

Recommendation 2169 (2020)¹

International obligations concerning the repatriation of children from war and conflict zones

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly stresses the gravity of the situation of children in Syria and Iraq whose parents, believed to be affiliated to the Daesh, are citizens of Council of Europe member States. It deplores the living conditions these children are confronted with: stranded in squalid camps and detention centres; insufficient food, shelter from the elements, access to clean water, medical services and education; exposure to violence, abuse, trafficking and exploitation; and high rates of illness and mortality.
2. The Assembly considers that the human rights-based approach of the Council of Europe is essential for effectively combating terrorism. Abandoning the children stranded in Syria and Iraq, in zones characterised by war, conflict and their aftermath, leaves these children exposed to grave violations of their rights as well as the risk of radicalisation. Their repatriation, recovery and (re-)integration is an investment in building prosperous and resilient societies.
3. The Assembly takes note of the Council of Europe Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2018-2022) and the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021). These are complementary policy frameworks, which provide useful guidance for the Council of Europe member States. However, synergies and complementarity between these strategies should be further reinforced, with a view to effectively integrating a child-rights perspective into counter-terrorism efforts.
4. In this urgent situation, the Assembly calls on the Committee of Ministers to:
 - 4.1. ensure that Council of Europe action against terrorism, when dealing with child-related issues, is focused on the best interest of the child, is in line with the priorities set by the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child and ensures adequate protection of children's rights;
 - 4.2. invite the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) to advise it on appropriate action to be taken by the Council of Europe to address the situation of child returnees (including with respect to their (re-)integration), and to co-ordinate the decided course of action;
 - 4.3. include a parliamentary round table on measures taken by the Council of Europe member States to repatriate and reintegrate children from zones characterised by war, conflict and their aftermath, as part of the Conference on the Roles of Women and Children in Terrorism, organised by the Council of Europe Counter-Terrorism Division in June 2020.

1. *Assembly debate* on 30 January 2020 (7th Sitting) (see [Doc. 15055](#), report of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, rapporteur: Mr Stefan Schennach). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 30 January 2020 (7th Sitting).

