



## The Secretary-General's Report on Children and Armed Conflict Shows That Syria Is Either the Worst or Amongst the Worst Countries Worldwide in Several Types of Violations

SNHR Is a Primary Source for Data on Violations against Children in Syria Through Cooperation with UNICEF

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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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## I. Syria Is Either the Worst or Amongst the Worst Countries Worldwide in the Secretary-General's Report on Children and Armed Conflict in Several Types of Violations

The United Nations Secretary-General in June submitted his [annual report](#) on “Children and Armed Conflict” for the year 2019 to the UN Security Council, with the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) annually reviewing this 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); we also conduct a comparison between the violations against children that we recorded in our database in 2019, and the data on violations in Syria released in the Secretary-General's report for the same year.

The latest report, released in June 2020, highlighted trends regarding the impact of armed conflict on children, and included details on violations committed by parties to a number of conflicts from government forces and other armed groups affiliated with or against the government against children in several countries, including Syria, in 2019.

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 killings and attacks on schools.
2. The second worst country in the world in terms of the recruitment of children and attacks on hospitals.
3. The fourth worst country in the world in terms of detentions and denial of humanitarian access.

### **One: The worst in the world in terms of killings and attacks on schools:**

Killing and maiming of children: The fate of some 10,173 children<sup>1</sup> was verified in the report, of whom 4,019 had been killed and 6,154 maimed; the report reveals that the United Nations verified 2,638 serious violations in Syria affecting 2,292 children<sup>2</sup>, the foremost of which is killing, with 897 children<sup>3</sup> having been confirmed killed in this period, making it the worst country in the world in terms of killings, and the third worst country in the world in terms of both killings and maiming after Afghanistan, Israel and the Palestinian state. Syrian Regime forces were the worst offender amongst all the parties to the conflict in terms of killings and maiming, being responsible for the death or maiming of 724 children<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The United Nations, the annual report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, page 3, paragraph 7, (June 9, 2020)

<sup>2</sup> The United Nations, the annual report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, page 23, paragraph 172, (June 9, 2020)

<sup>3</sup> The United Nations, the annual report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, page 23, paragraph 175, (June 9, 2020)

<sup>4</sup> The United Nations, the annual report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, page 23, paragraph 175, (June 9, 2020)

Attacks on schools: The report recorded 494 attacks on schools<sup>5</sup>, 157 of which occurred in Syria, making it the worst in the world<sup>6</sup>, followed by Afghanistan and Somalia. The report further confirmed Syria's status as the third worst country globally in terms of using schools for military purposes, with Syrian Regime forces being the worst offender amongst all the parties to the conflict in terms of attacks on schools<sup>7</sup>.

**Two: The second worst country in the world in terms of recruitment of children and attacks on hospitals:**

Recruitment of children: The report recorded some 7,747 children, some as young as 6, as having been recruited and used, with 90 percent of this total recruited by non-state actors<sup>8</sup>. Syria came second after Somalia, with 820 children being recruited in Syria in 2019, with Syrian Democratic Forces (People's Protection Units / Women's Protection Units) being the worst offenders amongst all the parties to the conflict in terms of child recruitment with 306 cases, followed by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham with 245 cases<sup>9</sup>.

Attacks on hospitals: The report recorded 433 attacks on hospitals<sup>10</sup>, 105 of which occurred in Syria<sup>11</sup>, making it the second worst country in the world after Palestine, where 193 attacks occurred<sup>12</sup>. According to the report, Syrian Democratic Forces (People's Protection Units / Women's Protection Units) were the worst offenders amongst all the parties to the conflict in terms of using schools and hospitals for military purposes, doing so 18 out of 32 times, followed by Syrian Regime forces who did so 13 times, and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham who did so once<sup>13</sup>.

**Three: The fourth worst country in the world in terms of detentions and denial of humanitarian access:**

Detentions: The report verified that 218 children were detained or deprived of their liberty in Syria in 2019<sup>14</sup> out of 2,500 worldwide<sup>15</sup>, with Syria being the fourth worst country in the world in this context after Iraq, Palestine, and Somalia. Syrian Democratic Forces (People's Protection Units / Women's Protection Units) were the worst offender amongst all the parties to the conflict in terms of detentions, being responsible for 194 cases.

<sup>5</sup> The United Nations, the annual report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, page 4, paragraph 8, (June 9, 2020)

<sup>6</sup> The United Nations, the annual report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, page 24, paragraph 177, (June 9, 2020)

<sup>7</sup> The United Nations, the annual report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, page 24, paragraph 178, (June 9, 2020)

<sup>8</sup> The United Nations, the annual report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, page 2, paragraph 6, (June 9, 2020)

<sup>9</sup> The United Nations, the annual report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, page 23, paragraph 173, (June 9, 2020)

<sup>10</sup> The United Nations, the annual report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, page 3, paragraph 8, (June 9, 2020)

<sup>11</sup> The United Nations, the annual report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, page 24, paragraph 177, (June 9, 2020)

<sup>12</sup> The United Nations, the annual report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, page 13, paragraph 87, (June 9, 2020)

<sup>13</sup> The United Nations, the annual report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, page 24, paragraph 87, (June 9, 2020)

<sup>14</sup> The United Nations, the annual report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, page 23, paragraph 174, (June 9, 2020)

<sup>15</sup> The United Nations, the annual report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, page 4, paragraph 13, (June 9, 2020)

Denial of humanitarian access: The report stated that some 4,400 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access to children<sup>16</sup> had been verified, with Syria being the fourth worst country in the world in this aspect with 84 incidents verified by the report. Syrian Regime forces were the worst offenders amongst all the parties to the conflict, being responsible for 59 incidents<sup>17</sup>.

