

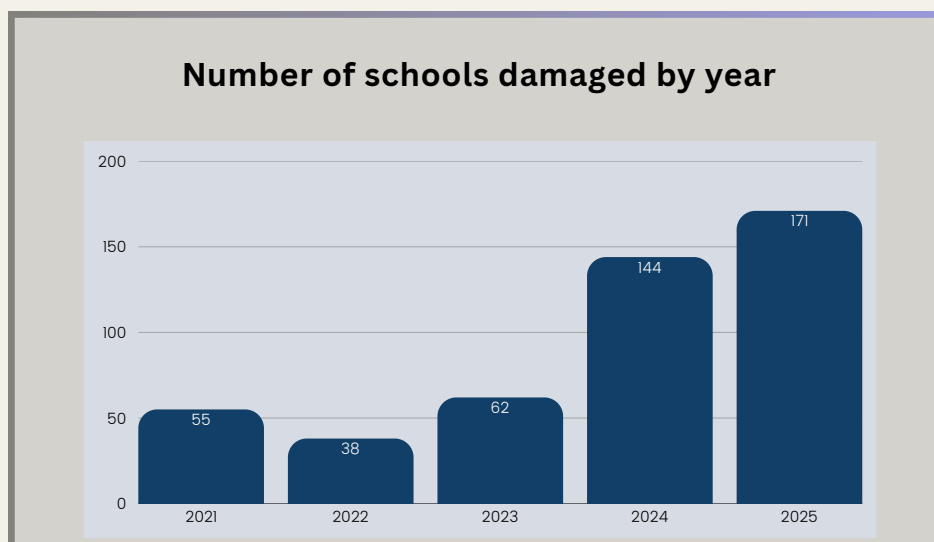
The Child Rights Crisis in Burma

Introduction

Since the onset of the military coup on 1 February 2021, armed conflict and human rights violations have escalated rapidly across Burma. The consequences of such violence have been borne disproportionately by civilians, with children being particularly vulnerable. Children have continuously faced threats to their lives, suffered injuries, been subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention, been forced to flee their homes, been deprived of their right to education and experienced significant psychological trauma.

Children have been continuously killed and maimed as a result of the military junta's airstrikes, artillery shelling, raids and destruction of villages and indiscriminate attacks on civilian areas following the coup. Not only that, but the increasing number of attacks on schools, displacement camps, religious buildings and other locations where civilians seek shelter has severely undermined children's right to life, safety, education and development. The deteriorating security situation, school closures and ongoing attacks have disrupted the education of millions of children. As a result, the fundamental rights of children across Burma continue to be systematically violated and eroded.

According to open-source data, from the military coup in 2021 until 21 October 2025, at least 470 schools, preschools and training centers across Burma were damaged or destroyed as a result of military airstrikes. Of these, Sagaing Region recorded the highest number, with 134 educational facilities affected, while numerous schools were also damaged in Magway Region, Mandalay Region and Chin State. Moreover, attacks on educational entities have increased year by year. A total of 144 schools were damaged or destroyed in 2024 alone, while 171 schools had been affected by 21 October 2025.¹ These figures highlight the severe impact of the conflict on children's right to education and their right to access safe and secure learning environments in Burma.



1. <https://burmese.dvb.no/post/730192>

Although June 2026 marks the official reopening of basic education schools across Burma, safe and secure learning environments remain unavailable for many children living in conflict-affected areas. Children attending school continue to face the risk of airstrikes, drone attacks, artillery shelling and other military-related threats. Under such conditions, the fundamental rights of children in Burma remain under severe threat and the child protection crisis continues to deepen. The ongoing insecurity not only jeopardizes children's safety and well-being but also undermines their access to education and their overall development.

