'ouja village in the eastern suburbs of Hama governorate and al Shbeki village in the eastern suburbs of Suwayda governorate.



The indiscriminate shelling operations, clashes, executions, and landmines have resulted in the deaths of no fewer than 837 children between the emergence of ISIS in April 2013, and November 20, 2018, with SNHR documenting these cases by name, photo, and place and time of death.

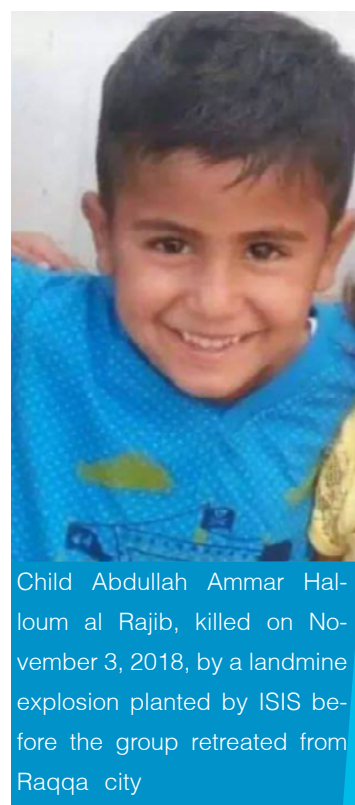
Fatima al-Jarad and her brother Khaled al-Jarad were killed on Saturday, February 17, 2018, by the explosion of a landmine which was planted by ISIS in al Hawi neighborhood of Abu Hamam city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate before the group retreated from the city.

Abdullah and Hasan Hussein al Hwayyesh, two siblings, were killed on Wednesday, May 23, 2018, by the explosion of a landmine which was planted by ISIS in Granij city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate before the group retreated from the city.

Abdullah Ammar Halloum al Rajib, a child from al Boukamal city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was killed on Saturday, November 3, 2018, by the explosion of a landmine which had been planted by ISIS near al Sawamea Circle area in northern Raqqa city before the group retreated from it.

B. Enforced-disappearance and torture

ISIS has arrested children in the areas under their control either for violating the draconian regulations enforced by the group, such as their dress codes and rules on haircuts, or for refusing to join the military training camps established by the group to train children in using arms and indoctrinate them with ISIS' extremist ideology. In addition, ISIS has arrested children from families which oppose the group's policies or arrested children along with their families as they were trying to flee areas under the group's control to escape to other regions. Most of the arrest cases we have documented qualify as enforced disappearance, with SNHR and the children's families having obtained information on many of the children, especially after ISIS lost control of most of the vital areas formerly under their control in Raqqa, Deir Ez-Zour, Hama, and Homs governorates where most of the group's detention centers were established. This has undoubtedly raised the concerns of the children's families and of SNHR about their fate. Between the emergence of ISIS in April 2013 and November 20, 2018, we recorded that no less than 396 children are still under arrest or forcibly disappeared.



ISIS routinely practiced methods of torture on children during their detention or as a punishment for violating the regulations enforced by the group. The methods used include whipping, severe beating, prolonged standing, deprivation of sleep and food, and solitary confinement for lengthy periods of time.

On Wednesday, July 25, 2018, between 05:00 and 07:00, ISIS affiliates raided eight villages in the eastern and northeastern suburbs of Suwayda governorates: al Shbeki, al Mtouna, al Swaimra, al Shreih, Gheidat Hamayel, Douma, Tarba, and Rami. As has been documented, 29 civilians were abducted including 18 children and 10 women from al Shbeki village. On Saturday, October 20, 2018, four children and two women were released in an exchange deal with Syrian regime forces. On Thursday, November 8, 2018, the rest of the abductees were liberated by Syrian regime forces in an operation whose details remain mysterious.

C. Conscription

Since the group was established in 2013, opening camps to train children in combat and arms-use, as well as indoctrinating them, have become a staple for the group which has named these camps “Mu’skarat Ashbal al Khelafa” (‘Camps of the Caliphate’s Cubs’). These camps provided training to thousands of children who were enlisted either forcibly or voluntarily through means of intimidation or inducements which the group propagated among the populations in their areas of control to promote a culture of bearing arms and “Jihad”. ISIS also worked to entice children from abroad via the internet, persuading them to fight by their side in Syria with inducements such as money and power which they would supposedly wield if they agreed to join.

