

ONE YEAR LATER
BELGIAN CHILDREN IN KURDISCH CAMPS IN NORTH-
EAST SYRIA
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One Year later

Belgische kinderen in Koerdische detentiekampen in Noordoost-Syrië

1. Introduction

Exactly a year ago, we returned from a second visit to Kurdish refugee and detention camps in Northeast Syria. The visit was a humanitarian mission aimed at preventing even more children and mothers from dying from war wounds, malnutrition, dehydration, pneumonia, diarrhea and other easily preventable diseases. Living conditions in the camps were extremely inhumane and harsh, with a serious lack of food, drinking water, tents, hygiene and medical care and an increasing threat of radicalization. The consequences of these inhuman living conditions and increasing IS radicalization were clearly reflected in the medical and psychological condition of the 41 Belgian children and their 14 mothers that we examined.¹ Almost all children and mothers had chronic diarrhea. About 70% of children under 5 years of age were chronically malnourished, resulting in a slowdown in height growth and weight gain and an increasing developmental delay. Above the age of 5, the malnutrition rate was 50%. Several mothers and children still had unhealed orthopedic war injuries requiring further medical attention. Four of them were diagnosed with injuries that needed to be treated again in the short term. During the game observations, we noticed clear signs of severe psychological stress and a lack of developmental learning experiences with a detrimental impact on the language acquisition, cognitive development and school skills of the oldest preschoolers and schoolchildren, resulting in their future integration and educational opportunities in increasing be hindered.

One year later, more than 7,000 children, the majority of whom are under 6 years old, still live in the same inhuman conditions. According to recent figures from the Syrian Observatory, 103 people have died in the Al Hol detention camp (Al Hasakah) since the beginning of 2020, 62 of them children. This **brings the number of deaths since January 2019 to 588, of which 488 children** from different countries, such as Portugal, Russia, the United Kingdom, Turkey, Belgium, China, Morocco, Tunisia, Somalia, India ... Again the children were confronted with war violence, bombing and shelling in an increasingly instable region, where the corona crisis is imminent and where desert summer has begun. For the third time, the children will have to survive temperatures of up to 50°C in tents, because the international and mainly European community does not assume its responsibility for the repatriation and trial of its citizens.

This report provides an overview of developments in the legal and political field of the past year. In both areas we notice a shift in decisions and approaches, with children's and human rights increasingly making way for convulsive and persistent efforts to avoid the return of mothers, at the expense of the children.

¹ A VUB team of doctors, pediatrician, child psychologists and psychotherapists visited the detention camps in October 2018 and in June 2019. The reports (in Dutch) can be found through the following links: (<https://youthatsocialrisk.be/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Verslag-missie-syrie-2018.pdf>) and (<https://youthatsocialrisk.be/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Rapport-2-Missie-Syri%C3%AB-juni-2019.pdf>)

2. Judiciary decisions regarding the repatriation of Belgian children

Court cases and judiciary decision

As in the previous years, Belgians and their family members continued their attempts at forcing a repatriation through the judiciary system. A number of lawsuits were filed again against the Belgian state last year for their repatriation and that of their children, in accordance with Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which obliges states to protect children and also Article 38/4, which requires governments to provide special protection for children in conflict situations.

In December 2018, there were hopeful signs that the judiciary would follow family members in their demands. In a summary procedure, a judge obliged the Belgian state to take all possible measures to bring six underage children and their two mothers to Belgium, and also imposed a penalty.² The judge declared the return of the children without the parents “in violation of fundamental human rights” and “manifestly illegal”. The judge thereby went against an earlier court decision, in which the Belgian state was not found responsible. So this was an important positive signal.

The Belgian state appealed against this court decision in February 2019. The Court of Appeal decided in favor of the Belgian state. The Belgian state was released from the obligation to repatriate the children and mothers. These two judgments are indicative of the course of the judiciary in the period that would follow: a succession of positive and negative judgments regarding the Belgian state’s responsibility to repatriate the Belgian mothers and their children.

Between June 2019 and June 2020, we observe a number of important developments and changes in the course of law. In the various statements we see an increasing recognition by the different parties that the children (a) reside in precarious circumstances and (b) are in an urgent situation. The Belgian state therefore seems to no longer challenge the claimants’ initial position that the children are in precarious circumstances and should be repatriated.³ In addition, the Belgian government recognizes the moral obligation to repatriate the children at repeated occasions.

