



Children in the Levant: Insights from Belgium on the dilemmas of repatriation and the challenges of reintegration

Thomas Renard and Rik Coolsaet

According to intelligence estimates, there are around 1,400 European children in Syria and Iraq, many of them born there. The fate of these children confronts European governments with moral, legal, political, diplomatic and security dilemmas. Governments are divided over the issue, but almost all are reluctant to address it head-on. None have taken a proactive stance with regard to these children, creating several security voids. This policy brief looks into the fate of these European children before exploring in more detail the situation of the Belgians among them. It analyses the position of the Belgian government with regard to repatriation and reviews existing policies concerning returning children. The authors end up with a number of recommendations for Belgian and European authorities, including a plea for a more proactive response.

The self-declared “caliphate” of the Islamic State (ISIS) is no longer. However, the fallout from this failed state project will be felt for

many years to come. The issue of children who lived in Syria and Iraq or were born there is gaining traction in Europe. Discussions on their repatriation and handling upon return are confronting European authorities with difficult dilemmas and challenges.

BRING BACK OUR CHILDREN? EUROPE’S DILEMMAS

Figures That Matter . . .

According to the latest European intelligence estimates, some 5,300 European men and women have travelled to the Levant to join a jihadi group since 2012. Some 1,000 children have accompanied their parents on their journey to Syria and Iraq. In the years that followed, an additional 600 are estimated to have been born in the region to at least one European parent. This brings to 6,900 the overall European contingent once present in Syria and Iraq.

The fate of the children is intimately linked to that of their parents. It is generally assumed that about a third of all EU citizens that travelled to the Levant have returned home, some of them with children. Some of those remaining in the region are fighting in the last ISIS strongholds, and a few have joined other

jihadi war theatres. A small proportion, around 140, are in Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF, a Kurdish militia) detention camps in Syria or awaiting trial in Iraq. However, many probably did not survive the intense bombing campaigns and the heavy fighting in both Syria and Iraq. At least 1,000 foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) are believed to have been killed. That should leave a maximum of around 2,500 European FTFs in the Levant, but probably much fewer.

In contrast to adults, less than ten percent of the children have come (back) to Europe so far. Around 130 children are reported to have returned, mostly below the age of eight. France has been the destination of the majority of those returns. Around 1,400 children from EU parents are thus assumed to remain in the Levant, according to European intelligence sources. The whereabouts of most of them is actually unknown. Many are likely to be still in the combat zones. Some are still with their parents, who are fighting or fleeing. An uncertain number are probably roaming unaccompanied, possibly orphaned. And probably an even greater number did not survive the war, being victims of bombs, diseases or malnutrition.

The actual number of European children that could still potentially return is therefore highly uncertain, but in all likelihood it will be only a fraction of the aforementioned 1,400 figure.

Adding to this uncertainty, numbers circulating among intelligence services are famously unreliable. On the one hand, there is certainly a degree of double-counting, as a number of children were born from two European parents of different nationalities (Belgian and French, for instance). As these children can claim both nationalities, they are counted by the services of both countries, thus inflating the overall figure. On the other hand, a number of children born in the Levant are most likely unknown to the authorities, thus underestimating the contingent.

... and Matters to Figure Out

Although (most) EU governments consider children – at least, those under a certain age – to be victims, none has taken a proactive position on their repatriation. No European government actively intervenes to have them (and their mothers) exfiltrated, let alone considers undertaking challenging search operations. Some Member States have made a few exceptions for children detained in Iraq, but not in Syria. Whereas Russia or Indonesia have repatriated a handful of families with children from Syria, EU Member States have not done it so far, although some countries are rumoured to be in advanced talks with Kurdish militias.¹

The authorities’ dilemmas are multi-faceted. Morally and legally, governments feel compelled to help these children. Unlike their

