



RTC Sweden Update

It has been more than five years since we began addressing the need for repatriation of children detained in prison camps in Northeast Syria, and over four years since the founding of RTC Sweden, RTC Denmark, and RTC USA. During this period, a total of 30 children and 12 women have been successfully repatriated to Sweden, as well as several to Denmark and the U.S.

RTC Sweden continues to provide reintegration and rehabilitation support to returnee families. All repatriated children are enrolled in preschool or school, and are developing well. It is truly remarkable to witness the resilience and growth of children when given a second chance in life. Their progress underscores that, with the right support, the negative impacts of early childhood trauma can be mitigated. Key factors in the successful reintegration have been safety, stability, and robust social support, particularly from families and next of kin.

The primary reason for the families' well-being and positive development is that they have been allowed to leave the destructive and high-threat environment of the prison camps. However, five Swedish children, among almost 30 000 children in total, remain stranded in the humanitarian crisis.

In March, the Swedish government announced it would not pursue efforts to repatriate these children left behind, despite having the capability to do so. This policy shift significantly deviates from a child-centered rights approach.

RTC Sweden will continue to advocate for the fundamental rights of children to grow up free from violence. Every child's right to life and development must be upheld. We collaborate with the UN, other NGOs, and human rights defenders across the globe.

During our most recent visit to Northeast Syria and Iraq in May, we met with many Syrians and Iraqis affected by the atrocities carried out by ISIS. There is a significant need for protection, redress, and legal justice, in particular for the Yazidi community. We also met with detained children in the prison camps, representatives from the Kurd-led self-administration, and various local NGOs and human rights advocates. This visit reinforced the urgency of our mission.

It is imperative for the member states of the Global Coalition Against ISIS to take responsibility and act urgently to rescue the children still detained in Northeast Syria and contribute to solutions for all affected families. Leaving them behind not only endangers their lives but also poses a significant security risk to the region and the world. The international community must uphold human rights and provide these children with the opportunity for a hopeful future.