Given the severity of these incidents and their impact on children, grave violations committed against children in situations of armed conflict, including the killing and maiming of children, abduction and attacks on schools and hospitals, are being monitored and documented at the international level by United Nations agencies and partner organizations. This is carried out through the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM), established pursuant to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1612 (2005) and the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) for Burma.²

This report compiles and presents, to the extent of available information, selected human rights violations committed against children from the time of the military coup in 2021 to June 2026. The report examines and analyzes the impacts on children's right to survival, development, protection and participation, based on international human rights and humanitarian standards, particularly the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC) and International Humanitarian Law (IHL). By ratifying the CRC, Burma (Myanmar) assumes binding legal obligations to respect, protect and fulfill the rights of children that are guaranteed under this treaty.

Violations Against Children and International Law

Based on the documented cases presented in this report, it is found that after the military coup in 2021, children in Burma have continued to be disproportionately affected by armed conflict and violence. Children have experienced severe impacts on their right to life, education, protection and development. Some of these incidents constitute violations of fundamental standards established under international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

(1) Killing and Maiming of Children

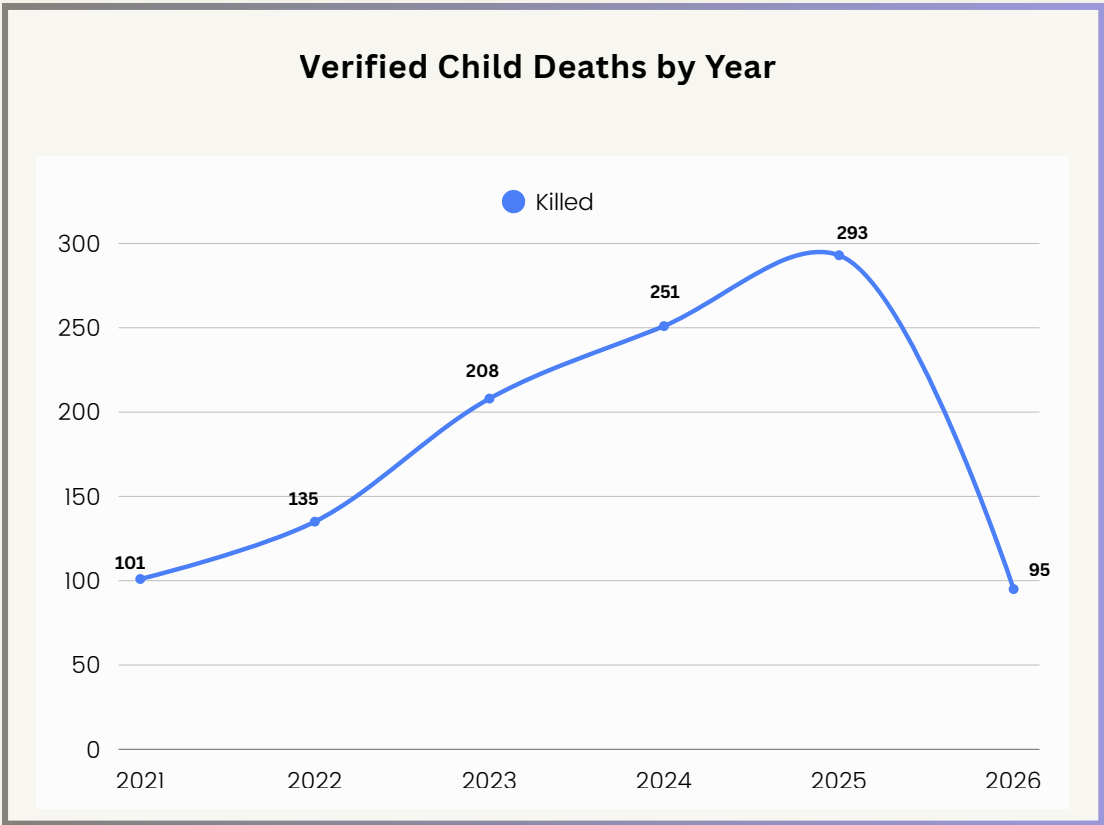
Since the military coup in 2021, children have been continuously killed and maimed as a result of artillery shelling, airstrikes and indiscriminate attacks carried out on civilian areas by the military junta. Children are not only affected as incidental victims of armed conflict but are increasingly being directly targeted in attacks.