However, an important shift occurs in extent to which the Belgian government is considered to be able to repatriate the children effectively, especially vis-à-vis the role of the parents in this. In the summary proceedings of 11 December 2019 before the Dutch-speaking Court of Brussels, the judge ordered the Belgian State to repatriate 10 Belgian children and imposed a penalty on the Belgian state.⁴ This decision was discussed extensively in the Belgian press and elicited many political reactions.⁵ In this decision, however, the court also stated that the parents should not be repatriated. The judges considered that the parents had acted negligently by travelling to a conflict zone, and thereby endangering both themselves and their children. The court thus ordered that only the children should be repatriated.

² Nederlandstalige Rechtbank van Eerste Aanleg Brussel, Beschikking, 10^e Kamer – Kortgeding, 2018/75/C

³ Hof van Beroep in Brussel van 5 Maart 2020, 2020/KR/3 en 2019/KR/60

⁴ Nederlandstalige Rechtbank van Eerste Aanleg Brussel, 10^e Kamer, Kortgeding, 2019/90/C

⁵ See <https://www.hln.be/in-de-buurt/brussel/belgische-staat-moet-10-kinderen-van-is-strijders-helpen-naar-belgie-terug-te-keren~a0237a74/> and https://www.nieuwsblad.be/cnt/dmf20200206_04837512

The Belgian state however appealed against this decision to pay a penalty, and was proven right. On February 25, 2020, the Court ruled that the Belgian government could only be forced to pay periodic penalty payments if it was shown that it had forsaken its duties.⁶ However, the Court determined that the Belgian state could not be held responsible as long as the Kurdish authorities did allow the children to leave without their parents. In addition, the parents were expected to provide written consent for the repatriation of their children. As long as these conditions were not met, the Belgian government could not be held responsible.

The above court decisions point towards an important change in the judiciary over the past year. While the government initially contested the 'urgency' of the claims and particularly pointed to limited jurisdiction, the emphasis now seems to be increasingly on the responsibilities of the Kurdish self-government and the parents, who are seen as obstacles to the effective repatriation of the children (without the parents). However, this shift is accompanied by increasing international criticism from human rights institutions and organizations.

International condemnation

On two occasions, the Committee against Torture asked the Belgian government to take measures to protect its nationals in detention camps in Northeast Syria. It is very specific about women and very young children. The Committee Against Torture is the body of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) that monitors compliance with the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Two complaints against the Belgian government's failure to comply with this convention were considered justified in recent weeks and led to a request to take action against the inhuman and degrading treatment of nationals. The government's failure to respond to this prompted, at a second reprimand, a request to provide necessary consular assistance to a Belgian mother and her two young children by:

1. Providing them with the necessary identity and travel documents for their repatriation by the government or a humanitarian organization.
2. Take all other necessary measures to protect their physical and psychological integrity.
3. Inform the Committee of the measures taken.

Contrary to a similar ruling by a Belgian judge in summary proceedings in 11 December 2019, it does not concern legally enforceable measures, but rather an international reprimand for non-compliance with the international human rights treaties, to which Belgium committed itself as a European democratic constitutional state.

How long can the European Union continue to accept that a democratic Member State continues to systematically ignore human rights reproaches? Especially when they come from the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and go against the most fundamental values of Europe.

⁶ Nederlandstalige Rechtbank van Eerste Aanleg Brussel, Beschikking, 10^e Kamer Kortgeding, 2020/13/C

3. Government policy regarding the repatriation of the Belgian children

In contrast to Western Europe, several countries already repatriated their own citizens from Syria and Iraq a year ago, including Kosovo (74 children, 32 women, 4 men), Uzbekistan (148 women and children), Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Russia, Turkey, Indonesia and the United States (16 adults and children). The repatriation of Belgian citizens from the detention camps is limited to 6 minors who stayed in Al Hol camp without a parent. After the recovery of these minors on June 13, 2019, the government has not carried out any repatriation, including the boy who was dying of malnutrition and dehydration at the time of the repatriation as an orphan child of 15 months. He survived through rapid medical intervention. Since then he has been raised by a Belgian mother in the camp. He could have been with his Belgian family as the seventh orphan, but he recently received the following message:

