



POLICY REPORT

STAND WITH
ME

**ENDING THE WAR ON
SYRIA'S CHILDREN**



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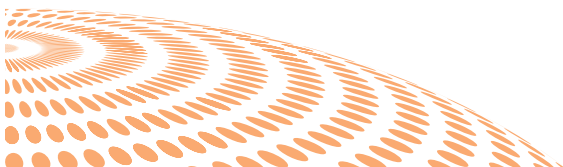
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Photograph on cover: Ghazal (right), 10, now living in a home in Jordan with 12 other people, misses her schooling in Syria. “We try to play while our sister is in school. We chase each other, sometimes in the streets. I am very scared of the rats. I want to be a doctor one day.” Meg Sattler/World Vision.



THE APPALLING REALITY FACING CHILDREN

The world is at a tipping point. The Syrian conflict has quickly become the worst assault on children in a decade. Now, nearly three years into the conflict, the situation is becoming increasingly worse, with growing reports of violence and targeting of children.

More than three million children have been affected by the war¹ in Syria – with some two million of these displaced from their homes.² The recent escalation of fighting has led to a rise in casualties;³ more than 7,000 of these are children. Children have been killed, targeted with maiming, sexual violence, torture, detention and recruitment by all parties to the conflict.⁴ Fleeing children and their families bring with them reports of what they saw in their homeland, whether in their families or their communities, and those reports suggest that “what is at stake is nothing less than the survival and wellbeing of a generation of innocents”.⁵ The psychological impact on children witnessing and surviving such violence is enormous.



Ghazal, 10, kisses her baby sister, Refaf, outside their new, unofficial “home” in Jordan. Meg Sattler/World Vision

World Vision is responding to child protection needs across the region, working to provide safe spaces for children and develop community-based protection systems, as well as providing basic services in education, food, water and sanitation to children who have been displaced and the families and communities hosting them.

It is difficult to over-emphasise the challenges facing World Vision, other non-government organisations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the United Nations as they work to address the overwhelming needs of children. As the humanitarian community struggles to reach those in need, having limited access and funds, it is time for the violence against Syria’s children to come to an end.

This will depend upon all involved to find a lasting end to the conflict; take immediate steps to protect children; ensure full, fair and unimpeded access for humanitarian relief; and commit funding to help protect children.

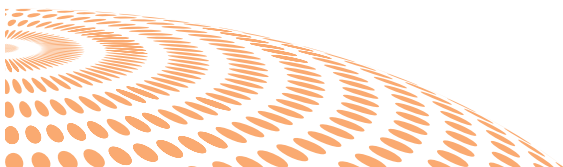
¹ UNICEF, Syria Crisis, bi-weekly humanitarian situation report 23 August–5 September, 2013.

² UNICEF, 46% of the 4.25m IDPs are children. <http://syria.unocha.org/>

³ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/Syriaseekingprotectionofchildrenrights.aspx>.

⁴ UNICEF, *Syria’s Children: A lost generation? Crisis report March 2011–March 2013*, 2013.

⁵ UNHCR/UNICEF joint press release, “A million refugee children mark shameful milestone in Syria crisis”, 23 August 2013. <http://www.unhcr.org/521628cf9.html>



CHILDREN UNDER ATTACK

Reports of increasing violence against children continue to emerge from Syria as the fighting continues in its third year with no end in sight. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry, reports from the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict, the latest research from partners in the region and a wide range of sources indicate that the situation for children is deteriorating. Regular news continues to chronicle killing and targeting of children. Scores of grave violations against children⁶ are being committed every day by all parties to the conflict, across the country.

Children maimed and killed

The official number of children killed during the conflict has reached 7,000, but it is likely that the unreported numbers are significantly higher. While many children have been killed in indiscriminate bombings, people talk of children being deliberately targeted in attacks, massacres and executions,⁷ with most of these accounts linked to campaigns to threaten and intimidate communities.

