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Statement by UNICEF Representative in Yemen Geert Cappelaere about school siege in the north

SANAA, 12 May 2010 – "UNICEF is deeply concerned about reports that schools in the northern governorate of Saada were occupied by armed men, and that children are denied their right to education.

"Schools should be zones of peace where children can learn and thrive. Using them for military or inappropriate political purposes is a violation of children's rights and of international humanitarian law. Children must be allowed to resume their schooling immediately.

"Yemen has some of the lowest school enrolment rates in the Middle East and North Africa region, with more than a quarter of children and particularly girls of primary-school age not receiving an education.

"The conflict in the north has exacerbated this situation, forcing thousands of children to flee their homes and reducing hundreds of schools to rubble. The 11 February ceasefire brought hope, allowing children to go back to school in the aftermath of conflicts and helping them recover a sense of normalcy.

UNICEF calls upon all parties throughout the country to ensure the right to quality education for every child. "Depriving children from this right is detrimental to their well-being and to their country's future."

For more details, please contact:

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