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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[19 January 2016]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).



Middle East Children: Victims of Endless Armed Conflicts

The fact that Iraq ranked the least happy country in the world is of no surprise. According to the available statistics, within the past 13 years (from 2003 to 2016), the civilian's death toll in Iraq amounts to over 171000 lost lives, many of whom are women and children.

An increasing number of children are victims of the ongoing armed conflicts in Iraq and the whole Middle East: children in Iraq, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Yemen are facing breaches of their human rights including the right to life, the right to health, the right to education, the right to food, the right to clean water and the right to adequate housing.

Armed conflicts have various adverse effects on children. Children are killed, maimed, abducted, raped, displaced or are made to serve as child soldiers during the conflicts.

Children lose their life or physical health in armed conflicts. For example, Iraq child casualties, that is the number of children killed or maimed by ISIS atrocities, are estimated to be over 3000 . A recent case is another mass grave discovered, in Iraq, containing bodies of Yazidis, including children, who refused to join the Islamic State .

In war zones, some children are abducted by armed groups and are subjected to abusive behavior. For example in Iraq and Syria, ISIS has abducted over one thousand girls and boys. In one incident in Syria, ISIS abducted approximately 150 young boys on their way home from school in Aleppo. They were released after a few months, but while in captivity, they were physically abused, indoctrinated and made to observe violent practices . In addition, in Iraq, Yazidi girls have been victims of sexual slavery which is quite justified by ISIS interpretation of religious texts. Also, in mid-January 2016, ISIS abducted about 400 Yazidi children who were reportedly being trained as potential suicide bombers .

Another negative effect of war on children is their abuse as child soldiers which leads to both physical disability and serious psychological traumas if they survive the conflict. Child soldiers are seriously injured or permanently disabled in wars. Moreover, those who are forced to kill other people or witness violent scenes will suffer from the adverse life-long effects of their bitter experiences.

Millions of children are reported to be victims of forced displacement as a result of the Middle East conflicts. Displaced children usually suffer from various deprivations, including loss of their home, family, friends and losing the chance of going to school.

As innocent children in war zones, especially Iraq and Syria are still paying the price of war, Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) would like to offer the following recommendations to the Human Rights Council, hoping to alleviate the children's endless sufferings:

- In the wake of the atrocities committed by the extremist groups toward children in Syria and Iraq, ODVV calls on the Human Rights Council to pronounce itself once more on

this challenge. In our globalized world, where threats recognize no border, this challenge could only be thwarted through joint efforts by the entire international community.

- Reports indicate that millions of Iraqi and Syrian refugee children are deprived of education . Since the shocking number of children deprived of schooling because of Middle East and Africa conflict is estimated to be over 13 million , ODVV urges the member states to assist the Human Rights Council bodies such as UNICEF and UNHCR in order to save the children's shattered future.

- Considering the fact that refugee crises is one of the most important challenges the world is facing today, ODVV calls on all member states to stop blaming refugees and migrants for economic and social problems, and instead combat all kinds of xenophobia and racial discrimination in order to prevent future tensions and violence.
