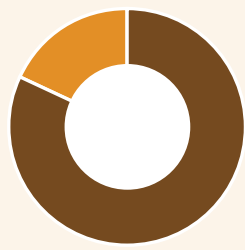


I. Facts & Figures: Recruitment and Use of children

The UN verified **3,377 cases** of children recruitment (3,150 boys and 227 girls) between the period from November 2013 - June 2017, though the actual figure is thought to be even higher:



82% of those served in a combat role, armed and in uniform



30% below 15 years of age when they first engaged with the ANSA

The UN documented an annual steady rise in verified numbers of cases: **351** in 2014, **538** in 2015, **1,034** in 2016 and **1,142** in 2017;

13 out of the 14 Syrian governorates were verified case of child recruitment having occurred:

Aleppo	Dayr al-Zawr	Raqqah	Rif Dimashq	Dar'a	Hasakah
1,140	550	302	271	247	234

ANSAs with the most verified cases of child recruitment are:

- Self-affiliated FSA groups (1,112 out of 38,000)
- ISIS (1,068 out of 30,000)
- Kurdish groups (YPG/YPJ, Asayish): (415 out of 45,000)
- Hay'at Tahrir Al Sham (HTS): (213 out of 12,000)
- Jaish Islam (103 out of 30,000)
- Ahrar al Sham (97 out of 20,000)
- Junud al-Aqsa (17 out of 1,000)
- Nur Din al-Zanki (14 out of 7,000)

II. Group Matrix

In each group, the following will be highlighted: Objective, Ideology, Size (when available), and Policy of recruitment and deployment.

Groups selected:

- Ahrar al Sham
- FSA-affiliated groups
- Hay'at Tahrir Al Sham (HTS)
- ISIS
- Jaish Islam
- National Defense Forces (NDF)
- YPG/YPJ



Armed non-state actors (ANSAs)	Recruitment practices	# of recruitment and use of children verified by MRM as of Nov 2013 - June 2017	Commitment to protection of children in hostilities ¹
Free Syrian Army	The policies and practices are highly different among the FSA factions; Some of them have adopted an official minimum age requirement of 18, others have recruited 9 years old for combat roles ²	(1112); 30 percent of all verified were attributed to the FSA, all boys; An average of 20 children were recruited per month	Signatories ³ of a deed of commitment to child recruitment with Geneva Call
ISIS (and its affiliates)	Children associated with ISSI are called "Cubs of the Caliphate"; Combat roles: As young as seven years old ⁴ ; Generally speaking, ISIS defines adulthood based on one's strength and physical maturity	1,068; 32 percent of the verified cases attributed to ISIS; A 4 years old boy was the youngest recruit; 68 girls as young as 8 years of age were also associated with ISIS for sexual purposes and forced marriage	Not a signatory
Jabhat Nusra-led Hay'at Tahrir Sham	Recruitment has not been well documented since the merger. But, Jabhat Nusra has been heavily recruiting 8 years old boys for both combatant and supporting roles ⁵	213	Not a signatory
Jaysh al-Islam (JI)	Officially prohibits the recruitment under 18 ⁶ , however several cases of child recruitment associated with the group were documented	103	Engaged with humanitarian dialogue about protection of children in armed conflicts ⁷ jointly draft with other ANSAs a statement about the 15 key rules of international humanitarian law in congruence with Islam to be respected in armed conflict.
Ahrar al Sham ⁸	minimum age: 15 years old ⁹ ; combatant roles: at least 16 years old; supporting roles ¹⁰ : 15 years old ¹¹ ; Children join military training camps together with adults; participate in fighting, fight in front lines and received monthly salaries (US\$47 to \$101) in addition to food subsidies including oil, canned goods, and grains	97	In dialogue with Geneva Call on humanitarian norms; not a signatory of any deeds of commitments
Kurdish armed groups (the People's Protection Units and Women's Protection Units and Asayish) ¹²	On Sept 2019, SDF issued a military order prohibiting the recruitment of children under 18 ¹³ Attachment: ..SDF Prohibits Child Recruitment .jpg	415 (boys 263 boys + 152 girls); 12 percent of the verified cases were attributed to Kurdish armed groups: - The People's Protection Units - The Women's Protection Units the Asayish male and female wings. In 2017, the following groups (in addition to the People's Protection Units) were also listed: - Sinjar Resistance Units - Protection Force of Ezidkhan - Zeravani forces, part of the Peshmerga	In 2014, YPG/YPJ becomes a signatory of a deed of commitment to child recruitment with Geneva Call ¹⁴ ; In June 2018, the YPG/YPJ/DSA ¹⁵ announced new measures taken to prevent child recruitment: a) set new internal investigation mechanism to follow up on violations of child recruitment within their ranks; b) opening of a new office in the Defense Committee of the Democratic Self Administration mainly to receive complaints from families on child recruitment; c) modification of minimum age of recruitment to 17 years old; d) issuing an internal notice explaining the new policies

¹In response to the conflict, humanitarian aid agencies have been mobilized for humanitarian and resilience assistance but a few who has been engaged in humanitarian dialogues with armed non-states actors in Syria to raise awareness about protection of civilians in armed conflict, most notably, Geneva Call and International Committee for Red Crescent keeping in mind that each has its own distinct approach

²Syria MRM, "Summary of MRM4Syria Verification"

³The signatories are: 21st Force Union, 23rd Division, Al Watan Liberation Movement, Brigade 51, Brigade Al Motasem, Central Division, First Coastal Division, Jaish Izzah, Southern Front

⁴In an interview conducted by the United Nations University field research team with a former IS fighter who join ISIS in 2014, he said that there was a significant rise in children soldiers in his unit from 25% in 2014 to up to 50% in 2016.

⁵Ibid

⁶In one incident, JI arrested two boys (15+18 years old) along their checkpoint in Daraa as they were heading to join ISIS <https://smartnews-agency.com/ar/wires/PrintPage/id/203706/type/wires>

⁷Geneva Call, Annual Report 2017. Available from https://genevacall.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2018/07/GVA_CALL_RA2017_WEB.25.06.18-1.pdf

⁸In June 2014, Human Rights Watch clarified that it not obvious if the group is actively targeting minor children adding that some leaders in the group, when first joined, did not verify their ages. Despite of this, they were allowed to join regales of their young age

⁹The group has been recruiting children since at least January 2013

¹⁰Such as cooks and cleaners

¹¹An interview with a former child soldier with AS (19, AS from Idlib) in Sanliurfa, Turkey, conducted by United Nations University research team, 26 February 2017

¹²The link below shares 13 commitments PKK/KCK/HPG/YJA-Star/Kongra-Gel have made regarding the rules of armed conflict, from 1995 to date. They are in English and Turkish <http://theirwords.org/?country=TUR&ansa=108>

¹³In June 2014, Human Right Watch reported that SDF recruited significant numbers of minor children (both boys and girls) some are volunteers, while others as young as 13 have been forcibly abducted

¹⁴Since the signature, the group expressed its reservation on the official minimum age of recruitment 18 till it modified its policy in June 2018

¹⁵Before its modification of the official minimum age of recruitment, children ages 16 and 17 could enlist in supporting roles, not in combat roles, "where they receive intellectual and occupational training