

Report About Refugee Children From Kobane and Sinjar

On behalf of Eğitim Sen, representing 127.000 education and science workers in Turkey, we would like to mention that the education right for all children is the basic human right. In our geography war is the main point to block exercising equal, democratic, secular, qualified and mother-language based education.

In our country, internal war has lasted 30 years. Now, the war in Syria, Kobane and Sinjar is so similar to internal war in our country. Since we all know that we are all influencing from the pains caused by the war, there is no need for hesitation to say that world is not the audience to wars. All people who are living in different parts of world are not neutral about wars. Everybody is in favor or against wars. We are opposite side of the war. We support justice and future. But the war in our geography still continues. Children are the innocent victims of it. The war which threatens the future of Arab, Turk, Kurdish, Yezidi, Assyrian and Christian children has not yet ended. Ongoing war in Syria and Iraq is against our hopes, equality ideals and freedoms of whole society in our region. The loser of this war is all humanity but there is no winner. According to us, it is impossible to win a war. If we want to stop the war in which the most brutal methods like massacres and genocides are used, people should freely determine their own future. Whenever we live, we have something to do for democracy and freedoms. It can be small or more. But we have to do something. We are making a fight for public, universal, mother language based and quality education. It is our responsibility to protect education right of all children.

Since 2011 the war in Syria, thousands of children has lost their lives, injured, forced to migrate and faced to violations of their fundamental rights. According to UNICEF data; 5.5 million children are affected by this war either directly or indirectly. We can say that war affects children in all the ways it affects adults, but also in different ways. Four major impacts can be mentioned. First of all; during clashes, the respect of child's best interest concerning their care and protection shall not be primary consideration. Secondly, the fundamental needs of children could not be satisfied. Furthermore, children could not exercise their rights of expressing their views freely and be a member of democratic society. They do not to find a chance to be active participant of society due to their psychological traumas by wars. Lastly, children's right of education is being violated. Before the war, enrollment rate in schools was %95 percent in Syria. But now, 3 million children have dropped out their schools. I would like to also highlight one issue, before the war there was

not mother language based education in Syria. In short, deaths and injuries are only physical dimension of this problem. The future of Syrian and Iraqi children are under threat of extinction.

While internal war in Syria is not over yet, DAİŞ (Islamic State terrorist organization) has started to make genocide using the extremely violent methods in Northern Syria and Iraq. DAİŞ has made first massacre against civilians in Sinjar which is sacred space for Yazidi people. It is the fact that Yazidi people has ancient sect's bloodline. They are only marrying within their community due to their culture. That's why DAİŞ has targeted women and children to convert them into Muslims by impregnating them. Yazidi women has been sold, raped and enslaved by ISIS. It is assumed that ISIS has kidnapped 7.000 Yazidi women. This is the proof of that ISIS is enemy of whole women. Since women are creator of life in world, their first target is women. Moreover, children are recruited by terrorist organization. People who managed to escape from the attacks of Islamic jihadists of ISIS remained in Sinjar Mountain. However, shortage of food, water and accommodation is a real problem for them. After jihadist has occupied Sinjar town, they turned their attacks towards Kurdish cantons in North Syria. These cantons are named as Afrin, Kobane and Cizire. All of them have democratic and self-declared government in autonomous areas. Different ethnic, cultural and belief groups are equally represented in them. Before internal war in Syria, Kurdish people do not have any identity card. Syrian state disregarded all Kurdish people. They were not citizens so they did not have any right like ordinary people. But they founded their new canton-type states in North Syria which is a good example in Middle East for oppressed people. ISIS has attacked not only civilian people in Kobane but also the burgeoning hope and belief of freedom in the region. Because of that, children and women have been targeted. The assimilation policies against all differences have been carried out. Self-defense powers of people in Kobane, YPG and YPJ, have been resisting against this brutal organization. However, many civilian people are forced to flee to Turkey because of safety reasons. Civilian people from Kobane and Sinjar are now refugees in Turkey.

