

P R E S S E M E L D U N G

More children killed in Idlib in last four weeks than all of 2018 Deadliest week since violence escalated in North West Syria at the end of April

The number of children killed in Idlib in the last four weeks has exceeded the total for 2018, Save the Children and its partner organization Hurras Network have found, as the latest escalation of fighting claimed the lives of eight children on Monday.

The escalation in violence which started at the end of April has now resulted in the deaths of at least 400 people, including 90 children, and displaced 440,000 people. Save the Children and Hurras Network can confirm that at least 33 children have been killed since June 24th, compared to 31 children killed during all of 2018.

This week has been the deadliest since fighting escalated in North West Syria – which is home to 3 million people. Multiple airstrikes and shelling have left more than 66 people dead and hundreds injured. Bodies, some torn into pieces or burnt beyond recognition, are still being recovered from the rubble. Many of the victims are women and children, some of them suffering the most horrific injuries, according to the UN and field reports.

“The current situation in Idlib is a nightmare. The injuries we are seeing are horrific. It’s clear that once again children have been killed and injured in indiscriminate attacks,” Sonia Khush, Save the Children Syria Response Director, said.

“The bombardment is relentless. It seems as though the different sides have stopped fighting each other and are fighting us, civilians, now. It’s just senseless brutality. I saw dozens of people killed in the marketplace, torn to pieces, including many young children who were playing on the street. They should have been safe,” Ahmad^[1], an eyewitness, told Save the Children.

Humanitarian agencies are already struggling to respond to the displacement across North West Syria. Civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, continue to be damaged or destroyed. In the last two weeks, at least four medical facilities have been impacted by the violence, as well as a water station serving more than 80,000 people, and several schools, settlements for displaced civilians, markets and bakeries, according to the UN. At least eight water facilities that provided drinking water for around 250,000 people in southern Idlib have been attacked in the last two months alone, as summer temperatures soar and civilians are at increased threat of diseases.

“The children of North West Syria have been caught in violent conflict for 80 days with no lull. They have been denied education, food, healthcare and forced to sleep under the trees in open fields for months now,” Khush added.

Across Syria, 2.1 million children are out of school and 1.3 million are at risk of dropping out. In the North West, at least 44 schools have been damaged or destroyed recently, as attacks on educational facilities and personnel have increased. Save the Children is calling on all parties to the conflict to respect International Humanitarian Law and human rights law, and to place the protection of civilians first. Schools, hospitals and other vital civilian infrastructure must be protected from attacks.

[1] Name changed for safety reasons.

Spokespeople are available. If you wish to arrange an interview, please contact Joelle Bassoul in Beirut joelle.bassoul@savethechildren.org 0096 1816 00696 or Davina Hagan in London davina.hagan@savethechildren.org 0044 7732 601762. During out of office hours, please contact media@savethechildren.org.uk 0044 7831 650409.

Notes to Editors:

- According to the UN, since the end of April, at least 400 civilians have been killed or injured in North West Syria. The death toll of children is based on reports from field monitors of Save the Children's partners, Hurras Network.
- North West Syria hosts one of the largest internally displaced populations in the country, with half of the population having been uprooted at least once, and some being displaced up to seven times over the course of the conflict. Most now live in overcrowded camps and shelters in rural areas with nowhere left to flee to. Food, water and medicine are in short supply, alongside essential services like schools and healthcare.
- Save the Children supports Syrians in the North West of the country through a network of partner organizations on the ground. Their work includes running primary healthcare clinics and a maternity hospital, vaccination and food security programmes, supporting a network of schools and carrying out child protection work.

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Über Save the Children

Im Nachkriegsjahr 1919 gründete die britische Sozialreformerin und Kinderrechtlerin Eglantyne Jebb Save the Children, um Kinder in Deutschland und Österreich vor dem Hungertod zu retten. Heute ist die inzwischen größte unabhängige Kinderrechtsorganisation der Welt in über 120 Ländern im Einsatz. Save the Children ist da für Kinder in Kriegen, Konflikten und Katastrophen – seit 100 Jahren und darüber hinaus. Diese Kinder zu schützen, zu stärken und zu fördern ist das zentrale Anliegen der Organisation. Die Schwerpunkte der Arbeit liegen in den Bereichen Schule und Bildung, Schutz vor Ausbeutung und Gewalt sowie Überleben und Gesundheit. Save the Children setzt sich ein für eine Welt, die die Rechte der Kinder achtet. Eine Welt, in der alle Kinder gesund und sicher leben und frei und selbstbestimmt aufwachsen können.