



ماعت للسلام والتنمية وحقوق الإنسان
Maat for Peace, Development, and Human Rights



Appalling Violations

The Impact of Armed Conflicts on Women & Children in the Middle East

EDITED BY
SHERIF ABDUL-HAMID

maatpeace.org

PREPARED BY
ALI MUHAMMED

An Introduction

Armed conflicts remain a major threat to civilians in times of wars. They remain at risk of indiscriminate bombing between the warring parties, and they are more vulnerable than others to other human rights violations, such as arbitrary detention, forced recruitment and sexual violence in all its forms, deprivation of education, and so on, among other violations that are continuously committed against civilians in armed conflicts.

However, armed conflicts have a disproportionate impact on women and children, the most vulnerable groups who are guaranteed protection under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as they are among the groups not participating in hostilities in conflict zones. Despite this protection, violence against women and children have alarmingly surged over the past two years, and the warring parties no longer care to spare them the horrors of war. On the contrary, the current approach of the various parties to the conflict focuses, in order to achieve its goals, on using both women and children in these conflicts, in contravention of the principles and provisions approved by the International humanitarian law, and all relevant international charters and covenants. Despite the passage of twenty-one years since the Security Council considered the protection of civilians during armed conflicts, as a thematic item in the agenda of the Council, and the passage of seventy-two years since the adoption of the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, which accorded special protection to civilians during armed conflicts, especially women and children, from 2019 until the end of 2020, more than 230,000 civilians have been killed in armed conflicts across 10 countries,¹ more than half of them are women and children.

The Middle East region is at the top of areas in which the rights of women and children are violated, and in which countries are suffering from internal strife. Armed conflicts have dramatically intensified human rights violations, thousands of civilians have been killed in these conflicts, and other arbitrary practices and various human rights violations have been practised. These violations are topped by arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance of women, and other inhuman and degrading treatment. Incidents of sexual violence against women continued to be reported, and women represented a significant part of the internally displaced as a result of these conflicts, which affected their public health and prevented their access to basic rights.

In the meanwhile, the indiscriminate killing of children continued in the conflict-plagued countries in the Middle East, and the conflicting parties began to recruit children, taking advantage of their financial condition and their young age, causing tens of thousands of children to drop out of pre-university education. All these violations categorically represent a clear

¹ البلدان العشرة هم: جنوب السودان، اليمن، العراق، الصومال، ليبيا، الجمهورية العربية السورية، الصومال، نيجيريا، أوكرانيا، أفغانستان، جمهورية إفريقيا الوسطى

violation of the International humanitarian law, international human rights law and all relevant Security Council resolutions.

These conflicts confirm one truth, that is, all international instruments and treaties related to armed conflicts will remain unless there is a real international will to end them. And if the Security Council and the UN bodies did not develop traditional tools to intervene in those conflicts, and create new mechanisms, through which civilians who did not participate in non-international armed conflicts could be protected, especially women and children, the most vulnerable to the horrors of wars and internal strife.

In light of the foregoing, Maat highlights the repercussions of armed conflicts in the Middle East region on women and children, and cover in this report the violations of the conflicting parties in certain countries: Libya, Yemen, South Sudan, Syria, Iraq, and Somalia. Accordingly, this report will deal with patterns of abuse against women and children in conflict zones, provided that these abuses include arbitrary detention and the resulting physical and sexual violence, as well as the impact of armed conflicts on the internal displacement of women as this displacement, is a direct result of these conflicts. As for children, the report focuses on the systematic targeting and extrajudicial killing thereof, in addition to their forced recruitment in conflict areas, and the consequences of these violations such as the deprivation of education. But before that, we will clarify the legal framework for the protection of women and children in the context of armed conflict.

The legal framework for the protection of children and women in armed conflict

International humanitarian law is the primary legislator to protect civilians in times of armed conflict, especially the groups who are in urgent need of special protection. International humanitarian law is a branch of general international law and consists of a set of rules aimed at limiting the effects of armed conflicts. International humanitarian law protects people who do not or who cease to participate in hostilities. It limits the means and methods of using force in armed conflicts by the parties to the armed conflict, and protects human rights in time of war, and differs from international human rights law in that the latter takes into account human rights in times of peace and war, while international humanitarian law deals with these rights in times of war and armed conflict.²

But in all cases, they are two sets of legal rules that complement each other and are inseparable from each other, and both of them prohibit any violation of the rights of civilians during armed conflicts and provide special protection for civilians, especially women and children, as they are among the vulnerable groups in hotbeds of armed conflict and in periods of humanitarian disasters and wars.

² Available at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/yyjdw5nb>

The International humanitarian law as well as the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, include provisions to spare civilians from hostilities, especially by the parties to the conflict, and these provisions include special protection for women, children and all individuals not participating in armed conflicts, such as the military who laid down their weapons, the sick, and the elderly, etc.

The International humanitarian law also includes a general principle for the protection of civilians, which is a "distinction" that guarantees protection for civilians from hostilities. The warring groups in conflict zones are supposed to abide by this principle in distinguishing between the civilian population and combatants on the one hand, and between civilian objects and military installations on the other hand. In the light of the previous principle, civilians, especially women and children, are supposed to not be the target of any of the indiscriminate hostile attacks, nor are they a valuable hunt for other human rights violations, such as arbitrary detention and sexual violence with regard to women and forced recruitment with regard to children.³

Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 states that "protected persons are entitled, in all circumstances, to respect for their persons, their honour, their family rights, their religious convictions and practices, and their manners and customs. They shall at all times be humanely treated, and shall be protected especially against all acts of violence or threats thereof and insults and public curiosity."

The same article added that "women shall be especially protected against any attack of their honour, in particular against rape, enforced prostitution, or any form of indecent assault. Without prejudice to the provisions relating to their state of health, age and sex, all protected persons shall be treated with the same consideration by the Party to the conflict in whose power they are, without any adverse distinction based, in particular, on race, religion or political opinion. However, the Parties to the conflict may take such measures of control and security in regard to protected persons as may be necessary as a result of the war."⁴

Because women and children are the subjects of this report, international humanitarian law has approved a set of rules, measures and benefits in favour of women and children in hotbeds of armed conflict, but on condition that they are not directly related to hostilities, and the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 guaranteed this protection in particular for women and children, not to mention the guarantees for the protection of civilians in general against any treatment that is detrimental to human dignity or against any attack on their physical integrity, and the prohibition of torture of any of them or committing any acts of revenge or even acts that

³ The Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Available at the following link: <https://bit.ly/3tSf31y>

⁴ اتفاقية جنيف الرابعة، 1949، اللجنة الدولية للصليب الأحمر، المادة 27 على الرابط التالي: <https://bit.ly/3xiaIa5>

carry the character of coercion against civilians. These rules, measures and advantages are summarized as follows:

- ☞ Establishing hospitals or other health care areas that provide protection for the wounded, sick, infirm, the elderly, children, and pregnant;
- ☞ The need for parties to the conflict to work out local arrangements for the transfer of the wounded, sick, infirm, the elderly, children, and maternity women (women in the postpartum period) from the besieged areas;
- ☞ Protecting women in particular against any attack of their honour, in particular against rape,
- ☞ The parties to the conflict take measures to ensure that children under the age of fifteen who are orphaned or separated from their families due to the war are not neglected, as well as the commitment of the parties to the conflict to provide for children whose parents are arrested and to facilitate their maintenance and allow them to practice their beliefs and continue their education under all circumstances;
- ☞ Preventing parties to the conflict from killing, maiming, or recruiting children under the age of fifteen or allowing them to participate in hostilities, prohibiting attacks on schools or hospitals, as well as prohibiting them from being subjected to kidnapping, rape, or other serious sexual violations that children may be exposed to it during the war.
- ☞ In the event that women and children are arrested, they are kept in places separate from men, and places for sleeping and health facilities are allocated for them and separate from the places of men, and pregnant and breastfeeding women and children under fifteen are disbursed with additional food that matches their body needs, and childbirth cases are also entrusted to any facility where appropriate treatment and care are available. Such care should not be less than the care provided to the general population.

However, it should be made clear that these rules apply to both international and non-international armed conflicts, but the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 contain Article 3 which is devoted to providing international minimum protection for civilians in the light of non-international armed conflicts only, which includes traditional civil wars, and internal armed conflict that affects other countries or internal conflicts in which a third country or multinational forces intervene on the side of the government.⁵

This joint article stipulated that these groups (civilians) would be spared from military operations. This article defines the protected groups as “persons who do not take a direct part in the hostilities, including members of the armed forces who have laid down their arms, and persons who are unable to fight because of illness, wounds, detention, or any other reason, who

⁵ اتفاقيات جنيف 1949 وبروتوكولاتها الإضافية، اللجنة الدولية للصليب الأحمر، المادة الثالثة المشتركة، علي الرابط التالي: <https://bit.ly/3viSrYd>

shall be treated humanely in all circumstances, without any discrimination based on sex, colour, religion or belief, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria”⁶.

Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 affirms the protection of civilians, as it stipulates the following:

In the event of an armed conflict not of an international character occurring in the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties, each party to the conflict is bound to apply, as a minimum, the following provisions:

- ☞ Persons not taking a direct part in the hostilities, including members of the armed forces who have laid down their arms, and persons who are unable to fight because of illness, wounds, detention, or any other reason, shall be treated humanely in all circumstances, without any adverse distinction based on race or color, religion or belief, gender, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria. For this purpose, the following acts are prohibited in relation to the aforementioned persons, and remain prohibited at all times and places:

(A) Preventing attacks on life and physical integrity, especially murder in all its forms, and mutilation, cruel treatment, and torture;

(B) Preventing the taking of hostages;

(C) Preventing outrages upon personal dignity, and in particular humiliating and degrading treatment;

(D) Sentencing and execution of penalties without a previous trial or legal court that guarantees all the necessary judicial guarantees in the eyes of the civilized peoples.

- ☞ The need to collect the wounded and the sick and take care of them, with the possibility that an impartial humanitarian body such as the Red Cross may offer its services to the parties to the conflict and the parties to the conflict must work in accordance with special agreements between them to implement all or some of the provisions of the agreement.

The First Protocol Additional to the four 1949 Geneva Conventions

The first protocol additional to the four 1949 Geneva Convention came to fill the gaps in the protection of civilians in the first convention, and to specify the rights of certain groups of civilians in armed conflicts, as Chapter Two of the Protocol guaranteed special protection for women and children specifically. Article 76 of the provisions of Chapter Two of the Protocol

⁶ أنظر، اتفاقية جنيف الرابعة، 1949، اللجنة الوطنية للصليب الأحمر، مادة 3، على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/yyym37lh>

stipulates that women shall be the object of special respect and shall be protected in particular against rape, forced prostitution and any other form of indecent assault.⁷

As for children, Article 77 stipulates that Children shall be the object of special respect and shall be protected against any form of indecent assault. The Parties to the conflict shall provide them with the care and aid they need, whether because of their age or for any other reason. The Parties to the conflict shall take all feasible measures in order that children who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities and, in particular, they shall refrain from recruiting them into their armed forces. In recruiting among those persons who have attained the age of fifteen years but who have not attained the age of eighteen years, the Parties to the conflict shall endeavour to give priority to those who are oldest.⁸

In all cases, the protocol affirmed the basic rule for protecting civilians from hostilities between the two parties to the conflict, which is the distinction between the civilian population and combatants, as specifically mentioned in Article 48 of the Additional Protocol 1, which provides: “In order to ensure respect for and protection of the civilian population and civilian objects, the Parties to the conflict shall at all times distinguish between ... civilian objects and military objectives.”⁹

In addition to the protections provided by international humanitarian law to children during armed conflicts, international human rights law guarantees the same protection based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child that was adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution No. 44/25 of November 20, 1989, which entered into force in September 1990. The convention came to remind states parties of the need to respect the rules of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts, especially those relating to children, provided that the rules respect the following:

- ☞ States Parties take all feasible measures to ensure that persons under the age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities;
- ☞ States Parties refrain from recruiting any person under the age of fifteen years into the armed forces;
- ☞ States Parties, in accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect the civilian population in armed conflict, must take all feasible measures to ensure the protection and care of children affected by armed conflict.¹⁰

However, Article No. 38 indicated a flaw within the convention that requires states to refrain from recruiting children as long as they do not reach the age of 15 years. This is a

⁷ أنظر، الملحق (البروتوكول) الأول الإضافي إلى اتفاقيات جنيف، 1977 - اللجنة الدولية للصليب الأحمر، المادة 76، على الرابط التالي:

<https://tinyurl.com/vyva4syt>

⁸ مصدر سبق ذكره، المادة 77، على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/yxsen7n9> حماية السكان المدنيين في النزاعات المسلحة، رائج، 24 نوفمبر 2019، للمزيد على الرابط التالي:

¹⁰ اتفاقية حقوق الطفل، المادة 38، على الرابط التالي: <https://bit.ly/3tTmnyq>

contradiction to the legal minimum age set by the convention in Article 1, which is 18 years, which means that the convention allowed, even indirectly, the recruitment of children in armed conflict. Therefore, this gap in the convention must be corrected.

The Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which entered into force on February 23, 2002, was introduced to eradicate weaknesses and shortcomings in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.¹¹ It raised the minimum age for participation in hostilities and battles from fifteen years to eighteen years, which was considered clear progress in relation to what international law provides in terms of protection for children from the risk of participating in armed conflict. It also recognized the need to keep children away from armed conflict, and from participation in hostilities in particular.

The first article of the protocol determined the age at which children can enrol in recruitment and in warfare, which is eighteen years of age. Among other instruments that also included special protection for children from the repercussions of armed conflict, were the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child of 1990 and the International Labor Organization Convention of 1999 concerning the Prohibition of the Worst Forms of Child Labor and immediate action to eradicate them.¹²

Despite all these agreements and protocols, civilians, especially women and children, are still subjected to various violations by armed groups and states in hotbeds of conflict, which requires the UN Security Council to issue special resolutions to raise the issue of women and children before the Member States. In this part, we will address the Security Council resolutions adopted since 2000, when the Council decided to place the issue of protecting civilians in armed conflicts on the agenda of the Council until 2020, the resolutions adopted by the Council so that the issue of protecting civilians in conflict areas would be a priority for member states, but this did not, in any case, prevent the violations committed by the various parties to the conflict against women and children in armed conflict areas.

These resolutions are the following:

Resolution No. / date	The content of the Resolution
Resolution 2565 of 2021	The resolution affirmed that armed conflicts could exacerbate the emerging coronavirus pandemic, and through the mobilization, the effects of Corona extend to the negative humanitarian effects of armed conflicts and increase their frequency, and the resolution also called on all parties to armed conflicts to comply with obligations under international law, including international law.

¹¹ مجلة حماية الطفل، الدواية الوطنية للإعلام القانوني، المادة 38، للمزيد على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y2tx9xn9>

¹² البروتوكول الاختياري بشأن اشتراك الأطفال في النزاعات المسلحة الملحق باتفاقية حقوق الطفل، اللجنة الدولية للصليب الأحمر، المادة الأولى، للمزيد على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y5euqt9n>

Resolution No. / date	The content of the Resolution
	For human rights, as well as international humanitarian law, especially the Geneva Conventions of 1949.
Resolution No. 2535 of 2020	The resolution affirmed that young civilians are the most affected by armed conflicts, including refugees and internally displaced persons. The resolution stated that the continuation of armed conflicts contributes to a widening gap towards achieving a lasting and sustainable peace. The resolution urges parties to armed conflict to give protection to civilians, including youth, and to comply with the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their 1977 Additional Protocols.
Resolution No. 2474 of 2019	The resolution affirmed the condemnation of all forms of targeting civilians or other groups covered by protection in situations of armed conflict, and emphasized the need for parties to the conflict to comply with the rules of international humanitarian law, and also stressed the necessity of Knowing the civilian families’ whereabouts of their forcibly abducted relatives.
Resolution No. 2475 of 2019	The resolution affirmed the need to provide protection and assistance to civilians, especially persons with disabilities, and the UN resolution indicated the need to allow humanitarian aid to reach children in conflict areas. He stressed the need for states to put an end to impunity for criminal acts committed against civilians, including persons with disabilities, including women and children belonging to this category.
Resolution No. 2417 of 2018	The resolution affirmed that the parties to the armed conflict pursue a policy of starving civilians as an approach in armed conflicts. The resolution also referred to the unlawful denial of access to humanitarian aid to the civilian population and affirmed that civilians constitute the vast majority of casualties in armed conflicts and are targeted by combatants and armed elements, which are exacerbated by the day. The resolution referred in particular to the hardships that civilians endure during armed conflict, especially acts of violence against civilians, particularly against women, children and other vulnerable groups, including refugees, internally displaced persons, persons with disabilities and the elderly.

