



VENEZUELAN VIOLENCE OBSERVATORY (OVV)  
COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER

REPORT ON **VIOLENT DEATHS**  
OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS  
VENEZUELA 2019



MAY 2020



## REPORT ON **VIOLENT DEATHS** OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS VENEZUELA 2019

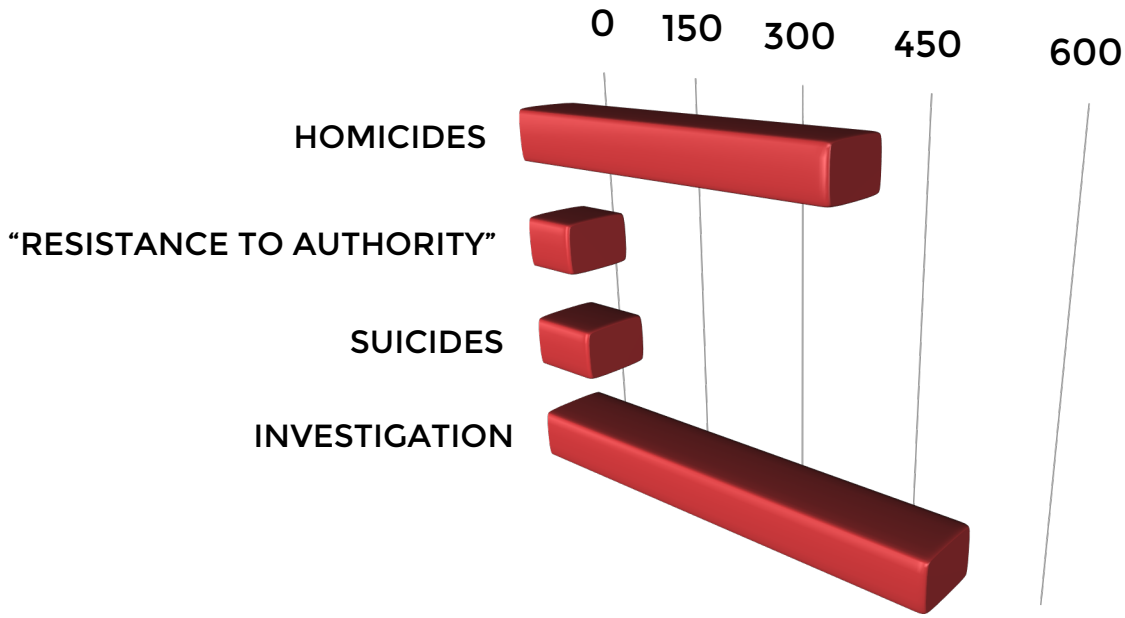
The Venezuelan Violence Observatory (OVV) and CECODAP present the report on violent deaths of children and adolescents in Venezuela during 2019.

This report is focused on the knowledge and analysis of the rights to life situation and the protection of childhood, understanding that only if we identify the risk factors and associated causes, will it be possible to avoid the involvement and death of this population, especially vulnerable.

This study is presented as a contribution to the surveillance of the right to life situation of this population, with information on deaths of children and adolescents. These are death that could have been avoided, this should never have happened. We study them and present them not only to accompany the pain of their families, but to also promote the paths that the Venezuelan society must follow to reduce this type of death or prevent it from happening.

The data published here, correspond to the period of January to December of 2019 and it refers to the mortality from the 4 categories we used at the OVV: Homicide, death by "Resistance to Authority", suicide and the so called "Deaths under Investigation".

<b>Total of violent deaths of children and adolescents Venezuela 2019</b>	<b>1.120</b>
<b>Homicides</b>	<b>425</b>
<b>Deaths by “Resistance to Authority”</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Suicides</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Deaths under Investigation</b>	<b>539</b>