According to documented cases, in September 2021, a one-and-a-half-year-old child was killed by gunfire in Nyaung-U Township, Mandalay Region. Subsequently, in December 2021, children were among those killed in an incident in Mo So Village, Kayah State, where civilians were burned to death. This incident constitutes a serious violation of the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law, which require the protection and distinction of civilians and children in situations of armed conflict. In addition to this, on 16 September 2022, a school in Let Yet Kone Village, Tabayin Township, Sagaing Region, was attacked by Mi-35 helicopters, resulting in the death of 11 children aged between 7 and 13. At least 17 other children and two teachers were injured. Reports indicate that more than 200 children were inside the school at the time of the attack.

² United Nations Security Council Resolution 1612 (2005); United Nations Secretary-General, *Children and Armed Conflict in Myanmar*, S/2025/81 (2025).

In April 2023, an airstrike on Pa Zi Gyi Village, Kanbalu Township, Sagaing Region, caused the death and injury of numerous children. Subsequently, in 2023, a four-year-old child was killed in an airstrike in Mindat Township, Chin State. In 2025, children were killed in attacks in Hakha and Mindat townships in Chin State. In June 2026, an airstrike carried out during school dismissal hours in Mahlaing Township, Mandalay Region, resulted in the deaths of three students, while other children were also injured.

According to information collected by AAPP, a total of **(1083)** children were killed due to violence perpetrated by the military junta from the time of the coup in 2021 until the end of June 2026. The youngest victim was (2) months old. The figures include (632) children aged 0–13 and (451) children above 13 years of age. These numbers represent cases that have been verified by AAPP, while the deaths of an additional **(400)** children are still under ongoing verification.



Article 6 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) affirms that every child has the inherent right to life and development. In addition, under international humanitarian law, parties to an armed conflict are required to adhere to the principles of distinction which means there is an obligation to distinguish between civilians and military objectives. Meanwhile, proportionality is required, which prohibits attacks that may cause excessive harm to civilians in relation to anticipated military advantage. Attacks that have resulted in the killing of civilian children constitute violations of the fundamental protections set out in Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions and in customary international humanitarian law. The aforementioned acts therefore breach essential international legal obligations to protect children in situations of armed conflict.

Therefore, the killing and maiming of children are in direct violation of international legal obligations to provide special protection for children in situations of armed conflict. These acts seriously threaten children’s rights to life, security and development.

(2) Attacks on Schools and the Education Sector

During the conflict, schools have served not only as places of learning for children but also as shelters for civilians displaced by armed violence. However, following the military coup in 2021, schools have increasingly become targets of airstrikes, drone bombings and artillery shelling. These attacks have severely endangered both the safety of children and the protection of educational environments.

According to documented cases, numerous schools have been attacked, including Let Yet Kone School and Oe Htein Kwin School in Tabayin Township, Ma Gyi Kan School in Myaing Township, Htan Taw School in Ye-U Township, Nat Inn School in Kawlin Township, Moke Soe Chon School in Wetlet Township, Vanhar School in Hakha Township, Htinchaung School in Mindat Township and Ka Net Thi Ri School in Thayetchaung Township.

In particular, the attacks on Let Yet Kone Village School, Ma Gyi Kan School, and Oe Htein Kwin Village School took place when children had gathered during school hours and were directly targeted. In May 2025, an airstrike on Oe Htein Kwin Village School resulted in the death of 22 students and 2 teachers, while many others were injured. Such severe attacks on schools and places where children gather show a grave disregard for the fundamental principles of distinction and protection of civilians under international humanitarian law.

Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) affirm that children have the right to education and that education should be directed toward the development of the child's personality, talents, and social abilities. In addition, Article 38 of the CRC provides for the special protection of children in situations of armed conflict.

Under International Humanitarian Law (IHL), schools are protected as civilian objects as long as they are not being actively used for military purposes. Parties to an armed conflict are therefore obliged to distinguish between civilian objects and military targets. In addition, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OPAC) is specifically intended to ensure the special protection of children from the effects of armed conflict.

Due to the destruction of schools, prolonged school closures and displacement caused by armed conflict, many children have been deprived of their right to education. Military attacks have rendered schools unsafe as learning environments and have systematically undermined children's right to education, safe learning and development.



Photo Credit: BBC: View of the school after the Oe Htein Kwin airstrike

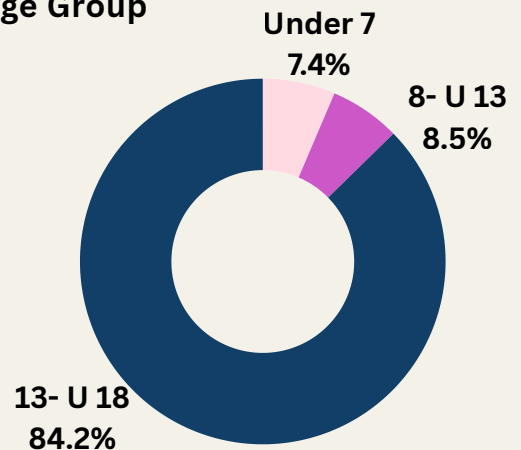
(3) Arbitrary Detention and the Use of Children as Hostages

Since the military coup, the military junta has carried out arrests and intimidation against family members of political activists, resistance forces and individuals perceived to be associated with them. Children have been affected by these actions.

According to the records compiled by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) and other human rights organizations, there have been cases in which children were arrested in place of their parents when the latter could not be apprehended. Children have been detained as hostages to force their parents to surrender and children have been arrested and interrogated due to their association with political activists. According to AAPP documentation, a total of (639) children have been arrested from the time of the coup until the end of June 2026.

Arrests of Children by Age Group

Age	Number
Under 7	41
7 - U 13	40
13 - U 18	558



Some children were held in detention without legal safeguards during interrogation and were also denied or restricted from communicating with their families. A child, who was 16 years old at the time of arrest and who was interviewed by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), described being denied contact with their family and experienced ill-treatment during interrogation. They state as follows:

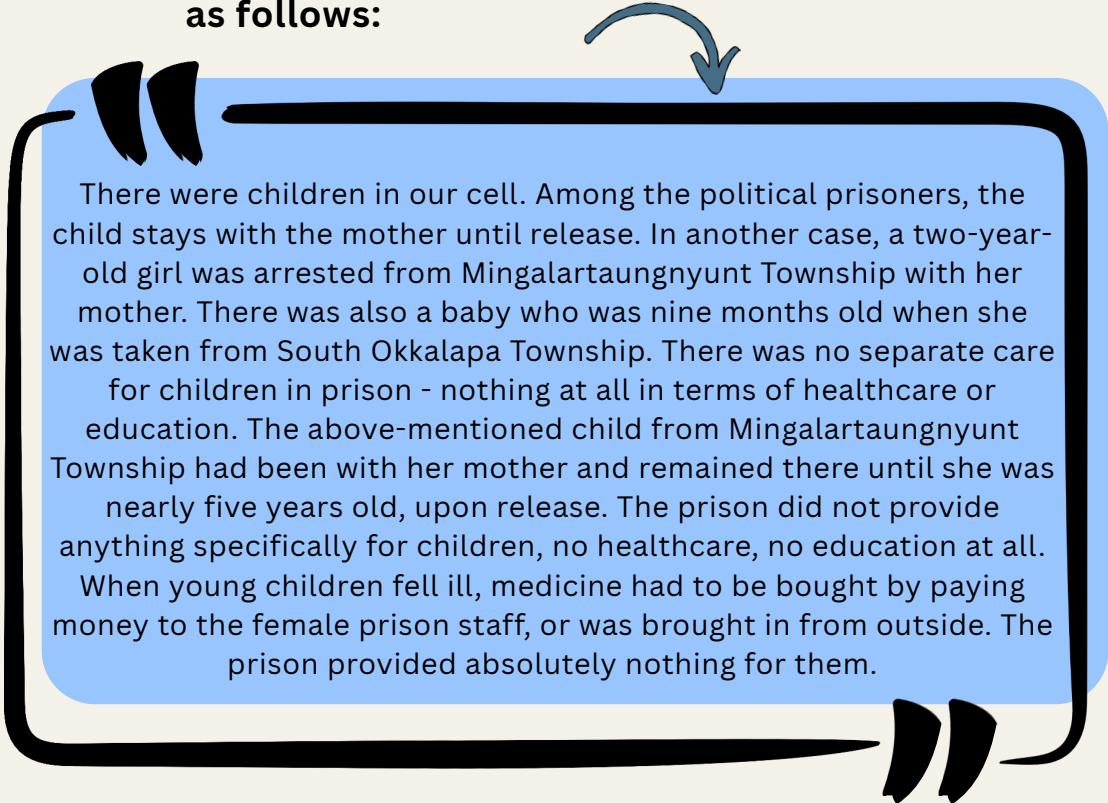
My friends posted online about my arrest. [The online post] was seen by my mother, who proceeded to investigate my whereabouts. I was unable to see my family, as I was completely barred from contacting them by the police station and the military. On the day of my arrest, I was interrogated the entire day with my hands handcuffed behind my back. I was beaten until nighttime, and the following day, I was in pain, even when my finger touched my muscles. They hit me with the intention of hitting my face. They used rubber sticks during the beatings. I also got hit on the soft tissue of my thigh. I also faced sexual threats. The interrogators threatened to shove their bullets into my anus if I did not answer.

These incidents highlight a pattern in which children are being used as instruments of political repression, coercion and control. Such acts have also resulted in long-term consequences for children's safety and psychosocial well-being. Articles 19, 37, and 38 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) affirm that children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence, arbitrary detention and the impacts of armed conflict. Accordingly, the arbitrary arrest of children in place of others and the use of children as hostages constitute serious violations of children's rights to liberty, security and protection.

(4) Violations of the Rights of Children and Mothers in Detention

Children and mothers with young children have been among the most vulnerable groups within the detention system after the military coup. According to testimonies from former political prisoners interviewed by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), some children were detained together with their mothers, while others were infants or very young children. These children reportedly lived in prison conditions without access to dedicated child care services, adequate healthcare or developmental support.

A former female political prisoner described the conditions she experienced inside prison, to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), as follows:




There were children in our cell. Among the political prisoners, the child stays with the mother until release. In another case, a two-year-old girl was arrested from Mingalartaungnyunt Township with her mother. There was also a baby who was nine months old when she was taken from South Okkalapa Township. There was no separate care for children in prison - nothing at all in terms of healthcare or education. The above-mentioned child from Mingalartaungnyunt Township had been with her mother and remained there until she was nearly five years old, upon release. The prison did not provide anything specifically for children, no healthcare, no education at all. When young children fell ill, medicine had to be bought by paying money to the female prison staff, or was brought in from outside. The prison provided absolutely nothing for them.

This testimony indicates that children living in prison with their mothers do not receive age-appropriate healthcare, education or developmental support. It reflects conditions in which even the basic needs of children are not adequately met.

Some pregnant political prisoners were forced to give birth inside prison facilities. In certain cases, delays in access to timely hospital care resulted in the loss of infants' lives. Even pregnant women who were allowed to give birth in external hospitals reportedly faced restrictions such as being shackled and having their freedom of movement limited based on so-called 'security' grounds.