ISIS’ conscription of children wasn’t limited to direct involvement in hostilities, with the group also using them to perform tasks such as guarding, cleaning, and transferring weaponry, as well as using them in suicide bombings and to carry out executions of their captives.

As well as indoctrinating children with extremist religious ideas and providing weapons training, the group instilled a principle of blind unquestioning obedience to the Amir (leader) at the recruitment camps. This indoctrination and brainwashing laid the groundwork for the group to use these children to execute captives in order to underline the children’s supposed absolute commitment to the group’s religious and military doctrines as a way of attracting more supporters.





A group of photos published by ISIS show training camps in eastern Damascus governorate where the trainees include children



A group of photos published by ISIS in February 2018 showing a “cups” training camp in Damascus where children received weapon and combat training. The photos show children being trained in operating individual and medium weapons, as well as participating in physical fitness exercises



D. Sexual violence

ISIS has practiced sexual violence widely against children, ranging from molestation to sexual enslavement by abducting the children, particularly those of ethnic minorities, and selling them in slave markets exclusive to the group's members and leaders. The group even flaunted these crimes as a supposedly appealing recruitment policy to attract would-be members. We have also documented a number of instances of sexual violence perpetrated against children that took place at the group's training camps for children, along with a number of instances of sexual violence by members or leaders of the group which took place in neighborhoods under ISIS's control.

E. Targeting schools and kindergartens

Between the emergence of ISIS in April 2013 and November 20, 2018, we documented that ISIS targeted no fewer than 21 schools.

On Thursday, September 13, 2018, ISIS used IEDs to bomb the [intermediate school](#) in the Marzouq al Aaliya neighborhood of al Sha'fa city, which is administratively a part of al Boukamal city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. The school fence was destroyed, along with one of the school buildings. The city was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (a coalition group composed of Fateh al Sham -formerly al Nussra Front- and factions from the armed opposition)

Indiscriminate shelling operations carried out by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham during their attacks which primarily targeted areas under the control of armed opposition groups as well as clashes in populated residential areas involving the group, have resulted in the deaths of no fewer than 60 children between the emergence of al Nussra Front (currently known as Fateh al Sham Front) in January 2012 and November 20, 2018.

Hanifa Abdul Qader, a 13-year-old female child, was killed on Sunday, March 11, 2018 in artillery shelling by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham, which fired a number of shells at Bsartoun village in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate.

Younes Mousa al Rahhal, a 12-year-old male child, was killed on Thursday, March 15, 2018 in artillery shelling by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham which fired a number of mortar shells at Deir Sunbul village in the Jabal al Zawiya area in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate.



Child Younes Mousa al Rahhal



B. Arrest and enforced-disappearance

SNHR has documented the arrest of 21 children at the hands of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham between the group's emergence in January 2012 and November 20, 2018. We've also documented that the group released formerly detained children in a prisoner exchange deal with Syrian regime forces on July 18, 2018.

[Munir Qentar](#), from Ein Larouz village in the Jabal al Zawiya village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was born in 2002. He was arrested by gunmen from Hay'at Tahrir al Sham on Monday, November 12, 2018, during a raid by the group on his family's home in al Janoubi neighborhood of Ein Larouz village. He was taken to an undisclosed location.

Raji Nedat Asali, aged 16, from al Rami village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was arrested by gunmen from Hay'at Tahrir al Sham on Saturday, April 28, 2018 in al Bara village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. He was taken to an undisclosed location.

Hussein Mohammad al Jabr, aged 15, from al Rami village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was arrested by gunmen from Hay'at Tahrir al Sham on Saturday, April 28, 2018 in al Bara town in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. He was taken to an undisclosed location.

C. Conscription

Hay'at Tahrir al Sham established training camps to train children in using weapons in a similar fashion to ISIS, even giving their camps similar names (e.g. Ashbal al Tawhid "The Cubs of Tawhid"). The group has also established military schools, complete with special curriculums and military uniforms for the children. The group has worked to exploit the children's neediness and poverty to recruit them in exchange for small sums of money. Children have been charged with tasks which include guarding and inspection, and been sent to the frontlines as child soldiers on a number of occasions during attacks on areas under the control of the armed opposition or the Syrian regime.