Table 1: European FTFs and children currently assumed in the Levant or returned

In Syria/Iraq	
Adult FTFs	2,500
Children	1,400
Returned	
Adult FTFs	1,500
Children	130

parents, they cannot be held responsible for their actions and are, in fact, mostly victims of their own parents. France even criminalises and prosecutes parents who took their children to fight the jihad. Considering their vulnerability, under international humanitarian law all children affected by armed conflict are entitled to special respect and protection, although the obligation of repatriation is subject to debate.² Yet, in the absence of reaction from EU governments, in spite of their moral responsibility and legal obligations, families have requested the help of NGOs and international organisations, in particular, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), to visit Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps and to restore contact with mothers and children present there. At their request, the ICRC also notifies their presence to the authorities, hence providing useful and objective information about their whereabouts and intentions.

The evolution of the situation on the ground put further pressure on European governments. Conditions are dire in SDF camps where about 40 European children are located, and cases of tuberculosis have been reported by families in Europe. Although they have freedom of movement, these women and children have nowhere to go as the Turkish border is very difficult to cross. Cells in Iraq are reported to be overcrowded. No professional psychological support structures are available to assist children in overcoming the war traumas most undoubtedly endured for a significant amount of time. According to Human Rights Watch, children as young as nine have even started to be prosecuted and convicted during expedite trials in Iraq, contrary to international law.³ This has not, however, concerned European children so far. Politically, EU governments might be aligned with their public opinion, which shows an overall reluctance to facilitate the return of FTFs from the Levant, although it is far less clear whether that public mood applies to children as well. Diplomatically, the issue is a

headache, considering that Kurdish militias have no international recognition, making any negotiation more complicated (though not impossible). The Iraqi authorities are eager to implement their sovereign rights to prosecute combatants (including children) who have committed atrocities on their territory. The issue of consular assistance for European citizens in detention also regularly appears on the table.

The most important dilemma of all, however, is security. The authorities' reluctance to address head-on the issue of returning children is driven by several considerations. One is the uncertainty and the inherent difficulty of reintegrating children back into European societies after they have lived in an ultraviolent environment. The older they are, the more they have been exposed to ISIS's ideological indoctrination (starting from six-years-old for boys and girls)⁴ and military preparation (starting from nine-years-old, for boys only). Another unknown is the potential attitude of the parents. If not deradicalised or at least disengaged from terrorist violence, they risk educating their children in a hostile and violence-prone attitude towards the country to which they have returned. There is thus a fear of bringing back "ticking time bombs" in the words of Patrick Calvar, former chief of the French domestic intelligence service (DGSI).⁵ A French returning FTF recently explained that some people within ISIS had imagined training children specifically with the purpose of perpetrating attacks in Europe upon their return.⁶

Nevertheless, security services also point at possible long-term security challenges if the issue is kept in limbo, creating security voids in the near future. Growing up in detention camps without any prospect risks creating a generation of frustrated and resentful teenagers. This is the ideal condition for constituting a stateless reserve contingent for jihadi and criminal organisations alike. As the infamous Bucca camp in Iraq illustrates,

detention camps have acted as boosters for jihadi networking and mobilisation in the past, ultimately facilitating the creation of ISIS.

Another security risk highlighted recently by press accounts concerns prisoner swap deals between the SDF and ISIS. Being unable to look after great numbers of prisoners, the SDF has engaged in the exchange of ISIS-linked prisoners in their camps with Kurdish prisoners held by ISIS. Such swap deals not only reinforce the military ranks of ISIS, but possibly also force women (with children) who had possibly rejected ISIS back into the arms of this organisation.

Another possible risk with similar adverse consequences might be the sudden release of SDF-held prisoners, something the SDF has threatened to do. The SDF might indeed end up taking such a decision as a result of the impossibility of taking care of great numbers of prisoners, because of growing pressure from hostile forces (Turkish Army, Syrian Army, jihadi groups) on the ground, but also due to the lack of cooperation from the home countries of these prisoners. Finally, ISIS and other jihadi groups have successfully organised both small and massive prison breaks in the past, which succeeded in reinforcing their ranks with revengeful new recruits, giving a new boost to the organisation.