Many children have been injured, maimed or killed in indiscriminate attacks on civilian areas. Cluster munitions,⁸ heavy artillery, airstrikes, crossfire, landmines and other forms of unexploded ordnance⁹ have all caused injuries and deaths of children. Areas around Damascus, Homs, Dera'a, Aleppo,¹⁰ Deir-ez-Zor, Hama, Idlib, and Lattakia,¹¹ among others, have been particularly dangerous. The UN Mine Action Service warns that widespread indiscriminate use of explosive weapons will have immediate and lasting damage on children. Dangerous for those living in the targeted areas, they are also dangerous for those displaced and on the run from conflict. Unexploded ordnance left after attacks have already caused injuries.¹²

Since the conflict began in 2011, reported beatings and shootings of children¹³ quickly developed into openly targeted direct attacks.¹⁴ Children have been shot dead at close range,¹⁵ while some younger than 10 years old have been targeted by snipers.¹⁶ Execution-style deaths have been reported, in which

“This is real fear. This is truth now, not rumour. I saw 60 people killed in front of my eyes. By the time we left, people were dying one by one. Children were being killed, and women. I didn't want to leave my Syria but I had to, for my girls.”

Ibrahim, father

⁶ Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict press release, “Children of Syria victims of deteriorating conflict”, 18 July 2013. <http://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/press-release/children-of-syria-victims-of-deteriorating-conflict/>

⁷ Child Protection Working Group report, *Syria Child Protection Assessment*, September 2013. <http://cpwg.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/SCPA-FULL-Report-LIGHT.pdf>

⁸ Cluster Munition Coalition press release, “100 countries gather for cluster munition ban meeting amid backdrop of ongoing use in Syria”, 9 September 2013. <http://reliefweb.int/report/world/100-countries-gather-cluster-munition-ban-meeting-amid-backdrop-ongoing-use-syria>

⁹ Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (A/67/845-S/2013/245) issued on 15 May 2013; 5th Report of Commission of Inquiry on Syria – A/HRC/23/58, 4 June 2013.

¹⁰ Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (A/67/845-S/2013/245) issued on 15 May 2013.

¹¹ OCHA, *Syria: Humanitarian Needs Overview*, 26 April 2013.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ 1st report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic – A/HRC/S-172/2/Add.1, 23 November 2011.

¹⁴ Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (A/67/845-S/2013/245) issued on 15 May 2013.

¹⁵ 3rd report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic – A/HRC/21/50, 15 August 2012.

¹⁶ 2nd report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic – A/HRC/19/69 22 February 2012; 5th Report of Commission of Inquiry on Syria – A/HRC/23/58, 4 June 2013; 3rd report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic – A/HRC/21/50, 15 August 2012.



children have been shot or had their throats cut.¹⁷ In northern areas of the country, joint assessments have reported that more than 11,000 children were injured, with the highest number in Idleb and Aleppo.¹⁸ Adolescents have been among the largest groups of children affected,¹⁹ but shootings of children as young as two years old²⁰ have shocked the conscience of people around the world, in some cases causing combatants to defect from their activities.

“If you hear the sound of helicopter, you have to run for your life. But, if you hear a plane, that means you are still alive, because it is very fast and you only hear it after it hits; but that also means that other people have died.”

Abdurrahman, 9

Children in combat

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, signed by 129 signatories (152 parties), prohibits the conscription of children and their use in direct hostilities. Syria ratified its commitment to the protocol in 2003. However, it has been reported that many parties to the conflict are increasingly²¹ using children as combatants.²²

“I want to be in the war, with guns.”

Hamza, 3

Children between 14 and 17 have been used in combat and supporting activities, including reloading bullets and carrying weapons, carrying water and food, couriering,²³ acting as look-outs,²⁴ and evacuating the injured.²⁵ Many are still being used in frontline combat.²⁶ Children as young as eight have been used as human shields in order for armed groups to perpetrate attacks, including one incident when 55 children aged between 10 and 13 were used for such purposes.²⁷

The association of children with armed groups has been rising sharply.²⁸ A recent study reported that almost three-quarters of respondents said the use of children by armed forces or groups was increasing, and almost half personally knew children who had been recruited.²⁹ Orphaned children have been targeted,³⁰ and the threat is perceived to be much greater for boys than girls. Although children are

¹⁷ 6th Report of Commission of Inquiry on Syria – A/HRC/24/46, 11 September 2013.

