



UNICEF condemns mortar attack on Syrian school

5 December 2012 – Speaking out in the wake of a deadly mortar attack on a school outside Damascus, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) today declared that strikes on schools during the Syrian conflict are “unacceptable.”

“UNICEF condemns yesterday’s shelling of a school near Damascus that killed a number of students and a teacher,” said the agency’s Middle East and North Africa Regional Director, Maria Calivis, in a [statement](#).

“Since the violence in Syria began, schools have been looted, vandalized and burned,” Ms. Calivis added. “This is unacceptable. Schools are, and must remain, zones of peace.”

Violence has gripped Syria since protests that began against the President Bashar al-Assad 21 month ago turned into a revolt amid a government crackdown. Civilians make up the vast majority of the at least 20,000 people killed in the conflict, while 2.5 million Syrians need humanitarian assistance, and another 475,000 have fled the country and have either registered, or are registering, as refugees, according to UN estimates.

In its statement, UNICEF reiterated earlier demands it has made for children to be spared the violence.

“UNICEF renews its call for all parties to the conflict in Syria to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and to ensure that all children are protected at all times,” Ms. Calivis said.

According to media reports, at least 28 students and a teacher were killed when a mortar hit the Batiha school in al-Wafidin camp, a community 20 kilometres northeast of the capital that is home to about 25,000 people displaced when Israel captured the Golan Heights during the 1967 war.

The reports said Syria’s official Sana news agency accused Syrian rebel forces of the attack, while rebel forces blamed Government forces.