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Promotion and protection of the rights of children

Identical letters dated 15 June 2024 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, I am writing about the fact that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict has signed a cooperation agreement with an armed terrorist entity known as the “Free Syrian Army”, on the pretext of protecting children. My delegation wishes to underscore the following points:

My Government is fully committed to protecting all its citizens throughout its territory, particularly women and children. It continues to tackle the crimes and serious violations committed by terrorist organizations, separatist militias and their sponsors, including the Israeli occupation entity, American forces and the Turkish forces that are illegally present on my country’s territory.

The fact that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict has signed a purported agreement with a terrorist organization raises numerous doubts about her professionalism and the impartiality of her work. It is a flagrant attempt to confer a form of recognition or legitimacy on a terrorist group, whitewash it, promote it and cover up its crimes, all to advance political agendas that are hostile to Syria and its people.

The Special Representative uses the pretext that the agreement does not, as she puts it, prejudge the legal status of the non-State armed group. That statement raises numerous questions about her true role, especially as her position on the genocide in Gaza – where the Israeli occupation authorities have killed tens of thousands of Palestinians, most of them women and children – betrays her bias and shameful dereliction of her duties and mandate. Member States should be aware of those points when they interact with that type of special representative.

The signing of this purported agreement calls to mind the agreement which she signed in 2019 with the separatist group known as the “Syrian Democratic Forces” in north-eastern Syria. That agreement was similarly promoted on the grounds that it would curb the recruitment and use of children by such militias in Syria. However, the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces continue to forcibly recruit children; they



have detained tens of thousands of children and other people in illegal and inhumane detention centres in such places as Ghuguayran prison and the Hawl and Rawj camps. This latest purported agreement thus does not serve the interests of the children, as the Special Representative claims. Instead, it provides cover for the terrorist groups and separatist militias to persist with, and indeed ramp up, their human rights violations in Syria.

The Special Representative makes a point of appealing to what she calls the parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. Syria emphasizes that it objects categorically to the way in which she places the Syrian Government on an equal footing with terrorist groups listed as such by the Security Council, and with separatist militias which act as proxies for foreign States that maintain an illegal presence on parts of Syrian territory.

Syria will persist with its efforts to combat terrorism, restore security and stability, and uphold the rule of law throughout its territory. The relevant United Nations mechanisms must ensure that issues related to the promotion and protection of the rights of children are kept separate from any political considerations.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter issued as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 67, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Koussay **Aldahhak**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
