

P R E S S R E L E A S E

"All children of war are our concern".

10 years of the Syrian war – The Save the Children photo book "I Am Alive" will be published in its second edition on 8 March. On the cover: A girl from Homs

Berlin, 03.03.2021. More than 5000 children have been killed in the Syrian war, 5 million children are dependent on humanitarian aid in Syria. In total, the war has driven more than 12 million people to flee, half of them children. One of them is the girl Amal*, whose expressive portrait is on the cover of Save the Children's book of the century, "I Am Alive". In the book, her story is one of 11 survival stories of children of war over the last 100 years.

Amal* grew up in embattled Homs, Syria, and has been living with her family in poverty and without prospects in an informal camp in Lebanon since 2014. The cover photo was taken in 2018, since then her situation has deteriorated once again.

At the time, her father worked as a teacher in a preschool project run by Save the Children, which no longer exists. The economic and political crisis in Lebanon and above all the devastating Beirut blasts in August 2020 have dramatically worsened the situation in Syria's crisis-ridden neighbour, where every fourth inhabitant is a refugee. The work of non-governmental organisations operating in the country, such as Save the Children, has also become more difficult. Project funding is declining and children like Amal* have to work instead of going to school to provide a livelihood for the family.

Ahmed Bayram, Save the Children International's media manager for the Middle East, recently spoke to Amal*'s father. "The family has wanted to come to Germany for years, but they are still staying in the camp - completely destitute. Amal's father's job at the preschool no longer exists because our office in Lebanon lacked the funds to continue the programme. Today, his children have to work to pay the rent for the tent in the informal camp. Amal* herself now works in a cucumber factory. She is now 13 years old."

"This is the story of many families in Lebanon. The price of the Lebanese pound has just hit a record low. The basic wage has plummeted from \$400 to \$68 in less than a year. The money that would buy Amal's family a meal a year ago is now literally worth one packet of biscuits."

Many Syrian refugees cannot return to their country because of the ongoing conflict, but in Lebanon they have no perspective. "With appropriate funding, Save the Children could do much more for children like Amal* than is possible now under these circumstances", says Dr Meike Riebau, migration expert at Save the Children Germany. "Expanding legal migration channels, such as humanitarian admission programmes to Germany, could be one way to help children like Amal* and her family escape their precarious situation. In addition, host countries like Lebanon need financial and structural support from the global community to give refugees a home."

The encounter with the Syrian girl in one of the many informal camps in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, not far from the Syrian border, was the initial spark in 2018 for the illustrated book "I Am Alive. How Children Survived a Century of Wars" by Save the Children. "The girl, traumatised by her experience of war in Homs, began to communicate with us through the camera. She allowed herself to be photographed so that the world would know about the fate of the children. She wanted to be seen," explains Martina Dase, Communications Director of Save the Children Germany and Editor of the book, who met Amal* at the time together with the Swiss photographer Dominic Nahr.

Thus began the worldwide photo project about children in war, which was published as a photo book by the renowned Kerber Verlag at the end of 2020.

Around three months later, the second edition is already hitting bookstores. "Our book is an appeal to end the war against children, in Syria, Yemen and everywhere where children are victims of conflict," says Martina Dase. "As much as we are delighted by the surprising success of the book, we are much more concerned about children like Amal*, whose childhood is scared by war. Every child has a right to childhood. Amal*, a quiet girl, wishes for magic to escape her situation. Her reality is work instead of school, uncertainty instead of security and a future perspective. How one wishes for a better life for children like Amal*."

*Name changed

Note to editors:

March 15th marks the 10th anniversary of the start of the Syrian war. Save the Children will mark this occasion by publishing a report on the impact of 10 years of war and its effect on the mental health of Syrian children. The analysis, which will be published in the week leading up to the anniversary, is based on data from Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and the Netherlands. In addition, Save the Children will provide extensive visual material (photos and B-roll) and first-hand accounts of the Syrian war, including a chronology of the war in pictures.

You can find an insight into the book as well as extensive picture material under this link:

www.savethechildren.de/i-am-alive

Additional information about the book "I Am Alive".

