



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 (24th session)
Item 04 / ID with COI Syria

Thank you Mr/Madam Chairperson,
We would like to thank the Human Rights Council for the opportunity to make this statement.

In the Syrian Arab Republic violations of international human rights law continue to be systematic and widespread. The on-going conflict is affecting highly populated areas where civilians, particularly children, are paying the ultimate price.

So far over 7000 children have been killed and others injured. Many children have also been arrested for their alleged support to opposition groups and suffer ill-treatment, including torture while in detention; sometimes these children are even held at ransom in order to force their parents to turn themselves in to the State authorities.

Furthermore, many schools continue to be targeted or are used for military purposes. These acts result in casualties and the killing of children, in the destruction of schools and are essentially violating the basic human rights.

Another issue of particular concern is the situation of refugee children. Reportedly more than one million children have fled Syria, and two million children have been displaced within the country. Beyond the physical and psychological side-effects which such circumstances may evoke, children are also facing several other difficulties, often being subject to forced labour, gender based violence and early marriages¹.

Defence for Children International would like to recall States' obligations under the Geneva Conventions and in particular the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children and armed conflict. Particularly that no child should be allowed to be involved in hostilities either directly or indirectly, and that governments and the international community as a whole have a legal and political responsibility to ensure the protection of all children exposed to armed conflict.

It is therefore that Defence for Children International would like to:

1. Call upon the government of Syria to engage in a peaceful dialogue and find consensus in respect of international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law;
2. Urge all parties to the conflict to cease targeting civilian areas such as schools, and the use of such areas for military purposes;
3. Demand an end to the detention and ill-treatment of children for alleged association with the opposition;
4. Call for the provision of greater protection to refugee children, including, the prevention of forced marriage, gender based violence and exploitation;
5. And lastly, call for the need to assist the Commission of Inquiry for Syria in dealing with children's issues, through the support of child protection experts.

Thank you, Mr/Madam Chairperson.

¹ According to a study carried out by UN agencies and NGOs