

**Statement by Panos Moutzisz, Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, on the Secretary General's Country Report on Children and Armed Conflict in Syria, 2013 - 2018****Amman, 27 November 2018**

I am appalled by the findings of the recently released Secretary-General's country [report](#) on children and armed conflict in Syria. Covering almost five years of conflict in Syria, the report documents a devastating increase in grave violations against children each year by all parties to the conflict active in Syria.

Between November 2013 and June 2018, the Syria Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on grave violations against children verified more than 7,000 children killed or maimed by the conflict. More than 350 schools and more than 340 hospitals were attacked – sometimes several times; over 3,300 children recruited or used and more than 400 education, medical or humanitarian personnel killed, injured or abducted.

This is only the tip of the iceberg that the Syria MRM was able to capture and verify through primary sources. Overall numbers are considered to be much higher.

The humanitarian toll of the conflict on children has been devastating. Some two thirds of children are said to have lost a loved one, had their house damaged or suffered conflict-related injuries. Of the 6.2 million Syrians now internally displaced, 2.6 million are estimated to be children.

I am particularly concerned about ongoing reports of attacks on hospitals and medical facilities or personnel. These have been a feature of the conflict and critically undermined health service delivery, disproportionately affecting the lives of children. In some part of Syria, entire education and health systems have been under attack, depriving children of their life-saving and life-sustaining protective environment.

In any other country in the world, one attack on a hospital would generate outrage and calls for action and accountability. In Syria the MRM verified dozens of such attacks in the first six months of 2018 alone, with no end in sight.

Reports that the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict – by all parties – continue to increase, are particularly worrying. In the first six months of 2018, one in four recruited children involved boys and girls under the age of 15 – a war crime and prohibited under International Humanitarian Law. Nine out of ten recruited children served in a combat role: in uniform, armed and with military training.

The protection of civilians in armed conflict remains a central focus for the humanitarian response in Syria, and I am deeply concerned that many of the child deaths and injuries verified occurred as a result of indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks against civilians, including the use of weapons prohibited under international law.

I call on all parties to respect their obligations towards children under International Humanitarian Law, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. All Member States must also leverage any influence they have to effectively stop violations against children.

The suffering endured by children and documented in this report is unprecedented and unacceptable. All parties to the conflict must put children before politics.