¹⁸ Assessment Working Group for Northern Syria, *Joint Rapid Assessment of Northern Syria II: Final Report*, 22 May 2013.

¹⁹ 2nd report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic – A/HRC/19/69, 22 February 2012.

²⁰ 1st report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic – A/HRC/S-17/2/Add.1, 23 November 2011.

²¹ 5th Report of Commission of Inquiry on Syria – A/HRC/23/58, 4 June 2013.

²² 3rd report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic – A/HRC/21/50, 15 August 2012.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Global Protection Cluster, Desk Review – Child Protection in Syria, 1 February 2013.

²⁵ Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (A/67/845-S/2013/245) issued on 15 May 2013.

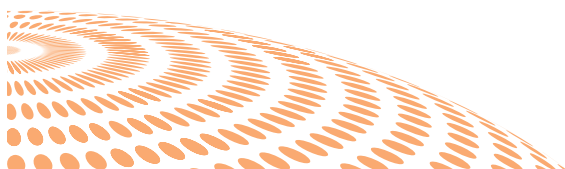
²⁶ 3rd report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic – A/HRC/21/50, 15 August 2012.

²⁷ “Syria crisis: UN says children used as human shields”, *The Guardian*, 12 June 2012; OCHA, *Syria: Humanitarian Needs Overview*, 26 April 2013; 3rd Report of Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic – A/HRC/21/50, 15 August 2012; Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (A/67/845-S/2013/245) issued on 15 May 2013.

²⁸ Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (A/67/845-S/2013/245) issued on 15 May 2013.

²⁹ Child Protection Working Group report, *Syria Child Protection Assessment*, September 2013. <http://cpwg.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/SCPA-FULL-Report-LIGHT.pdf>

³⁰ Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (A/67/845-S/2013/245) issued on 15 May 2013.



targeted for recruitment across Syria, particular hotspots have included Aleppo, Al-Hassakeh and Deir-ez-Zor.³¹ In some areas of one sub-district in Deir-ez-Zor, more than 25 per cent of children above 15 years are reportedly connected to armed groups.³²

It is tempting to view the situation as one of abducted children forced to fight, but evidence suggests the reality is more complex. Many have volunteered or been pressured to fight by their families or communities. Some have even returned from refugee camps in neighbouring countries to fight. This is most vividly demonstrated by more than 32 per cent of respondents to a recent survey³³ who said children are being recruited in their homes through family links to armed groups. Often these links to armed groups can result in income, status and protection. Some teenage boys feel a sense of obligation to join other family members who may be fighting; they try to earn extra money for their families because they are aware of financial pressure or because they see themselves as young adults with a sense of obligation to protect their community.

Children as prisoners

The social structures that are built and designed to protect vulnerable children and enforce laws have been compromised – or dissolved completely – and are now being used as tools of war, rather than of protection. The detention of children is being used for political and military ends, rather than law enforcement. Children continue³⁴ to be arbitrarily arrested and detained for allegedly associating with opposition groups.³⁵ In a recent survey, 80 per cent of participants reported an increase in the detention of children.³⁶ The UN has continually reported that while held in custody by military and security forces, children as young as 10 can face the same torture methods as adults, including electric shocks, beatings, whippings with electrical cables, stress



Ahmad, 17, lost his mother when two mortars fell on their house and killed her.
Patricia Mouamar/World Vision

“There were soldiers surrounding our home, suddenly. We didn’t take anything, we just ran.”

Shamaa, 10

³¹ Assessment Working Group for Northern Syria, *Joint Rapid Assessment of Northern Syria II Final Report*, 22 May 2013.

