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## How 2016 Became the Worst Year for Syrian Children

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According to UNICEF the state of affairs of Syrian children has been deteriorating since last year. The organization's latest report published on March 12 suggests that at least 652 children were killed in military clashes in 2016. That is 20% more than last year.



[Reflections on Six Years of Conflict in Syria](#)

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About 255 children were killed at or near school. More than 850 children were involved in military hostilities, which is 2.5 times more than that in the previous few years. It should be noted however, that the report statistically accounted for only the officially confirmed cases.

As the war against terrorists rages in Syria the militants are increasingly using children in combat clashes on the front lines and turning them into suicide bombers.

The former regional representative of UNICEF in the Middle East, Ahmed Khalifa, told [Sputnik Arabic](#) that these sad figures speak of the great sufferings and troubles of the Syrian children.

“As a result of the six-year conflict about 6 million small Syrian citizens are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance,” Khalifa said.

He further said that there are 250,000 children living in blockade conditions. These [children](#) are in the worst situation because they do not receive any humanitarian assistance.

“They are suffering from diseases that cannot be cured at home without any medical assistance or prescriptions,” the former representative said.

According to UNICEF more than 1 million Syrian children have become displaced inside Syria, with another 2.3 having [fled the country](#). These children are constantly in danger of getting kidnapped and enslaved.

Earlier, Sputnik reported that, according to estimates made by Norwegian media, six years of war have taken a terrible toll on the mental health of Syrian children.

Every fourth Syrian child was found to be struggling with suicidal thoughts, self-harm, substance abuse and/or depression, a survey conducted by Save the Children reveals. Two out of three children surveyed also answered they had lost a loved one, had their home destroyed or sustained [war-related injuries](#) themselves, the Norwegian news portal ABC Nyheter reported.

Save the Children surveyed 458 children and adolescents in all 14 of Syria's provinces (governorates) to coincide with the sixth anniversary of the Syrian war. Of those interviewed, 80 percent said they had become more aggressive, 71 percent suffered from bedwetting and involuntary urination, 51 percent resorted to drugs to cope and 50 percent admitted that they never felt safe, be it at home or at school.

These are possibly signs of so-called "toxic stress," i.e., prolonged stress that can lead to life-long issues with learning, behavior and health.

Syria has been mired in civil war since 2011, with government forces loyal to President Bashar Assad fighting a number of opposition factions and extremist groups.

Russia has been carrying out regular humanitarian aid deliveries to various parts of Syria and has been facilitating the distribution of UN aid in Syria where a civil war has been ongoing since 2011.