Resolution No. / date	The content of the Resolution
Resolution No. 2427 of 2018	The resolution condemned all violations of international law, such as the recruitment and use of children by parties to armed conflicts, their killing, maiming and rape. The resolution appealed to Member States and United Nations entities to ensure that the views of children are taken into consideration and that issues of protection for children affected by conflict are integrated into reconstruction strategies. The resolution also stressed the need to combat poverty, deprivation and inequality in order to prevent and protect children from being exposed to all violations and attacks in the context of armed conflicts. As well as the importance of education and encouraging the establishment of peaceful societies in which no group is marginalized.
Resolution No. 2286 of 2016	This resolution also affirmed the protection of civilians during armed conflicts, as well as the need to ensure health care for them during those conflicts, and strongly condemned the acts of violence, attacks and threats against the wounded and sick, medical workers and workers in the field of humanitarian assistance. The resolution called for all parties to armed conflicts to fully comply with the obligations placed on them by international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law.
Resolution No. 2222 of 2015	The decision holds the responsibility for the harm inflicted on civilians, on the parties to the armed conflict, including those who exercise their right of expression by requesting access to information, and the decision noted provisions prohibiting attacks on civilians in accordance with international humanitarian law based on their status as civilians. He stated that exceeding these violations in times of armed conflict constitute war crimes. The resolution also called for an end to impunity for these crimes.
Resolution No. 2242 of 2015	This decision is a bridge to the gaps and an update to Resolution No. 1325 of 2000 concerning women in armed conflict, and the decision affirmed that the conflicting parties’ the practice of sexual violence against women as a method of warfare leads to prolonging conflicts that do not end them, and is an obstacle to establishing international peace and security.

Resolution No. / date	The content of the Resolution
	The resolution considered that acts of sexual violence are inherent in the ideology that extremist groups believe and use as a tool of terrorism.
Resolution No. 2175 of 2014	This resolution also addressed the protection of civilians during armed conflicts, including workers, United Nations personnel and international organizations, and the resolution urged all parties to the armed conflict on the necessity of unimpeded access for humanitarian aid workers to all those in need of assistance. He stressed the need to conduct full investigations with persons responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, and to prosecute these persons to prevent the recurrence of these crimes.
Resolution No. 2106 of 2013	Urging all Member States and United Nations entities to redouble efforts to combat impunity for crimes of sexual violence, and stressing the importance of gender equality and the political, social and economic empowerment of women in efforts to prevent sexual violence in armed conflicts and post-conflict situations.
Resolution No. 1894 of 2009	The resolution affirmed that civilians represent the vast majority of casualties in situations of armed conflict, and reaffirmed what was stated at the 2005 World Summit on the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, including paragraphs 138 and 139 of the document relating to the protection of people from Genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.
Resolution No. 1888 of 2009	This resolution is an update to Security Council Resolution No. 1820 of 2008, and this resolution entrusted peacekeeping missions with the protection of women and children from sexual violence during armed conflict, and the resolution requested the Secretary-General to appoint a special representative on sexual violence in armed conflicts and to expedite the submission of a report on sexual violence in armed conflict. Finding monitoring and reporting mechanisms. Establishing teams of judicial experts to respond promptly to sexual violence in the context of conflict.
Resolution No. 1889 of 2009	This resolution called for the continued enhancement of women's participation in peace processes, the development of strategies to increase the number of women in conflict resolution and decision-making positions, and the development of indicators to measure progress in implementing Resolution 1325.

Resolution No. / date	The content of the Resolution
	He emphasized the role of women in rebuilding the fabric of society in implementing post-conflict strategies. The resolution referred to responding to the needs of women and girls and establishing institutional arrangements for their protection and participation in peace processes that can contribute to building international peace and security.
Resolution No. 1820 of 2008	Sexual violence against women and children is considered a serious threat to security and an obstacle to restoring peace and security, considering all types of sexual violence as a war crime or a crime against humanity or as an act of origin for a crime related to genocide, and he called on member states to pursue the perpetrators and ensure protection for women and children victims. The decision linked sexual violence as a tool of war with women's issues, peace and security, and called on the parties to the armed conflict to take adequate measures to protect civilians from sexual violence, including training the armed forces on this and laying down disciplinary measures for those who sexually assault women.
Resolution No. 1674 of 2006	This decision came to confirm the repercussions of armed conflicts on women and children, including women and children of refugees and internally displaced persons, and other civilians who may have particular vulnerabilities. The report also referred to the role that awareness-raising can play in supporting efforts to prevent attacks against civilians affected by armed conflict, especially efforts aimed at combating sexual exploitation, human trafficking and violations of international law.
Resolution No. 1612 of 2005	This resolution called on the United Nations Secretariat to establish a monitoring and reporting mechanism, mainly run by national forces led by UNICEF and the United Nations High Representative in the country, to provide reliable and timely information on the six grave violations of children's rights, and these violations are: 1. Killing or maiming of children. 2. The recruitment or use of children by armed forces or groups.

Resolution No. / date	The content of the Resolution
	3. Attacks on schools or hospitals. 4. Rape or any other form of sexual violence against children. 5- Kidnapping. 6. Preventing humanitarian aid from reaching children. He urged the parties involved in armed conflict to develop and implement action plans with a specific time frame to stop these grave violations against children
Resolution No. 1325 of 2000	This decision is the first of its kind that addresses the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women. The decision indicated the extent to which women's contributions to conflict resolution and peacebuilding are neglected. The resolution also stressed the importance of the participation of women on an equal and full basis as an active element in the establishment of peace and security. Protect women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence.
Resolution 1296 of 2000	Ali stressed that civilians constitute the vast majority of casualties in conflict hotspots, and noted the obstacles that civilians endure during conflicts, especially as a result of acts of violence directed against them, especially those directed against women, children and groups, and the resolution clarified its reflection on lasting peace, national reconciliation and development.¹³

The situation of women in areas of armed conflict

Women in times of humanitarian disasters and armed conflicts are exposed to a wide range of forms of violence, abuse, systematic targeting, and countless patterns of abuse. The targeting of women is frequent because they are a vulnerable group, unable to protect themselves in such circumstances. Parties to the conflict covered in this report have practised various violations against women that contradict international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and all international charters and norms, and most of the time they override the national laws and the constitutional legislation of each country. These violations included arbitrary detention and the consequences thereof in the absence of accountability from sexual violence and torture in its

¹³See, Security Council Resolutions, the United Nations, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y5usgruw>

various forms. These conditions force women to flee these areas to be counted among the displaced and to suffer the negative repercussions that this displacement has on women and girls.

1. Arbitrary detention against women in armed conflict

All parties to the conflict in the countries covered in the report have practised arbitrary detention on a large scale, inconsistent with international human rights law. Arbitrary detention has unprecedentedly increased in recent years and became frequently used as an effective means of restricting public freedoms and gagging dissenting voices and opposition. As for the areas suffering from lack of security and control of armed militias, arbitrary detention has resulted in more grave violations, such as cruel treatment that amounted to torture and sexual violence in prisons and detention centres.

In **Libya**, for example, the outgoing Government of National Accord and the armed militias loyal to it, including the RADA Special Deterrence Forces that operates under the Ministry of Interior, the Bab Tajoura Brigade, Al-Nawasi, the Abu Salim Brigade, and Zawiya practised arbitrary detention outside the framework of the law against women. Until the first months of 2020, about 9,000 detainees were found in the prisons of the Government of National Accord, which left after the election of a new executive authority. These 28 prisons were supervised by the Ministry of Justice in the previous government, and the militias stationed in western Libya. Among the previous statistics, 300 women were arbitrarily detained, some of whom were detained due to their political opposition to the Government of National Accord headed by former Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj, between 2015 and August 2020.¹⁴

Apparently, the new Libyan government headed by Abdul Hamid al-Dabbah and the Presidential Council headed by Muhammad al-Manfi are still having little control over the armed militias. This is evidenced by the continued detention of the Libyan activist Widad al-Sharji, who was arbitrarily arrested on 31 January 2021 by Zawiya militia, despite the ongoing calls of the United Nations Mission in Libya for the immediate and unconditional release of her, and the call for a full investigation by the Attorney General and for all perpetrators to be brought to justice.¹⁵ Widad is still illegally detained and was not allowed to contact her family unless one time, which indicates that the new executive authority is not tightening its grip on the armed militias deployed in Tripoli and the surrounding cities.

Widad is only one of the hundreds of detained women who were not charged with anything. The majority of these women were not allowed to seek legal assistance, or contact their families, and were not brought for investigation before any of the competent courts in contradiction with Articles 9 and 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

¹⁴ تقرير الأمين العام عن بعثة الأمم المتحدة للدعم في ليبيا، مجلس الأمن، ص 10، 5 مايو 2020، للمزيد على الرابط التالي:

<https://tinyurl.com/y2y3w4q4>

¹⁵ السلطة الليبية الجديدة تبحث تشكيل الحكومة وتوحيد الجيش، الخليج، 22 فبراير 2021، على الرابط التالي: <https://bit.ly/3vg7odF>

In addition to that, local Libyan reports documented the presence of 1,400 refugees and migrants in prisons belonging to the Ministry of the Interior in Tripoli, including women, who were subjected to all kinds of physical and emotional abuse by those charged with guarding detention centres and secret prisons.¹⁶ The violations did not stop at arbitrary detention and verbal abuse. Prisons and detention centers in Tripoli witnessed dire conditions for women, in the absence of real accountability or any serious investigations aimed at putting an end to this type of violations. The other violations that women were subjected to in prison centers, according to human rights defenders, included physical and sexual abuse that may amount to systematic torture.