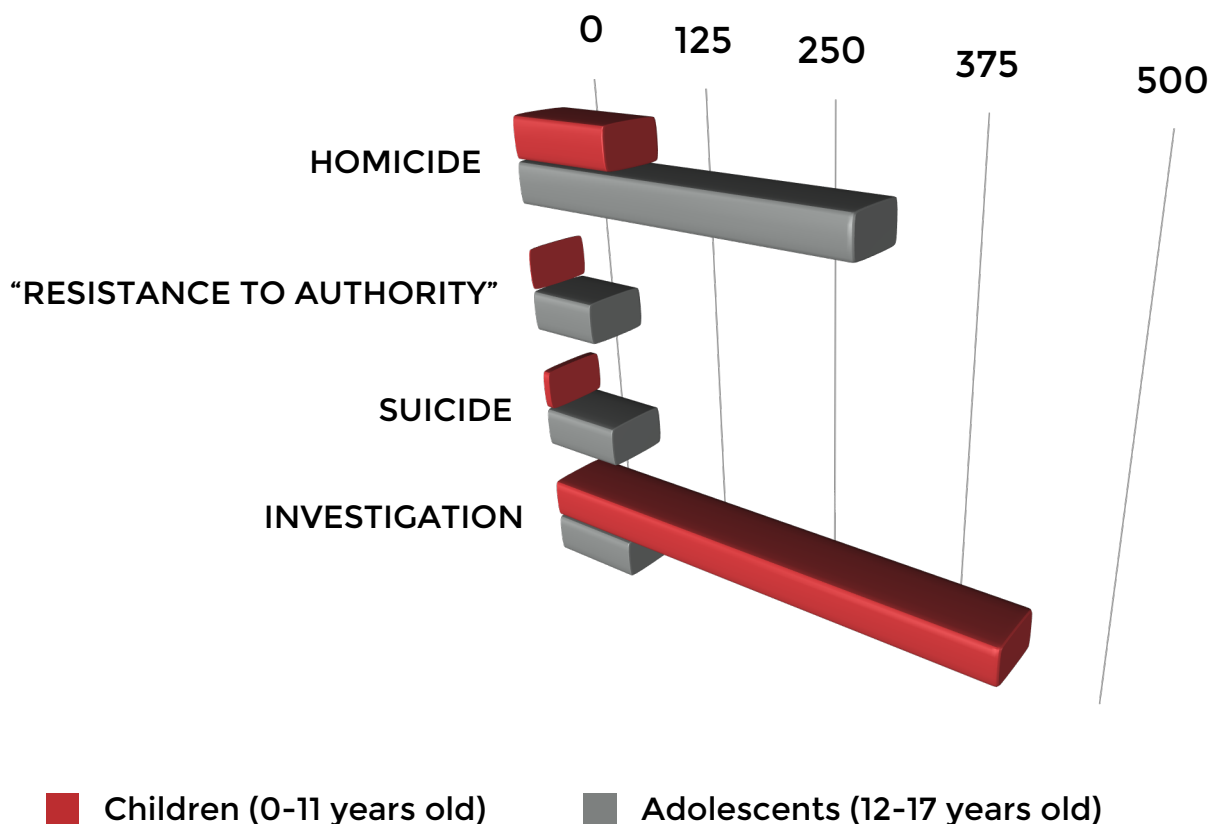


Examining this data in detail, we can observe the following:

**Table 1. Violent Deaths in population from 0 to 17 years old.  
Venezuela 2019**

Reported Age	Types of Violent Deaths				Total
	Homicide	“Resistance to Authority”	Suicide	Deaths under Investigation	
Children (0-11 years old)	100	1	7	451	559
Adolescents (12-17 years old)	325	67	81	88	561
Total	425	68	88	539	1120

Source: Venezuelan Violence Observatory 2020



There are **1120** children and adolescents deaths by violent causes, of which 559 (49.9%) are deaths of children under 12 years old and 561 (50%) cases correspond to deaths of adolescents.

This proportion in age groups is different when data is analyzed by types of death, in that way that is possible to observe that:

In the case of homicides, the 76% are deaths of adolescents.

The deaths that the police bodies name "death by resistance to authority", a 98% is represented by the group of adolescents.

The greatest percentage of deaths by suicide, a 92%, is represented by the group of adolescents.

In the category of Deaths under Investigation, there is a different rate, the 84% of these deaths are of children under 12 years old.

**As a whole, these statistics allow to identify that every day of 2019, 3 children and adolescents died by volente deaths. There were 21 children and adolescents death every week of the year. This data confirm that this population is suffering as well of an epidemic that causes avoidable deaths**

**and it has to be attended with the appropriate prevention measures.**

It is convenient to emphasize that the data in Table 1 and those in all subsequent tables take into account children and adolescents with reported ages, but is important to clarify that the age of the 3.036 deaths from violent deaths could not be known. The lack of the age is even more prevalent in the "Resistance to Authority" deaths (40%) than in homicides (15%). Consequently, the absolute figures presented in the report are likely to be higher than those indicated and should be read preceded by the adverb of quantity "at least."