“... although the situation of (X) is certainly regrettable, the FPS Foreign Affairs cannot intervene for him (...) After all, our FPS can only take action for children who have or could have the Belgian nationality. Given that the mother (who may have died) was of (XX) nationality, the child was born out of wedlock and your brother did not have the opportunity to recognize the child, (X) did not have his father's nationality but his mother (...) If she had actually had (XX) nationality, you may be able to contact the (XX) embassy in Brussels to check whether they are aware of the situation of (X). ”

(FPS Foreign Affairs report, 18 June 2020)

The Belgian minor of age in Syria/Iraq

The table below shows that an estimated 208 Belgian children accompanied their parents to Syria / Iraq or were born there. Of these, 38 have returned and 51 have been identified in detention camps in Northeast Syria. Of the other 119 children (57%), they have little or no news. About 35 of the 51 children in the detention camps have a Belgian mother and are eligible for immediate repatriation to Belgium. More than 90% of these children are under 6 years old.

A second observation is the increase in the number of returned children, which rose from 22 to 38 in the past year, despite government policies that failed to bring these children back.

Tabel 1. Overview of Belgian minors in Syria/Iraq

	Oktober 2018	Juni 2019	Oktober 2019	Juli 2020
Totaal	184	184	184	208
0-11 jaar	169	169	169	190
12-18 jaar	15	15	15	18
In Syrië/Irak	162	162	156	170
0-11 jaar	149	149	146	157
12-18 jaar	13	13	10	13
Teruggekeerd	22	22	28	38
0-11 jaar	20	20	23	33
12-18 jaar	2	2	5	5
Detentiekampen NO-Syrië	15	51	56	51
Geregistreerd 0-11 jaar	14	38	56	51
12-18 jaar	1	3	0	0
Belgische moeder				
Met 0-11 jaar	14	34	45	35
12-18 jaar	0	0	0	0
Zonder 0-11 jaar	0	4	11	16
12-18 jaar	1	3	0	0
Overleden in kampen	1	3	5	6
0-11 jaar	1	3	5	5
12-18 jaar				1

Political decisions

In February 18, 2020, Minister of Foreign Affairs Philippe Goffin (MR) appealed to the Belgian mothers in the detention camps in the Chamber of Representatives. The minister asked them to demonstrate a sense of responsibility and a repatriation of the children without admitting the mothers: "First, think about the well-being of your children and allow the government to implement it." With this, he repeated that the government was ready to repatriate the children, but that the mothers did not allow this.

This intention to repatriate had been announced one week earlier in New York when Belgium, as chair of the UN Security Council, put the protection of children in armed conflicts as a priority. Minister Philippe Goffin then argued, "Once a conflict is passed from one generation to another, peace and stability become more difficult." He stated that the Belgian government wants repatriate all 42 children from the camps without their mothers as soon as possible. The administrative preparations for their repatriation had been made and the necessary travel documents were available in Erbil (Northern Iraq). Here too, he stated that the mothers are responsible for protecting their children: "The mothers decide to give their children a safe life, or they can stay on the ground together."

Putting responsibility for the return of the children on the shoulders of the mothers is a strategy previously used by the government to prevent the children from returning. In December 22, 2017, the government decided that children of Belgian Syrians under the age of 10 could automatically return to our country, when their ancestry was determined by a

DNA test. In concrete terms, this meant that the mothers were expected to go to a Belgian embassy with their children, the nearest being in Turkey. This was impossible for the mothers and children trapped in the detention camps.

Once again, the government presented the mothers with an impossible and non-existent choice by suggesting that the return of their children depended on them. In reality, the mothers cannot and do not have anything to decide. The repatriation of children without mothers has never been an option for over two years. As in most Western European countries, the repatriation of children is stuck because the Kurdish Autonomous Self-Government refuses to let children leave without mothers, , referring to the Children's Rights Convention.

Convention on the Rights of the Child
November 20, 1989

Article 9. States Parties shall ensure that a child is not separated from his or her parents against their will unless the competent authorities decide, subject to the possibility of judicial review, in accordance with applicable law and procedures. that this separation is necessary in the best interests of the child. Such a decision may be necessary in a particular case, such as when the child is abused or neglected by the parents, or when the parents are separated and a decision has to be made regarding the child's whereabouts.

The position of the Kurdish Self-Government regarding the repatriation of the Belgian children is in accordance with the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that a child should not be separated from its parents, unless this is in the interest of the child and is sanctioned through legal process. Neither condition was met, and yet the Belgian government continued to attempt to repatriate the children without their mothers.

