



DEFENSA DE NIÑAS Y NIÑOS INTERNACIONAL DNI
DEFENSE DES ENFANTS INTERNATIONALE DEI
DEFENCE FOR CHILDREN INTERNATIONAL DCI
the worldwide movement for children's rights

Human Rights Council (23rd session)
Item 04 / ID with COI Syria

Thank you Mr/Madam Chairperson,

We would like to thank the Human Rights Council for the chance to make this statement, and we welcome the opportunity to discuss substantive issues relating to the continuous human rights violations against Syrian children.

The conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic has led to the increasing deterioration of human rights. Children are a vulnerable group whose human rights are being violated by both Government-affiliated militia and anti-Government armed groups. In fact, many children have been among the victims of targeted attacks on the civilian population.

Despite Syria being a party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed, young boys have been used in combat and remain at risk of being recruited by either side to the on-going conflict (according to a report of the UN Commission of Investigation on Syria). No child under the age of 18 should be allowed to be involved in hostilities, either directly or indirectly. Governments have the most direct formal, legal and political responsibility to ensure the protection of all children exposed to armed conflict within their countries.

According to a study carried out by the Inter-Agency Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence Sub-Working Group in Jordan, many children have been forced to flee the country, sometimes by themselves and thus separated from their families. Unaccompanied and separated children are even more susceptible to violence and exploitation; particularly when living without adult care and supervision in the existing refugee camps. The aforementioned study also highlights the practice - within these refugee camps - of child labour, violence and abuse, not to mention the exacerbation of certain traditional practices, such as early marriages.

Within refugee camps, at checkpoint and during house searches, children (girls in particular) are victims of sexual violence. It has also been reported that children have been deprived of their liberty on several occasions during the conflict, without the application of their procedural rights.

It is therefore that Defence for Children International (DCI) would like to make the following recommendations to:

- 1/ Urge all the parties in the on-going conflict in Syria to start a concrete process towards pacification in the country;
- 2/ All Governments should adopt measures to effectively implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols and the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol.
- 3/ Put in place safeguards in order to ensure that no child is recruited or involved in any way in hostilities. Children involved in the armed conflict should not be detained and should be treated as victims in any and all cases;
- 4/ Provide support services for all children without adult care, whether in Syria or in refugee camps, in order to ensure that they are not subjected to any form of exploitation, and provide assistance if no foster families are present;
- 5/ Take all necessary measures to prevent all forms of violence against children whether at home, in schools or in detention. Ensure that these practices are not reproduced in refugee camps.