A child recruit with Hay'at Tahrir al sham (right) – February 2018

5. International coalition forces

A. Extrajudicial killing

SNHR has documented the killing of at least 886 children at the hands of international coalition forces between the beginning of their intervention in Syria on September 23, 2014, and November 20, 2018

On Sunday, February 4, 2018, at around 01:30, fixed-wing international coalition warplanes fired a number of missiles at al Bahra village in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, resulting in [the deaths](#) of [40 civilians](#), who were IDPs from al Sfeira city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, [including 21 children](#) and [13 women](#). The village was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.



A child killed in a massacre by international coalition warplanes in al Bahra village in Deir Ez-Zour – February 4, 2018



On Sunday, February 25, 2018, fixed-wing international coalition warplanes fired a number of missiles at a civilian car transporting IDPs from the desert area around al Sha'fa city, which is administratively a part of al Boukamal city, in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, as they were heading for al Alwani Camp in the desert area near al Susa town, which is administratively a part of al Boukamal city. The attack resulted in the deaths of 16 civilians from the same family, who were IDPs from al Baghouz village of al Boukamal city, including 15 children and four women. The area was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

On Monday, June 4, 2018, at around 06:00, fixed-wing international coalition warplanes fired a number of missiles at al Jazza village, which is administratively a part of al Shaddadi city in the southern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, which resulted in the death of 13 civilians, including 10 children and two women, while around 10 others were wounded. The village was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

On Thursday, November 15, 2018, fixed-wing international coalition warplanes fired a number of missiles at al Bobadran neighborhood of al Sousa town in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, which resulted in the death of 18 civilians, including 14 children (five boys and nine girls) and three women. The city was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

B. Targeting schools and kindergartens

Between the beginning of the international coalition's military intervention in Syria and November 20, 2018, we recorded that no fewer than 24 schools were targeted.

6. Factions from the armed opposition

A. Extrajudicial killing

Between March 2011 and November 20, 2018, SNHR documented the death of no fewer than 975 children at the hands of factions from the armed opposition, most of whom were killed in indiscriminate shelling operations carried out by opposition forces against areas under the control of Syrian regime forces – most prominently mortar shelling.



Rivan Khandouvan Hamdoush, a six-year-old child, died on Saturday, April 28, 2018 of wounds sustained on Wednesday, April 25, 2018 in crossfire between al Sultan and Jaish al Sharqiya, two armed opposition factions, in Kafr Janna village of eastern Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate.

Mari Abdul Raouf Mustafa, a female child, was killed on Friday, October 5, 2018, by a stray gunshot during infighting between Ahrar al Sham Movement and Lewa al Ahfad, two armed opposition factions, in al Sukkariya villages near al Bab city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate.

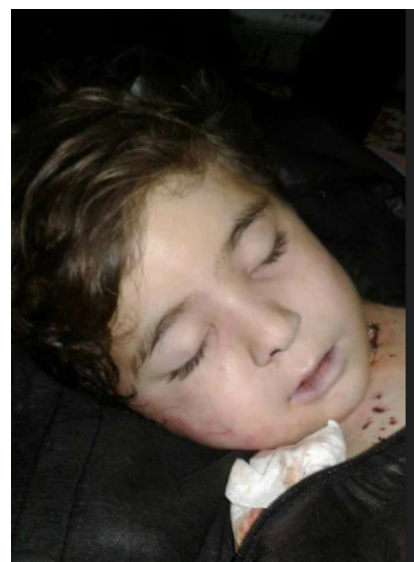
B. Arrest and enforced disappearance

During their attacks on areas under the control of Syrian regime forces, some factions of the armed opposition have arrested children along with their families for the purpose of using them in prisoner exchange deals with the Syrian regime. The toll of child arrests by armed opposition factions saw an increase in 2018, mainly in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. We've documented the arrest of no fewer than 309 children between March 2011 and November 20, 2018. Most of the arrest cases we documented qualify as enforced disappearance.