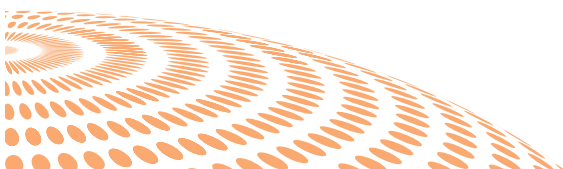
³² Ibid.

³³ Child Protection Working Group report, *Syria Child Protection Assessment*, September 2013. <http://cpwg.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/SCPA-FULL-Report-LIGHT.pdf>

³⁴ Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (A/67/845-S/2013/245) issued on 15 May 2013.

³⁵ Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (A/67/845-S/2013/245) issued on 15 May 2013; 5th Report of Commission of Inquiry on Syria – A/HRC/23/58, 4 June 2013.

³⁶ Child Protection Working Group report, *Syria Child Protection Assessment*, September 2013. <http://cpwg.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/SCPA-FULL-Report-LIGHT.pdf>.



positions, burns from cigarettes, and even sexual torture.³⁷ In some cases, they are simply detained, forced to strip and beaten at checkpoints.³⁸

Often they are held for prolonged periods in the same cells as adults³⁹ without charge, and without access to their families. Most reflections have suggested that children are being detained to punish them and/or their families for perceived support for particular sides in the conflict, while nearly half said it was done to pressure families. Some are held for ransom from relatives associated with opposing sides of the conflict.⁴⁰ The same survey found that boys (60 per cent) are more vulnerable to detention and physical violence than girls.⁴¹

Children cut off from aid

Accessing the hundreds of thousands of children most in need has been extremely difficult in 2013⁴² as insecurity grows and control over areas changes between government and armed groups. Organisations have repeatedly reported denial of access, limitations placed on their movements, increasing checkpoints, and refusal of travel permits.⁴³ The number of humanitarian workers being killed, injured or kidnapped has increased, affecting their ability to assist children. This has meant that organisations are less willing to allow travel inside Syria in order to protect their staff. Attacks on supplies, materials, compounds and vehicles of agencies have also increased.⁴⁴

There are many cases of agencies being limited in their access to communities, including children, inhibiting the ability to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance. In some cases, child-focused agencies have been left to negotiate access to children on a case-by-case basis,⁴⁵ slowing down and greatly reducing their ability to help. Aid agencies have struggled to reach children in Aleppo, Dar'a, Deir-ez-Zor, Al-Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqa and parts of Homs and Damascus.⁴⁶ Sieges such as those in Homs, Idleb, Eastern Ghouta towns, and Aleppo,⁴⁷



Syrian refugee Hussain, 2, chews on bread in his new, cramped home where access to services and food is scarce. Meg Sattler/World Vision

³⁷ 1st report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic – A/HRC/S-17/2/Add.1, 23 November 2011; 2nd report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic – A/HRC/19/69, 22 February 2012; 3rd report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic – A/HRC/21/50, 15 August 2012.

³⁸ 3rd report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic – A/HRC/21/50, 15 August 2012.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (A/67/845–S/2013/245) issued on 15 May 2013.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² OCHA Humanitarian Bulletin 34, 9 September 2013.

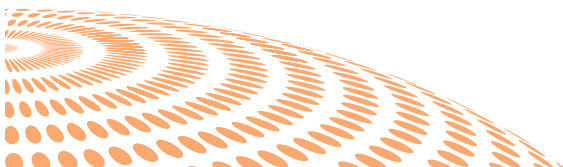
⁴³ UNICEF, *Syria's Children: A lost generation? Crisis report March 2011–March 2013*, 2013; Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (A/67/845–S/2013/245) issued on 15 May 2013.

⁴⁴ Valerie Amos, Security Council Briefing, 18 April 2013.

