

Syrian Children's Lack of Education

War, the “core of mass devastation and human suffering,” destroys everything on its path. It's the barbaric side of humans that has continued to cost millions of people their lives still to this day. Since this is such a big topic, our group decided to pick one of the most dreadful war zones as our theme: Syria and Syrian children's lack of education. The conflict in Syria has devastated the lives of an entire generation of young people. It's more important than ever to make other countries aware of what these children have gone through and are still going through and how to help them as much as we can. Syria's war has been going on for eight years and there is no sign of it ending soon. Numerous Human's Right's laws being broken, Syrian children don't have access to the most common things we take for granted in Switzerland. Many of these children and their families live where basic services are nowhere to be found. Food, health, education and safety are the primary essentials these people are missing, as well as many more. For the 2.5 million homeless children living in these most dreadful conditions, we must fight for a future we all share.

Let's take a look at statistics collected by UNICEF:

- 50'000 children have been killed as a result of the war in Syria;
- 10 times as many have been injured;
- 55% of school-age children are out of school;
- 18 out of 1000 children die before their 5th birthday;
- 28% of children suffer from stunting due to malnutrition.

The physical devastation in Syria is massive, with schools, hospitals and water treatment facilities destroyed. Meanwhile, an estimated:

- 2.6 million children remain displaced inside Syria;
- 2.5 million children are living as refugees in neighboring countries;
- 85% of refugee children are living below the poverty line.

In 2015, UNICEF identified 1'500 cases of grave violations of children's rights.

Education

Against all odds, 4.9 million Syrian children continue to have access to education despite more than eight long years of war, violence and displacement. “Massive funding from donors, unprecedented generosity from host governments and communities; relentless work from heroic teachers and the determination of Syrian children and their families have helped millions of Syrian children get an education,” said Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa. Nearly 90% of children who have access to education are in public schools, both in Syria and in

neighboring countries. In Lebanon and Jordan, Syrian children have been able to join their local peers in public schools.

However, huge challenges remain. The conflict has caused 2.8 million children to miss out on their education. Some of these children have never even been to school, while others have missed out on up to many years of learning, making it extremely difficult for them to catch up.

In parts of Syria, going to school has become a matter of life or death because of the attacks on education systems, as armed groups tend to target schools, students, and teachers as a military strategy. Since the conflict began in 2011, 309 education facilities have come under attack and one in three schools can no longer be used, meaning one in four schools are closed or destroyed inside war-torn Syria. Nearly 40% of children who are out of school are between 15 and 17 years-old, making them prey to exploitation including early marriage, recruitment into the fighting and child labour. These problems are becoming more prevalent as families often resort to extreme survival measures. For those children who are in school, the risk of dropping out looms as they increasingly face the impacts of trauma. Concerning refugee children, the risk of losing years of education is five times bigger than for others. More than three million Syrian children receive no education. Comparing these statistics to Switzerland, which has 100% of children going to school for at least 9 years, it just makes us realize how lucky we are to have such easy access to education. We can complain all we want about having to go to school in the morning, but what we don't realize is how much of a privilege we have compared to other children who would give anything to be in our place.

Syria had a strong education system before the civil war, with almost 100% primary school enrollment and 70% of children attending secondary school. According to the 2004 census, Syria's literacy rate was 79.6%: 86% of men and 73% of women. In 2016, UNICEF reported that 2.1 million children in Syria and 700'000 refugee children did not have access to education. There was a total of 80'000 children refugees in Jordan that were out of school.

Even when the schools remain open, children may be afraid of going to school, fearing attacks, kidnappings, or other threats. In addition, the school system is also hampered by teachers fleeing the war. A third of the children among the 1'500 cases were killed while at school, or travelling to or from school. Moreover, the violence and trauma of war also affects their mental development and their ability to learn. With no end of the conflict in sight, there are fears that the crisis will lead to a 'lost generation' of children, who will lack basic necessities and will be unable to gain access to education.

After eight long years of war, the Syrian crisis continues to have a huge impact on children inside Syria, across the region and beyond. Syrian children have been heavily affected by the attacks on schools and this has had a huge psychological impact on them. These people in the same age range as ourselves are missing out on something we take for granted. The freedom to learn, grow, and live a peaceful life should not be prohibited to any child. Looking at what horrible conditions these young people are going through, it just makes us aware of how lucky we are to live in such a stable country like Switzerland. They need the world's help; our help. We need to get these children a proper life and education.

Sources:

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