These accounts indicate the existence of conditions that pose serious risks to the health and survival of pregnant women and newborn babies. Timely access to healthcare has also been denied and poor treatment during childbirth undermines human dignity.



One sister had already started experiencing labor pains and said the baby was in distress, but the prison staff did not send her to the hospital in time and the baby died. Another sister gave birth in an external hospital. She was only allowed to go to the outside hospital when she was close to delivery. She gave birth there and then was brought back into the prison with the baby. When she went to give birth, she was shackled and her leg was chained to the iron bars.

Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules) and the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), children, mothers with children and pregnant women are entitled to special protection and access to adequate healthcare services.

The principle of the best interests of the child, as set out in Article 3 of the CRC, together with the rights guaranteed under Articles 6, 24, and 27, namely the right to life, to the highest attainable standard of health and to an adequate standard of living, are not adequately upheld or protected within detention facilities.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

- Article 3 – Best Interests of the Child
- Article 6 – Right to Life, Survival and Development
- Article 24 – Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health
- Article 27 – Right to an Adequate Standard of Living

Article 12 of CEDAW provides that women are entitled to appropriate healthcare services during pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period. The Bangkok Rules, particularly Rules 48 and 51, also require that pregnant and breastfeeding women in detention receive adequate healthcare and nutritional support, with the best interests of the child taken into primary consideration. In particular, Rules 49 to 52 stipulate that the health, development, care and living conditions of children living with their mothers in prison must be determined on the basis of the best interests of the child.

Similarly, Rules 24 to 27 of the Nelson Mandela Rules stipulate that prisoners are entitled to access healthcare services without discrimination, equivalent to that which is available outside of prison. These rules further require that adequate healthcare services be provided in prisons and that timely medical care and referral to specialized treatment be ensured in cases of medical emergencies or when specialized treatment is necessary.

Therefore, the lack of adequate healthcare, nutrition, education and developmental support for children, pregnant women and mothers with children in detention is found to be in violation of the basic protection standards set out in the CRC, CEDAW, the Bangkok Rules and the Nelson Mandela Rules.

(5) Forced Displacement and the Psychological Impacts

Due to airstrikes, artillery shelling and the burning and destruction of villages, thousands of children have been forced to flee their homes. The majority are now living in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, monasteries and temporary shelter.

As a consequence of displacement, children have experienced loss of access to education, lack of healthcare services, separation from family members and disconnection from their communities. In addition, many children are suffering from anxiety, fear, insomnia and symptoms of trauma as a result of witnessing airstrikes and other violent incidents.

As a result of forced displacement and repeated exposure to violent incidents, levels of stress, grief and trauma symptoms among children have increased. Therefore, the need for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) has significantly risen.

Furthermore, due to armed conflict and forced displacement, children's access to essential healthcare services has been severely affected. Owing to the shortage of healthcare facilities and security constraints, maternal and child health services have become largely inaccessible. As a result, cross-border humanitarian assistance and health and protection services provided by local community-based organizations have played a crucial role in supporting the survival and health of children in conflict-affected areas.³ Similarly, due to the ongoing conflict and the collapse of the health system, routine immunization programs for children have been severely disrupted. An estimated 1.2 million children under the age of five remain either unimmunized or insufficiently immunized.⁴ This situation is likely to have long-term negative impacts on the rights of children in conflict-affected and displaced settings, particularly for their right to survival, health and development.

Articles 12 and 15 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) affirms that children have the right to express their views on matters affecting them and to participate in social life. Meanwhile, Articles 6 and 27 of the CRC guarantee children's right to development and to an adequate standard of living.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

- Article 12 – Child Participation and Expression of Views
- Article 15 – Freedom of Association and Peaceful Assembly

However, due to armed conflict, security risks and displacement, children's voices and opportunities for participation have been significantly restricted. At the same time, their education, health and psychosocial development have been severely affected. These conditions have had long-term impacts on children's physical, psychological, and social development, undermining their rights to development, protection and meaningful participation in society.