⁴⁵ Syria Needs Analysis Project, *Regional Analysis Syria: Part I – Syria*, 26 September 2013.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ E. Ferris, K. Kirişci and S. Shaikh, "Syrian Crisis: Massive displacement, dire needs and a shortage of solutions", Brookings, 18 September 2013; Syria Needs Analysis Project, *Regional Analysis Syria*, 28 August 2013.



have become more common, denying children in those cities access to humanitarian services. This has resulted in regular deaths of children suffering from malnutrition,⁴⁸ and a recent outbreak of polio.

Girls in Syria are at a particular disadvantage when it comes to accessing desperately needed services, according to 63 per cent of respondents to a recent survey. More than half of respondents said it was because girls had trouble travelling outside their homes.⁴⁹ Children under 15 have also seen their ability to access services affected, according to 80 per cent of respondents.

Children violated

Sexual violence has played a prominent role in this conflict.⁵⁰ Committed by all parties to the conflict as part of campaigns to punish or terrorise communities seen as sympathetic with the other side,⁵¹ violence of this kind is frequently committed during armed raids, at checkpoints and in detention facilities.⁵² Sexual violence is traditionally one of the most under-reported forms of violence against children. Three-quarters of Syrian respondents in a recent survey said sexual violence was increasing.⁵³ Detention centres are the most likely locations for sexual violence, according to 44 per cent of respondents, but nowhere is safe – homes (40 per cent), the trip to school (24 per cent), and at school (20 per cent) are all places where it is being perpetrated.

While sexual violence is more likely to affect girls, it is an issue for both sexes, and displaced children are particularly vulnerable to risk, especially when separated from their families. The UN has shared successive reports of men and boys (as young as 11) who have been raped, significantly affecting their physical and psychological condition.⁵⁴ Attacks of this nature are increasingly targeting children.⁵⁵ More than 80 per cent of respondents in the recent survey said they would not know where to seek help for sexual assault.



Rahaf, 12, lives with her two brothers and nine other children in Jordan, where none of them go to school, and every day is a struggle. Meg Sattler/World Vision

“All this time, my children have been missing school. They’ve been missing play, too. This is no life for them.”
Samhar, mother

⁴⁸ 5th Report of Commission of Inquiry on Syria – A/HRC/23/58, 4 June 2013.

⁴⁹ Child Protection Working Group report, *Syria Child Protection Assessment*, September 2013. <http://cpwg.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/SCPA-FULL-Report-LIGHT.pdf>

⁵⁰ 3rd Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic – A/HRC/21/50, 15 August 2012; OCHA Humanitarian Dashboard, 9 September 2013.

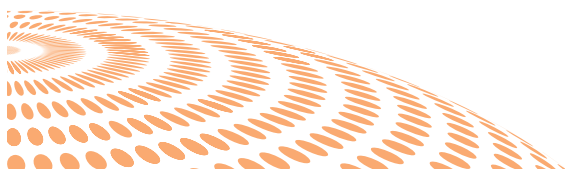
⁵¹ Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (A/67/845-S/2013/245) issued on 15 May 2013.

⁵² Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (A/67/845-S/2013/245) issued on 15 May 2013; 3rd Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic – A/HRC/21/50, 15 August 2012.

⁵³ Child Protection Working Group report, *Syria Child Protection Assessment*, September 2013. <http://cpwg.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/SCPA-FULL-Report-LIGHT.pdf>

⁵⁴ 1st report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic – A/HRC/S-17/2/Add.1, 23 November 2011.

⁵⁵ UNICEF Syria Appeal. <http://www.unicef.org/appeals/syria.html>



No refuge

Children are further affected because public services are being systematically targeted by parties to the conflict,⁵⁶ with schools and health centres experiencing the worst of the impacts.⁵⁷ Schools have consistently been looted, vandalised,⁵⁸ bombed, shelled and raided.⁵⁹ Many more are used by armed groups for military purposes such as military staging grounds, temporary bases, sniper posts, ammunition storage and detention facilities.⁶⁰ Sometimes this can occur as classes continue to be held. Almost 3,000 schools are either partially damaged or completely destroyed.⁶¹ Some parties to the conflict have been using car bombs to target schools.⁶² Hundreds of teachers and education personnel, together with the children, have been killed in attacks.⁶³ It's no wonder, then, that almost two million children (6 to 15 years) have dropped out of school since 2012 due to the war.⁶⁴