The report also indicated that other patterns of violations against children occurred in Syria, including sexual violence, and noted that what the number of cases verified in this field is far fewer than the number reported, with the report having verified 11 cases of sexual violence against girls in detention by Syrian Regime forces<sup>18</sup>.

## **II. The Data Included in the Report of the United Nations Secretary-General Are Largely Comparable to What the SNHR Recorded in Its Database for 2019**

The SNHR focuses particularly on documenting violations affecting children in Syria, with hardly any statistic or report issued on these for nearly ten years that doesn't include violations against children, with this care for the rights of children being in the spirit of both international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

We conducted a brief comparison between the violations against children documented by SNHR on its database in 2019 and the data documented by the United Nations and presented in the Secretary-General's report, and despite the slight difference in the methodology of work, the percentage of disparity was limited. At the level of killing, we documented a death toll close to 900 children, with Syrian Regime forces, followed by Russian forces, being the worst offenders among the parties to the conflict in this crime. In regard to the arrest/ detention of children, we documented approximately 245 cases, with Syrian Regime forces again being the worst among the parties to the conflict in this violation, followed by Syrian Democratic Forces. In regard to targeting schools, we documented 219 incidents of attack on schools, whether by bombardment or by their being repurposed as military headquarters, (the Secretary-General's report included 157+32 equals 189), as well as the rest of the other violations which were largely comparable. For more details, you can see some of the violations against children that we documented in 2019 by reviewing our annual report, which [monitors the most notable human rights violations in 2019](#).

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<sup>16</sup> The United Nations, the annual report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, page 3, paragraph 9, (June 9, 2020)

<sup>17</sup> The United Nations, the annual report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, page 24, paragraph 180, (June 9, 2020)

<sup>18</sup> The United Nations, the annual report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, page 24, paragraph 176, (June 9, 2020)

### III. SNHR Cooperation with the UNICEF Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism

Since 2014, the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism in Syria has documented grave violations of the rights of children in the context of the armed conflict and has systematically investigated them. The Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism in Syria is mandated by the Security Council in accordance with [Resolution 1612 \(2005\)](#) and subsequent resolutions, having been activated after the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict listed the parties to conflict that commit grave violations against children.

The SNHR cooperates with the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism in Syria through a constant monthly sharing of the SNHR's data, which our team has been able to document showing multiple types of violations against children, such as killing and maiming of children, recruitment, abduction, 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 stresses the importance and vitality of the work of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism in Syria, and adds that the SNHR will continue to cooperate and share data with this body, as we do with a number of other United Nations bodies operating in Syria, which we consider to be an essential component 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, democracy and human rights, and thus ensuring that these horrific violations against Syria's children are not repeated in the future.

### IV. Conclusions and Recommendations:

The catastrophic situation of the children of Syria, which was detailed in the report, intersects with the findings catalogued on the SNHR's database. We would also like to emphasize that these violations are still ongoing in 2020, many of which constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes, with the Syrian regime along with its allies, the Russian and Iranian regimes, having been the main perpetrators in terms of the magnitude and intensity of violations in all these types of crimes in general, except for the recruitment of children, where Syrian Democratic Forces / Kurdish People's Protection Units have been the worst perpetrator of this violation, followed by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham / Jabhat al Nusra, followed by Armed Opposition factions.

#### **Recommendations:**

##### **The supporting States and the European Union:**

- Syria is one of the worst countries in the world in terms of committing several types of violations against children, and therefore it needs a greater amount of assistance compared to other countries and regions, especially considering that the violations are still ongoing to date.

- Allocate more resources to UNICEF in general and to the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism in particular, and rely on this database to begin rehabilitating child survivors.

**UN Security Council:**

- Issue a resolution based on the data included in the report of the Secretary-General, which stipulates the condemnation of violations, in particular those that constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes, and threaten immediate intervention to protect children from these crimes if they are repeated, in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.
- The Security Council has failed over ten years to protect civilians in Syria, and based on this report, it must make greater efforts to avoid repeating this failure and to protect the future of Syria by protecting its children.
- Put real pressure on all parties to the conflict to stop all violations against children.

**The international community and civilized countries:**

- Based on the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of children in Syria and on the continuing failure of the United Nations Security Council, and given the fact that the Syrian regime which governs the country is by far the most prolific perpetrator of these and other crimes, a group of civilized countries of the world that respect international law and human rights should intervene in every possible way to protect children in Syria from crimes against humanity and war crimes.
- Put real pressure on all parties to the conflict to end all violations against children, and work seriously to achieve a political transition towards democracy and human rights that guarantees stability and allows the return of displaced children and families to their homes and schools in dignity and safety.



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