These arbitrary practices contradict with the conclusion of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, which stated that detention is considered arbitrary if the authorities do not present any legal basis justifying the deprivation of persons of their liberty and in accordance with Article 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that, “no person may be arbitrarily arrested, detained or exiled”. Arbitrary detention of persons is inconsistent with Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which also prohibits arbitrary arrest and forced detention of individuals.

Article 32 of the Fourth Geneva Convention also prohibits any measures that would cause “physical suffering or extermination to protected persons under its authority.” This prohibition is not limited to murder, torture, corporal punishment, and scientific medical experiments that do not require medical treatment for the protected person only, but also involve any brutal acts, whether carried out by civilian agents or military agents. Despite the UN recognition of the Government of National Accord in the past, it did not comply with its obligations under international agreements and treaties it signed. This imposes on the new Libyan authority the responsibility of doubling one of its pillars, which is to investigate crimes against refugee and Libyan women in prisons in western Libya, and in Tripoli specifically.

While the **Houthis** in **Yemen** continued their violations against women without deterrence, violations and attacks on women's rights have reached in northern Yemen, where the Houthis rule with de facto force, an extent that Yemen has never seen before. According to statistics verified by Maat, women in areas under Houthi control have been subjected to more than 1,145 violations in the period from the end of December 2017 until February 2021, related to the arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance of Yemeni women. These violations included 280 cases of enforced disappearance, 295 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention of women activities and workers in the education sector, in addition to the presence of 270 women working in the relief and humanitarian aid sector in prisons under the Houthis control. The

¹⁶ مصدر سبق ذكره، على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y2y3w4q4>

number of women detained outside the framework of the law, who are under 18 years, is more than 300 women in the prisons of Sana'a and its suburbs.

In the most recent case of the detention of women in Houthi-controlled areas, Maat observed that armed elements of the Houthi group have arrested Yemeni artist Intisar Al-Hammadi, a 19-year-old artist and fashion designer, who was with two of her companions while she was driving her car on Haddah Street in Sana'a Governorate, while they were on their way to film a Ramadan series. Maat found out that armed elements of the Houthi group took Al-Hammadi and her two companions to the women's prison in the Central Prison in Sana'a, and then were charged with participating in a depraved party in a house in Sanaa governorate, a charge that Al-Hammadi's lawyer has denied.

The supervisors of prisons in Sanaa and the rest of the areas ruled by the Houthis by force of arms were not satisfied with the arbitrary detention or enforced disappearance of women opposed to the rule of the Houthi group, but then a torrent of endless violations against them in prisons, torture, sexual violence, and psychological abuse became a hallmark. The main reasons are in women's prisons, which prompted four girls detained in the Central Prison in Sanaa to commit suicide during the past year, while these violations claimed the lives of others in prisons.¹⁷

The Houthis did not allow the medical examination of the detention centers and the investigation of the causes of death inside the detention centers in a clear violation of Rule No. 31 of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), which stipulates that a doctor or other qualified specialist must examine all prisoners Patients daily, provided that the examination includes all prisoners who complain of problems related to physical or mental health or injury to any harm, or a prisoner whose condition requires examination, provided that this is done in strict confidentiality.¹⁸

In **Syria**, arbitrary arrests of women also expanded in the Afrin region in northern Syria, where armed factions loyal to Turkey arrested 100 people in Afrin in August 2020, including 4 women.¹⁹ According to human rights reports, the pro-Turkey Hamzat militia has committed crimes alongside the Suleiman Shah faction. In April 2020, it arrested a number of elderly women in the "Dar Kiir" village in Afrin countryside, and did not release them until after a ransom was paid, in a new strategy to collect money from the locals.²⁰

¹⁷ Rights Report Documents Houthi Violations against Women in Yemen, Asharq Al-Awsat, 21 February 2021, Available at the following link: <https://bit.ly/37zyRxF>

¹⁸ أنظر، قواعد الأمم المتحدة النموذجية الدنيا لمعاملة السجناء، ص 10، على الرابط التالي: <https://bit.ly/3aKhKuI>

¹⁹ ارتفاع عدد المعتقلين منذ بداية أيلول في غفرين إلى 40 مدنيا بينهم نساء، مركز توثيق الانتهاكات في شمال سوريا، 13 سبتمبر 2020، للمزيد على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y6mlxawd>

²⁰ الاستخبارات التركية والشرطة العسكرية تدهمان قرية في ريف غفرين وتعتقلان 6 من أبناء القرية، المرصد السوري لحقوق الإنسان، 2 يوليو 2020، للمزيد على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y2cke8oo>

In **Iraq**, the policy of intimidation followed by the Iraqi government led to the retirement of a number of activists and human rights defenders who participated in the political demonstrations calling for an end to corruption against the Iraqi government. The Iraqi activist Mary Muhammad was kidnapped in November 2019 due to her participation in demonstrations calling for the dismissal of former Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi.²¹ After her release, she decided not to participate in the demonstrations again, after she was threatened and intimidated.²²

In addition, women demonstrators and human rights defenders reported to the United Nations Mission in Iraq that since the beginning of the protests, anonymous social media campaigns have targeted activists who have published opinions in support of the demonstrations in Baghdad and other cities. Morally, the university girls who participated in the demonstrations against the government should emphasize that they only went to the demonstrations for the sake of dating men, and it seems that the Iraqi government likes the campaigns to smear the activities and defenders of human rights in Iraq.²³ This contradicts the protection guaranteed by the Declaration of Human Rights Defenders and the relevant international treaties and instruments for human rights defenders and political activists in exercising their natural right to express their views.

It seems that the parties to the conflict in areas of armed conflict have used the violations they are practising against women, especially arbitrary detention, as an aim to achieve their own interests. Some governments that previously enjoyed international legitimacy, such as the Government of National Accord in Libya, allowed armed militias to torture and assault women in detention centres without accountability. In northeastern Syria, the Turkish-backed armed factions continue to abuse women in order to collect money and displace local populations. All parties don't observe the provisions of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, not only with regard to regulating matters of war but even with regard to the special protection that these legal rules grant to vulnerable groups, especially women.

2. Sexual violence against women in armed conflict

Sexual violence against women in armed conflicts is one of the things that have become common in recent times, and parties to the conflict use this violence in its various forms in order to subjugate and blackmail women. Although most of the victimized girls and their families remain silent, between January 2019 and January 2020, about 3 thousand cases of sexual violence in areas of armed conflict were reported. Maat believes that the real number is even more than

²¹ اختفاء الناشطة العراقية ماري محمد بعد انتقادها عبد المهدي، البيان، 12 نوفمبر 2019، للمزيد على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y32ochom>

²² ناشطة عراقية: كنت بسجن انفرادي ولن أشارك مجددا بالتظاهرات، العربية، 19 نوفمبر 2019، للمزيد على الرابط التالي:

<https://tinyurl.com/y2z86nkr>

²³ انتهاكات وتجاوزات حقوق الإنسان في العراق في سياق التظاهرات، من تشرين الأول 2019 إلى نيسان 2020، بعثة الأمم المتحدة لمساعدة العراق، أغسطس 2020، للمزيد على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y4wmt9w8>

the reported cases, given that the families of these girls do not often report incidents related to sexual violence out of fear or stigmatization.

In **Libya**, specifically in Tripoli, a number of women were subjected to harassment and sexual violence in the prisons of the outdated Government of National Accord after the election of a new executive authority. Most of these women were immigrants and refugees. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya documented 8 cases of women and girls who were raped and sexually harassed by human traffickers and Libyan security personnel, as it was reported that migrant women were subjected to sexual harassment by gunmen in the Libyan capital, Tripoli.²⁴

Some of the women in Ma'aiteh Detention Center in Tripoli were also subjected to harassment and sexual violence by the Special Deterrence Militia operating under the Ministry of Interior in the Government of National Accord. 4 prisoners were forced to strip their clothes and appear naked, in addition to the exposure of a human rights activist to mass rape by those responsible for guarding the detention centers in Tripoli.²⁵ It seems that all the aforementioned violations occurred in full view of the previous government in Libya, and the new executive authority in Libya must put an end to impunity and the need to hold members of the Government of National Accord accountable for these grave human rights violations.