Overall, various dilemmas have pushed EU governments into a passive approach of dealing with returning children on a case-by-case basis, but not seeking actively their repatriation. The tide seems to be turning, however. The security implications of inaction are becoming increasingly obvious, while the short-term risk associated with returns of children and adults are mitigated by an increasingly efficient (if imperfect) handling by the various relevant services. Indeed, 130 children have already returned to Europe. While requiring intensive care and continuous monitoring, including risk assessments, these children are clearly victims first and foremost.

However, inaction or improper handling could still turn these young children into a security liability.⁷ Returning children, as returning fighters, constitute a long-term challenge that requires long-term commitment.

More importantly, independently from a shift of policy on repatriation, more children will return home by their own means, and they will need to be taken care of. In the next section, we look at the Belgian situation to better understand the scope of the challenge and the nature of the debates in one specific country, but also to examine the measures already in place or under discussion to deal with returning children, and the challenges that remain ahead.

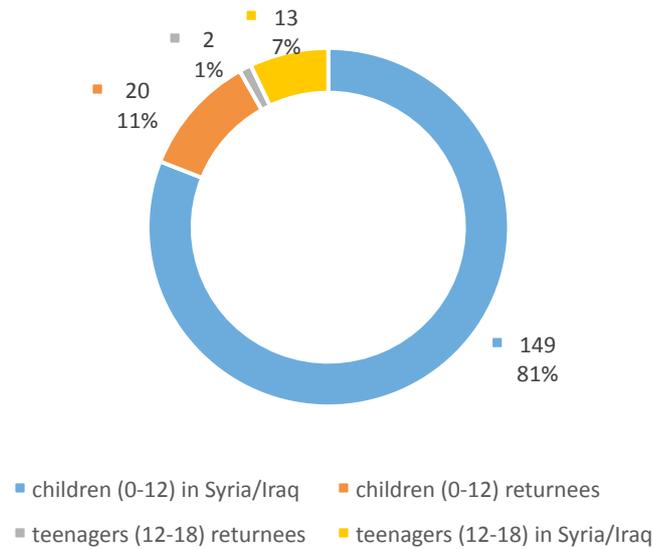
THE BELGIAN APPROACH TO THE CHILDREN

Belgian children in the Levant

According to the Belgian Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis (CUTA), the national counter-terrorism fusion centre, there are an estimated 162 children linked to Belgium in Syria and Iraq as of May 2018, including 13 teenagers (aged 12-18 and thus listed as FTF). These are children of whom at least one parent was a Belgian citizen or resident. If we add the 22 minors who have already returned since 2012,⁸ this brings the Belgian contingent of children to 184 individuals. In a recent interview, the Mayor of Vilvoorde claimed that the figure could be even higher, considering that 25 children born in Syria are from his town alone.⁹

Among the 149 children below 12-years-old still present in Syria/Iraq, 80 percent were born there whereas 20 percent travelled to the region with their parents. The vast majority of these children, about 85 percent, are therefore very young (below six-years-old) and have not been educated or trained militarily under the caliphate.¹⁰ Some older children might have been more exposed to ISIS ideology, however, and a handful of young boys are likely to have been trained. This comes in addition to the 13

Figure 1: The children of Belgian nationals in the Levant



Source: CUTA, May 2018.

FTF teenagers who are still in the region and have possibly participated in combat.

These numbers are approximate, based upon the best information available to the authorities. The reality is less clear-cut. As with the other European children in the Levant, the fate of the children of Belgian nationals is largely unknown, with the exception of the 14 children formally identified in SDF-run IDP camps in Syria (allegedly none are detained in Iraq). Intelligence services are relatively certain about a small number of children having perished, but most have disappeared altogether from the services' radar. They might wander unidentified in the region or have succumbed to bombings and fighting, disease or malnutrition, given the worsening situation in the region. They may also be hiding with their parents.