When examining the distribution by age and gender, it can be seen that in all age groups the mortality from violent deaths in men is higher.



**Table 2. Violent deaths of children and adolescents, by age and gender groups, in percentages. Venezuela 2019**

Reported Age	By Gender		Total
	Female	Male	
Children (0-11 years old)	25.7	39.5	65.1
Adolescents (12-17 years old)	7.2	27.7	34.9
Total	32.8	67.2	100

Source: Venezuelan Violence Observatory 2020



When analyzing these figures, it is evident that it is necessary to study and address the risk factors that identify the highest mortality in children and adolescents. However, it is possible to appreciate a relevant fact that warns that the deaths of girls (from 0 to 11 years of age) reach a figure of 25.7% of the total deaths in this population from 0 to 17 years of age. A growing percentage and very worrying.

Analyzing these violent deaths for each of these typologies, we find the following:

# HOMICIDES

The data in Table 3 shows that 100 boys and girls and 325 adolescents were victims of homicides; in most cases due to criminal action, but there are also regrettable cases of filicide and other murders committed by family members.

**Table 3. Homicides of children and adolescents, by age groups and gender. Venezuela 2019**

Age	Homicide		
	Female	Male	Total
Children (0-11 years old)	40	60	100
Adolescents (12-17 years old)	50	275	325
Total	90	335	425

Source: Venezuelan Violence Observatory 2020

With these data, it is observed that adolescents are not protected, nor do children receive the care, protection and vigilance they require to avoid damage and injury that may be irreparable. These are unacceptable figures that express how the violence that plagues us does not seem to have limits, that moral barriers are not enough, nor is there contention in the perpetrators

of this lethal violence. Nor is the legal sanction, the criminal punishment of these events, visible or known, which surely contributes to their reproduction and escalation.

**Table 4. Federal entities with the highest numbers of Homicides of Children and Adolescents, by age groups and federal entity. Venezuela 2019**

Federal Entity	Victims (0-11 years old)	Victims (12-17 years old)	Total
Miranda	12	67	79
Zulia	9	41	50
Bolívar	3	34	37
Aragua	7	29	36
Capital District	7	21	28
Carabobo	6	19	25
Monagas	5	14	19
Anzoátegui	6	12	18
Lara	5	11	16

Source: Venezuelan Violence Observatory 2020





Miranda ranks first in magnitude of homicidal violence against children and adolescents with 79 homicides. It highlights the greater vulnerability and risk of adolescents and it is a very relevant fact to note the higher proportion of these deaths in this entity compared to any other; information that is not new because Miranda includes municipalities subject to long-standing criminal violence and is also the second most populous state in the country.

Zulia, the entity with the most population, appears in second place in mortality from homicides of adolescents and children (50 deaths of which 41 are from adolescents and 9 from children). In the following ranges, and in order of appearance, the figures for deaths of children and adolescents in the states of Bolívar (37), Aragua (36) and the Capital District (28) stand out. Bolívar state, which is the seventh most populous, ranks third in homicides; Aragua is the sixth most populous, but occupies a fourth place, and the Capital District occupies a fifth place, although it is the fourth most populous state in the country.

The vulnerability factors of adolescents and children are diverse and differentiated: most of the victims live in urban poor neighborhoods where the opportunities to access food, medicine and the most basic services are precarious; they are children who grow up without the constant presence of an adult, mothers must be away a good part of the day to get food; in some cases the deaths of children are related to domestic violence, cases of adolescent femicide are known. There are no protection or support services in situations of violence, threats or deprivation that this population may face. A relevant factor is the existence of arms and ammunition in the hands of the civilian population and criminal gangs, the presence of armed groups that seem to commit crimes with impunity guarantees, due to the ineffectiveness or inaction of the judicial bodies for judicial investigation and sanction of those who violate the laws.

The distribution of these homicides in the states of the country is shown in Table 5.

**Table 5. Homicides of Children and Adolescents, by age groups and federal entity. Venezuela 2019**

<b>Federal Entity</b>	<b>Children (0-11 years old)</b>	<b>Adolescents (12-17 years old)</b>	<b>Total</b>
Miranda	12	67	79
Zulia	9	41	50
Bolívar	3	34	37
Aragua	7	29	36
Capital District	7	21	28
Carabobo	6	19	25
Monagas	5	14	19
Anzoátegui	6	12	18
Lara	5	11	16
Sucre	1	12	13
Yaracuy	2	11	13
Guárico	5	8	13
Falcón	4	6	10
Trujillo	5	5	10
Táchira	1	8	9
Portuguesa	3	5	8
Barinas	0	7	7
Apure	3	3	6
Mérida	4	2	6
Vargas	5	1	6
Cojedes	3	2	5
Delta Amacuro	1	3	4
Nueva Esparta	2	2	4
Amazonas	1	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>425</b>

Source: Venezuelan Violence Observatory 2020

# RESISTANCE TO AUTHORITY

As a very relevant fact, it is reported that **68** children and adolescents died in situations that are registered as "Resistance to Authority".

This "Resistance to Authority" is a category used by police forces in Venezuela to publish figures referring to people killed in situations of "confrontations with authority." According to the legal name, these deaths correspond to events in which there was a confrontation, in which it is assumed that there was a threat to the lives of the people, the physical integrity of those present was at risk. In this type of event, the Law obliges the authorities to be notified so that a judicial investigation can be launched, aimed at clarifying the case and determining if there are criminal responsibilities.

Now, what the national data shows, for the entire population, and specifically, for the population of children and adolescents, is that these events, which should be exceptional, appear frequently and in very high numbers, which force a detailed analysis. The deaths of children and adolescents due to "Resistance to Authority" in 2019 reached **68** deaths, as shown in the following data:

**Table 6. Deaths by “Resistance to Authority” of children and adolescents. Venezuela 2019**

Age	Females	Males	Total
Children (0-11 years old)	1	0	1
Adolescents (12-17 years old)	0	67	67
Total	1	67	68

Source: Venezuelan Violence Observatory 2020

Regarding these data, the first question has to do with the suitability of police action. Because these are actions in which police officers use firearms and the result is lethal, against a girl and 67 others with adolescents. It is an unequivocally questionable performance; as a minimum, it warns of the possibility of non-compliance with legal regulations regarding the progressive, differentiated and proportional use of physical force to contain the violence or confrontation of the subject who intends to be apprehended.

Comparing this information with the frequent reports of victims and human rights organizations, it has been affirmed that in these situations no confrontation has occurred: it is objected that officials and police bodies go directly to the homes, requesting certain people whom they execute in their own homes, being unarmed and subject to police control. If these statements can be verified, these events do not qualify as "resistance to authority" but rather constitute extrajudicial executions, illegal use of the police force. In each of these situations, the Public Ministry should have initiated an investigation that clearly documented the facts, and Venezuelan society should know the results of those investigations, making it clear what the situation was and whether the events qualify or not such as abuse of power, police excess or violation of human rights.

Particularly questionable is the data on the death of children by Resistance to Authority, are they wrong records? Or are they being so registered because death by the police authority is considered to have this name, regardless of whether or not there was a confrontation? How will the case in which a 6-year-old girl was killed in Delta Amacuro by the shooting of a National Guard commission against the indigenous people who came in a boat have been recorded? (May 6, 2019); Can the case of the 10-year-old boy killed by CICPC officers who were persecuting criminals be classified as Resistance to Authority? (April 28, 2019, Portuguesa state). This analysis is important to do because events like these can only be classified as homicides; perhaps there was no intention to kill them, but this was the case and therefore they should not be classified as “resistance” and their authors should be judged by the judicial authority, which has the legal authority to determine the degrees of responsibility that correspond to the actions of these officials.



**Table 7. Deaths by "Resistance to Authority" of children and adolescents, by age groups and federal entity. Venezuela 2019**

Federal Entity	Total "Resistance to Authority"	Age Groups	Female	Male	Total by Age
Miranda	16	Children			-
		Adolescents		16	16
Zulia	15	Children			-
		Adolescents		15	15
Bolívar	5	Children			-
		Adolescents		5	5
Capital District	5	Children	1		1
		Adolescents		4	4
Sucre	5	Children			-
		Adolescents		5	5
Anzoátegui	4	Children			-
		Adolescents		4	4
Portuguesa	4	Children			-
		Adolescents		4	4
Barinas	3	Children			-
		Adolescents		3	3
Guárico	3	Children			-
		Adolescents		3	3
Trujillo	3	Children			-
		Adolescents		3	3
Carabobo	2	Children			-
		Adolescents		2	2
Cojedes	1	Children			-
		Adolescents		1	1
Mérida	1	Children			-
		Adolescents		1	1
Lara	1	Children			-
		Adolescents		1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>68</b>

Source: Venezuelan Violence Observatory 2020

As can be seen in Table 7, of the 68 cases of Resistance to Authority that report gender, age and federal entity, 67 are adolescents, the population most clearly vulnerable to police fatality. 98% of deaths from "Resistance to Authority" occur against male adolescents, between 12 and 17 years of age.

On the other hand, it is important to appreciate that "resistance to authority" is a record that is documented in 14 federal entities in the country, which allows us to appreciate that it is a generalized event that can correspond to a policy, with a guideline that guides the police performance and that is not related to individual actions or isolated cases that may incriminate certain officials.

## SUICIDES

With the known data, the death of 88 children and adolescents from suicide is accounted for. Of this number, 7 deaths are of children, and another 81 deaths are of adolescents (46 male adolescents and 35 females).



**Table 8. Suicides in children and adolescents.  
Venezuela 2019**

Age	Female	Male	Total
Children (0-11 years old)	2	5	7
Adolescents (12-17 years old)	35	46	81
Total	37	51	88

Source: Venezuelan Violence Observatory 2020

In this category, it is important to differentiate that the highest figures are in the adolescent population, which determines the importance of specific prevention programs for that age group. It is an inexcusable death, which rebuke our capacity as families and as a society, to guarantee the well-being, social formation and protection of people who must grow up protected, as human beings who are in the process of physical, cognitive, affective and moral development. They are unequivocally preventable deaths, which can be avoided if monitoring systems are in place, with accessible, reliable and quality opportunities for support and protection.

When analyzing the data by type of suicide, hanging is the main modality:



**Table 9. Suicides by type and age group. Venezuela 2019**

Type of suicide	Children	Adolescents
Hanging	6	64
Firearm	0	7
Poisoning	0	5
Immersion	1	0
Other	0	5
Total	7	81
	88	

Source: Venezuelan Violence Observatory 2020



These data show a violent mortality that challenges Venezuelan society: these are very young people, who surely faced situations of adversity and faced with those difficulties or problems that they perceived, neither they nor their families had counseling services or programs of psychosocial support that could have prevented their deaths.

Faced with this fatality, the State's obligation is to generate mental health programs specifically aimed at the adolescent population, publicize widely on telephones, web pages and other opportunities that can serve as an early response, accompaniment and support.

# DEATHS UNDER INVESTIGATION

The deaths under investigation add up to a total of at least 539 victims who are children and adolescents. It is highly probable that their number is greater, because the age report is only available for 89% of the deaths under investigation. This figure of 539 victims represents 13.5% of the national total of deaths under investigation, a category that totaled for the year 2019 the figure of 3,975 among those with reported ages.

It is important to note that the category “deaths under investigation” refers to those cases in which the justice administration knows the case, but does not have a conclusion about the fact and therefore there are doubts about whether it is a homicide, a suicide or an accident. In these cases, the Public Ministry has the legal competence to carry out the corresponding investigation to clarify the facts, thus guaranteeing that there is justice and that the case does not go unpunished. In our studies, we exclude from violent deaths the cases that are presumed and classified as accidents, and we only include those in which there are well-founded suspicions of the occurrence of a hidden violent death after the classification of “accident”.

Table 10 details these deaths by investigation in children and adolescents. In this Table, it is worrying to note that 399 victims, 74% of the cases, correspond to the categories "Other" and "To be determined", which does not allow associating this fact with an alleged external cause that may be considered an accident, but rather, on the contrary, it must be associated with a death by violence. From an ethical standpoint, as human rights defenders we present these data to public scrutiny because we understand that we cannot be indifferent to figures that, like these, report on the loss of human lives, of people in the process of formation, for whom the State and society did not have the capacity to protect, because the guarantees of their rights to life, to the protection of their safety and personal integrity were not made effective. In this type of case, the reaction or behavior cannot be ignorance or silence.

**Table 10. Deaths under investigation by type of death and age groups.  
Venezuela 2019**

Type of Death	Children	Adolescents	Total
Natural	126	14	140
Other	324	73	397
To be determined	1	1	2
Sub-Total	451	88	539

Source: Venezuelan Violence Observatory 2020

It is also observed that there are 140 cases that are presumed to be deaths from natural causes, but which are in the “investigation” category. This fact is noteworthy because important evidence or doubts of a criminal intent must have been found, so that these deaths have been subject to legal investigation processes, which, unfortunately, are rarely carried out and concluded.

Accident data are not included in the statistics that we present here and that we regularly prepare, because they may be unintentional deaths, associated with lack of foresight, risky behaviors, or difficulties in safeguarding and protecting. However, from a comprehensive protection perspective, from a human rights-based approach, these figures highlight the social situation of the humanitarian crisis that the country is going through, the failures in the most basic services, in the maintenance of equipment, in the security of transportation, the supply of domestic gas, insecurity of homes and the inadequacy of the spaces in which they live. In 2019, it was possible to learn, from data published in the press and on social networks, about deaths of children due to the explosion of gas cylinders in poor condition, due to accidents in vehicles that transported gasoline to complete the journey, or the burning of a home in which they cooked with firewood, for not having been able

to buy the domestic gas for their stoves. Among the guarantees of the right to an adequate standard of living, safety and protection of the dwellings they inhabit, is the provision of public services of domestic gas, electricity, and drinking water, which must be provided with security, and of course with hygiene and quality that the entire population requires, and especially childhood. Although it is not the intentional violence that we report in this report, we want to highlight that it does show the face of structural violence that must be taken into account in order to understand deaths from accidents as another violation of the rights of children in Venezuela.



## CONCLUSIONS

The context of humanitarian emergency that the country is experiencing, complicated by a new epidemic that adds to the deterioration of the health and quality of life of the population, is very likely to be of greater difficulties and threats to life and personal integrity of children and adolescents. If special protection mechanisms, measures and programs are not activated, that take into account the factors and situations that increase their vulnerability, they will continue to be victims of multiple damages and rights violations. By presenting these figures, we want to make the main risks visible, to identify the protective factors and actions that could stop the deaths, injuries and damage to the personal integrity of children.

Violent deaths resulting from criminal action can be avoided with a prevention and security policy that implements such basic measures as, for example, the disarmament of the civilian population, among other decisions. On the other hand, the State is obliged to eradicate the deaths for "resistance to authority": It is not a legal or ethical option to maintain warmongering policies and programs that increase deaths, reproduce social violence and violate human rights. Deaths from domestic violence, femicides, and filicides must be understood as a failure of a society that does not manage to have the capacities to guarantee the protection of its most vulnerable population, of people who require special care and attention for their survival and development. But it is also necessary to observe that in the face of the seriousness of the humanitarian emergency and the epidemic of violence that affects us, families and communities do not have a social state, which guarantees their rights, which ensures parents and other family members the opportunities access to food, services and the minimum conditions for the sustainability of child survival and care.

Venezuela is a signatory to international human rights treaties; the State enshrined as its own the mandate of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and has laws and regulations that oblige it to guarantee the protection, care and well-being of children. The Constitution affirms that the human rights of children are State obligations that must be fulfilled with absolute priority, with the participation and co-responsibility of families and society. However, Venezuelan children continue to be the victim of multiple and prolonged threats and violations of their rights to life, to an adequate standard of living, to health, to education, and to their full personal and social development.

The State has not guaranteed the immediate and comprehensive protection that victims require, has not undertaken the policies, programs, and investments to ensure the functioning of the organs, services, and programs that must constitute the National Protection System provided by the Constitution and the National Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (LOPNNA). In accordance with this legislation, the State is the holder of obligations, and is omitting its protection duties. Many of the deaths of boys and girls that are counted here could have been avoided, particularly those that occur in the face of public service failures, due to the contrary action of police officers, which were not avoided due to the absence of

programs and psychosocial support services for adolescents who require protection. Given the magnitude of the irreparable losses that have been known, the priority is to prevent new deaths from occurring. Effectiveness measures must be ordered, making investments and putting into operation preventive programs, counseling services and family support, making mechanisms and actions accessible for humanitarian and protective assistance to a population that is vulnerable, already at risk and that does not count with the most basic guarantees for its survival, development and protection.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

Our main recommendations refer to the recognition of violence against children as a public health problem. From this perspective, priority measures should be adopted and effectively implemented, among which we highlight the following:

- Development of basic social policies and special protection.
- Effectiveness of the humanitarian response to meet the basic needs of the population, especially children.
- Strengthening specialized and quality capacities in child protection.
- Guarantees of the Rule of Law, institutional development of the Protection System.
- Development of an information and data collection system with an approach based on children's rights and that guarantees the right to information with records disaggregated by age, sex and geographic distribution.
- Existence of protocols for the prevention and care of children and adolescents facing a violent event.
- Strengthen schools as affective, formative and protective spaces against violence.

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