In **South Sudan**, the various parties to the conflict took advantage of the general situation of insecurity and the lack of protection by the government of Southern Sudan to practice sexual violence and coercion against women, and human rights reports documented 38 cases of sexual violence against women in South Sudan, in the period from January As of December 2019, 14 of them were against girls under the age of 18. The victims were subjected to sexual violence, gang rape in some cases, forced marriage, forced nakedness, and threats of rape. The incidents were attributed to the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) and its allies, tribal militias, and the National Police of Southern Sudan, along with the Sudan People's Liberation Army and the National Salvation Front.²⁶

In **Yemen**, Maat has verified that 71 women in Houthi prisons were subjected to rape and impotence, as a result of their detention on the basis of their political affiliation contrary to the Houthi ideology, from March 2015 until the end of 2020. The Houthis justified this act under what is called the purification jihad, which is an implicit rape as the one previously practised by the ISIS terrorist militia. The Houthi, affiliated with the Hashemite dynasty, believe that rape is a racial superiority and purity, and according to their view, in this case, it gives her a positive characteristic similar to purification. These practices against women detained in Sanaa are facilitated by the so-called "Zainabat" apparatus, which is a female-led intelligence agency

²⁴ مصدر سبق ذكره، ص 11، للمزيد على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y2y3w4q4>

²⁵ الأمم المتحدة: توثيق غنف جنسي واستغلال بمعتقل معيّنقة ومراكز احتجاز مهاجرين، بوابة الوسط، 16 أغسطس 2020، للمزيد على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y2amldbp>

²⁶ الحالة في السودان، تقرير الأمين العام للأمم المتحدة، 15 يونيو 2020، ص 13، للمزيد على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y5ycgq48>

headed by “Ibtisam Al-Mohatwari,” and it was established by the director of the Criminal Investigation Service in Sanaa, Sultan Zaben, who, according to local Yemeni reports, has died recently. The responsibilities of this apparatus include inspecting women and their homes, indoctrinating women to the Houthi ideology, maintaining order in women's prisons, and facilitating the so-called purification jihad against women who refuse to submit to the instructions of the Criminal Investigation Service.²⁷

In **Syria**, the situation is no better. Girls continue to be exposed to sexual violence in its various forms, and according to human rights estimates, up to 11,523 incidents of sexual violence that occurred in Syria from March 2011 until March 2020, were committed by all parties to the conflict, whether the regular forces or ISIS and Turkish-backed armed factions. In northern Syria, in June 2020, members of the Sultan Murad faction loyal to the Turkish government raped a girl in Afrin countryside on the pretext of marriage and threatened her family to liquidate her if they reported the issue after the girl returned to her house four days later. Four members of the Sultan Murad faction took turns raping her.²⁸

In **Somalia**, from January to April 2020, 56 cases of sexual violence and coercion were directly related to the conflict against girls, most of them under the age of 18. Among the mentioned cases, a 13-year-old girl was raped in an orphanage in the capital Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland, in last June.²⁹ It seems that sexual violence is one of the most important tools used by the various parties in armed conflicts against women, in stark contrast to the provisions of international humanitarian law that accorded special protection to women in times of armed conflict, and this violence is exacerbated by the armed groups loyal to external parties in armed conflicts and this sexual violence result in other, more severe violations, such as pushing underage girls to marry early for fear of being brutalized and subjected to sexual coercion, and in order to avoid defamation and stigmatization of society. In Yemen, for example, the percentage of girls under the age of 18 who got married in Yemen has increased to more than 65% compared to 50% before the outbreak of the conflict. Addressing the issue of sexual violence in hotbeds of armed conflict requires the international community and international donors to fund programs that provide comprehensive protection for women in these areas if there is a serious approach in implementing Security Council Resolution 1325, because the idea of building peace without protection for these women is a fictional idea that contradicts the reality experienced by women in areas of armed conflict and in the areas covered in the report.

3. Internal displacement and its impact on women

²⁷ مصدر سبق ذكره، على الرابط التالي: <https://bit.ly/3dDKkjp>

²⁸ مصدر سبق ذكره، على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y2cke8oo>

²⁹ الصومال: صندوق الأمم المتحدة للسكان يدين بشدة اغتصاب فتاة في 13 من عمرها، أخبار الأمم المتحدة، 23 يونيو 2020، للمزيد على الرابط التالي:

<https://news.un.org/ar/story/2020/06/1057052>

Internal displacement is a direct consequence of armed conflict. Internal displacement is known for its forced nature. Displaced and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are forced to do so for several reasons such as battles. The displaced are seeking safer places, where they can rest assured of their children. There are nearly 50 million internally displaced people in the world, 30% of whom are in the Middle East and North Africa. According to estimates by the Norwegian Refugee Council, there are 12.4 million internally displaced people in the Middle East and North Africa region. Women and girls represent about 50% of any refugee or internally displaced population. The displacement processes affect the essential human rights guaranteed by international treaties and national legislation and laws. The countries covered by the report witnessed internal displacement due to various factors, the most important of which is the battles between the parties to the armed conflict. The displacement affected women about reproductive health and child marriage and diminished education opportunities.

The International Organization for Migration estimated the number of internally displaced people in Libya at 301,407 as of July 2019. They were displaced due to the security breakdown. The largest groups of IDPs were from Tripoli and the southern city of Sabha, and Benghazi. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) office; There was about 200,000 childbearing age displaced women in need of humanitarian assistance in Libya³⁰.

Due to violence between armed groups in South Sudan, there are 1.6 million internally displaced people. More than half of that number being women and children³¹. In Somalia, UN agencies estimated at least 2.7 million displaced persons and internally displaced persons due to the armed conflict, floods, and the spread of desert locusts.

The majority of women are exposed to risks due to internal displacement. About women's health care, Somalia ranks sixth for postpartum deaths in the world (829 deaths per 100,000 live births). Only one in 10 deliveries take place under the supervision of qualified health workers. In addition, the prevalence of female genital mutilation/cutting is 98%, with 70% having difficulty accessing adequate and safe health services³².

Yemen is the largest humanitarian disaster in the world at present. There are about 4.3 million Yemenis who are internally displaced, 74 per cent of whom are women and children. Of the up to one million displaced people in the Ma'rib governorate only, more than 50% are women. The escalation of military operations after the Houthi escalation on Ma'rib may affect this number of internally displaced persons, especially women and children. The displacement will generally affect girls' educational opportunities. More than 48% of women have lost their opportunities in education recently as a direct cause of the internal displacement of women in Yemen.

³⁰ المرأة الليبية: معاناة من البداية... والصراع يزيد الخطف والاعتقال، مصر 360، 26 أغسطس 2020، للمزيد على الرابط التالي:

<https://tinyurl.com/y3rq6r5a>

³¹ أنظر، الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y33oldkk>

³² Available at the following link :<https://tinyurl.com/y39zk7a5>

There are 6.6 million internally displaced people in Syria, of whom nearly 3 million are in hard-to-reach and other besieged areas. The number of displaced women in Syria is increasing. They are losing the family's breadwinner, whether by joining terrorist groups or being killed in the ongoing conflict. In northeastern Syria, women and children constitute 96% of displaced people in Al-Hawl camp³³. There are 800,000 internally displaced people; 81% of them are women and children³⁴. As a result of the conflict in Syria, the United Nations Population Fund was closed. It had to close seven health service delivery points that were caring for 13,000 people due to the escalating conflict and restricted humanitarian access since late last year. In March of last year, the United Nations Fund was forced to close two health services centres and two mobile clinics. It was serving about 6000 people per month. Meanwhile, it suspended work in three safe places that provide life-saving services to women and girls in the area. According to the fund, that causes of the increase in premature births incidence, miscarriage, low birth weight in newborns, and stunting at birth.

In general, internal displacement affects three basic rights for women, and they are:

1. **The right to education.** There are long distances between the camps for the displaced and the nearest schools. So, girls' families did not enrol their girls in school, fearing security chaos for their daughters, in the absence of legal accountability or protection. Most of the time, there are no schools.

2. **The right to access to health care.** Internally displaced persons and those residing in camps on the outskirts of cities have limited access to health care. It is due to the unavailability of hospitals or doctors. In addition to all medicines are not available in mobile clinics, diseases come as a direct result of the lack of clean drinking water. They suffer from the lack of sanitation services, safe spaces in the IDP camps, and overcrowding.