3. OCHA, Myanmar Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025; UNICEF, Humanitarian Action for Children: Myanmar 2025.

4. WHO, Decreasing Zero-Dose Children Threefold Amidst Pandemic and Political Unrest in Myanmar, 10 May 2024.

Conclusion

Based on documented cases from the period of the military coup in 2021 to June 2026, children in Burma continue to be disproportionately affected by armed conflict and violence. Airstrikes, artillery shelling, arbitrary detention, forced displacement and attacks on schools are not isolated incidents but rather reflect a systematic pattern of abuses, perpetrated by the military junta, that have severely undermined children's rights to life, safety, education and development.

In the aftermath of the military coup, attacks on educational facilities and the occupation of schools for military purposes have been continuously reported in Burma, as documented in a report by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), *Education Under Attack 2024: Myanmar Profile*. The report records at least 245 attacks on schools and at least 190 instances where the military occupy schools and universities during 2022 and 2023.⁵ These conditions have led to school closures, forced displacement and increased security risks, pushing millions of children out of the education system. This situation is likely to have long-term and far-reaching consequences on an entire generation's access to education, psychosocial well-being and socio-economic development.

The incidents documented in this report indicate widespread violations of the rights to survival, development, protection and education as guaranteed under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Furthermore, these incidents are found to constitute serious violations of the standards set out in the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OPAC) and international humanitarian law (IHL).

Similarly, the conditions of children and mothers in detention are inconsistent with the protection standards established under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules) and the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules). Burma has ratified the CRC, as well as CEDAW, and therefore assumes binding legal obligations to respect, protect and fulfill the rights guaranteed under these treaties.

The child rights crisis in Burma is not only a humanitarian concern but also a human rights emergency directly linked to issues of accountability, child protection and the long-term building of peace. Urgent attention and responsibility from the international community and all relevant stakeholders are required to effectively protect and uphold children's rights.

5. Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA). *Education Under Attack 2024: Myanmar Profile*. New York: GCPEA, 2024.

Recommendations

(1) Strengthening Child Protection and Mental Health Support for Children in Conflict Areas

Humanitarian organizations and United Nations agencies should expand needs-based child protection services, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and case management services for children in conflict-affected areas.

(2) Ensuring Equitable Access to Humanitarian Services for All Children in Conflict Areas

United Nations agencies and international organizations should ensure equitable access to child protection, health, education and emergency services for all children in conflict-affected areas. They should also work in collaboration with the National Unity Government, local authorities and civil society organizations to ensure that these services are effectively delivered and accessible to children across all conflict-affected regions

(3) Supporting Emergency Education Programs to Ensure Continuity of Learning

International donors, education partners and humanitarian organizations should strengthen support to emergency education programs, safe learning environments and alternative education opportunities for children affected by conflict and displacement, particularly during emergencies and protracted crises.

(4) Protecting the Rights of Children in Prisons and Detention Centers

International organizations working on prison reform and child protection should strengthen monitoring mechanisms and emergency support to ensure that detained children, including those living with their mothers in prisons and detention centers, have adequate access to healthcare, education, nutrition and protection services.

(5) Strengthening Accountability for Grave Violations Against Children

The international community and accountability mechanisms should continue to collect and preserve evidence of grave violations, including the killing and maiming of children, attacks on schools, hostage-taking and other serious abuses. Efforts should be strengthened to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable for these violations.

(6) Continuing Documentation of Violations Against Children Using a Child-Sensitive Approach

Civil society organizations and child rights networks should continue documenting violations against children in a manner that takes into account children's specific circumstances, while adhering to the principles of child safety, confidentiality and "do no harm." They should also strengthen collaboration and coordination to ensure greater international attention and action in response to these violations.

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