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Press release

Syria conflict 10 years on: 90 per cent of children need support as violence, economic crisis and COVID-19 pandemic push families to the brink

Almost 12,000 children killed or injured in the past decade, according to verified data – an average of more than three children a day

10 March 2021



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On 15 March 2018 in Beit Sawa, eastern Ghouta, a boy on crutches walks towards Hamourieh where an evacuation exit from eastern Ghouta has been opened.

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AMMAN/NEW YORK, 10 March 2021 – The war in Syria has left the lives and futures of a generation of children hanging by a thread, UNICEF warned today, as the conflict nears the 10-year mark. The situation for many children and families remains precarious, with nearly 90 per cent of children in need of humanitarian assistance, a 20 per cent increase in the past year alone.

“This cannot be just another grim milestone, passing by in the world’s peripheral vision as children and families in Syria continue to struggle,” said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore. “Humanitarian needs cannot wait. The international community should make every effort to bring about peace to Syria and galvanize support for its children.”

A decade of conflict has had a staggering impact on children and families in Syria.



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stunting as a result of chronic malnutrition;

- Nearly 2.45 million children in Syria and an additional 750,000 Syrian children in neighbouring countries are out of school; 40 per cent of them are girls;
- According to verified data, between 2011 and 2020:
 - Almost 12,000 children were killed or injured;
 - More than 5,700 children – some as young as seven years old – were recruited into the fighting;
 - More than 1,300 education and medical facilities and personnel have come under attack;
- The reported numbers of children displaying symptoms of psychosocial distress doubled in 2020, as continued exposure to violence, shock and trauma has had a significant impact on children’s mental health, with short and long-term implications.

The situation in northern Syria is particularly alarming. In the northwest, millions of children remain displaced, with many families having fled violence multiple times, some as many as seven times, in search of safety. They have suffered through another long winter – battling severe weather, including torrential rain and snow – living in tents, shelters and destroyed or unfinished buildings. More than 75 per cent of the grave violations recorded in 2020 occurred in the northwest.

In Al-Hol camp and across northeast Syria, 27,500 children of at least 60 nationalities and thousands of Syrian children associated with armed groups are languishing in camps and detention centres. Violence has recently surged in Al-Hol, putting lives at risk and highlighting the need for long-term solutions including the reintegration in local communities or the safe repatriation of children to their countries of origin.



COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF continued to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to children and families in Syria and the neighbouring countries including:

- Nearly 900,000 children received routine immunization or vaccination against measles;
- Over 400,000 children were reached with psychosocial support;
- Over 3.7 million children had access to formal and non-formal education;
- Over 5.4 million people had safe water through improvements to water supply systems;
- More than 55 million people were reached with information on safety health measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As Syria marks 10 years of war, UNICEF reminds the warring parties, those with influence over them and the wider international community that:

- Humanitarian organizations like UNICEF urgently need the support and funding they need to deliver assistance to Syria's children. UNICEF is appealing for US\$1.4 billion for its response inside Syria and the neighbouring countries for 2021.
- Children associated with armed groups, especially those in northeast Syria, must be reintegrated in local communities. Children of foreign nationals must be repatriated safely to their countries of origin.
- Parties to the conflict must refrain from attacks on children and civilian infrastructure including schools, hospital, clinics and water points.
- We call for the renewal of the UN Security Council Resolution on cross border assistance allowing the continuation of delivery of life-saving assistance across Syria's borders.



support.”

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