In an attempt to persuade the Kurdish authorities to violate the children's rights, several mothers receive text messages, ordered by the Belgian government, in which they were given an ultimatum (including April 3 and May 15): allow their children to be repatriated within a few days. It was always presented as a single and exceptional opportunity to take their children away from the detention camps.

This approach sparked outrage and panic among the mothers, children and Belgian families and also lead to several escapes from the camps. Mothers with children attempted to reach Turkey to use the Belgian-Turkish "hotspot" procedure and to be extradited to Belgium. Some were intercepted, one woman is missing and another mother and children were actually extradited from Turkey. The idea of a sudden divorce from their children was unbearable. They did not want to do this to their children.

Messages from the camps in North-East Syria



BLOG: <https://youthatsocialrisk.be/home/berichten/>

10/04/2020 I had yet another nightmare

Some time ago, when we were just told that they want to come get the children without the mothers, my son came to sit with me. I was peeling potatoes. He asked: "Mommy why is Belgium not coming"? "Because they only want to take you, the children, and mom doesn't." "No, mommy then me and my brother will stay here too."

The next night he woke up shockingly and crying ... "What's the matter? What is it?" He couldn't speak. I grabbed him and asked if he was in pain? He still couldn't speak. Again I asked what was wrong. After five minutes he replied: "Mommy, me and my brother will not leave without you huh, we will stay with you huh." He was clearly having a nightmare and his whole body was shaking when he woke up.

The same happened two days later. Again he woke choking and crying. I said not to be afraid, "Mommy is here and will be with you."

In the meantime it has happened to me too. A few times I dreamed that they suddenly stood at the tent and took my children away from me. I also woke up crying. Tears also ran down my cheeks.

We've been living in a nightmare for years and it still continues. We want these nightmares to end. We ask to be tried for what we have done wrong. We ask to stop punishing our children because they have done nothing to anyone. (A mother from the camps)

22/04/2020 A devastating and impossible choice

Mid days are warm days and the nights are cold. It is now almost 3 years that we live here in the camp. My children run and play in a tent of a few square meters. When will this misery be over? What is the future perspective for my sons? As a mother I now have to make a choice, a forced choice. Do I send my sons without a mother back to an unknown world? Or do I keep them here with me with no prospect of a future. No mother can make this choice. These children are not like other children. They don't understand who or what daddy is, don't know who or what grandma and grandpa are. They don't know what family is, not what a house is. They only know mom. Mommy is everything to them.

If I sent my kids without me, knowing that I would never return because they don't want us back, will they not hold a grudge. Resentment against their mama: "Mama sent us back because we were too much for her. Because she couldn't take it anymore." Will they think that way? Which is not really the case. The reality is that Mommy was forced to make such a choice. If I don't send my children back as a mom, then I am a selfish mother taking her children hostage, while I want the best for them and think about their future. But what is their future in the end? No matter how old a child, a toddler or an adolescent, having your mom next to you is the foundation of a healthy future. As a mother, I cannot be separated from my children, not for myself but for my children. (A mother from the camps)

27/06/2020 We no longer have any hope

The mothers here have no hope in the government. We just wait and see what's going to happen. So many lawsuits and no change, so many letters and no change. Women and children are burned here by the bad conditions and no one looks back. A little girl was bitten yesterday by an insect which has now mutilated all her face. Her mother went to the administration to ask her to be taken to the hospital. The person in charge just sent her away. We no longer have any hope. (A mother from the camps)

The above message was the answer to our request to appeal to the government to be repatriated, albeit in a way that is significantly different than what the government has been trying to do in recent months.

Indeed, it is unacceptable to ask mothers to give up their children after having been obliged for months or years to care for them, in situations of extreme weather, malnutrition, lack of clean water, untreated wounds and diseases, extremist violence, war and bombing. Such actions of forcing mothers to give away their children threaten to match the inhumanity of IS.

The only stability the children have is their mothers who, despite psychological stress, lack of perspective, inhumane living conditions and previous trauma, protect them from violence and radicalization in the camps, and who reassure them in troubled and anxious moments. A breach of attachment would be a serious, additional traumatic experience, as described in the following letter to the government that was signed by 463 mainly (pediatric) psychologists, (pediatric) therapists, pediatricians, child psychiatrists, (ortho) pedagogues, teachers, educators and lawyers.

