



## Statement

### **On the International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression: 29,520 Children Have Been Killed in Syria Since March 2011, Including 180 Due to Torture**

#### **A Bloody Decade of Violations against Children Threatens the Future of Syria for Decades to Come**

June 4 marks the International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression, with children in Syria having been subjected to the most horrific forms of aggression since the beginning of the internal armed conflict. By far the largest number of these crimes and the cruelest and most systematic of them have been and remain those carried out by Syrian regime forces; despite being the very people who are supposed to protect Syrian children, they have failed shamefully to do so, instead being the main perpetrators of various types of violations. Indeed, hardly any violation has been perpetrated against the members of Syrian society regarding which the SNHR has not documented children among the victims, including killings due to indiscriminate bombardment, torture in detention centers, forced conscription, forcible displacement and the bombardment of schools and kindergartens. An enormous amount of aggression has been inflicted on children over the past ten years, creating a traumatized generation suffering in various ways and in desperate need of educational, health and psychological care, as well as being at high risk of illiteracy, which is spreading in a manner unprecedented in Syria's history.

In addition, nearly a quarter million children live in the camps scattered across Syria, where they suffer from unimaginably dire living conditions, including a lack of basic hygiene facilities, privacy, housing, medical and health care, and a complete absence of safety measures. The forced displacement of nearly six million Syrian citizens due to the attacks and violations committed by the parties to the conflict, primarily the Syrian regime and its allies, has also led to widespread poverty, since the IDPs are the most vulnerable groups in society, with many children having lost their family breadwinners due to the spread of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance; as a result, many children have become breadwinners for their families, going

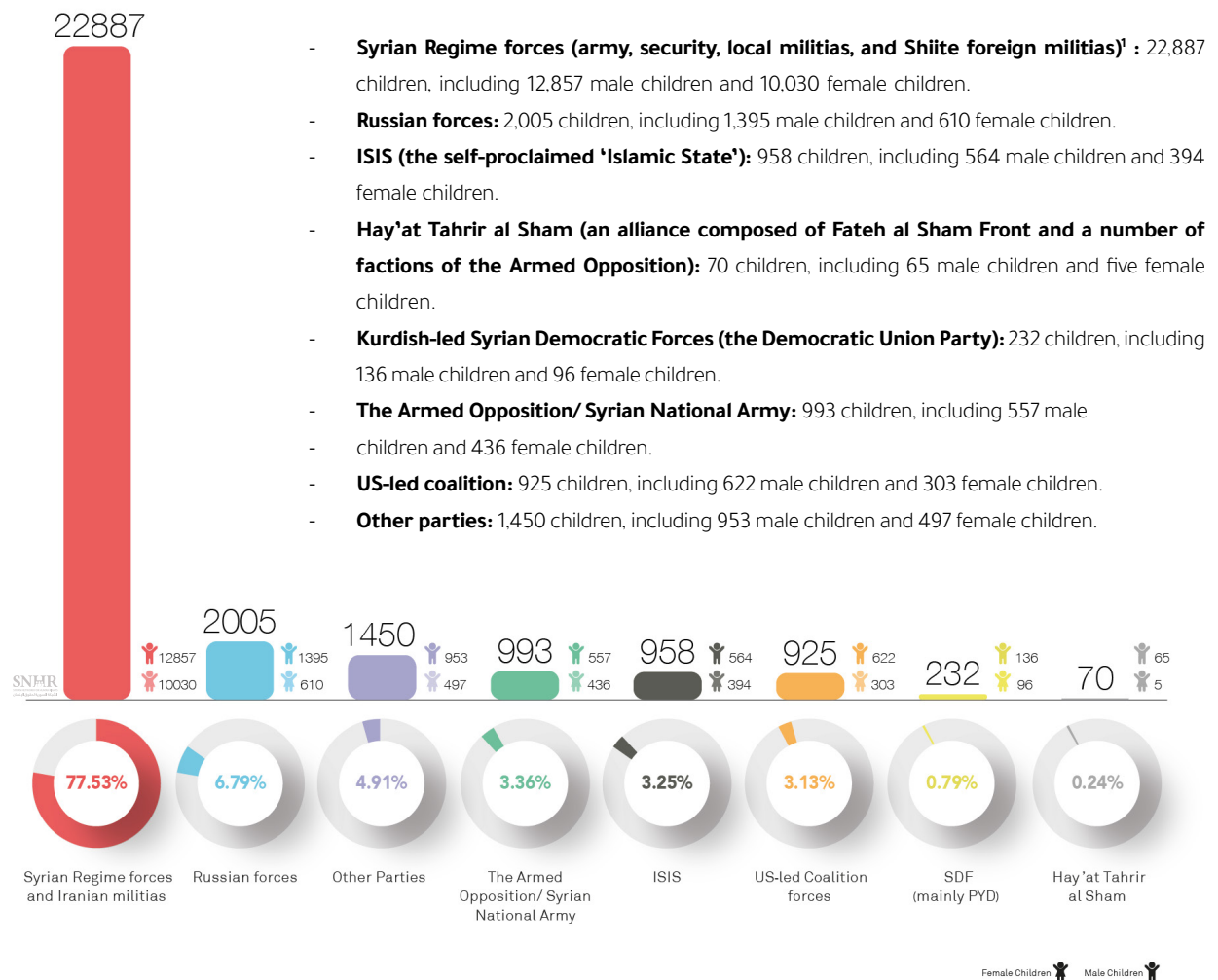
straight to the workplace and missing out on their childhoods and education. As a result of all these factors, hundreds of thousands of Syrian children are illiterate. In addition, most children born in areas outside the control of Syrian regime forces have been denied access to official documents that prove their identity which are essential for all official transactions, with children born in refugee camps having the same issue.

