



Media Release

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Four million Syrian children know nothing but war after eight years of conflict

Since the start of Syria's brutal conflict eight years ago, some 4 million children have been born and most know nothing but war.

On March 15, the Syrian conflict will enter its 9th year. [more than half of Syrian children are in need of humanitarian assistance and a third are out of school](#). Many live in areas where basic services are almost non-existent and the infrastructure they rely on has been decimated, and at least 2.5 million children are internally displaced.

Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Chief Executive of Save the Children International, said: *"Many children in Syria have grown up knowing nothing but war, seeing and experiencing things that no child ever should. The Syrian children we spoke to feel unsafe and alone after being separated from their family.*

Those who have committed grave violations against Syria's children during the brutal war must be held to account by the international community.

As leaders meet in Brussels this week, we are calling on them to listen to the children of Syria. Despite all they've been through in eight years of war, Syrian children remain optimistic and are determined that they will create a better future. They demand peace, stability and an education – and it's up to the international community meeting to help deliver it."

Ahead of the major international Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region in Syria in Brussels this week, questionnaires and focus group discussions were carried out with children in four governorates in Syria that have been devastated by war.

According to a survey carried out for a new Save the Children report, *"A Better Tomorrow: Syria's Children Have Their Say"* more than a third of Syrian children 'always or frequently' feel unsafe, as well as distressed and alone,

Half of those surveyed identify violence, family separation, the destruction of homes and vital infrastructure and lack of access to basic services like education and healthcare as "very serious" challenges facing them and their communities. Despite this, most of the children surveyed are hopeful about the future and their role in creating a better Syria, providing there is peace and stability. This survey only provides a snapshot of children's experiences and further consultations should now happen to fully understand the recovery needs of all children and their communities.

In surveys conducted with more than 365 children in Idlib, Aleppo, al-Raqqa and al-Hassakeh governorates, they said:

- Violence and insecurity, substandard housing and the lack of basic services are the major challenges facing their community;
- Being separated from family/family breakdown is a major concern. Following the massive internal displacement crisis within Syria, the overwhelming majority (98%) said being with their family was very important for their happiness;
- Restoring schools and access to education is essential to Syria's future. With a third of Syria's children out of school, the children surveyed repeatedly expressed their fears of being uneducated;
- The majority of children surveyed feel optimistic about the future and their role in helping to build a better Syria – but their key demand to both their leaders and the international community is to protect children and end the conflict.

13-year-old Lina*, who fled the siege in Eastern Ghouta and now lives in Idlib, said: *“The war has taken everything from children and left us with nothing: no education, no future. My parents were killed four years ago when a shell landed on our house. After I lost them, I hoped that I would follow them but god had other plans.*

I want the war to end so we can return home and rebuild our country. As for me, I don't want anything in the world except for an education. I hope that the world can see us and help us.”

14-year-old Sara* was injured during an airstrike which destroyed her home in Deir Ezzor, and now lives in a displacement camp in Syria where she completed the survey. She said:

“Before the war my life was very beautiful and I was happy with my family. I am not so happy anymore. My life and the war are one now. Whenever I hear a plane in the sky I still get so scared. I think it's important to ask children about our lives. It's hard to imagine the future of my country when we don't even have a home, but I'm still optimistic. I would tell the world's children not to go too far from your families and don't play with anything dangerous.”

Save the Children is calling on delegates to the Brussels III donor conference to publicly commit to supporting child-focused early recovery in Syria and provide targeted and sustained funding for key sectors to support this. Parties to the conflict and the international community must also take concrete steps to create the conditions for peace and protect children, while ensuring equitable access to basic and life-saving services.

ENDS

Spokespeople are available. If you wish to arrange an interview, please contact: Joelle Bassoul in Beirut joelle.bassoul@savethechildren.org, 0096 181 6 00696, Davina Hagan in London davina.hagan@savethechildren.org, 0044 7732 601762. During out of office hours, please contact media@savethechildren.org.uk, 0044 7831 650409.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Broll, photos and written case studies available [here](#).

*** Names Changed to protect identities**

- Save the Children surveyed 365 children across North West and North East Syria in 4 hard-hit governorates where almost half (5.28m) of the total number of people have been assessed by the UN as in need of assistance (Idlib, Aleppo, al-Hassakeh and al-Raqqa). 30% of all children

surveyed said they always or frequently felt unsafe, 57% that conflict and insecurity is a very serious challenge facing their community, 56% that family breakdown, separation and bereavement is a very serious challenge facing their community and 50% that substandard housing is a very serious challenge facing their community.

- Together with our partners Save the Children works in four Governorates in northern Syria – Aleppo, Hama, al-Hassakeh and Idlib – and have reached more than 750,000 people, including over half a million children, through our programmes. We help to reconstruct schools and provide education, support primary healthcare facilities and provide essential aid items such as food, clothing, kitchen sets, winter kits and hygiene kits to displaced families.
- On Tuesday 12th March, as leaders gather for the Brussels Syria III Conference, Save the Children will place a huge 3D installation outside the European Commission in Brussels. The installation features a drawing by a Syrian girl and shows the horrific violence which has been the backdrop to her childhood.