It is thus impossible to predict how many of the children in the region will eventually return, and when. Their fate will partly depend on the Belgian government's response, on the evolution of the situation on the ground, and on their own ability to cross the border to Turkey (possibly with the support of their

families or international organisations). A few families with children have already reached Turkey to wait to be allowed to return, a process complicated by the absence of an extradition agreement between Brussels and Ankara. More families with children (up to 30 persons) have expressed their intention to return as well, but must travel at their own peril outside the conflict zone. The group of children officially identified in SDF camps could possibly be repatriated, if the Belgian government decided so (see below). Kurdish militants are losing patience, however. Recent news of exchanges of prisoners between Kurdish forces and ISIS fighters has raised concerns that Belgian FTFs with children could also be sent back to ISIS territory as part of such deals.¹¹

Administrative burdens will add further layers of difficulty for returning children. Not all of them will be granted Belgian citizenship, particularly if their parent(s) have passed away. For the children born in the Levant from a Belgian mother, citizenship should be granted automatically if the DNA tests are positive. But for those born of a Belgian father, positive DNA results will be insufficient if the marriage

was not recognised by the Belgian administration (which is the case for religious unions celebrated under the caliphate), or if the father did not officially recognise the child. The fact that DNA tests are expected to precede repatriation, and therefore to be performed in Syria/Iraq, can be a major hurdle to their recognition.

The challenge posed by minors in Syria and Iraq, and their possible return, has been a topic of discussion in Belgium as in other countries. To the credit of the Belgian federal government, it was among the first Western governments to take a relatively clear position on the situation of these children.¹² The government decided in December 2017 that Belgian children should be treated as victims until the age of ten, and therefore allowed to return. Those aged 10 to 18 are treated on a case-by-case basis (including with regard to the permission to return) since they could also represent a security threat.¹³

Since that decision of principle, however, the coalition government has not been able to reach an agreement on the modalities of these repatriations, leaving it up to the families to bring the children at their own peril to a consulate or embassy (i.e. in Turkey in most cases, since Belgium has no diplomatic presence in Syria or Iraq). This is understandably a complex issue, as outlined in the previous section. The government seems to be torn between two distinct arguments. On the one hand, adult FTFs are not welcome back, as clearly stated by the Minister of Interior Jan Jambon in early 2018: their return is “not in the strategic interest of the country”. On the other hand, this position does not automatically extend to the foreign fighters’ children, as the Minister of Justice Koen Geens declared that it is the government’s “obligation” to bring back Belgian children.¹⁴

These two arguments are at least partly in contradiction and certainly complicate the operationalisation of the Belgian position of

principle. Indeed, repatriating children without their parents is legally and morally debatable. Should children be repatriated with their parents, to avoid a traumatic separation, or could the children be repatriated separately with the consent of (one) parent? The arrest warrants issued against the parents are another complicating factor: proactively arranging the return of individuals subject to such a warrant from third countries that have no extradition agreement with Belgium may not be impossible, but is certainly difficult if not unprecedented.

Recently, a number of actors have started increasing the pressure on the government to transform the position of principle into a more proactive policy. This is notably the case of the francophone Delegate General for the Rights of Children and his Flemish counterpart, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, and of associations of mothers of (grand-)children in Syria/Iraq.¹⁵ Some signals have also emerged from the government suggesting a possible evolution. For instance, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Didier Reynders has stated on several occasions that Belgium should play a more proactive role in this sensitive issue, in line with international law and principles, particularly since the election of Belgium as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in June 2018.¹⁶ The extent of these international obligations is, however, still subject to internal discussions.

Whether the government changes its position or not, some children have already returned and more will follow. Authorities should therefore seriously plan for it. However, there is no clear strategy to handle them so far.