3. **The right to food security.** IDPs in the Middle East are suffering from food insecurity. That occurs due to the international organizations' difficulty reaching some areas where the displaced live; besides use food as a weapon in the war between the conflicting parties. These parties often hinder the access of humanitarian aid, including food, to areas of displacement, causing severe damage to women and children's health

Children in armed conflicts

Children, women suffer the most in areas of armed conflict due to their limited ability to protect themselves. Children constitute a high percentage of civilian victims who die or are exposed to abuse and violations inconsistent with international human rights law and

³³ تعزيزا للسلامة والأمل، صندوق الأمم المتحدة للسكان يوفر خدمات صحية لنساء سوريات محاصرات بتداعيات الحرب، أخبار الأمم المتحدة، 24 يناير 2020، للمزيد على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/yxolqbac>

³⁴ أوتشا: 142 ألف نازح في شمال غرب سوريا خلال الأيام الأربعة الماضية فقط، أخبار الأمم المتحدة، 13 فبراير 2020، للمزيد على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y3jexc2o>

international humanitarian law. From January 2019 to the end of 2020, there were more than 40,000 violations against children in areas of armed conflict in the Middle East region. We focused in the following on killing, systematic targeting, and forced recruitment of children. We also explain the impact of armed conflict on children dropping out of the educational process.

1. The systematic targeting of "children in the crossfire"

Civilians in Libya, especially in western Tripoli, have suffered from killings and systematic targeting. The killing was the result of exchanges of fire and indiscriminate bombing of populated areas. The outbreak of the conflict between the Libyan National Army, the Government of National Accord, and the armed militias loyal to it, on April 4, 2019, had a clear impact on civilians in Libya. This conflict erupted to expel armed militias from western Libya.

The Government of the National Accord launched Operation Peace Storm to defend Tripoli against attacks by the Libyan National Army. The mandate of the Government of the National Accord ended after the election of a new executive authority. The conflicting parties in Libya did not respond to calls for a ceasefire, Security Council resolutions calling for calm, and the relevant UN efforts. That affected women and children³⁵, so the process of targeting children continued. About 77 children, including 16 girls under 18, were killed in armed operations areas; from January 2019 to 2020. The two conflict parties were involved in the killing, with armed groups affiliated with the Government of National Accord in Tripoli³⁶.

In June 2020, the Government of the National Accord bombed the displaced cars from Tarhuna city to the south of Sirte city. The bombing resulted in the deaths of 10 civilians, including three children³⁷. On February 18, 2021, Abdul Basit Fawzi Shalabi, the 6-year-old child, was killed. The child was killed after hit by random bullets in the Gharyan area, which is under the control of armed militias loyal to the Government of the National Accord in Tripoli³⁸.

The killing of children in Libya does not depend on exchanges of fire or indiscriminate shelling of populated areas. However, some children were killed cause of the explosion of the mines that were planted in Tripoli. On March 18, 2021, the 14-year-old child, "Abd al-Muhaimin Muammar Aqeel," was killed, in addition to the injury of two other children as a result of a mine explosion in Ain Zara district in Tripoli. Eight children, between the ages of eight to fifteen, were

³⁵ Security Council urges Libyan conflict parties for an immediate ceasefire, The Libya Observer, 26 March 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/v6lb4hnm>

³⁶ غوتيريش يعلن حصيلة القتلى من الأطفال في الحرب الأخيرة بليبيا، روسيا اليوم، 16 يونيو 2020، للمزيد على الرابط التالي:

<https://tinyurl.com/y5do8pl8>

³⁷ منظمة رصد الجرائم الليبية تدين مقتل مدنيين نازحين من ترهونة نتيجة قصف قوات الوفاق "التركي"، أخبار ليبيا 24، 26 يونيو 2020، للمزيد

على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y6dm44e9>

³⁸ مصدر سبق ذكره، على الرابط التالي <https://bit.ly/3tTvef4>

injured cause of a mine explosion related to remnants of war in the Zamzam neighbourhood in central Benghazi³⁹.

Whereas, the child "Al-Zein Ali Bin Neama" died on August 5, 2020, a 10-year-old boy, after being hit by a random bullet in the Al-Hadba area. And the child died when he arrived at the Green Hospital in Tripoli⁴⁰. Among the cases mentioned was the death of a refugee child, called "Zuhair Mateen," in the Al-Faraj neighbourhood of Tripoli. The child died after several shells hit the university dormitory building at the University of Tripoli. There are some families of the affected displaced people living in Al-Mina who were living in the areas of clashes. And these shells led to the immediate death of 6 people, including the aforementioned child⁴¹. It is clear from the aforementioned facts that insecurity and extrajudicial killings are mainly linked to the proliferation of armed militias, especially in Tripoli. This also helped the limited ability of successive governments in Libya to control these militias, even after the new executive authority election. These militias increasingly practice their violations, which requires curtailing and dismantling these militias quickly.

In South Sudan, although the fighting between the conflicting parties decreased after the peace agreement was activated again, in September 2018. But from time to time there were clashes between rebels who did not join the convention and the South Sudanese army. And the parties to the conflict committed killings of children. As many as 51 children were documented, including 12 girls who died and were maimed. About 20 children were affected by explosive remnants of war. And that is during the period from January 2019 until the end of December of the same year. These violations were attributed to both government and opposition forces, including the National Salvation Front and the opposite wing of the Sudan People's Liberation Army⁴².

Syria is one of the first countries in which civilians and children are targeted. More than 116,000 civilians, including about 22,000 children, are killed since the conflict started on March 15, 2011, until now. In 2019 alone, up to 900 children were killed, 70% in northwest Syria and the Idlib region⁴³. In Afrin, the pro-Turkish militias forced children to engage in work that contradicts their rights. In September 2019, visual content showed Kurdish children in Afrin; at

³⁹ تقرير: انتهاكات حقوق الإنسان في ليبيا خلال شهر مارس 2021، منظمة رصد الجرائم الليبية، على الرابط التالي: <https://bit.ly/3tSuTcu>

⁴⁰ تقرير: انتهاكات حقوق الإنسان في ليبيا خلال شهر أغسطس، منظمة رصد الجرائم الليبية، 1 أغسطس 2020، للمزيد على الرابط التالي:

<https://tinyurl.com/y4a258et>

⁴¹ تقرير: انتهاكات حقوق الإنسان بمناطق النزاع المسلح خلال النصف الثاني من شهر مايو، منظمة رصد الجرائم الليبية، 1 يونيو 2020، للمزيد

على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y29sep5l>

⁴² تقرير الأمين العام حول الأطفال والنزاع المسلح، مجلس الأمن، 9 يونيو 2020، للمزيد على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y4sdmojq>

⁴³ 384 ألف قتيل حصيلة 9 سنوات من الحرب المدمرة بسوريا، العربية، 14 مارس 2020، للمزيد على الرابط التالي:

<https://tinyurl.com/yvrsxdjg>

a police station cleaning toilets, intending to subjugate and humiliate them⁴⁴. The police station was belonging to the Euphrates Shield militia loyal to Turkey.

In Yemen, the High Commissioner Office for Human Rights documented the killing of approximately 2,140 children. Additionally, about 2,898 others were injured from the beginning of the conflict in Yemen until the end of December 2020. All parties to the current conflict in Yemen are responsible for the killings. Maat believes that the numbers are more, given the difficulty of monitoring the battlefield and the areas under Houthi control. In 2020 alone, the Houthi movement committed about 1,700 violations related to the direct targeting of civilians in the areas they control by force of arms. Seven hundred twelve civilians were killed, including 122 children, and the injury of 940 civilians, including 247 children.

Children in Taiz Governorate become indiscriminate Houthi attacks legitimate targeted, due to the siege imposed on them. On March 7, 2021, the Houthi group fired artillery shells, hitting six children; some were only 13 years old. That occurred in the Al Rawda residential neighbourhood in the southwest of Taiz; while the children were returning from school. While human rights reports stated that these shells were deliberate because the families of these children supported the Arab coalition to support legitimacy in Yemen⁴⁵. In early December 2020, five children were killed in the bombing of the Houthi group on residential neighborhoods in Al-Qaza village, west of Al-Durayhimi district, Al-Hadidiya governorate. That violates the principle of differentiation between civilians and non-combatants and combatants that a fundamental rule of international humanitarian law. However, this rule does not apply to children and residential neighborhoods densely populated by civilians in Yemen⁴⁶.

In Somalia, the armed conflict between Al-Shabaab terrorist movement and government forces affected children, especially in extrajudicial killings, in which about 703 children were killed. The death toll attributed to the Somali youth movement with 252 violations, the Somali security forces, the Somali police 100 violations, and the Somali army with 74; and the rest violations distributed among other armed groups. The causes of the killing of children were improvised explosive devices and deaths resulting from the exchange of fire between the Somali armed forces and extremist groups such as Al-Shabaab. Children also died because of the explosion of remnants of war⁴⁷.