Access to healthcare before the conflict was also more accessible; however, medical infrastructure has been significantly reduced and 57 per cent of hospitals are damaged or out of service.⁶⁵ Health units, clinics and hospitals have been bombed and specifically targeted by parties to the conflict.⁶⁶ Other facilities have been forced to close.⁶⁷ Hundreds of staff, including ambulance drivers, nurses, doctors and medical volunteers from these facilities, have been attacked by parties to the conflict.⁶⁸ They have been injured, detained, tortured or killed as they are perceived to be supporting opposition groups through their assistance.⁶⁹ Patients, especially young boys and men, have



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“I want to send my children to school and I want to live in a normal house, but the prices are too high. I can't afford transport. I can't afford anything. I have to keep my children inside because there are rats.”

Aisha, mother

⁵⁶ UNICEF, *Syria's Children: A lost generation? Crisis report March 2011–March 2013*, 2013.

⁵⁷ Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (A/67/845–S/2013/245) issued on 15 May 2013.

⁵⁸ 3rd Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic – A/HRC/21/50, 15 August 2012.

⁵⁹ Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (A/67/845–S/2013/245) issued on 15 May 2013.

⁶⁰ 3rd Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic – A/HRC/21/50, 15 August 2012.

⁶¹ Child Protection Working Group report, *Syria Child Protection Assessment*, September 2013. <http://cpwg.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/SCPA-FULL-Report-LIGHT.pdf>

⁶² Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (A/67/845–S/2013/245) issued on 15 May 2013.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ UNICEF – OCHA, *Humanitarian Bulletin: Syria*, Issue 34, 10–23 September 2013.

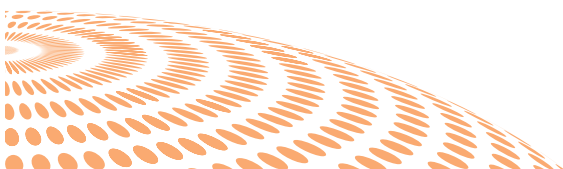
⁶⁵ UNICEF Syria Appeal. <http://www.unicef.org/appeals/syria.html>

⁶⁶ Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (A/67/845–S/2013/245) issued on 15 May 2013.

⁶⁷ Report of the Independent Inquiry: Assault on medical care in Syria (A/HRC/24/CRP.2).

⁶⁸ *Children and armed conflict: Report of the Secretary-General*, 15 May 2013, A/67/845–S/2013/245; Report of the Independent Inquiry: Assault on medical care in Syria (A/HRC/24/CRP.2).

⁶⁹ *Children and armed conflict: Report of the Secretary-General*, 15 May 2013, A/67/845–S/2013/245.



been harassed and arrested based on the same perceptions.⁷⁰ In light of this, the health situation for children across Syria continues to deteriorate. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry's latest report has noted the disproportionate impact that this targeting of health services is having on children under the age of five and on nursing mothers.⁷¹

A generation at risk – lasting damage

Beyond the physical damage caused by such violence, children who survive and witness violence are experiencing common and widespread psychological trauma and distress.⁷² This is in addition to having to try to cope with displacement from communities and possible separation from their families. Almost all respondents in a recent survey⁷³ said that children were exhibiting visible signs of a negative impact on mental health and psychological well-being, including nightmares, crying, bed-wetting, and becoming withdrawn.⁷⁴ The long-term effects of this level and scale of devastation are almost too horrific to contemplate. Regular references to a lost generation of children are no over-statement.



Meg Sattler/World Vision

“I want to be a painter when I grow up. I like to draw pictures. I will draw all the people fighting in the war, when they stop fighting.”