Returning children in Belgium

Twenty-two children (including two teenagers) have already returned to Belgium. Fourteen of them were under three-years-old upon their return. All have suffered from multiple

traumas. In addition to these children, at least one woman returned pregnant. Since regional entities are exclusively competent on youth matters in Belgium, this further means that Flanders and Wallonia-Brussels have only handled about ten cases each so far. Given this limited number of cases, which ranged over several years, no systematic approach exists yet to accompany these children upon their return. Each child has been treated on a case-by-case basis.

In the absence of any clear strategy, the prevailing procedure is the one applied in cases of endangered minors or child abuses. Only very recently, tentative discussions on specific procedures for returning children have been initiated. The main institutional actors (and rules) are therefore still those dealing with children, and not the specialised services in radicalisation and terrorism.¹⁷

Upon arrival, children are immediately checked by a medical team to verify if any urgent care is required. Then begins a reinsertion trajectory that is mainly guided by three criteria: age, family situation and life-experience.

In terms of age, the main distinction lies between those under ten-years-old, who fall under childcare protection measures, and those between 10- and 18-years-old who can be subject to judiciary or security measures. In the first category, children can stay with their mothers in prison until the age of three (if the mother is jailed as a returnee), in order to avoid a traumatic separation between the child and the mother, not least given that prison sentences are relatively short. This has indeed been implemented on several occasions, but not systematically. In the second category, from 12-years-old,¹⁸ minors can be incarcerated in juvenile institutions generally for two to four months, following a decision by a youth judge, usually followed by intensive accompaniment possibly over several years.

From 16-years-old, the minor can also be prosecuted as an adult for terrorist acts committed after his sixteenth birthday.¹⁹

With regard to the family situation, in line with international standards, the overall preference is to maintain young children in their family environment. The situation will therefore depend on whether the child's parents are still alive and in Belgium, whether they will be sent to jail and for how long, or whether they are still considered to carry extremist ideas or intentions and possibly constitute a danger for the child (radicalisation could be interpreted as a form of abuse or mistreatment, parents can be suspected of planning to travel again with the child to conflict zones, etc.). If the child must be separated from his parents, he can be placed with his extended family (generally with the grand-parents, a number of whom are actively seeking their repatriation). This has been the most common scenario so far. The challenge for the authorities is to assess both the family's ability to take care of these traumatised children, on the one hand, but also to ensure that the extended family is not itself involved in extremism, which is why continuous monitoring and assessment is required. Ultimately, children can be placed in a foster family or institution. A particular challenge arises for the placement of families with several brothers and sisters. While the preference is to keep the families united, it is not always possible for the extended or foster families to accommodate three or four children. The separation of these siblings can then create an additional significant trauma.

Finally, the childcare approach must take into account the specific experience of children under the caliphate. Every child will have suffered a series of traumas, from exposure to violence and cruelty to the loss of a family member. Some girls may have been raped and some young boys may have been forced to commit violent acts. Poor sanitary conditions on the ground, potential detention in Syria or

Iraq, or the difficult journey back to Europe are equally unsettling. Upon return, the potential separation from the mother and siblings as well as stigmatisation from society (in school, for instance) can create more traumas. Every child should be cared for with special attention to the psychological impact of these individual traumas and should be closely accompanied in their (re)integration into a safe environment. This requires a tailor-made approach for every child, requiring a large number of actors to coordinate their efforts. Relevant actors include a youth judge (who can impose certain measures), youth services, psychiatrists, but also actors specialised in family support, as well as those working on radicalisation (such as the local or regional prevention services who can also share their expertise in secondary and tertiary prevention), and the security services (who can share useful information about the life experience of the children in Syria/Iraq and the situation of their families). Specific arrangements to that effect have been created and recently reinforced to facilitate information-sharing among stakeholders. In some places these are working smoothly, but in other places they continue to be hampered by issues of professional/medical secrecy and security confidentiality. Some actors, in particular those working on prevention and child protection, are reluctant to share information on individual cases, fearing that these exchanges with security services would adversely impact on the relations of confidence and trust with the persons they accompany.

