



Syrian refugees at the Budapest Keleti railway station, 4 September 2015
(Mstyslav Oherhov photo)

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Since the publication of the first issue of *Allons-y* in August of last year, the world has become a darker place. Rising tides of xenophobia, toxic nationalism, and violent rhetoric threaten our diverse and inclusive societies at home and abroad, while the world seems to be retreating from critical international institutions and the very democratic values that underpin peace and the rule of law. New and escalating crises threaten to cause new inter- and intra-state wars, while horrific conflicts without end in sight grind on in Syria and Iraq, South Sudan, Somalia, and elsewhere. The renewed hope of the past eight years has now been fully replaced by doubt, cynicism, and the sense of impending crisis.

As always in such times of instability and growing conflict, children are both the ones most at risk of harm during wars and refugee flows, the go-to tool for extremist recruiters, and the most important agents of change for building a brighter and more peaceful future. As ISIS loses ground in Iraq and Syria, we see them turning increasingly to recruiting children over the internet to carry out attacks, placing new challenges before our communities and governments. As millions of refugees flee brutal conflicts and repressive regimes, half or more of them are children, and are left vulnerable to exploitation and abuse as they are turned away at borders, sent back to more dangerous countries, or viewed with suspicion because of their religion or race.

Children and youth are also taking action to build a better world, engaging in politics, standing up for peaceful and inclusive societies, and working to build peace in their communities. As an international and interdependent community, we must support the efforts of children and youth to create a better world, and help protect them from use and abuse by those who pursue a malign agenda.

In order to effectively do so, we require research, analysis, and insights on the roles that children and youth play in the perpetuation of conflict and the building of peace. *Allons-y* seeks to provide a platform for this kind of work, and this issue addresses a number of the most pressing matters facing the modern world. I hope that these pieces on children and cyberwarfare, Islamophobia and Islamist fundamentalism, and the mental health of Syrian refugee children provoke thought, inform conversations, and form one small part of our work to build a world that is peaceful, prosperous, and affirms and supports the rights of all human beings.

*Dustin Johnson, Editor of Allons-y
Program Officer – Research at the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative*