



## Mohamad Al Jounde from Syria wins International Children's Peace Prize 2017

**The Hague, 4 December 2017 – Sixteen-year-old Mohamad Al Jounde from Syria has won the International Children's Peace Prize. In the Hall of Knights in The Hague Mohamad received the award for his tireless efforts to ensure the rights of Syrian refugee children. In the presence of media outlets from all over the world and several prominent guests, such as His Royal Highness Prince Ali bin al-Hussein of Jordan and a large number of foreign ambassadors, the award was handed out by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and Children's Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai. Mohamad, himself a refugee as a consequence of the Syrian civil war, has amongst other things built a school in a Lebanese refugee camp. The International Children's Peace Prize is an initiative of KidsRights, the foundation committed to defending children's rights worldwide.**

During the award ceremony Malala emphasized the importance of Mohamad's work by pointing out that worldwide there are currently 28 million displaced children. The Syrian civil war alone has led to 2.5 million child refugees, most of whom have had or no access to education. Malala: *"As Mohamad knows, Syria's future depends on its children - and their future depends on education. Despite all they have personally suffered, Mohamad and his family have helped many children go to school. I am proud to support his efforts and honored to present him with the International Children's Peace Prize."*

*"Syria's future depends on its children - and their future depends on education."*

— Malala Yousafzai, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and Children's Peace Prize Winner

## **A born aid worker**

Mohamad grew up in Syria, but when it became too dangerous he was forced to flee to Lebanon along with his family. As is the case for thousands of Syrian child refugees, Mohamad was not able to go to school. Together with his family he has built a school in a refugee camp in Lebanon that nowadays provides 200 children with their right to education. As a twelve-year-old already, Mohamad was teaching Math and English to his peers. Currently, he uses photography and games to help children cope with their traumas, learn and have fun.

## **KidsRights: prevent a lost generation of Syrians**

According to Marc Dullaert, founder and chairman of the KidsRights Foundation, the Expert Committee of the Children's Peace Prize sees Mohamad as a paragon of the strength that children possess to bring about positive change. *"Mohamad is a true changemaker: confronted with what for many of us would seem as an unsurmountable challenge, he decided to change the destiny of himself and his peers in the refugee camp."*

*"Mohamad is a true changemaker"*

— Marc Dullaert, founder and chairman of the KidsRights Foundation

Still, Dullaert emphasizes, children cannot do it all by themselves. KidsRights therefore demands that the international community fulfill its promises to the Syrian refugees. The education funds, for example, that were promised at several donor conferences have only been paid out partially. The countries involved with providing shelter for refugees in the region have so far not been able to provide access to education for child refugees.

Dullaert warned the attending guests in The Hague today that a lost generation of Syrians is looming. *“For children and youngsters, education is the key to having a future. To prevent a lost generation, the access to education is a basic requirement. For it is this generation that will have to rebuild Syria when the war is over. From a humanitarian standpoint we are obligated to provide access to education for the Syrian child refugees in the region”*, Dullaert states. He says to understand how large numbers of refugees have come to Europe: *“When every possibility of having a future is missing, people are forced to build their future elsewhere. Education is not a luxury but a basic need. It promotes stability and helps to meet the psychological and social needs of children affected by conflict.”*

## **End of press release**

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### **About the International Children’s Peace Prize**

The International Children’s Peace Prize is awarded annually to a child who fights courageously for children’s rights. Every year, the message of the new young winner has enormous impact and demonstrates to millions of people globally that change is possible. In 2017 the prize will be awarded for the 13th consecutive year. Previous winners include Nkosi Johnson, who fought for the rights of children with hiv/aids, and Malala Yousafzai, who won the International Children’s Peace Prize in 2013. Last year’s winner was Kehkashan Basu from the United Arab Emirates. By winning the award she has gained an international platform which enabled her to spread her powerful message of environmental protection among an audience of hundreds of millions of people worldwide.

The International Children’s Peace Prize was founded by Mr. Marc Dullaert, founder and chair of the KidsRights Foundation. It was launched in 2005 during the World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates in Rome, chaired by Mikhail Gorbachev. During the nomination process the Expert Committee of the prize receives nominations from countries all over the world. Very remarkable, but often unknown, brave children have been discovered through the annual nomination process.

Each year the International Children's Peace Prize is presented by a Nobel Peace Laureate. The winner receives the statuette 'Nkosi', which portrays a child setting the world in motion, as well as a study grant and a worldwide platform to promote his or her ideals and causes for the benefit of children's rights. Furthermore, KidsRights invests the sum of €100,000 in projects that are closely connected to his or her area of work.

Please visit the website for more information about the International Children's Peace Prize:  
<http://www.childrenspeaceprize.org>.

### **About KidsRights Report 2017**

#### ***A Crisis within a Crisis: Access to Education for Syrian Refugee Children***

In honour of the International Children's Peace Prize 2017, KidsRights has written the report 'A Crisis within a Crisis: Access to Education for Syrian Refugee Children'. It comprises findings from international research into the status of the right to an education for Syrian refugee children. Education is instrumental in the development of children and it provides a protective and stable environment for children living in crisis areas. However, at least 530.000 Syrian refugee children living in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon are out of school. In the report, KidsRights urges the international community to take action. International donors should honour their promises and guarantee that host countries actually receive the amount of support pledged. Host countries should revisit their registration policies and make it easier for refugees to go to school. Please download the report in the press kit on: <http://kidsrights.pr.co/presskit>

### **About KidsRights Foundation**

KidsRights is an international non-governmental organization that promotes the wellbeing of very vulnerable children across the world and advocates the realization of their rights.

KidsRights strives for a world where all children have access to their rights and are enabled to realize the great potential they carry within them. KidsRights sees children as changemakers with the power to move the world, and facilitates in voicing their opinions and taking action in order to bring about change. KidsRights supports children by commanding global attention for the realization of children's rights and acting as a catalyst to ignite change, together with children and youths. We support this with research and action. In order to gain insight into the status of children's rights, KidsRights frequently conducts research. The foundation also finances local projects aimed at directly improving the rights of vulnerable children and stimulating child participation and change-making by youths. Please visit our website to find out more about KidsRights: [www.kidsrights.org](http://www.kidsrights.org).

### **About ABN AMRO**

ABN AMRO is a socially responsible company that invests in the future. Our sponsorship and Foundation activities focus on talent under the motto 'Partner of the Future'. We are committed to discovering, developing and celebrating talent. We support people and organisations aspiring to achieve a goal, sometimes by offering a financial contribution and often by using our expertise and networks. ABN AMRO has been a partner of the Dutch children's rights organization KidsRights since 2006, working together to enable the International Children's Peace Prize. Children set the world in motion; the International Children's Peace Prize provides them with a platform to make the world a better place. More information:

[www.abnamro.com/partnervandetoekomst](http://www.abnamro.com/partnervandetoekomst).

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### **Additional information and press accreditation (not for publication)**

Additional background documents and information are available in KidsRights' dedicated online newsroom: [kidsrights.pr.co](http://kidsrights.pr.co).

### **HD-images**

After the award ceremony a compilation of HD video footage will be available of the day's highlights, including Mohamad's acceptance speech. Also, a short documentary of Mohamad's life is available. The materials can be found [here](#).

### **Interview requests and other questions**

Please address any interview requests to KidsRights' media relations officers:



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