In addition to all of the above, and as a result of these factors, some children suffer from psychological disorders for various reasons, most notably deep trauma at the loss of family members or friends.

This statement outlines the record of the most notable grave violations that children have been subjected to in Syria since the outbreak of the popular uprising in March 2011 up until June 2021, according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights' (SNHR) database:

**First: Extrajudicial killing:**

SNHR has documented the deaths of 29,520 children at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria between March 2011 and June 2021, distributed as follows:

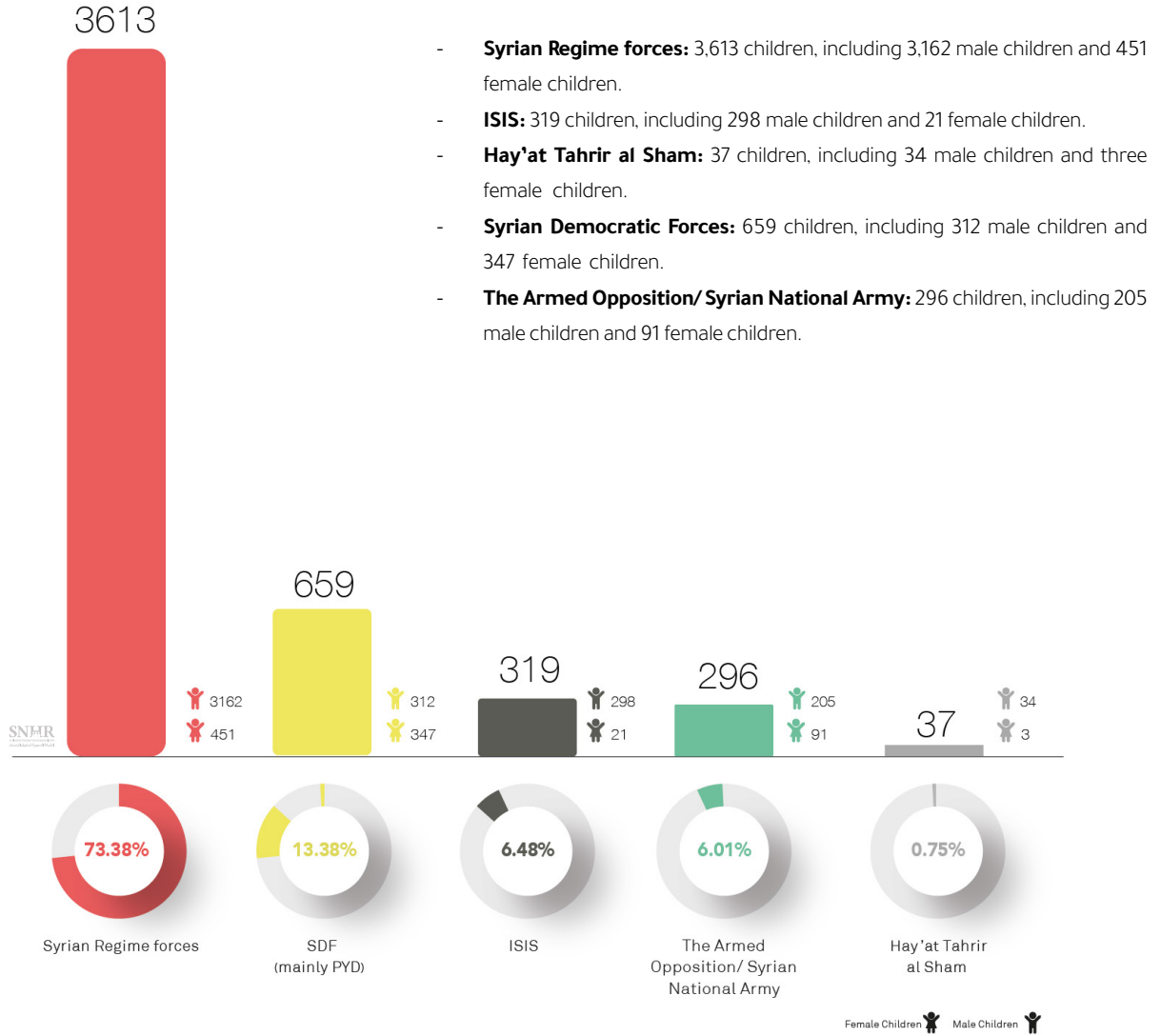


<sup>1</sup> We generally use the term 'the Syrian regime' rather than 'the Syrian government', because the nature of the ruling power in Syria is a totalitarian dictatorship based on ruling the nation in an authoritarian fashion through a very limited group of individuals, primarily the President of the Republic and his selected leaders of the security services, while the ministers, including the Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior, play a restricted, largely ceremonial role, which is limited to implementing precisely what the ruling regime orders, without any decision-making power or active role; this means that the government's role is wholly subordinate and limited to serving the regime, with all the main powers being concentrated in the hands of the President of the Republic and the security services. Governance in Syria is wholly decided by the autocratic authority of the ruling family and there is no independent decision-making structure. Rather, the government is an empty façade there for show; the Minister of Interior receives orders from the security branches over which he nominally presides which are in turn under the command of the President, while the Minister of Justice cannot summon a civilian-level security agent other than the head of a security branch; the security branches, along with the president, are the true power and the governing regime in Syria. Although we acknowledge that the United Nations and its agencies use the term 'the Syrian government' in general, we believe that this is a completely inaccurate and misleading term in the Syrian context.

