

## Statement



### **On the International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression: 29,791 Children Have Been Killed in Syria Since March 2011, Including 181 Due to Torture**

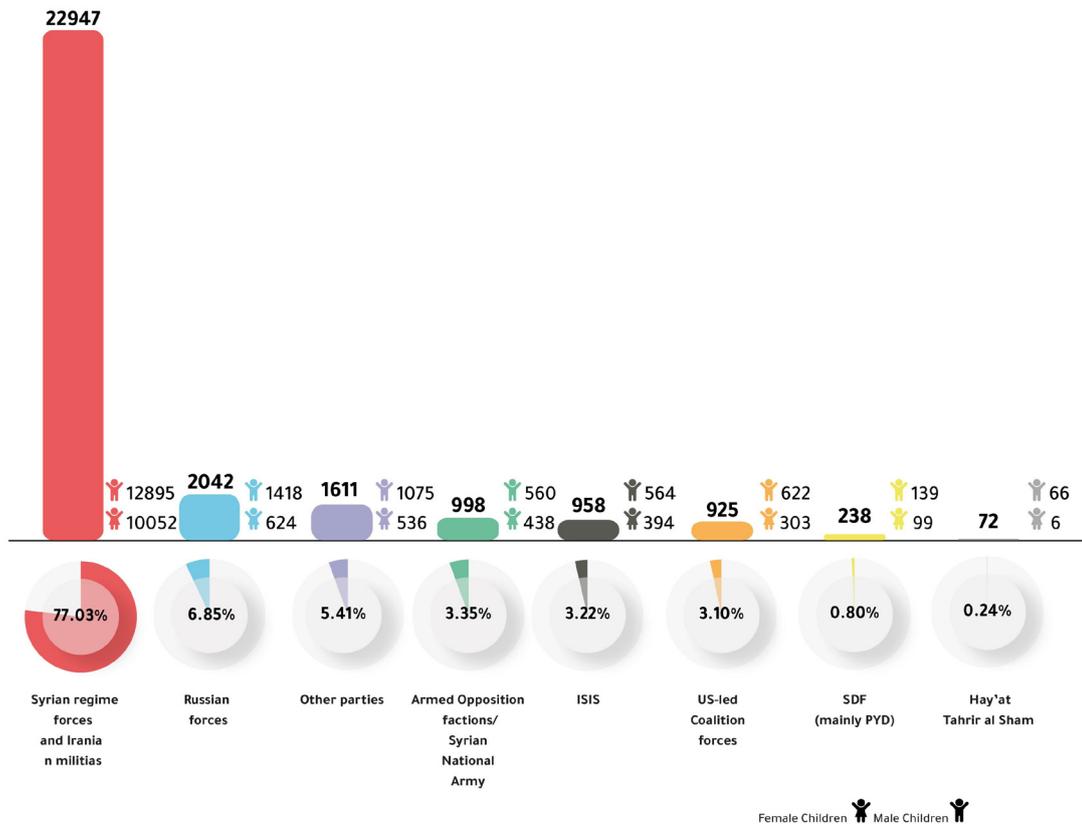
Amid a Complete Failure to Resolve the Syrian Conflict, Syrian Children Have Been Subjected to the Worst Forms of Aggression Over 12 Years

June 4 marks [the International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression](#), proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in its Resolution ES-7/8 of August 19, 1982. In the period of almost 12 years since the start of the popular uprising in March 2011, the children of Syria have been relentlessly subjected to the most heinous forms of aggression, including killings, sexual violence, forced conscription, the targeting of schools and hospitals, and the deliberate curtailment of access to humanitarian aid; while all these forms of aggression have been practiced by the various parties to the armed conflict in Syria, the data conclusively indicates that the Syrian regime and its Russian and Iranian allies bear responsibility for the overwhelming majority of violations against children, some of which amount to crimes against humanity, such as enforced disappearance, torture, and forced displacement.

Hardly any of the violations perpetrated against Syrian society which the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) has been able to document have not affected children or included children among the victims, with an unimaginably immense amount of aggression inflicted on children over the past 11 years. The following is a summary of the most notable grave violations that children have been subjected to in Syria between March 2011 and June 2022, according to the SNHR's database (in connection with the armed conflict or violations of international human rights law):

### **First: Extrajudicial killing:**

SNHR has documented the deaths of 29,791 children at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria between March 2011 and June 2022, distributed as follows:



- **Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias):**<sup>1</sup> 22,947 children, including 12,895 male children and 10,052 female children.
- **Russian forces:** 2,042 children, including 1,418 male children and 624 female children.
- **ISIS (the self-proclaimed 'Islamic State'):** 958 children, including 564 male children and 394 female children.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham**<sup>2</sup> (an alliance composed of Fateh al Sham Front and a number of factions of the Armed Opposition): 72 children, including 66 male children and six female children.
- **Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party):** 238 children, including 139 male children and 99 female children.