Overall, there is no strategy to coordinate all these actors. The current approach in Belgium thus remains sub-optimal. This contrasts with the experience of other countries (notably France), which have established relatively detailed protocols explicating the role of each actor at every stage – although these countries are still learning by doing and encounter many challenges in the implementation of these protocols.²⁰

THE WAY FORWARD

To this day, few children have returned from Syria and Iraq to Europe. However, as a result of the evolution of the situation on the ground, following the fall of the caliphate, a certain number of Europeans, in particular families with children, are seeking to return. It is hard to predict how many will do so and when. But it seems obvious that the number of returning children will indeed increase – with or without the assistance of the authorities. It is therefore urgent to devise a clear strategy with regard to these children. We make a number of recommendations based on the Belgian experience, but a number of these could apply to other EU countries as well.

- *Clarify (and implement) the repatriation procedure:* Most Belgian children in Syria/Iraq are below six-years-old. This is significant because it means that they have not been educated or trained by ISIS. Moreover, they are still in a very early phase of socialisation and identity formation, mostly learning by imitation. As a result, they are able to (re-)adapt and (re-)adjust to Western societies.²¹ However, the more time they spend in a hostile environment, the more they could be further traumatised and possibly groomed for hatred against the West. In other words, most of these children are not “time bombs” yet, as some have claimed, but they could become so if not repatriated quickly.
- *Develop a coherent strategy to handle returning children:* Independently of the repatriation policy, more children will return in the coming months. So far, the Belgian approach has been largely based on existing practices and models. However, the singularity of these children, and perhaps more importantly the fact that we are able to anticipate their return, call for a more strategic approach. A clear methodology with a clear division of labour should be devised step by step. The

key principles for such a strategy should be: anticipation, comprehensiveness, multi-agency and long-term. (1) Anticipation refers to the fact that authorities already have some information, even if scant, on these children and their families before they actually return, and they can therefore prepare tailored measures, to be further developed and finetuned upon return. (2) Comprehensiveness suggests that the approach should focus on a wide range of aspects including medical care, psychiatric care, social and educational support, family support and possibly security measures. (3) Multi-agency means that many different services (youth, medical, social, educational, security) will be involved in the handling of these children, and should therefore have a platform through which they could exchange and coordinate their efforts. Some platforms already exist in the context of radicalisation (in Belgium this is the case with the Local Integrated Security Cells [LISC]), which could be used, but other platforms could also be used or, if needed, created. (4) Long-term reflects the reality that returning children will require support for many years. As is common with poly-traumatised children, they will experience ups and downs throughout their childhood. When young children become teenagers, they may become curious about their past, about their (deceased) parents, about their (missing) siblings, etc. These constant challenges require a long-term commitment from the authorities, transparency in administrative procedures and lasting cooperation with the (foster) families.

- *Capitalise on the existing experience.* Today's returning children from Syria/Iraq represent a particular challenge, but some EU countries, including Belgium, already have some experience with young children seeking asylum from war-torn countries. These children present a number of

traumas that are similar to those of returning children. Belgium has even provided asylum to former child-soldiers in the past. Lessons can certainly be drawn from these various experiences – in terms of good (and less good) practices. Given that youth matters are a regional competence in Belgium, possibly resulting in different regional approaches, more exchanges should be organised between authorities from Flanders and Wallonia-Brussels. There is surprisingly very little inter-regional coordination on youth policies. Beyond Belgium, a lot could be learned from exchanges with other countries that are dealing with similar challenges today (notably France, Netherlands or Germany) or that have faced similar situations in the past.

