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A complaint to the Office for the Protection of Children in Armed Conflicts of the Autonomous Administration, Regarding the Recruitment of 17 Male and Female Minors

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Syrians for Truth and Justice calls for action to monitor the operationalization of the office, established last August, and taking punitive measures against those found indulged in child recruitment, including al-Shabiba al-Thawria/the Revolutionary Youth' and Young Women's Union

On 18 November 2020, Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) made a formal complaint to the Office for the Protection of Children in Armed Conflicts, which was founded by decision of the executive council of the Autonomous Administration in northeast Syria on 30 August 2020, under the action plan signed between the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the United Nations (UN) and approved by the Autonomous Administration on 29 June 2020.

Our complaint contained detailed information on the activities of a group calling itself 'al-Shabiba al-Thawria/the Revolutionary Youth' (Kurdish: Ciwanên Şoreşger) in recruiting male and female minors, with nine verified cases:

1. The first case: the recruitment of a 16-year-old girl child on 23 May 2020.
2. The second case: the recruitment of a 15-year-old girl child while sitting her examinations for the preparatory certificate in the city of Qamishli/Qamishlo on 25 June 2020.
3. The third case: the recruitment of a 14-year-old child in the city of Qamishli/Qamishlo on 2 July 2020.
4. The fourth case: the recruitment of a 15-year-old girl child on 2 July 2020.
5. The fifth case: the recruitment of a 15-year-old child in the ninth grade in the city of Ayn al-Arab/Kobanî in early July 2020.
6. The sixth case: the recruitment of a 14-year-old girl child in the village of Minas to the west of Ayn al-Arab/Kobanî on 6 July 2020.
7. The seventh case: the recruitment of a 14-year-old girl child in rural Ayn al-Arab/Kobanî on 11 July 2020.
8. The eighth case: the recruitment of a 15-year-old girl child in rural Ayn al-Arab/Kobanî on 11 July 2020.
9. The ninth case: the recruitment of a 16-year-old child in the city of Qamishli/Qamishlo on 28 July 2020.

Further, STJ cited detailed information on five other cases of children recruited by the Women's Protection Units (YPJ) and the People's Protection Units (YPG), which are parts of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF):

1. The first case: the recruitment of a 15-year-old child by the YPG in the Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhood in the city of Aleppo on 25 May 2020.
2. The second case: the recruitment of a 16-year-old girl child – while preparing for her preparatory school exams – by the YPJ in the Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhood on 29 May 2020.
3. The third case: the recruitment of a 14-year-old child by the SDF on 1 June 2020.
4. The fourth case: the recruitment of a 15-year-old child by the YPJ, east of Al-Raqqqa, in mid-August 2020.
5. The fifth case: the recruitment of a 16-year-old secondary girl student – while attending her school – by the women Asayish with help from the Young Women's Union.

In addition, STJ verified the existence of three minor girls in the SDF ranks since late 2019 to the date of filing this complain on 16 November 2020; they are:

1. A 16-year-old girl recruited by people linked to the SDF on 7 January 2020 from Shahba area to the north of Aleppo.
2. A 14-year-old child girl recruited in late 2019 by the YPJ from the Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhood in the city of Aleppo.
3. A 14-year-old child girl recruited in February 2019 by the YPJ from the city of Tell Rifaat in north Aleppo.

Consequently, STJ recommends the Autonomous Administration and the SDF:

1. To demonstrate transparency and full commitment to the agreements signed, either with Geneva Call, in July 2014, or with the UN, in late June 2019, to prevent the recruitment and use of children in military operations.
2. To immediately demobilize child soldiers and reunite them with their families and put those at risk of home violence in the care of the responsible civilian authorities.
3. To monitor the functioning of the Office for the Protection of Children in Armed Conflicts, in receiving complaints related to child recruitment and handling them and to take punitive measures against those found indulged in child recruitment, including al-Shabiba al-Thawria/the Revolutionary Youth' and Young Women's Union.
4. To dissolve the groups and organizations recruiting children, primarily the al-Shabiba al-Thawria/the Revolutionary Youth and the Young Women's Union and to hold all parties (individuals and entities) involved in such acts accountable.



History

Syrians for Truth and Justice was conceived during the participation of its co-founder in the Middle-East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) Leaders for Democracy Fellowship program, who was driven by a will to contribute to Syria's future. Starting as a humble project to tell the stories of Syrians experiencing enforced disappearances and torture, it grew into an established organisation committed to unveiling human rights violations of all sorts.

Convinced that the diversity that has historically defined Syria is a wealth, our team of researchers and volunteers works with dedication at uncovering human rights violations committed in Syria, in order to promote inclusiveness and ensure that all Syrians are represented, and their rights fulfilled.

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