Repatrieer kinderen samen met hun moeders uit Koerdische detentiekampen in Noordoost-Syrië



Het huidige voorstel van de regering om bij een repatriëring van Belgische kinderen uit Koerdische detentiekampen in Noordoost Syrië de kinderen van hun moeders te scheiden botst op een aantal verontrustende psychologische bedenkingen. Jonge kinderen op een bruske manier van hun ouders weghalen zonder perspectief op een mogelijk weerzien riskeert op korte en lange termijn te leiden tot ernstige psychosociale ontwikkelingsproblemen. Als (kinder)psychologen, (kinder)therapeuten, kinderartsen, kinderpsychiaters, (ortho)pedagogen en opvoeders voelen we ons verplicht hierop te wijzen in het belang van deze jonge kinderen.

Op korte termijn riskeert zulke bruske onthechting van een vertrouwensfiguur bij jonge kinderen ernstige emotionele en sociale problemen, waaronder ernstige verlatingsangst, een terugval in hun psychologische ontwikkeling en de ontwikkeling van een onveilig hechtingspatroon, met name een onveilig-afwerende en/of gedesorganiseerde gehechtheid, die zich uit in afhankelijk vastklampen en afwerend wegduwen, boosheid, angsten, hevige stressreacties, moeilijk te troosten, snelle en hevige gedrags- en gevoelsveranderingen en een gebrek aan vertrouwen in hechtingsfiguren en andere personen. Ook op lange termijn riskeert deze onveilige gehechtheid een duurzame invloed te hebben op latere sociale relaties.

Bij de Belgische kinderen in de Koerdische detentiekampen zullen deze psychologische gevolgen op korte en lange termijn des te ernstiger zijn. Het betreft immers kinderen die op zeer jonge leeftijd werden blootgesteld aan levensbedreigende, traumatiserende situaties van bombardementen, beschietingen, gruweldaden, gevangenschappen, isoleercellen en langdurige detentie in zeer erbarmelijke omstandigheden. De zeer hechte band die hierdoor ontstond tussen moeders en kinderen mag niet worden onderschat en kan men niet zomaar verbreken zonder blijvende psychologische schade aan te richten. Een psychologisch-medisch team stelde immers in oktober 2018 ter plekke vast dat de psychologische impact van de vele traumatiserende situaties op de kinderen relatief beperkt was mede door de bescherming en zorg van hun moeders. Ook de voorbije maanden en jaren tijdens het gedwongen verblijf in detentiekampen waren het de moeders die hun kinderen moesten beschermen tegen extreme weersomstandigheden, ondervoeding, onbehandelde wonden en ziekten en opnieuw oorlog en bombardementen. De kinderen nu repatriëren zonder hun moeders zal leiden tot een zeer ingrijpende onthechting, die de opgelopen traumatische stress zal versterken en de sociaal-emotionele ontwikkeling en sociale integratie in de samenleving ernstig riskeert te belemmeren.

Bovendien zullen deze kinderen op lange termijn worden geconfronteerd met de feiten dat ze gedurende maanden tot meerdere jaren verbleven in detentiekampen, omdat de toenmalige regering naliet hen te repatriëren. En, dat ze werden gescheiden van hun moeders, die de regering onberecht en ongestraft achterliet in Syrië. Sociaal-psychologisch riskeert dit te leiden tot een verheerlijking van hun ouders als helden, die vochten tegen de samenleving die hen dit heeft aangedaan.

Forcing young children to leave their mothers as a condition of living is absolutely not in the children's interest and does not contribute to their well-being and a safe life. Rather, it leads to the transmission of conflict from one generation to the next. Not only will peace and stability become more difficult; hate, polarization, violence and war are also fed over generations.

Over the past few days and weeks, we have witnessed the psychological impact and harm that can be done when the children are separated from their mothers. A first time, when Belgian children were returned via Turkey and a second time, with the recent repatriation of 10 French children on 22 June 2020.

4. Return via Turkey

On November 20, 2019, Bouchra and Tatiana, two Belgian mothers, crossed the Syrian-Turkish border with a French woman and nine Belgian children after leaving the Kurdish detention camp Ain Issa in northeastern Syria and roaming in the desert for six weeks. The four oldest children (5-7 years old) were separated from their mothers and placed in a crowded youth facility where they stayed for eight weeks without understanding and speaking the language. After two months, the four traumatized children were repatriated to our country, where they were entrusted to the grandparents and were finally able to relax, partly through support from youth care. As psychologists and therapists with nearly 40 years of experience working with children around the world, we have seldom seen children who reacted with such distress to the separation and detachment of their mothers. They clung to their grandmother, tried to stay with her as much as possible and lost themselves in screaming, crying, hitting and kicking when a divorce was imminent. At night they awoke anxiously, shouting for their mothers.