Mohammad Shikhou Hammou, aged 17, from Jouqa village in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was arrested by gunmen from Ferqat al Hamza, an armed opposition faction, on Thursday, September 6, 2018 in Jouqa village, which is administratively a part of Afrin city. He was taken to an undisclosed location.

Alan Ahmad Brim, a 15-year-old child from Kela village in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was arrested by gunmen from armed opposition factions on Wednesday, September 12, 2018 in Kela village, which is administratively a part of Balbala county of Afrin city. He was taken to an undisclosed location.

Ferhad Mustafa, a 17-year-old child, was arrested by gunmen from armed opposition factions on Saturday, September 8, 2018, from Khlneira village, which is administratively a part of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. He was taken to an undisclosed location.



Child Rivan Khandouvan Hamdoush, killed on April 25, 2018, during infighting between armed opposition factions in Kafr Janna village in Aleppo



Children detained in armed opposition factions' detention centers are subjected to a range of torture methods including whipping, al Shabah (being suspended from a ceiling), electrocution, and severe beating. We have recorded that no fewer than two children died due to torture inside detention centers run by armed opposition factions between March 2011 and November 20, 2018.

Abdullah Nabil al Nasr Askar, a child born in 2002, from Jasim city in the northern suburbs of Daraa governorate, was arrested by members of armed opposition factions on Wednesday, April 25, 2018 in Jasim city. He was taken to Jasim Police Station. We received information confirming that he died due to torture after he was released on the same day, when his family received his dead body with signs of torture on it.

C. Targeting schools and kindergartens

Attacks by armed opposition factions have resulted in damage to 24 education facilities for children and one kindergarten between March 2011 and November 20, 2018.

D. Conscription

The destruction of tens of thousands of shops, factories and other buildings and mass displacement have paved the way for widespread poverty, with many families losing their fathers and main family provider. This deprivation, along with trauma, poor psychological conditions, and overwhelming frustration, with no educational future or career prospects in sight, are all factors that have compelled hundreds of children to join armed opposition factions. Children's membership of armed opposition factions has become common, with armed children routinely deployed at checkpoints for areas under opposition factions' control.



Child conscription by factions of the armed opposition at the Euphrates Shield operation room in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate in January 2018



Although armed groups are a non-international party, and therefore not bound by the customary protocol which specifies eighteen as the minimum age for direct involvement in recruitment, these groups are, nonetheless, bound by the international humanitarian law which specifies the minimum recruitment age to be fifteen years. In the case of armed opposition factions, we can safely say that hundreds of children younger than fifteen years of age have been recruited by these groups, which constitutes a war crime.

7. Other parties

A. Extrajudicial killing

SNHR's categorization includes many classifications such as victims who drowned as they were fleeing by sea, and victims of bombings whose perpetrators we couldn't positively identify, as well as others who were killed by armed groups unknown to SNHR.

Under this category, SNHR documented the death of no less than 985 children between March 2011 and November 20, 2018.

B. Targeting schools and kindergartens

We documented that no fewer than 31 schools and three kindergartens were damaged by other parties between March 2011 and November 20, 2018.

On Friday, February 23, 2018, the fence of [Ahmad Nasif Intermediate School](#) in the Rukn al Din neighborhood of northeastern Damascus city [was partially destroyed](#), [while the school furniture](#) was [moderately damaged](#), as a result of a bombing whose source we haven't been able to identify at the time of this writing. We've also been unable to positively identify the weapon used. The Rukn al Din neighborhood was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.



Damage in Ahmad Nasif Intermediate School in the aftermath of a bombing of unknown source, Rukn al Din, Damascus – Friday, February 22, 2018



IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

Syrian regime forces

Government forces and pro-government militias have carried out acts which constitute crimes against humanity against the children of Syria through widespread and systematic killing, as well as acts of torture and sexual violence in blatant violation of Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. In addition, these forces have committed other acts which constitute war crimes, including conscription, starvation, and mass siege of civilians, including women and children. All of these crimes constitute blatant violations of international humanitarian law and the relevant Security Council Resolutions.

Russian forces

Most of the Russian forces' bombardment has been concentrated in populated areas and centers, resulting in the death of dozens of Syrian children. All of these indiscriminate attacks qualify as war crimes.