Mohamad, 6

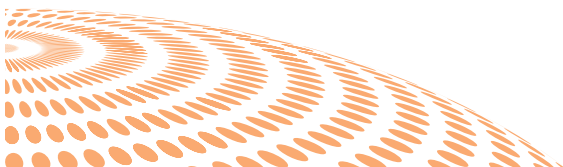
⁷⁰ Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (A/67/845-S/2013/245) issued on 15 May 2013.

⁷¹ Conference Room Paper: “Assault on medical care in Syria” – A/HRC/24/CRP.2, 13 September 2013.

⁷² 1st report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic – A/HRC/S-17/2/Add.1, 23 November 2011; 2nd report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic – A/HRC/19/69, 22 February 2012; Assessment Working Group for Northern Syria, *Joint Rapid Assessment of Northern Syria II: Final Report*, 22 May 2013.

⁷³ Child Protection Working Group report, Syria Child Protection Assessment, September 2013. <http://cpwg.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/SCPA-FULL-Report-LIGHT.pdf>

⁷⁴ Assessment Working Group for Northern Syria, *Joint Rapid Assessment of Northern Syria II: Final Report*, 22 May 2013.



STAND WITH ME: HOW TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SYRIA

There is hope. Children are resilient, and despite the despair, thousands of Syrian children still hold hope for the future. They are not yet lost. But preventing this from happening will take enormous effort, and here are just a few of the things that need to be done:

I. A lasting end to the conflict

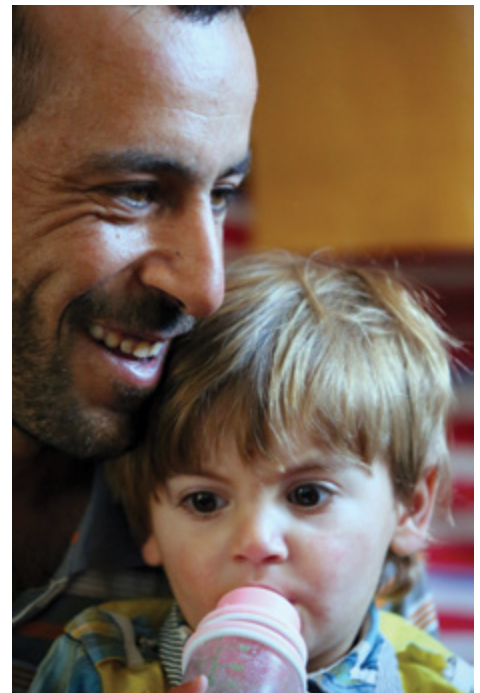
The most effective way to protect Syrian children from violence is for parties to the conflict, supported by their international allies, to rapidly reach a politically negotiated settlement. All need to agree to join the talks in Geneva in good faith to reach a settlement, end hostilities and create a plan towards peace.

World Vision recommends the following:

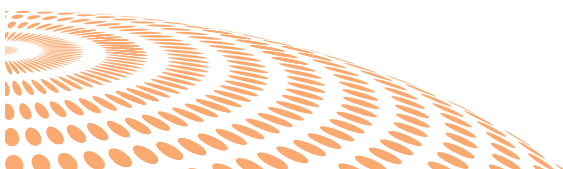
- The UN Secretary-General and the UN/Arab League (LAS) Special Envoy to Syria, with the support of the international community – particularly the United States and Russia – continue to work with all parties to the conflict to convene the Geneva II peace conference.
- All parties to the conflict commit to Geneva II, and measures including ceasefires, to ensure the success of the talks.
- Parties to the conflict commit, as part of the Geneva II process, to immediate actions to ensure that children and their families can access desperately needed humanitarian assistance.
- The UN Secretary-General and the UN/LAS Special Envoy map out a framework that includes the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements at national, provincial and local levels, as part of a sustained push for peace beyond the Geneva II peace conference.
- The protection of children is raised as an important point during negotiations, as per the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict recommendations. Concessions should be sought from all parties to negotiations in order to protect children.

