

## 'Enough is enough;' world cannot become numb to killing of children, says top UNICEF official in Syria

26 January 2018 – With families in Syria's besieged northern town of Afrin on the run or hiding in basements to escape intense shelling, the head of the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) operations in the country has strongly denounced the rising number of child casualties, questioning whether the world is "becoming numb to the killing of children."

"The grim tally of children killed in Syria in the past two weeks has increased daily as violence escalates in several areas across the country," Fran Equiza said on Friday in an impassioned statement.

"Nearly seven years into the conflict, children continue to be the hardest hit by unprecedented destruction, displacement and death. They have lost lives, homes and childhoods. Enough is enough."

According to UNICEF, over the last few days, at least 23 children have reportedly been losing killed as a result of fighting in Afrin, Idlib, Saraqab, Khan Shaykhoun and Damascus.

The attack in Damascus on 22 January, the heaviest in weeks, allegedly occurred as children were leaving school.

Furthermore, families that managed to flee violence in some places are living under extremely difficult conditions and exposed to the harsh winter conditions while others have reportedly been prevented from leaving areas of hostility.

**SEE ALSO:** [Syrian children succumb to freezing temperatures while crossing into Lebanon](#)

In Afrin, violence is reported to be so intense that families are confined to the basements of their building, after reportedly being prevented from leaving the area.

According to UNICEF, the majority of shops in the district are closed and UNICEF-supported child protection services, including a child-friendly space and psychosocial support activities, had to be suspended.

Wars have laws and these laws are being broken every single day in Syria  
UNICEF official Fran Equiza

"Wars have laws and these laws are being broken every single day in Syria," said Mr. Equiza underscoring the need on all parties to the conflict to honour obligations to protect children at all times and to allow safe passage

to all people wishing to leave areas under attack.

#### *Hostilities in Afrin force temporary halt on aid supplies*

Meanwhile, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)) also said Friday that the military campaign in Afrin (north-west Syria) has forced a temporary halt on humanitarian shipments across the border from Turkey into Syria.

[According](#) to Jens Laerke, a spokesperson for the UN relief wing, during the past week, 123 trucks have been put on hold.

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## **Venezuela: Economic woes worsening malnutrition among children, warns UNICEF**

26 January 2018 – Amid growing food insecurity and rising malnutrition among children on the back of a protracted economic crisis in Venezuela, the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) on Friday called on all actors for rapid and coordinated assistance efforts to reach those most in need.

“While precise figures are unavailable because of very limited official health or nutrition data, there are clear signs that the crisis is limiting children’s access to quality health services, medicines and food,” said the UN agency in a [news release](#), Friday, underlining the severity of the situation.

According to UNICEF, national reports in 2009 (the most recent official figures) showed that the prevalence of wasting (low weight to height ratio) in children under five was, at the time, 3.2 per cent.

However, more recent non-official studies indicate “significantly higher rates” of as much as 15.5 per cent, and an additional 20 per cent of children at risk of malnutrition.

Similarly, the [State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017](#) (a comprehensive report on the subject prepared by a number of UN agencies) suggested that undernourishment – a measure of hunger indicating the proportion of population with inadequate energy consumption – in Venezuela rose from 10.5 per cent in 2004-2006 to 13 per cent in 2014-2016.

In response, the Venezuelan Government has implemented measures to mitigate the impact of the crisis on the country’s children, including providing regular food packages at affordable prices to the most vulnerable families, cash transfers, and strengthening of nutritional and recuperation services.

“But more needs to be done to reverse the worrisome decline in children’s nutritional wellbeing,” said UNICEF, calling for the rapid implementation of a short-term response to counter malnutrition, based on disaggregated data and coordinated between the Government and partners.

On its part, the UN agency is working with the Ministry of Health, National Institute of Nutrition and the civil society to strengthen and expand nutritional surveillance at the community level and provide nutritional recuperation services through partners organizations.

The efforts are being implemented through activities such as nutrition screening days aiming to reach over 113,000 children, provision of supplementary and therapeutic foods when required, training programmes and communication campaigns, added UNICEF.

Venezuela has been mired in a socio-economic and political crisis since 2012 and has witnessed rising consumer prices even as the overall economy has contracted.

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## [Overcrowded boat capsizes off Yemen coast, 30 drowned; UN agencies condemn smugglers](#)

26 January 2018 – At least 30 [refugees and migrants](#) drowned when their boat capsized off the coast of Aden, Yemen, the United Nations reported on Friday, saying the overcrowded vessel was believed to have been operated by unscrupulous smugglers who were trying to extort money from the passengers.

The International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) expressed outrage and sadness over the incident, which occurred Tuesday.

“As we have been saying for almost five years now, the preservation of [human life is our utmost priority](#) everywhere,” IOM Director William Lacy Swing said Friday in Davos, Switzerland, where he has been part of the UN agency delegation attending the 2018 World Economic Forum.

“Yemen is no exception,” he added

Survivors of the incident have reported to the UN and partners that an overcrowded boat, packed with 101 Ethiopians and 51 Somalis, departed 23 January from the Al Buraiqa coast in Aden, headed across the Gulf of Aden towards Djibouti.

