

## **A bloody start to 2018 in Syria; Over 30 children killed in two weeks – UNICEF**

14 January 2018 – Only in the first 14 days of the year, more than 30 children have been killed in escalating violence in Syria's East Ghouta, where an estimated 200,000 children have been trapped under siege since 2013, the top United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) official in the Middle Eastern country said Sunday.

“At a time when most parents are filled with the New Year's hope for their children's future, mothers and fathers in Syria are left grieving for the children they have lost,” said Fran Equiza, UNICEF Representative in Syria in a statement.

“It is shameful that nearly seven years into the conflict, a war on children continues while the world watches. Millions of children across Syria and in neighbouring countries have suffered the devastating consequences of unabating levels of violence in several parts of the country,” he added.

UNICEF received information from inside East Ghouta that people are taking shelter underground in fear for their lives.

Two medical facilities came under attack in the past days in East Ghouta, and most health centres had to close because of the violence. Schools have been reportedly closed in and around East Ghouta at a time when children elsewhere in Syria are sitting for their mid-term exams.

“While we saw a small glimmer of hope at the end of last year with the evacuation of 17 children in urgent need of medical attention, increased violence in and around east Ghouta turned hope into despair for the remaining 120 children who continue to suffer in silence waiting for urgent medical evacuation,” Mr. Equiza said.

In Idlib, to the northwest of the country, heavy violence reportedly killed and injured scores of children and women and displaced an estimated 100,000 civilians in the past few weeks. The maternity and paediatric hospital in Ma'arrat An Nu'man was attacked three times taking it out of service and killing at least one patient and two medical staff.

“We must be able to reach children in need of humanitarian assistance, urgently and without restrictions, wherever they are in Syria. The various parties to the conflict can make that happen by immediately allowing humanitarian workers to reach them with life-saving assistance,” he said.