Self-Management forces (primarily consisting of the Democratic Union Party – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers' Party)

These forces have committed acts that qualify as war crimes through indiscriminate shelling which resulted in the death of many children, as well as conscription.

Extremist Islamic groups

These groups have recruited hundreds of children aged under fifteen. In addition, these groups have perpetrated torture against children imprisoned in their detention centers, while their indiscriminate shelling operations have killed many children. All of the above acts constitute war crimes.

Armed opposition forces

Different factions have recruited dozens of children. In addition, the indiscriminate shelling by some factions has resulted in the death of a number of children. All of the above acts constitute war crimes.

International coalition forces

The attacks carried out by the international coalition have caused collateral damage involving the loss of civilian lives, including children, or injuring children, or causing excessive damages to civilian property. There are strong indicators that compel us to believe that these damages were excessive in comparison to the military advantage anticipated.



Recommendations

International community and Security Council

- Secure protection and assistance for forcibly displaced children, both IDPs and refugees, especially females, by taking into account their special needs with respect to protection in particular.
- Uphold the commitments stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and make serious efforts to isolate the Syrian regime and expose and put an end to its criminal practices as soon as possible.
- Support the possible sources of accountability in Syria, most prominently the International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism; which was founded by the UN General Assembly, the Commission of Inquiry; which was founded by the Human Rights Council, and the active national human rights groups. Also, expose the states that are attempting to rehabilitate or sponsor the perpetrators of crimes against humanity carried out against the children of Syria.
- Take all possible legal, political, and financial measures against the Syrian regime, its allies, and all perpetrators of violations in the Syrian conflict to apply pressure on those parties in order to compel them to respect the rights of children.
- Uphold the commitment to all financial donations that have been pledged
- Relief supplies must be delivered to besieged children. The Syrian regime, in particular, must be compelled to lift its sieges rather than only dropping airborne relief supplies.
- Provide assistance for the neighboring countries and every possible form of support to improve the level of education and healthcare in these countries which house the largest proportion of children refugees.
- Find mechanisms to put an end to bombing schools and kindergartens, which would also ensure that these facilities are protected, and work to create a safe educational environment. This is considered the minimum level of protecting civilians.
- The issue of the children of Syria is a universal one. All the world's states must work to alleviate the ramifications of it by supporting schools and educational and medical processes in Syria and for children refugees.

United Nations

OCHA

- Coordinate humanitarian relief efforts on the basis of prioritizing the areas worst affected and disregard the pressure and attempts at blackmail by the Syrian regime which wishes to exploit relief aid in its favor.



- Dedicate sufficient resources to rehabilitate the children while taking into account the special needs of the females who were directly affected by the violations, and those who suffered sexual exploitation on the basis of prioritizing the areas worst affected.

IIIM & COI

- Investigate the incidents included in this report, and shed more light on the suffering of the children of Syria.

Neighboring countries

- Ensure that people coming from Syria can seek asylum and respect their rights, including banning forced return. The states of the European Union and other countries should help to ease the burden on the neighboring countries by taking in more Syrian refugees. Meanwhile, donor states should increase their assistance to the OHCHR and the local society groups in refuge countries.

OHCHR

- Create a stable and safe environment for Syria's child refugees and make more efforts to socially reintegrate them through the provision of long-term psychological therapy.

Syrian regime and the parties to the conflict

- The regime should uphold its pledges in accordance with its ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as two international covenants, and the Geneva Conventions.
- The Syrian-Russian alliance and Iranian militias and their affiliates should cease the deliberate bombardment of schools, kindergartens and residential areas populated by children and their families, and stop killing, injuring and disfiguring children.
- International coalition forces should launch investigations into the incidents in which child victims were killed in particular, and take deterrent steps against those individuals suspected to have been involved in these violations. Also, the international coalition should apply pressure on their allies in the Syrian Democratic Forces to cease their child recruitments.
- All parties to the conflict should immediately release detained children, particularly those who were detained on the grounds of armed conflict, and adhere to international laws against detaining children, especially females.
- All parties should respect international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and cease all egregious violations against children.



- End all indiscriminate and disproportionate violations against civilian areas and take all appropriate steps to protect children during military offensives.

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