"I Am Alive" traces a century of wars. Starting with the First World War, ten contemporary witnesses from each decade of the past 100 years are portrayed through the camera of photographer Dominic Nahr. With the help of Save the Children, among others, they all survived the war or conflict that shaped their childhood. The eleventh, current portrait from one of the most recent eruptions of violence shows a Rohingya baby from one of the world's largest refugee camps in Bangladesh.

The encounters with all eyewitnesses on four continents took place after extensive research in 2018 and 2019. The text work and the design of the book were created in 2020, a year marked by the Corona pandemic. "The fact that we were actually able to find survivors from the past 100 years with a direct connection to Save the Children is a miracle," says Martina Dase, Save the Children's Communications Director, who conceived this unusual illustrated book "like a movie". "But then came the Covid-19 pandemic. It presented us with unprecedented challenges to our global outreach to children, and it even affected the book's production. Of course, this is nothing compared to what our witnesses went through. They all remind us that people are capable of overcoming the worst crises when everybody supports each other."

The global search for traces was prompted by Save the Children's 100th anniversary in 2019, and the German office of the global child rights organisation wanted to find out what became of children whom Save the Children helped over the past 100 years. This is because the very first aid mission of the

newly founded British aid organisation, which is active worldwide today, took place in Germany immediately after World War I.

The resulting book shows survivors who, despite their difficult experiences, go through life with self-confidence and do not want to be seen as victims only. Over time, they all have found a way to deal with grief, trauma or loss of home.

Dominic Nahr chooses a visual language that allows places and time to merge. He interweaves portraits and reportage photography, current and historical material, colour and black and white, analogue and digital images.

Each protagonist is also assigned to one celebrity guest author who describes their personal thoughts on viewing a single image without knowing the whole story. Among them are from Germany star violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter, journalist and news anchor Ingo Zamperoni, actress Ulrike C. Tscharre, German Development Minister Dr Gerd Müller, former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon from Korea, Vice-President of the EU Commission Margrethe Vestager from Denmark and Nobel Prize winner for literature Wole Soyinka from Nigeria.

The book received widespread media attention. After a preview in stern, Spiegel reported, as did t-online, Deutsche Welle and Neue Zürcher Zeitung. The ARD cultural flagship TV show Titel, Thesen, Temperamente ran the headline "Alle Kriegskinder gehen uns etwas an" ("All children of war are our concern").

The makers explain the book's success with the sophisticated design, the well-researched texts and the – despite all the gravity of the topic of war - ultimately positive tone of these survivor stories.

"It surprised us that all survivors presented themselves to us not as victims, which they all are, but as optimists. Their stories of survival and support are not only touching and courageous but also remind us of not losing hope for a better future. In our pandemic-shaken times, this obviously hits a nerve," says initiator Martina Dase.

The book "I Am Alive. How Children Survived a Century of Wars " has 324 pages and will be published in German and English in a second edition by Kerber Verlag on 8 March. Orders can be placed online via Kerber Verlag and bookstores.

Overall concept

Martina Dase

Photography

Dominic Nahr

Essays

Bertram Job

Based on interviews and reports by

Anna Mayumi Kerber

Guest authors

Anne-Sophie Mutter - Ingo Zamperoni - Jon Swain - Anne Watts - Margrethe Vestager - Ban Ki-moon - Professor Wole Soyinka - Mayte Carrasco - Marcel Mettelsiefen - Ulrike C. Tscharre - Amir Hassan Cheheltan - Dr. Gerd Müller

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You can find an insight into the book as well as extensive picture material for editorial use on our website under the following link:

www.savethechildren.de/ich-lebe-fotobuch

For interview requests, please contact our press office.

Save the Children

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About Save the Children

In 1919, the British social reformer and child rights activist Eglantyne Jebb founded Save the Children to save children in Germany and Austria from starvation. Today, the world's largest independent children's rights organisation is active in over 110 countries. Save the Children stands up for children in wars, conflicts and disasters. For a world that respects children's rights. A world in which all children live healthily and safely and can grow up and learn freely and self-determined - for over 100 years.