Civilians targeting in general and children in particular in the areas covered by the report demonstrates that non-state armed groups do not adhere to the principle of distinction between civilians and combatants. It is the distinction that international humanitarian law obligates parties to armed conflicts, including non-state armed groups, even though operations limit military

⁴⁴ في عفرين المحتلة.. الميليشيات التركية تجبر الأطفال على أفعال منافية للإنسانية، الحرة، 22 سبتمبر 2019، للمزيد على الرابط التالي:

<https://tinyurl.com/y6cfwnvh>

⁴⁵ شظايا قصف حوثي تدمي 6 أطفال يمنيين أثناء عودتهم من المدرسة، العربية، 7 مارس 2021، على الرابط التالي: <https://bit.ly/3gENCoe>

⁴⁶ للمزيد على الرابط التالي: <https://bit.ly/32Kx0TV>

⁴⁷ مصدر سبق ذكره، ص24، على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y4sdmojq>

objectives. Maat believes that these groups target children as a punitive policy against residents who reject their presence in conflict areas. Maat formed this view by analyzing and tracking the facts related to the targeting of civilians, especially children, in areas of armed conflict.

2. Child recruitment in armed conflicts in the Middle East region

About 420 million children live in areas of armed conflict, nearly a fifth of the number of children in the world. According to Save the Children, these children's recruitment networks are exploited by non-state armed groups and external actors involved in these conflicts to recruit children. Children are being recruited for various purposes, not necessarily participating in battles. But in addition, children are used in conflict areas to work as cooks, porters, and messengers. Girls are recruited for sexual purposes or underage forced marriage. As a result of the forced recruitment of children, they expose them to massive violence, abuse, and psychological harm.

Turkey, for example, has pursued a strategy to recruit children. The strategy aims to recruit the children to use in the areas it controls in northeastern Syria. It may send children to Libya to participate in the battles between the Government of National Accord and the Libyan National Army. Maat investigates the recruitment of the armed factions of the Turkish forces in northern Syria for more than 1,316 children from 2014 to 2019, including children less than eight years of age. These factions used children on the front lines in battles, as guards for security headquarters, or to assist other armed elements. These factions pay the children's families an amount that reached 400 dollars per month. Families in northeastern Syria depend on this money to secure the life necessities, such as food and the purchase of necessary medicines⁴⁸.

On the other hand, human rights estimates indicated that Turkey was directly involved in the Syrian children recruitment. Then they sent children to Libya to achieve Turkish political interests. The previous government of reconciliation was Turkey's main political ally in the eastern Mediterranean region. Maat has verified that the Turkish government recruited up to 380 children. Turkish factions recruited them in northern Syria to fight in the various conflict areas. About 25 children were killed during the fighting between the parties to the conflict in Libya. Maat monitored two cases, the case of the 14-year-old boy, Osama al-Musa, from the town of Bazaa in the eastern countryside of Aleppo. The child was participating in the fighting in Libya within the Sultan Suleiman Shah Brigade, but he was killed during the battles⁴⁹. A 17-year-old child, Ahmed Salem, from the Hamid town of Ras al-Ain in Hasaka governorate, was also killed

⁴⁸ علي الرابط التالي: <https://bit.ly/2RXSn1D>

⁴⁹ دفنوه سرّاً طفل سوري جند للقتال في ليبيا وقتل فيها، جسر، مايو 2020 <http://bit.ly/37RPVYy>

in January 2020. Salem was one of the Sultan Murad faction fighters; Turkey sent him to fight in Libya⁵⁰.

Through Maat tracking the stages of child recruitment in Libya, it found that recruitment passes through two stages. The first stage is children recruitment through broker's network and retired military companies with the Turkish government, including the Sadat International Defense Consulting Company. Children and their families are persuaded to go to Libya to fight under Turkish protection in exchange for sums of money. False identity cards are issued with false information; to register children in older age than their current age. They change children's age and identity to send them to fight after entering Turkish territory and from there to Libya⁵¹.

The second stage includes the transfer of child fighters from Syria to Turkey and from there to Libya. These children are transported, like other combatants, through the Central Command of hostilities located in the town of Hawar Kilis, within the so-called Hawar Kilis operations room. Then they are transferred via the military line of the Bab al-Salama crossing to the Kilis city; and then to Istanbul International Airport. The Airport sends flights carrying the fighters to Tripoli airport; It is under the control of the pro-Turkish Government of National Accord⁵²; These children join armed factions for material purposes. The case of a 15-year-old boy who left Afrin to work in agriculture indicates that he joined the ranks of the Sultan Murad faction. The child traveled to Libya to fight there without inform his family⁵³.

In South Sudan, armed groups have recruited 161 children, including 12 girls. The opposite wing of the SPLA recruited 80 children. Government forces recruited 30 children. The South Sudan People's Defense Forces recruited 20 children. The Southern Sudan National Police Agency recruited six children. The national security services recruited four children for combat. The rest of the cases were distributed to other armed groups, including the Southern Sudan Opposition Alliance in 10 children and the National Salvation Front in 19 children⁵⁴.

In Yemen, the Houthis recruited about 30,000 children in areas under their control by arms force from the armed conflict beginning until the end of 2020. In 2020 the Houthis recruited about 6,400 children in northern Yemen. The Houthis recruited children under the age of 15 and use them in hostilities, although it is prohibited under international humanitarian law and according to international treaties and norms. Child recruitment is also defined as a war crime by the International Criminal Court. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict states that armed groups are not entitled

⁵⁰ جسر تنشر مقطعاً من تشييع القلصر السوري أحمد السالم الذي قتل في ليبيا، جسر، يناير 2020، <http://bit.ly/3uDJvNK>

⁵¹ UN launched probe into the deployment of Syrian fighters to Libya by the Turkish gov't and its paramilitary contractor SADAT .Nordicmonitor .August 19, 2020<http://bit.ly/3svIBAX>

⁵² سوريا تجنيد الأطفال في حروب الكبار، جريدة المصور، يناير 2021، <http://bit.ly/3bJIPxx>

⁵³ المرصد السوري لحقوق الإنسان يوثق عمليات تجنيد الأطفال وإرسالهم للموت في ليبيا، المرصد السوري لحقوق الإنسان، مايو 2020

<http://bit.ly/3aWsc2n>

⁵⁴ مصدر سبق ذكره، ص 26، على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y4sdmojq>

to use children under the age of eighteen under any circumstances. This protocol called on states to criminally punish these practices. The Secretary-General adds Parties to the conflict who recruit and use children to his annual shame list. Despite this, the Houthi terrorist group continues to recruit children without observing international norms and laws.

In most cases, these children participate in hostilities, guarding checkpoints and buildings, conducting patrols, and as carriers of the material and logistical equipment required for the fighting. These children join these groups to secure an income for their families for fear of being oppressed⁵⁵.

In Syria, armed groups opposed to the Syrian government recruit more than 820 children during 2019. They including 55 girls, 147 children under the age of fifteen. Child recruitment operations were distributed among more than one armed group, including Hayat Tahrir al-Sham led by the Al-Nusra Front, the armed opposition groups known as the former Free Syrian Army, the Ahrar al-Sham group, the Nour al-Din al-Zenki group, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, ISIS, and the Syrian Democratic Forces. A large number of cases of recruitment occurred in the cities of Aleppo, Idlib, and Raqqa⁵⁶.

In Somalia, UN reports documented the recruitment of 1442 children and 53 girls; until 2020. The Somali Youth Movement recruited up to 1,169 children. The Somali police recruited 100 children, the Somali army recruited 74 children, while the rest of the cases were attributed to other armed groups.

In Iraq, 296 children were recruited from June 2015 until June 2019. ISIS recruited more than 50% of children; the rest divided between the Iraqi security forces, the Popular Mobilization Forces, the Popular Defense Forces of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), and the Sunni tribal mobilization groups. About 199 children were used in hostilities, which constitutes 67%, 37 children in support work, 13% in support missions, and 14 children, or up to 5%, in carrying out suicide acts. The Popular Mobilization Forces used children by 73% in hostilities, and 27% in support work.

The child recruitment figures in the aforementioned countries indicate that the conflict parties followed this strategy to exploit the children's needs. It also exploits the increase in economic destitution and poverty rates for the children's families. At the same time, they did not pay high wages to children; in addition to parties' desire to ensure children's loyalty from the beginning of their consciousness formation. In addition, a child who is not good at fighting is used in work such as cooking, carrying equipment, and serving the leadership elements of the extremist organizations.