2. Protect children now

Before an agreement can be reached and implemented, more must be done to end the targeting of children. Parties to the conflict bear the primary responsibility for ending policies and practices violating child rights. States with influence over parties to the conflict also bear responsibility, and should leverage their influence to ensure that children are protected.



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World Vision recommends the following:

- All parties to the conflict respect and ensure the protection of children and uphold children's rights by immediately ceasing all violence, exploitation and abuse against children.
- All parties to the conflict re-commit to action plans outlining how they will end grave violations of child rights, determining further steps and resources that will reduce violence, exploitation and abuse against children.
- All parties to the conflict openly cooperate with the UN to monitor grave child rights violations.
- All involved with the crisis, including regional actors, mobilise administrative structures for social protection and justice under their control to prevent, address and respond to incidents of violence, exploitation and abuse against children.
- States with influence over parties to the conflict review and remove support for parties to the conflict that commit violence, exploitation or abuse against children, including the recruitment and use of children in their military campaigns.
- States and international bodies ensure that all groups receiving military or financial support must first receive International Humanitarian Law and child protection training,⁷⁵ and must make commitments to the protection of civilians, especially children.

3. Let children access aid

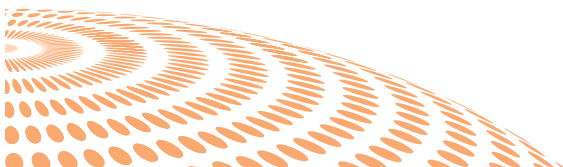
Following the October UN Security Council Presidential Statement on "The Situation in the Middle East", immediate actions must be taken to ensure that children and their families can access desperately needed humanitarian assistance. Children represent the largest and most vulnerable group of people, and they face specific protection, health and nutrition, and education needs and face greater challenges in having these met. Children must be prioritised in all discussions regarding humanitarian access.

World Vision recommends the following:

- All parties to the conflict accept and facilitate impartial humanitarian relief for children and their families.
- All parties commit to respect, and avoid harm to, relief operations, including allowing the safe and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief personnel, equipment, and convoys.
- All parties to the conflict cease diverting humanitarian relief from its designated purpose of serving Syrian children and civilians.
- States promote humanitarian access by pressuring parties in the conflict to accept humanitarian pauses⁷⁶ and by implementing other access-enhancing measures outlined in the Presidential Statement.

⁷⁵ E. Ferris, K. Kirişci and S. Shaikh, "Syrian Crisis: Massive displacement, dire needs and a shortage of solutions", *Brookings*, 18 September 2013.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*



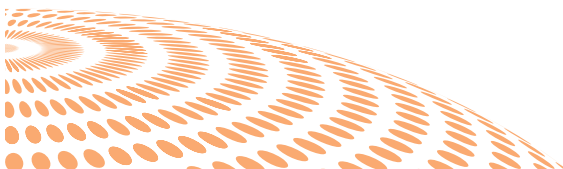
4. Fund the protection of children

In order to meet the cost of humanitarian programmes aiming to prevent and respond to violence against children, urgent prioritisation and commitments from donors are needed. The UN Security Council Presidential Statement has urged Member States to respond swiftly to the UN's humanitarian appeals, and UNICEF, DFID and ECHO have launched their "Lost Generation Strategy" highlighting the massive needs of children, demonstrating the imperative to ensure that children are prioritised in future funding commitments.

World Vision recommends the following:

- All donors and international bodies increase funding for protection activities in Syria to cover the urgently needed US\$27 million for the last three months of 2013.⁷⁷
- All donors and international bodies make commitments first and foremost to projects directly addressing child protection, and promoting child-focused humanitarian assistance in the 2014 Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan, in line with the Lost Generation strategy.
- All donors and international bodies ensure that the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action are integrated in every project selected for funding.

⁷⁷ OCHA, Financial Tracking System: SHARP funding as per September 2013.



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World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. World Vision is dedicated to working with the world's most vulnerable people. World Vision serves all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender.

