2.10. Children

2.10.1. Impact of violence on children

According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), as of the end of March 2026, 6.9 million children were in need of humanitarian assistance across Syria.[868] Nutritional risks, particularly for children under five, remained high,[869] with 600 000 children estimated to be 'suffering from wasting' as of early 2026.[870] The main concerns relating to children include neglect, child labour, child marriage, and domestic violence,[871] exacerbated by economic hardships,[872] deteriorating living conditions,[873] displacement, and exposure to explosive ordnance.[874] UNICEF highlighted that displacement and overcrowded living conditions increased the risk of violence, including sexual violence, for children, girls, and women.[875] Different community surveys indicated that families often adopted negative coping strategies, including child labour, child marriage,[876] and withdrawing children from school,[877] due to economic challenges driven by high living costs and limited access to services.[878] These challenges especially affected displaced population[879] and communities in northeast Syria.[880]

Following the fall of the Assad regime, reports on killing of children by armed actors persisted, including by Syrian transitional government forces,[881] Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF),[882] Israel Defence Forces (IDF),[883] Turkish-backed forces,[884] and armed groups affiliated with the Assad regime.[885] However, the majority of the 328 child fatalities documented by SNHR in 2025 [886], and the 43 recorded during the first quarter of 2026[887], were attributed to unidentified perpetrators and landmines.[888]

Contamination by explosive ordnance remains 'widespread' across the country[889] and continues posing a significant threat against civilians,[890] with children being disproportionately affected[891] in both residential and agricultural areas.[892] According to UNICEF, at least 5 million children live in areas contaminated with landmines and explosive remnants of war, with more than 300 000 deadly devices scattered across the country.[893] UNICEF further estimated that between December 2024 and February 2026 698 people were killed and 1 193 injured by explosive war remnants, with children accounting for 30 % of those killed and 40 % of those injured, although noting that the figures were 'likely underreported'.[894] Between December 2024 and April 2026, SNHR documented the death of at least 74 children due to landmines and cluster munitions.[895]

During the reporting period, child recruitment by the SDF and affiliated entities continued to be reported.[896] For detailed information on child recruitment in Syria, see section Individuals fearing forced or child recruitment by Kurdish-led forces.

As noted in a UNFPA and GBV AoR report, unaccompanied minors, including orphaned children, were more vulnerable to discrimination and exploitation than other children.897 There are several orphanages and childcare institutions under the supervision of the transitional government. These facilities are mostly operated by charities, religious groups, or humanitarian organisations, largely dependent on private donations and foreign funding. Conditions in these institutions were described as ‘generally very poor’.898

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