



## Children: Victims of Terrorist Organizations Legislations in the Face of Child Abuse

Malak Albalawi

Researcher specializing in security studies and extremism issues

The crimes of terrorist organizations involve violent acts and practices, such as bombings, destruction, torture, murder, kidnapping, ransom demand, and other criminal terrorist acts committed by multiple means and methods. These organizations aim to exploit vulnerable groups in society, particularly women and children, given how easily they are deceived and lured, and their lack of awareness of the nature of terrorist activities. These criminal organizations seek to recruit children in particular by carrot at times and stick at others, by involving them in criminal terrorist operations, especially suicide bombings, killings, destruction, and even sexual exploitation.

### The Crime of Child Recruitment

Terrorist organizations and armed groups seek to take advantage of children in the implementation of their terrorist schemes, due to children's great abilities to acquire skills and take in rules and principles without objection, and because they find in their innocent minds the perfect place to plant their destructive ideas, spread their malicious poisons, manipulate their minds, shape them, and direct them to serve terrorist goals and criminal agendas.

To this end, terrorist organizations and armed groups have resorted to compulsory recruitment of children through methods such as abduction, coercion, violence, and intimidation. They do this to enlist them in carrying out criminal operations and terrorist agendas.

Terrorist groups also capitalize on the voluntary recruitment of children who may choose to join these organizations for various reasons. Some succumb to terrorist propaganda designed to manipulate and appeal to their aspirations. Others may be driven by dire economic and living conditions, seeking an escape from their harsh reality by joining these terrorist groups. Additional contributing factors include societal issues,

limited education, and the prevalence of diseases and epidemics, among others. Terrorist groups exploit these circumstances to attract children, who are often the most vulnerable members of society. These children are then trained and indoctrinated, becoming participants in armed conflicts.

At times, families are a prime reason for the recruitment of children into terrorist organizations and armed groups. They either push their children into such groups in return for money or adopt terrorist ideologies and take their children to these groups to be active and influential terrorist elements .

The recruitment and manipulation of children for terrorist activities emerged as a significant violation of children's rights. Armed groups and terrorist organizations target children for both security and economic reasons, as children are less likely to raise suspicion by security services, and recruiting them is often more cost-effective. It is important to note that children recruited, whether through coercion or voluntarily, endure significant physical and psychological harm, and in some cases, even death. In response to this alarming issue, the international community has taken measures to protect children from recruitment by terrorist organizations and armed groups. This has led to the implementation of relevant international regulations, legislation, and conventions. For instance, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court outlines «war crimes» as encompassing actions such as «conscripting or enlisting children under the age of fifteen years into the national armed forces or using them to participate actively in hostilities».

Saudi Arabia has placed a particular focus on the well-being of children and has implemented legal measures to shield them from violence. The recruitment of children has been criminalized, and Saudi Arabia has adopted a resolute stance against this criminal activity conducted by terrorist groups and organizations, particularly when directed at children and their innocence. The Saudi Law for Combating Crimes of Trafficking in Persons explicitly forbids the exploitation of individuals, irrespective of their age.

### **The Crime of Using Children in Suicide Attacks**

Suicide operations and terrorist bombings vividly demonstrate the criminality and radical extremist ideology of terrorist groups and organizations. These acts encompass the indiscriminate booby-trapping of individuals, including children, women, and men, as well as the deliberate targeting of structures, housing complexes, and public

infrastructure. Terrorists employ various methods, such as using individuals as unwitting carriers of explosives, particularly children wearing explosive belts or carrying backpacks laden with explosives. Additionally, they resort to basic techniques, such as loading vehicles with explosives, concealing them in trash bins, or even within coffee refrigerators.

There is no doubt that Islamic law regards these attacks on sacred souls as corruption on earth due to the enormity of the sin and the magnitude of the crime committed against people and properties. These actions are marked by their atrociousness. Allah says: “And when he goes away, he strives throughout the land to cause corruption therein and destroy crops and animals. And Allah does not like corruption” [Quran, Al-Baqarah: 205].

In combating terrorist acts, particularly those involving the use of explosives in terrorist operations, the Saudi legislator criminalized any person carrying explosives in order to carry out a terrorist crime, as in Article 32 of the Law on Combating Crimes of Terrorism and its Financing .

There is strong evidence to indicate that terrorist organizations employ children to transport explosives covertly and involve them in carrying out suicide terrorist acts or transporting explosives within the country. In response to these threats to the Kingdom's security, the Saudi legislator has addressed these actions in Article 15 of the Explosives and Fireworks Law, which encompasses «any individual proven to have engaged in any of these activities: (d- using, storing, or transporting explosives, e-training one or more individuals in the manufacturing, usage, or attempted usage of explosives) ». Consequently, the utilization of children in suicide operations represents a criminal form of terrorism. These terrorist groups are accustomed to exploiting the innocence of children for their sinister and malevolent schemes through the following actions:

- A. Carrying, transporting, and storing explosives by using children in these operations, with or without their consent .
- B. Training children in the manufacture of explosives and how to use them.
- C. Brainwashing children and deluding them that these terrorist acts are beneficial acts, misshaping their views, expelling fear from their souls, and raising them on ideas that serve destructive agendas.

## The Crime of Sexual Abuse of Children

Islamic Sharia has embraced the ethical principle of honor, aiming to safeguard individuals from any illicit sexual misconduct. While sexual abuse is classified as a condemnable offense under international laws and agreements, Islamic Sharia categorizes it as a form of obscene behavior and strictly forbids all unauthorized sexual activities. The exploitation of children in activities endangering their well-being, such as sexual trafficking, falls under the category of human trafficking. There is a possibility that terrorist groups are involved in trafficking children for sexual purposes to fund their terrorist activities.

The Saudi legislator has followed the approach of Islamic Sharia in protecting children from this heinous crime, stipulating in Article 9 of the Child Protection Law that: “A child may not be sexually exploited nor exposed to any form of sexual exploitation, nor shall he be subject to trafficking for purposes of criminal activities or beggary.”

Article 2 of the Saudi Law for Combating Crimes of Trafficking in Persons provides that “It is prohibited to commit any act of trafficking in persons, including coercion, threat, fraud, deceit, or abduction of a person, abuse of position or power or any authority thereon, taking advantage of the person’s vulnerability, giving or receiving payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of sexual assault, forced labor, ... or beggary”. Accordingly, any terrorist group that uses, exploits, or traffics children for sexual activities or pornography is guilty of the criminal conduct constituting the crime of sexual abuse of children.

In the light of the recent revolutionary electronic developments, criminal practices have emerged through cyberspace, alerting the Saudi legislator, stipulating in the Saudi Anti-Cyber Crime Law a heavier penalty for anyone who is tempted to practice this criminal behavior in deceiving and exploiting minors and the like. Child sexual abuse on the internet takes various forms, including the distribution of explicit content and the utilization of children in displaying sexual images or content of a sexual nature. These actions encroach upon the innocence of children, violate their modesty, distort their cognitive development, and have a negative impact on their moral values.

In conclusion, terrorist organizations and armed groups have not hesitated to exploit children in carrying out their heinous terrorist and criminal operations, even going so far as to exploit them sexually. These terrorist groups have shown a disturbing interest in recruiting, focusing on, and exploiting children to the fullest extent. They do so due

to the innocence of this age group, their distance from the suspicion of security authorities, and their susceptibility to manipulation and obedience to orders, making them easy targets for carrying out deadly schemes.