Meanwhile, Bouchra and Tatiana remained in a Turkish prison with their two youngest children (19 months and 3 years). In March 11, 2020, the Turkish court decided not to prosecute them in Turkey, because they had turned themselves over after crossing the border. The same day they were released from prison and transferred to the return center of the Provincial Directorate of Migration in Gaziantep Province, where they were held administratively, pending their extradition. They stayed there for a dozen weeks. Some foreigners who also stayed in the center testified: "This is not a center. It is a prison, a prison for foreigners. " A unit has 18 rooms for 6 to 8 people, in total there are about 100 people, many of whom are children: "Children are in their rooms all day. Those who have toys play in their room. There is no place for them to play. There is nothing to do. " The only relaxation area appears to be the crowded TV room and the library where one can borrow two books once a week. "You are sitting in your rooms talking, drinking tea, doing nothing (...) Nothing is allowed, nothing is possible."

The children are allowed to go outside for 30 minutes once a day, and twice a week for one hour. This is in a closed open space where nothing is. "Children must be able to play. They always want to go outside. It's very difficult. We were all locked up with a lot of children. " "Life is hard, very hard. It is very hard for everyone. "

One of the witnesses remembered the Belgians: “Her daughter (19 months) always had a hard time at night. She often woke up and cried all the time. The child coughed a lot; coughing, coughing and coughing.”

In its administrative oversight procedure for expelled foreigners, Turkish law provides for a number of options, the most far-reaching of which is administrative detention in a return center, which should not exceed six months. Other measures include a stay at a specific address in the city, which requires regular reporting to the police.

In July 1st, 2020, Tatiana and Bouchra and their two children were repatriated to Belgium along with another mother with four children who had fled Al Hol in early March after the Belgian government had approached mothers to give away their children.

5. Repatriation of the French children in June 22nd 2020

On June 22, 2020, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that it had repatriated ten French children from the camps in Northeast Syria on Monday morning. These were orphans and children whose mothers had previously given permission through their lawyers to repatriate the children without them. According to the French government, the latter were in a humanitarian emergency, from which they had to be removed. Only two of the approximately 130 French women in the detention camps allowed their children to be taken away. One of these two mothers let her four oldest children leave. She kept the two youngest with her. The oldest children left their mother, but also younger brother and sister. Will they ever be able to understand this? How will they deal with this? How will they react when they read the next letter from a French mother in the camps?

Il y a quelques jours, la France est venue chercher les enfants français. Je n'ai pas pu envoyer mes enfants tout d'abord parce que le temps de préparation était trop bref, on nous demande en quelques heures de faire des adieux à la chose la plus chère qu'il nous reste. Puis les enfants n'étaient pas préparés psychologiquement, je n'avais pas le temps de leurs expliquer ce qui allait arriver.

C'est la décision la plus difficile que j'ai pu faire dans ma vie. On nous demande de choisir entre la présence de nos enfants ou leurs avenir, une vie meilleure, loin de ce camp insalubre. Comment expliquer à son enfant français que la France veut de lui mais pas de sa maman. Ces enfants vivent déjà sans leurs pères je ne pouvais pas choisir des orphelines de mère, nous sommes leur seul repère depuis des années. ...Quel avenir pour un enfant qui aura grandi sans père ni mère ?

Mes espoirs envers la France s'amenuisent de jour en jour.

By doing this to these children, history will repeat itself. There will be no room for recovery and no place for the next generations to live peacefully together.

France has organized four repatriation missions in the past two years. In total, 28 of the approximately 300 French children were taken from the inhuman conditions of detention camps in desert and war zones in northeastern Syria.

6. Call for the Belgian Government

We urge the Belgian government to take its responsibility and to repatriate the approximately 13 Belgian mothers and their 35 Belgian children from the detention camps in Northeast Syria as soon as possible, based on the fundamental values of human and children's rights.

The persistent neglect and psychological assault on these children makes the Belgian government a co-architect of a European Guantanamo, albeit a Guantanamo for children.