According to data published by UNCHR, 1.097.724 people from Iraq and Syria come to Turkey. 17 percent of them are between 0 and 4 years old, 20 percent is between 4 and 11, and 15 percent is between 11 and 17 years old. In other words, half of total refugees in Turkey are children. They are living inside and outside of camps. To win them back to society, they need support of us. In Turkey, there are 22 camps whose capacity is 220.000 people in 10 different cities. Only half of Syrian people who are living outside camps are registered by state. The main problem of refugees is deal with their statue. Half of Syrian people living in Turkey, registered ones, are not considered as refugee by Turkey. Because of that they could not have rights like refugees. AKP government carried out charitable approach towards registered Syrian and Iraqi people rather than human rights-based approach. United Nations could not intervene under any circumstances due to legal structure in Turkey. We are also witnesses that camps for refugees are used to organize military attacks inside Syria. There are many news in media showing that strategic plans of

war in Syria has been made and terrorist from different Islamic groups has stayed in these camps.

Despite all, AKP government has behaved the only actor not allowing any internal or international intervention. It blocks international support and solidarity without any explanation. According to us, the reason of them is behind its policies. AKP government has discriminated people migrated from Iraq and Syria based on their religion, ethnic origins, culture and beliefs. We can see this discrimination when we look at people who live inside camps. They are only Sunni and Arab people. Camps in Turkey do not accept Alawite, Assyrian, Kurdish or Yazidi people. Kurdish people who come from Sinjar and Rojava, Christians and Assyrians are discriminated. Arabs and Sunnis have better conditions supported by state authorities.

UNHCR declared that only 60 percent of children in camps and 27 percent outside camps go to school. In other words, majority of fleeing children are deprived of fundamental right of education. There are some schools established for them but the language of education is only Arabic. That's why pupils whose mother-tongue is other than Arabic or Turkish miss out on basic education. In Turkey, it is forbidden to give education in different languages in public schools. Almost half of migrated children could not have any chance to go to school since they don't know Arabic or Turkish. Since it is forbidden to make education in Kurdish in public schools, Kurdish refugee children could not go to schools. In Turkey, as a result of discriminative refugee policies, education in only Arabic, language is expanding, not Kurdish. There are schools inside camps. Additionally, public schools served classes for Arabic education in the region where Syrian and Iraqi people live intensely. According to a report published by UNICEF, Turkey has targeted to give education in Arabic language to 500.000 children by the end of 2015.

On behalf of our union, we would like to mention that we are also in favor of education in Arabic language. But there are also Kurdish children. It is unfair that some children who are Sunni and Arab have the opportunity to go to school but others not. Who will be responsible from protection, education, care and health of Kurdish and Yazidi children; if the government do not what needed to be done?

As members of Eğitim Sen, we support equal education right for all children. It is not easy for us to support this universal principle. We have faced many oppressions of government throughout our history. There is only reason for this pressure. We do not accept discriminative policies of government in education field. We are the only union which can succeed to be a member of Education International. In the last period, Turkish government has used conservatism as an attack against union activists. These attacks has resulted with deeper inequality in education. For example, AKP government has released wearing headscarf inside schools by claiming removing all restrictions on clothes. But it is not the fact. Our members have been investigated by school authorities due to their dresses. It is a

contradiction. Our union is in favor of equality and democracy. Unless education right for all children either native or refugee, it will be impossible to live in a peaceful society.

In this framework, members of Eđitim Sen are working voluntarily to provide food, clothes or sheltering needs of children in Batman, řırnak, Mardin, Urfa, Diyarbakır and Antep. While our psychology teachers makes therapy with children, teachers who know Kurdish are giving lessons from different subjects. We also provide financial support to them in order to satisfy their basic needs. In Batman, members of Eđitim Sen give lessons at the level of pre-school and primary to 307 Yazidi students whose ages range from 4 to 12. But students do not have any text books. We need to reproduce sample textbooks. Moreover, our members in Batman would like to found a new school in which three classrooms will be opened. We also need support for construction a school. Also, our members in Mardin are giving voluntarily lessons to 874 children from Kobane. Due to limited means, they have managed to give lessons in only weekends. In řırnak, our members would like to transform a free tent into pre-school institution. Since, due to insufficient resources, 700 children could not have education. In Diyarbakır, our members have deal with 526 children under five years old and 430 children between 5 and 15 years old. Our members observe that the main problem for children, especially for girls, is the absence of schools. Even if our members in different cities try to do something for mother language based and equal education for all children, they have financial challenges.

Eđitim Sen will continue to fight in order to overcome all obstacles. As education and science workers in Turkey, we will use all democratic ways in order to realize our aims. We will continue to support education right of refugee children from Kobane and Sinjar with international comrades.