

Atrocities committed against children

By Harun Yahya

-We have seen countless reports and summaries of the news developments of 2017. The media extensively covered all the highlights in politics, the arts, entertainment and technology among other things. But how did 2017 fare for children of the world? Not so many people seem to be asking that question.

Regrettably, 2017 has been another conflict-driven year and once again children have paid the highest price. Even worse, their suffering was not limited to predictable conflict regions like Syria or Yemen. Dozens of countries, now almost forgotten after receiving a small amount of international attention, became brutal scenes of renewed child abuse. Do you remember the Central Republic of Africa? Ukraine? South Sudan? These and many other regions saw increasing numbers of children being placed in the frontline of conflicts.

According to UNICEF's Director of Emergency, **Manuel Fontaine**, "...children are being targeted and exposed to attacks and brutal violence in their homes, schools and playgrounds. As these attacks continue year after year, we cannot become numb. Such brutality cannot be the new normal."

Sadly, such horror has become ordinary for many around the world. Let's start with Yemen, which experiences the worst of circumstances. Predictably, the response of the world doesn't match the urgency of the situation. In the 1000 days of fighting, at least 5,000 children lost their lives or were injured. At the moment, 11 million children are in need of humanitarian assistance and 385,000 are severely malnourished to the extent of facing death unless treated immediately. The situation is worsened by what's been described as history's worst cholera epidemic. According to UNICEF, the disease infects one child every 35 seconds on average. Another report by the same organization revealed that 2 million Yemeni children are out of school, and more than 3 million children were born into the war. Inevitably these children had been "scarred by years of violence, displacement, disease, poverty, undernutrition and a lack of access to basic services". Additionally, as stated by UNICEF, since March 2015, violence cost the life of "an average of five children every day". UNICEF representative in Yemen, Meritxell Relano said "an entire generation of children in Yemen is growing up knowing nothing but violence."

In Syria, after years of violence, three million children had to flee to other countries, thousands perished on the way and thousands more fell prey to human trafficking schemes in Europe and elsewhere. As to the situation back in Syria, close to six million Syrian children require humanitarian assistance – and that’s when they are not being used as human shields or targeted specifically by snipers. The ongoing aerial bombardment in Iraq and the earlier fighting between ISIS and the Iraqi army has deprived five million children from access to clean water and health care services among other necessities.

As we explained before, children of many other countries went through similar ordeals in different parts of the world in 2017. For example:

– Afghanistan: 700 children were killed.

Central African Republic: The fighting has escalated, leading to the killing, raping and abduction of countless children.

Democratic Republic of the Congo: 850,000 children were driven from their homes due to violence. According to estimates, 350,000 children are currently malnourished in the country.

Northeast Nigeria and Cameroon: Boko Haram used 135 children as suicide bombers. This is five times more than the numbers of 2016.

Mynanmar: Rohingya children suffered shocking violence and were driven from their homes in Rakhine state.

South Sudan: More than 19,000 children are used as child soldiers.

Somalia: Children are increasingly being recruited by armed groups.

Eastern Ukraine: 200,000 children have to live under the constant threat of mines.

In the 21st century, one would expect the world to be a safer place for our children and not increasingly resemble the horrible days of the 20th century’s two world wars. It is almost unbelievable to hear that children are being specifically targeted by snipers in Syria, or hacked to death in the CAR or burned alive in Rohingya. However, the unacceptable and unthinkable is happening and the most innocent, the most vulnerable, the most precious members of our societies are being hurt. According to UNICEF, parties are ‘blatantly disregarding’ the international laws created to protect children and the world seems content to stand by and watch.

Clearly, our leaders need to take urgent action without any hesitation and stop these atrocities. If they act decisively and take steps to prevent further harm by

utilizing all their resources, there is no doubt that their people will rally behind them and support their conscientious and humane efforts. We should not forget; every second we delay in taking action, a child might be getting hurt or killed somewhere in the world and it is assuredly in our power to stop it.

<http://web.archive.org/web/20180405112751/http://afghanistantimes.af/atrocities-committed-children/>

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