<sup>2</sup> The United Nations has designated it as a terrorist organization

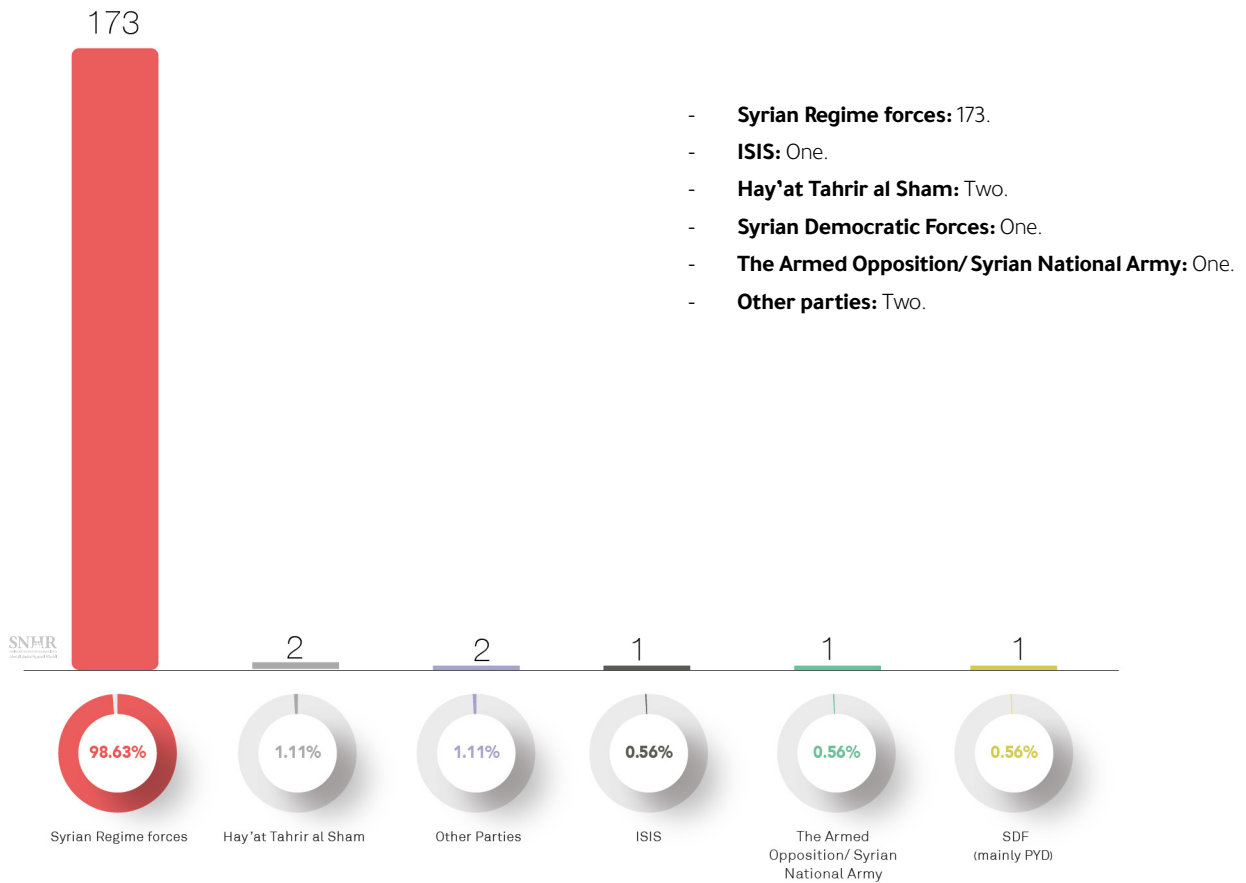
**Second: Arbitrary arrest/ detention and enforced disappearance:**

According to the SNHR database, as of June 2021, at least 4,924 of the children arrested/ detained or forcibly disappeared at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria since March 2011 are still arrested/ detained or forcibly disappeared, distributed as follows:



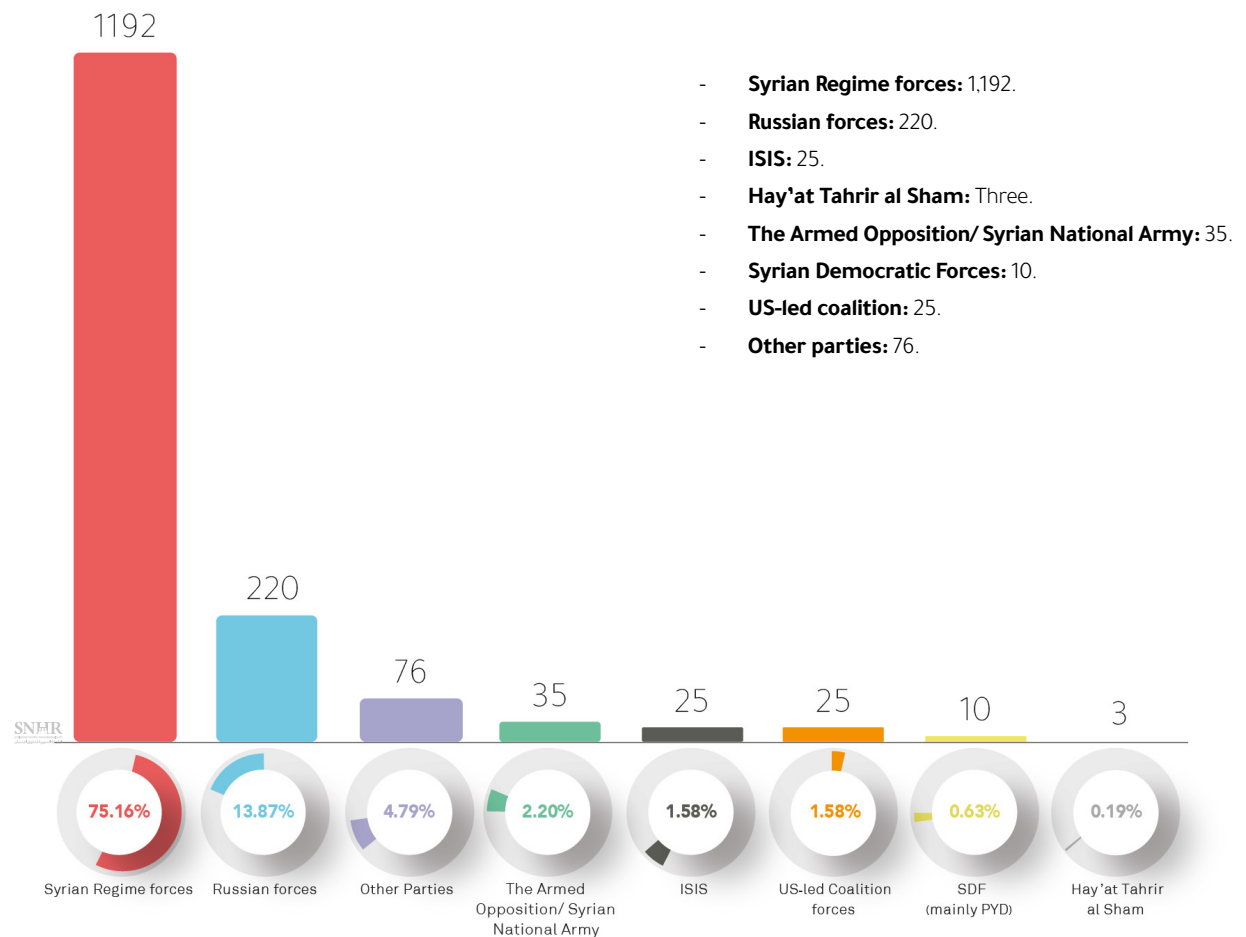
**Third: Victims who died due to torture:**

SNHR has documented the deaths of at least 180 children - all males - due to torture at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria between March 2011 and June 2021, distributed as follows:



**Fourth: Incidents of Attacks on Schools:**

SNHR has documented attacks on at least 1,586 schools in Syria by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces, between March 2011 and June 2021, distributed according to the perpetrator parties as follows:



Whilst it's true that all the parties to the conflict have violated children's rights, the Syrian regime has far exceeded all other parties, in terms of the amount of crimes perpetrated in a regular and systematic manner, in particular those violating the rights defined in Articles 6, 37 and 38<sup>3</sup> of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the regime ratified, such as the inherent right to life and survival, the prohibition of torture and deprivation of liberty, and the ensuring of respect for the rules of international humanitarian law relevant to the child, all of which amount to crimes against humanity. The United Nations' Committee on the Rights of the Child, established by the Treaty Body for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, bears legal and ethical responsibilities to follow up on the situation of children's rights in Syria and to help in bringing an end to the violations perpetrated by the Syrian regime.

These violations are a consequence of the continuation of the armed conflict that has gone on for ten years to date and of the failure of the Security Council and the international community to achieve a political transition in Syria. Syria will not be able to advance and to achieve any meaningful level of societal stabilization towards cohesion and bringing an end to the process of decline into a failed state unless regional and friendly states fulfill their responsibilities to the country's children; this underlines that the issue of Syrian children is a global one, and all countries must do their utmost to alleviate its repercussions by supporting schools and the educational and medical systems inside Syria, as well as by caring for refugee children.

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

The continued failure to first stop the violations against these children, and secondly to respond to their need for recovery and rehabilitation will have unpredictable consequences; accordingly, the international community must urgently invest at the social, cultural and economic levels as part of a long-term strategy.

<sup>3</sup> The United Nations, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Articles 6, 37 and 38  
<<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>>