- *Enhance the information position on children and mothers:* A more proactive policy on children necessitates a stronger information position. Currently, authorities have only a grainy picture of the situation of children and their families in the Levant. Knowledge of the situation of the extended family context in Belgium (as in the rest of the EU) is not always optimal either. More information would be available to authorities if a concerted effort is undertaken to combine different sources, including families, local authorities, international organisations and security services.
- *Now is the time to act:* This is understandably a complex issue. But all things considered, it is preferable to address the issue now when it still appears manageable (however challenging), rather than leave it in limbo and risk it worsening as time passes. In our previous study on returning fighters,²² we have highlighted that we are entering into a new phase rather than having reached the end of jihadism. The collapse of ISIS's state project has opened a window of opportunity to address the environment

that is conducive to radicalisation and violent extremism, and to reduce the scope and likelihood of a new jihadi mobilisation in the future. Dealing promptly with the issue of children who have both already returned and who will return is part and parcel of this challenge. For jihadi organisations, children born and raised under the caliphate represent an investment in the future; they are the “cubs” that will become tomorrow’s “lions”. Through proactive policies and a more positive narrative around returning children, European governments can show that they treat children not as animals (“cubs”) but as human beings and citizens. This can send a powerful message to the

parents and family, and to the broader Muslim community that all children are equal. The “ticking” that some officials are hearing need not be that of “time bombs”, but rather the one that precedes a necessary wake-up call.

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- ³ “Iraq: change approach to foreign women, children in ISIS-linked trials”, *Human Rights Watch*, 21 June 2018.
- ⁴ It should be noted that many EU children are reported to have been schooled at home and not in ISIS schools, however.
- ⁵ Romina McGuinness, “Children of hate-filled ISIS returnees are ticking time bombs’ – French experts warn”, *The Express*, 13 December 2018.
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- ⁸ This figure includes two teenagers (above 12-years-old) who are listed on the FTF list of CUTA. At least two more FTF returned as teenagers but have reached majority in the meantime and are therefore no longer included in this category. In addition to these returning children, there is one teenager who attempted to travel to Syria but was prevented, while three others are considered as “potential candidates”.
- ⁹ Tom Pardoën, “Als Anke Van dermeersch op een koran gaat staan, is dat olie op het vuur. Ook bij jongeren die tot nu toe veel konden slikken”, *Humo*, 19 June 2018.
- ¹⁰ Belgian intelligence services are not aware of Belgian-linked children having attended ISIS schools. This does not mean that these children might not have been indoctrinated by their kin, however.
- ¹¹ Joanie De Rijcke, “IS-bruiden terug naar IS in ruil voor Koerdische gevangenen: ‘onze enige zorg zijn onze kinderen,’” *Knack*, 31 May 2018; Björn Stritzel, “Werden deutsche Islamisten zurück zu ISIS geschickt?“, *Bild*, 5 June 2018.

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¹³ It should be noted that the logic underpinning the age criteria is unclear. Other countries have indeed opted for different age distinctions. See: *Question de M. Stefaan Van Hecke au ministre de la Justice sur "le rapatriement des enfants de combattants belges partis en Syrie" (n° 25198)*, Belgian Federal Parliament, Justice Commission, 2 May 2018.

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¹⁶ “La Belgique élue en qualité de membre non-permanent du Conseil de sécurité des Nations Unies”. Press statement by Didier Reynders, 8 June 2018; Speech by Didier Reynders at the 37th session of the Human Rights Council, Geneva, 28 February 2018.

¹⁷ Youth assistance services can request the help of specialised services in radicalisation, when needed. In Wallonia-Brussels, a protocol of collaboration is under negotiation between the youth administration and the Centre d'Aide et de Prise en charge de toute personne concernée par les Extrémismes et Radicalismes Violents (CAPREV).

¹⁸ Following a legal change, the age will be raised to 14-years-old from 2019.

¹⁹ From 2019, previous incarceration in juvenile institutions will be an additional requirement for the minor to be judged as an adult.

²⁰ Charlotte Belaich, “L'accueil plein d'écueils des ‘enfants du jihad’”, *Libération*, 15 February 2018.

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