

Nearly 40% Of 3.4 Mn Displaced In Myanmar Are Children: UN

AFP- Children made up nearly 40 percent of the more than 3.4 million people in Myanmar displaced by civil war and climate change-driven extreme weather, the UN agency for children said Thursday.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military deposed Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government in 2021 and launched a crackdown that sparked an armed uprising against the junta's rule.

The Southeast Asian nation was also battered by Typhoon Yagi in September, triggering major floods that killed more than 400 people and forced hundreds of thousands from their homes.

"The humanitarian crisis in Myanmar is reaching a critical inflexion point, with escalating conflict and climate shocks putting children and families at unprecedented risk," UNICEF deputy executive director Ted Chaiban said in a statement on Thursday.

"Over 3.4 million people have been displaced across the country, nearly 40 percent of whom are children."

The junta is battling widespread armed opposition to its 2021 coup, and its soldiers have been accused of bloody rampages and using air and artillery strikes to punish civilian communities.

The fighting, as well as severe climate events like Typhoon Yagi, have had a "devastating impact" on children, Chaiban said, leaving them displaced, vulnerable to violence and cut off from health care and education.

He said seven children and two other civilians were killed on November 15 in a strike that hit a Kachin church compound where children were playing football.

Myanmar's northern Kachin state is the homeland of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), one of the various ethnic minority armed groups that hold territory in the north and are battling the junta.

At least 650 children have been killed or wounded in violence in the country this year.

Minors also made up about a third of the more than 1,000 civilian casualties from landmines and explosive remnants of war, according to Chaiban.

"The increasing use of deadly weapons in civilian areas, including airstrikes and landmines hitting homes, hospitals, and schools, has severely restricted the already limited safe spaces for children, robbing them of their right to safety and security," he said.

Eleven people were killed last week when a teashop in Myanmar was hit by a military air strike in the town of Naungcho in northern Shan state, a local ethnic armed group said.

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