<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 means it is a totalitarian dictatorship based on ruling over 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 implementation 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.

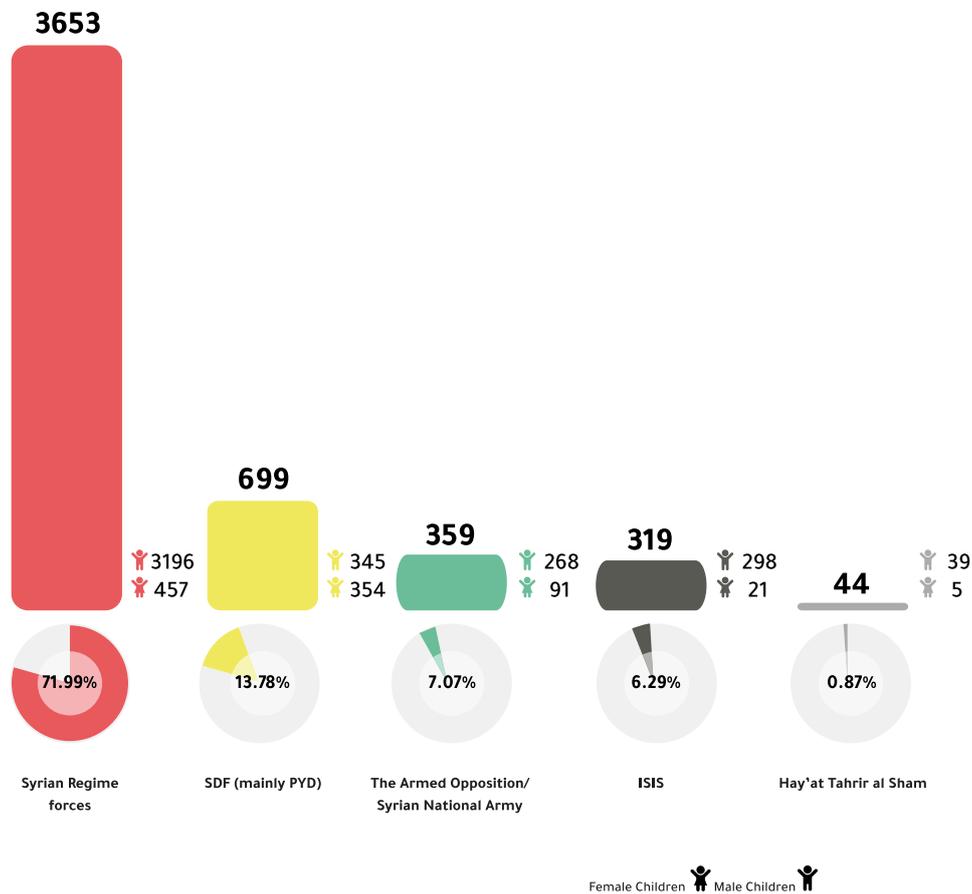
Although we acknowledge that the United Nations and its agencies use the term 'the Syrian government' in general, we believe that this is a completely inaccurate and misleading term in the Syrian context.

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

- **All Armed Opposition factions/Syrian National Army:**<sup>3</sup> 998 children, including 560 male children and 438 female children.
- **US-led Coalition forces:** 925 children, including 622 male children and 303 female children.
- **Other parties:** 1,611 children, including 1,075 male children and 536 female children.