⁵⁵ جندوا 4600 طفل خلال 2020.. أطفال اليمن أكبر ضحايا الحوثيين، مرصد الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا، 18 أكتوبر 2020، على الرابط التالي:

<https://bit.ly/3kbj7po>

⁵⁶ مصدر سبق ذكره، ص 29، للمزيد على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y4sdmojq>

3. Deprivation of education in conflict countries

The violations against children in conflict zones cannot limit to extrajudicial killings, indiscriminate targeting, or forced recruitment. Among those violations is the children forced exit from education as armed conflict results. The educational process is a strategic goal for armed groups. The rates of attacks on education have risen to 11,000 violations against education, as a cause of armed conflict in some countries experiencing this situation. As of December 2019, there were as many as 11,600 children deprived of education in Libya. The attacks and armed actions between the Libyan National Army and the militias affiliated with the Government of National Accord in Tripoli and adjacent areas have led to the closure of about 222 schools in the former areas⁵⁷.

The indiscriminate bombing that targets schools is a reason for depriving children of education in Libya. Besides, militias loyal to the National Accord have used schools for military purposes, in clear violation of the principle of protecting civilian objects in times of war for military purposes.

South Sudan, which is one of the countries of the Middle East region, has a low average age for its citizens, according to the "Status of Adolescents and Youth in South Sudan for the year 2019". The report found that 72% of the country's population is under 30; So, it is the youngest country in the world. Yet armed conflict is there, leaving as many as 2.2 million children under the age of eighteen out of school. There are also 12% of girls who dropped out of primary education and 20% in secondary school. These girls drop out of education due to, among other things, pregnancy and early marriage. Early marriage is one of the consequences of the conflict in Southern Sudan. Many families force their girls to marry at an early age; They fear rape and hope of protection. The family also seeks to alleviate material pressures and improve the economic situation⁵⁸.

Somalia is one of the countries with the lowest enrollment rate of children in the world. An estimated three million children are out of school. More than 60% of school-age children are deprived of education, while only 26% of children are enrolled in secondary education⁵⁹. Many things contributed to this, among them indiscriminate attacks and the targeting of schools. And in 2019 alone, the Somali youth movement targeted 64 schools. The movement launched 60 attacks on schools and hospitals. Violations against the educational process also included the kidnapping and killing of teachers and students under 18. They also destroyed educational

⁵⁷ أنظر، ص 19، على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y4sdmojq>

⁵⁸ مبعوثة الأمم المتحدة للشباب تزور جنوب السودان وتطلع على برامج تدريب الشباب في جوبا وتوريت وغيرها من المناطق، أخبار الأمم المتحدة، 2 فبراير 2020، للمزيد على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y2eaf7ae>

⁵⁹ أنظر، الصومال، البوابة العربية للتنمية، على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y5l368m7>

facilities, stole everything in them, and sometimes used them as weapons and ammunition stores⁶⁰.

Syria is among the countries in which conflict has affected children dropping out of education the most. There are 2.8 million children out of school, in conflict areas or refugee camps, or refugee children in neighboring countries⁶¹. The education drops out is due to the educational facilities destruction in Syria by the various parties to the conflict. 2 out of 5 schools have become untaught because they were destroyed. The parties' attacks on the conflict targeted 1000 educational and medical facilities from 2014 to 2019. In 2019 alone, 157 educational facilities were attacked by armed militias in Syria; and indiscriminate shelling by the Syrian army. In addition, some schools are used to shelter displaced persons or to store weapons and military supplies⁶².

In Yemen, Maat noticed that the reason for students' reluctance to go to schools is that the Houthis consider educational facilities legitimate targets for indiscriminate bombing. Since the beginning of the conflict in Yemen, the Houthis have carried out more than 2,000 attacks on educational facilities. The attacks varied between bombing and raiding, closures, and military use. More than 2,500 schools stopped, 66% of schools destroyed, another 25% closed, and 7% of schools were used for military purposes or as shelters for the displaced. All these violations against the educational process in Yemen contributed to the exit of about 2 million children from education. While UN reports suggest that up to 3.7 million children will exit the educational process if the current conflict continues; and the salaries of more than 200,000 Yemeni teachers cut off, this means the Yemen children will not educate. The right to education is a right foundational to the rest of human rights, and it is a complementary means for the realization of other human rights. Education is the tool by which adults and children, male and female, and the marginalized economically and socially, can lift themselves out of poverty. They also enable education to have the opportunity to participate fully in all aspects of social, political, cultural, and economic life⁶³.

In Iraq, the rates of school dropouts have registered a steady increase, reaching about 30% of the total enrollment in the educational process. About 101 thousand male and female students were outside the educational process in Iraq at the end of 2014. This number increased to 131 thousand and 649 male and female students by the beginning of 2019. An average of 360 students per day dropouts' education; and displacement contributed to this dropout. That followed the war between the terrorist organization ISIS and the Iraqi government. Human rights reports documented the attack on about 236 schools from June 2015 until the first half of 2019, and these

⁶⁰ مصدر سبق ذكره، ص 24، على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y4sdmojq>

⁶¹ حوالي 5 ملايين طفل ولدوا أثناء الحرب في سوريا ومليون طفل سوري ولدوا لاجئين في دول الجوار - اليونيسف، 15 مارس 2020، للمزيد على

الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y6da2cxt>

⁶² أنظر الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y4p28epq>

⁶³ الأمم المتحدة تدعو إلى دفع رواتب المعلمين في اليمن، Independent عربية، 5 أكتوبر 2020، على الرابط التالي: <https://bit.ly/3sn52Zb>

attacks had a severe impact on schools, as most of them were destroyed during an exchange of fire or as a result of explosives⁶⁴. But with the continuing of the new Coronavirus outbreak, one in every two children in Iraq is threatened with education deprivation, which constitutes 48.8% of the proportion of school-age children⁶⁵.

Conclusions & Recommendations

After examining the previous violations committed against women and children in conflict areas, we come to several main conclusions:

1. The conflicting parties in the Middle East have violated the rules for civilians protection included in international humanitarian law. It did not pay attention to giving special protection to women and children, as they are vulnerable groups during humanitarian crises and wars.

2. violations against civilians' high rates in the Middle East are based on a fundamental variable in armed conflicts, which is the increase in the number of external actors in the countries of conflict and their militias. That contributes to fueling violence, and the lack of permanent and stable peace agreements.

3. Violations against women and children are mainly caused by the fragility of states in conflict areas, and the increase in poverty rates. It leads children and women in many cases to resort to terrorist militias to improve the material level of both the child and his family.

4. Among the phenomena inherent in all armed conflicts in the region are the early marriage of children, forced recruitment, violence and sexual coercion against women, and the denial of education.

Accordingly, Maat recommends the following:

To the Security Council

- Search for new mechanisms that protect civilians, including women and children, in areas of armed conflict. Take decisive measures at least in establishing safe areas to keep vulnerable groups away from hostilities.
- Stop the sources of external financing for armed militias in the countries in conflict. Which is one of the most important reasons for the failure to reach peace between the various parties.

⁶⁴ تقرير الأمين العام، حول الأطفال والنزاع المسلح في العراق، مجلس الأمن، 23 ديسمبر 2019، للمزيد على الرابط التالي:

<https://tinyurl.com/y34nnjt3>

⁶⁵ أطفال العراق يشكلون الأغلبية من بين حوالي 4.5 مليوناً من العراقيين المهددين بالفقر والحرمان نتيجة لتداعيات فايروس كورونا، يونسيف، 8

يوليو 2020، للمزيد على الرابط التالي: <https://tinyurl.com/y4l38w5v>

To the donors

- Redoubling efforts and injecting the necessary financial support in conflict areas. Ensure that these funds do not reach those who are not eligible, and allocate the most important part of these grants towards reintegration and rehabilitation programs for children and public health for women in the affected areas. That is to contribute, at least, to raising a healthy child.
- Funding programs that provide comprehensive protection for women in conflict zones if there is a serious trend in implementing Security Council Resolution 1325. The building peace idea without women's protection is a fictional idea that conflicts with the reality that women are experiencing in areas of armed conflict and the areas specifically covered by the report.

To the parties to the conflict

- Adherence to international obligations and treaties ratified by each country separately, and the removal of civilians from the conflict, by establishing safe zones for vulnerable groups. And that women and children should not be the target of indiscriminate bombing and arbitrary detention.
- Ensure that those responsible for violations of indiscriminate bombing and violence inside prisons are held accountable. And an end to impunity for human rights violations.
- Comply with the statement made by the High Commissioner for Human Rights that whenever non-state actors exercise state-like functions, they are required to comply with international human rights standards.
- Release the detained women in Houthi prisons. And allow international investigation committees to visit these prisons and write their reports without pressure or dictations.
- To stop recruiting children under eighteen years in conflict. And comply with international human rights law and relevant international covenants and norms.

To the international community

- Imposing sanctions on sources of funding for armed militias in the countries in conflict. Because this funding is an impediment towards concluding peace agreements or at least long-term armistice with a ceasefire. And the use of smart punishments on persons involved in child recruitment, torture, and detention of women in the conflict areas covered by this report