

Syria: UNICEF warns 40,000 children in the line of fire in Raqqa

9 June 2017 – An estimated 40,000 children are trapped in extremely dangerous conditions in Raqqa as fighting intensifies in and around the Syrian city, the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) reported today, warning that many are caught in the crossfire.

Heavy violence in the city of Raqqa is threatening the lives of children, [said](#) Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF Regional Director in the Middle East and North Africa Region, in a statement, which noted that at least 25 children were reportedly killed and scores injured in the city.

He explained that hospitals and schools have reportedly come under attack and that those attempting to flee are at danger of getting killed or injured. He emphasized that children are being deprived of the most basic and life-saving necessities and that little aid have reached Raqqa since 2013 due to violence and access restrictions.

He added that the conflict has resulted in massive displacements in and around the city, with some 80,000 children from Raqqa city now internally displaced and living in temporary shelters and camps.

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UNICEF called on all parties to protect children inside Raqqa, provide safe passage to those wishing to leave the city and grant a protected environment to civilians who fled the city.

Vaccine-derived polio virus detected in children

Meanwhile, the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) reported that a vaccine-derived polio virus has been detected recently in two children in Syria, who have been paralyzed as a result.

Speaking at the regular briefing in Geneva, WHO spokesperson Oliver Rosenbauer said a third child was also detected with the virus, but has not been paralyzed.

He said these strains of polio detected in these children are rare but can arrive. The area affected is Deir-Ez-Zor Governorate in eastern Syria, which in 2013-2014 had been affected by a wild polio outbreak.

WHO is preparing an outbreak response to stop the virus’ spread.

In New York, Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, told reporters that UN humanitarian workers are alarmed that no UN convoys have moved to besieged and hard-to-reach locations in Syria in over two weeks, with the last such convoy on 22 May.

He said that the UN continues its concern for the safety and well-being of some 4,000 people who have reportedly fled from the Tel Safuk area and surrounding villages along the Iraqi border to Markada town in Al-Hasakeh Governorate, due to ongoing fighting in the area.

Also, as fighting advances into Raqqa City, we have reports that over 95,000 people have already fled the city. We remind all parties to the fighting of their obligations to protect civilians under international humanitarian law, he said.