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

According to the SNHR database, as of June 2022, at least 5,074 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 under arrest/detained or forcibly disappeared, distributed as follows:



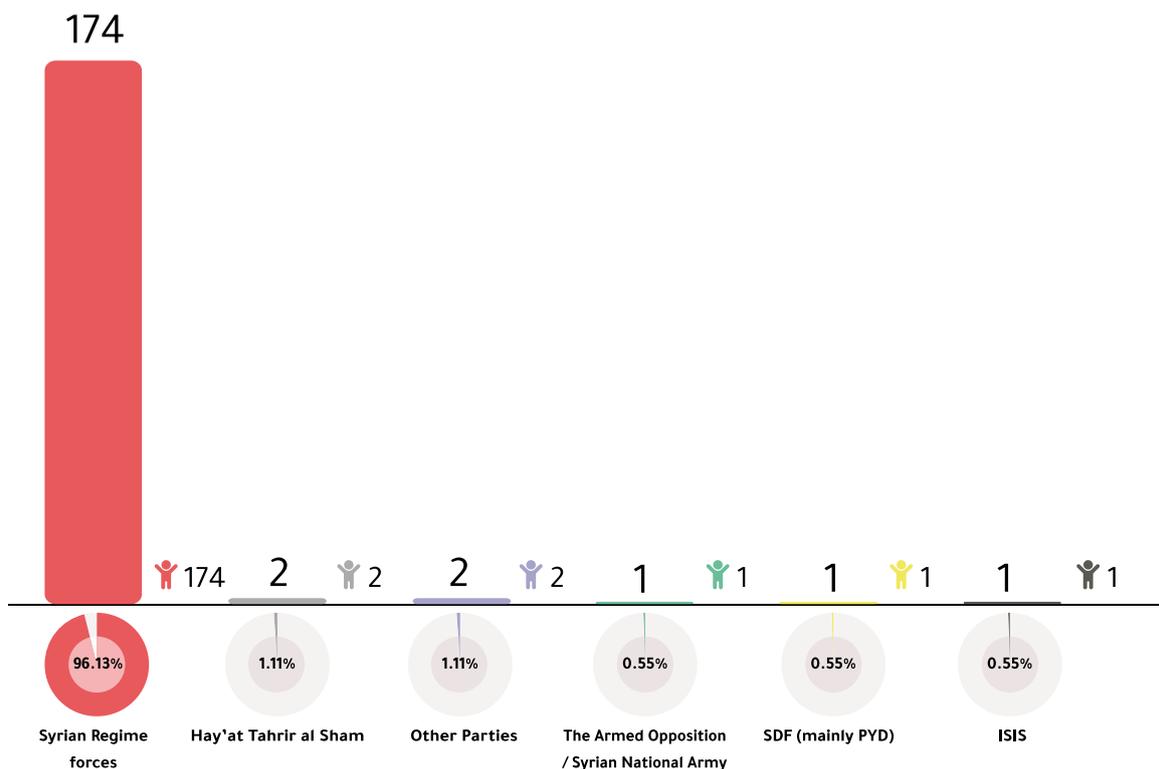
- **Syrian regime forces:** 3,653 children, including 3,196 male children and 457 female children.

<sup>3</sup> Various Armed Opposition factions/Syrian National Army that emerged since 2011 to date in all areas that came under their control.

- **ISIS:** 319 children, including 298 male children and 21 female children.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:** 44 children, including 39 male children and five female children.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** 699 children, including 345 male children and 354 female children.
- **All Armed Opposition factions/Syrian National Army:** 359 children, including 268 male children and 91 female children.

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

SNHR has documented the deaths of at least 181 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 2022, distributed as follows:

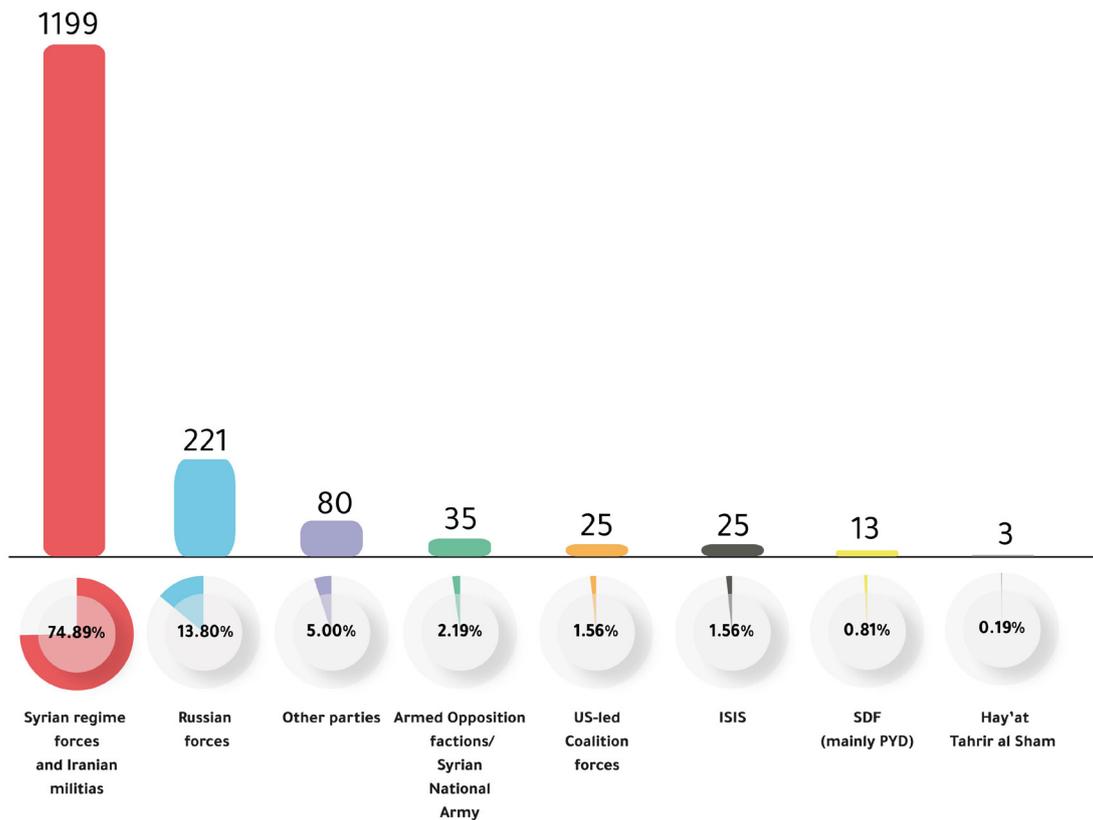


Male Children 

- **Syrian regime forces:** 174.
- **ISIS:** One.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:** Two.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** One.
- **All Armed Opposition factions/Syrian National Army:** One.
- **Other parties:** Two.

## Fourth: Incidents of Attacks on Schools:

SNHR has documented attacks on at least 1,601 schools in Syria by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces, between March 2011 and June 2022, distributed according to the perpetrator parties as follows:



- **Syrian regime forces:** 1,199.
- **Russian forces:** 221.
- **ISIS:** 25.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:** Three.
- **All Armed Opposition factions/Syrian National Army:** 35.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** 13.
- **US-led Coalition forces:** 25.
- **Other parties:** 80.

Various other types of aggression have also been perpetrated against children in Syria; all parties to the conflict have practiced a policy of forced conscription, while [Russia has routinely resorted to blackmail through the arbitrary use of its veto in the Security Council](#) to prevent the entry of humanitarian aid, constituting explicit aggression against hundreds of thousands of forcibly displaced children in northern Syria. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are currently [at least 2.5 million displaced children in Syria](#), most of whom live in camps or settlements of tents which cover large areas in most areas outside the control of the Syrian regime forces, and which are especially concentrated around the Turkish-Syrian border. The displaced people, including children, suffer from the worst living conditions due to the lack of the most basic necessities of life such as hygienic facilities, privacy, bathrooms, and safe housing. The lack of healthcare facilities and educational centers in the camps has led to extremely poor health among residents, causing immense additional suffering, especially to the most vulnerable group, children, and meaning that residents must travel for long distances or move simply to receive basic healthcare and depriving already traumatized children of access to education.



All of these factors have in turn caused steep increases in disease and illiteracy among the displaced children, while huge numbers of children are forced to go into the labor market, with many, if not most, of these having been exposed to the worst forms of child labor. In addition to and based on all of the above, some of the children suffer from psychological disorders whose impact may extend for decades to come.

The violations against Syria's children are a consequence of the continuation of the armed conflict that has gone on for 11 years to date. The shameful failure of the UN Security Council and the international community to achieve a political transition in Syria means that the country will be unable to move forward or achieve any meaningful level of societal stabilization enabling the cohesion necessary to finally bring an end to the process of inevitable decline into a failed state; this cannot be achieved unless and until regional and friendly states fulfill their responsibilities to the country's children. All these factors underline the fact that the issue of Syrian children's suffering is a global one, and that 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 its criminal practices against Syria's children, and make every possible effort to mitigate and end these inexcusable violations.

The continued failure to, firstly, stop the violations against these children, and secondly, respond to their need for recovery and rehabilitation will have unpredictable and potentially devastating consequences; accordingly, the international community must urgently invest in protecting and positively developing the children's and thus Syria's future at the social, cultural, and economic levels as part of a long-term strategy.