

Syria: Life 'living nightmare' for children in East Ghouta, UNICEF chief warns

9 February 2018 – Following reports that dozens of children have been killed in violence this week alone in Syria, a senior United Nations official on Friday stressed the need for unconditional evacuations of sick and wounded children from East Ghouta and other sieged areas.

"The violence shows no sign of abating," said UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) Executive Director Henrietta H. Fore in a statement. "For children who remain trapped under siege and under wanton, heavy violence across Syria, life is a [living nightmare](#). They are struggling just to stay alive."

Violence is intensifying in several parts of Syria, and in East Ghouta alone, hundreds of children are in urgent need of medical evacuation, she said, noting that four years of siege have crumbled health and other basic services and over the past few months, malnutrition has increased five-fold.

Evacuation of sick children 'not a bargaining chip'

"Children, wherever they are in Syria, must have access to healthcare. The evacuation of sick and wounded children from besieged areas should be a given, not part of bargaining efforts," she warned.

"I am heartbroken by what the children of Syria continue to suffer because of actions taken by adults – actions that show total disregard for the protection, safety and wellbeing of children," she added.

Protection of children must be paramount at all times, and schools, hospitals and playgrounds should be places of safety, never targets, she stressed, calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities in Syria.