



Supreme Military Council

Dated: 26 JUN 2014

A statement about the recruitment of child soldiers

Based on the reports issued by international human rights organisations, and the latest report by the 'Human Rights Watch', regarding the recruitment of children in military actions within the forces of the Syrian opposition. The General Staff of the Free Syrian Army emphasises its active role in combating this despicable practice. We work with all affiliated military units via a mechanism for monitoring and reporting to ensure non-recruitment of fighters or under any title who are under the age of eighteen. This approach complies with all international conventions regarding the rights of children, in particular The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 2003.

We, in the FSA General Staff, refer to the recruitment of children, by the Assad regime, for the so-called People's Committees and National Protection Forces. The Assad allies, including Hezbollah and Iraqi battalions fighting in Syria, also work in a systematic manner on the recruitment of children.

We call upon all factions of the military opposition to adopt mechanisms and working practises to prevent children from engaging in military actions or supporting any military activity, as this has a devastating effect on the psychology of children. We demand that all military units immediately release all fighters who are under the age of eighteen. We call upon all humanitarian organisations concerned with children to help with the effective reintegration and rehabilitation of child soldiers into society.

The General Staff of the Free Syrian Army agrees to cooperate with all relevant organisations and by all means available to monitor this damaging and illegal practise, which is classified as a war crime.

**Staff Brigadier General
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Chief of Staff of the Supreme Military Council
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