

4.12.1. Violence against children: overview

Following the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024, this document has been reviewed and updated. Please consult '[Interim Country Guidance: Syria \(2025\)](#)'

COMMON ANALYSIS

Last update: April 2024

COI summary

According to UNOCHA, children 'continue to be greatly affected by the crisis in Syria' and exposed to violations in the hostilities. [[Country Focus 2023](#), 1.4, p. 37]

As indicated in the June 2023 report by the UN Secretary General, 2 438 grave violations against 2 407 children (2 059 boys, 312 girls, 36 sex unknown) occurred throughout 2022. The same source reported that 711 children were either killed or maimed, mostly by unidentified actors, GoS and affiliated forces. The main reasons behind the casualties were explosive ordnance, ground shelling, air strikes and live ammunition. In the first half of 2023, SNHR recorded the killing of at least 71 children. Most of the casualties were the result of landmines, explosions and killings by unidentified actors. [[Country Focus 2023](#), 1.4, p. 37]

Sexual violence against children perpetrated by different parties to the conflict has been a persistent issue throughout the conflict. Government forces used child rape as a weapon of war and were systematically abusing the children of opposition figures in GoS prisons, at checkpoints and during house raids, with impunity [[Situation of women](#), 2.4, p. 18]. Children were detained with adults and exposed to exploitation, torture, violence, including sexual violence perpetrated by prison guards, torturers and other prisoners [[Actors](#), 2.2.6, p. 23, 2.4, p. 38]. Cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated by the SNA were also reported [[Country Focus 2023](#), 1.4, p. 38].

The growing inability to meet basic needs and the widespread poverty induced households across the country to rely on negative coping mechanisms. In this context, female-headed households and children have been affected disproportionately [[Country Focus 2023](#), 1.4, p. 39].

The population of IDP children continued to grow due to the hostilities, facing increased vulnerability to abuses. [[Country Focus 2023](#), 1.4, p. 38]

According to an International Labour Organization (ILO) study of 2012, children who worked outside of their homes and did not reside with their family became exposed to exploitation by gangs or to joining gangs, to smoking and drug abuse, and to health hazards stemming from handling dangerous equipment. Spending most of their day outside their home many working children returned home alone after dark, exposing them to harassment such as sexual harassment. A source also stated that ISIL was conducting kidnappings partly from orphanages, schools and family homes. [[Targeting 2020](#), 12.1, 12.2, pp. 93-94]

Other examples of violence against children include the internment of thousands of wives and **children of ISIL** fighters in makeshift camps under deplorable living conditions in areas under SDF control [[Targeting 2020](#), 3.2, p. 42; [Actors](#), 3.3, p. 48]. There were also reports of abductions of women and girls by different actors and motivated by various reasons, including organ trafficking, with children being especially affected [[Situation of women](#), 1.1.3, p. 21].

According to researchers, domestic violence was common in Syria even before the civil war and not criminalised in Syrian's legislation. The changes in the traditional ways of family life and gender roles might have resulted in further violence against women and children, without effective legal protection mechanisms. A lack of services to support survivors of domestic violence is also reported. [[Situation of women](#), 1.1.3, pp. 22-23]

Generally, effective protection against violence is limited and enforcement is either weak or non-existent (see profile of women, in particular under subsection [4.11.2. Violence against women and girls: overview](#)).

Conclusions and guidance

Do the acts qualify as persecution under Article 9 QD?

Acts reported to be committed against children are of such severe nature that they amount to persecution (sexual assault, abduction, torture, killing).



What is the level of risk of persecution (well-founded fear)?

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for the applicant to face persecution should take into account risk-impacting circumstances, such as: family members perceived to be involved with the opposition or anti-government armed groups (see [4.1. Persons perceived to be opposing the government](#)), socio-economic situation (e.g. residing in IDP camps), family status, area of origin or residence, lack of documentation, religion, etc. Children without a male relative who is willing and able to provide support, would particularly be at risk.



Are the reasons for persecution falling within Article 10 QD (nexus)?

Available information indicates that persecution of this profile may be for reasons of (imputed) political opinion (e.g. in case of perceived link to an anti-government armed group), religion (e.g. when persecution is by extremist groups), and/or membership of a particular social group (see examples below).

See other topics concerning children:

- *4.12.1. Violence against children: overview*
- [4.12.2. Child recruitment](#)
- [4.12.3. Child labour and child trafficking](#)
- [4.12.4. Child marriage](#)
- [4.12.5. Access to education](#)
- [4.12.6. Lack of documentation](#)

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