At least 30 people have died in this tragic incident. There have also been

reports that gunfire was used against passengers.

“We are deeply troubled by reports of this latest incident,” Mr. Swing stressed.

IOM and partners are working with the Yemeni Coast Guard to further understand the incident and provide emergency assistance to survivors, including medicine, food, water and psycho-social support services.

IOM and the Un refugee agency have long been warning that prolonged conflict and insecurity in Yemen exposes vulnerable refugees and migrants to a heightened risk of human rights violations, such as arbitrary arrest, detention, trafficking and deportation.

Yemen is a traditional transitory and migratory hub in the region. Despite prevailing conflict and rapidly deteriorating humanitarian conditions more than 87,000 migrants and refugees risked their lives on the high seas in 2017 – seeking to reach Yemen from the Horn of Africa by boat.

To raise awareness about the horrendous risks and dangers in Yemen, UNHCR launched a [Dangerous Crossings](#) regional awareness campaign last year to inform those contemplating the journey.

IOM, UNHCR and their partners are members of the Mixed Migration Working Group in Yemen, which has been responding to the needs of migrants and refugees there. The Group is appealing for more urgent support to respond to the needs of those most vulnerable in Yemen and to actively pursue solutions for refugees and migrants.

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## [Davos: UN rights chief stresses leading role of businesses in ending LGBTI discrimination](#)

26 January 2018 – With major companies joining the growing list of early adopters of United Nations standards to promote equality for lesbian, gay, bi, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people, the UN human rights chief on Friday highlighted the private sector’s crucial leadership role in ensuring the dignity and equal opportunities of LGBTI employees in the workplace and beyond.

Speaking at the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein said that “companies that take action to end discrimination and support LGBTI communities can be a motor for change.”

The standards, developed by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)), draw on good practice from around the world, setting out actions that can be taken by employers.

These include eliminating unfair treatment against LGBTI people in the workplace, making sure business operations do not contribute to discrimination against customers, suppliers or members of the public, and working with business partners to address discriminatory practices up and down the supply chain.

They also encourage companies to stand up for the rights of LGBTI people in the countries where they operate – including through advocacy and support for local organizations.

“These standards provide the most comprehensive set of benchmarks for responsible corporate behaviour on LGBTI issues. A company of any nationality, size and location or sector can find no better vehicle to correct inequities and end discrimination brought about by prejudice,” Mr. Zeid said.

The High Commissioner was speaking at a panel discussion titled “Free and Equal: Standing Up for Diversity”, which also included Vittorio Colao, Vodafone Group Chief Executive Officer, and Jin Xing, Choreographer and Founder of the Jin Xing Dance Theatre Shanghai, and was moderated by Zanny Minton Beddoes, Editor-in-Chief, of The Economist magazine.

The Standards of Conduct build on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, adopted by the UN Human Rights Council in 2011. They are the product of a year-long process of consultations facilitated by the OHCHR and the Institute for Human Rights and Business.

Nineteen more companies have joined a growing list of early adopters, including Airbnb, Airbus, AXA, Barilla, Bloomberg L.P., Cisco Systems Inc., Gol, Hermes Investment Management, Lloyd’s, Lush Fresh Handmade Cosmetics – North America, Marriott International, MAS Holdings, Nasdaq, New York Life, Santander Group, Tesco, Trillium Asset Management, Unilever, Vert Asset Management, and Xerox.

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## [Yemen: UN chief welcomes measures by Saudi-led coalition to ease access for humanitarian aid](#)

25 January 2018 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has welcomed news that five tankers carrying 180,000 litres of fuel reached Yemen’s northern province of Marib on Wednesday as part of the Saudi-led

coalition's wider plan to facilitate humanitarian action in the war-ravaged country.

"The coalition has committed to [increase humanitarian fuel deliveries](#) to one million litres per week over the coming weeks," Mr. Guterres said in a statement on Thursday.

He noted that in light of the dire, unrelenting humanitarian crisis, the fuel will be delivered, based on need, to health facilities and water stations to keep life-saving services running for local communities.

"I also welcome the generous \$1 billion pledge by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to support humanitarian action in Yemen, as well as their commitment to raise an additional \$500 million from other donors in the region," he stated.

The 2018 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan ([YHRP](#)) was launched on 20 January and seeks \$2.96 billion to assist 13.1 million people across the country.

The Secretary-General urged all donors to channel their contributions through the YHRP and rapidly convert pledges into cash for aid agencies.

He renewed his call to all parties to cease hostilities and engage meaningfully with the UN to achieve a lasting political settlement.

"The most effective way to address humanitarian suffering in Yemen is to end the conflict," he stressed.

Since the escalation of violence in March 2015, when conflict broke out between forces loyal to President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi and those allied to the Houthi rebel movement, Yemen, already the poorest in the region, has been left on the verge of a humanitarian collapse.

*The UN relief wing has more on the Yemen crisis [here](#)*