

# Brutality against children 'cannot be the new normal' stresses UNICEF

28 December 2017 – The scale of attack on children in conflict zones throughout 2017 is “shocking” said the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), calling on all parties to conflict to abide by their obligations under international law and immediately end violations and attacks against children.

“Children are being targeted and exposed to attacks and brutal violence in their homes, schools and playgrounds,” said Manuel Fontaine, the Director of Emergency Programmes at UNICEF, in a news release Thursday.

“As these attacks continue year after year, we cannot become numb. Such brutality cannot be the new normal.”

According to UNICEF, children have become frontline targets, used as human shields, killed, maimed and recruited to fight in conflicts around the world.

Sexual violence, forced marriage, abduction and enslavement have become “standard tactics” in conflicts from Iraq, Syria and Yemen, to Nigeria, South Sudan and Myanmar, said the UN agency.

In addition to the physical trauma children have had to suffer, far too many children have been subjected to the psychosocial trauma in having to witness shocking and widespread violence.

Hundreds of thousands have been displaced and many children have died as a result of lack of health care, medicines or access to food and water, because these services and were damaged or destroyed in fighting.

In some contexts, children abducted by extremist groups experience abuse yet again upon release when they are detained by security forces, added UNICEF.

In the news release, the UN agency underscored the need of all parties to conflict to abide by their obligations under international law to immediately end violations against children and the targeting of civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals.

UNICEF also called on all States with influence over parties to conflict “to use that influence to protect children.”