

UNICEF: 2024 has been one of the worst years for children in recent history



Geneva, December 31 (RHC)-- A review conducted by UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) based on the latest available data and prevailing global trends indicates that 2024 could reach an unprecedented impact on the effects of armed conflicts on children.

More children than ever are living in conflict zones or have been forcibly displaced due to wars and systematic violence, estimates the UN agency in a recently published analysis.

The report shows that a record number of children affected by conflicts have died or been injured, have had to leave school, have not received essential vaccines, or suffer from severe levels of malnutrition.

Although humanitarian issues do not gain their relevance from the figures, these become evidence of genocides, extermination campaigns, and the consequences of the implications on the civilian population

of imperial interests.

According to UNICEF, more than 473 million children (at least 1 in 6 worldwide) currently live in conflict-affected areas, and it identifies that this number is the highest recorded since World War II. The percentage of children living in these regions has doubled: while in the 1990s it was 10 percent, this year it is recorded at 19 percent.

UNICEF indicates that the trends recorded this year reveal an additional increase in the number of children displaced by the intensification of conflicts, particularly in Palestine, Haiti, Lebanon, Myanmar, and Sudan.

They estimate that while the child population represents 30 percent of the global population, on average, around 40 percent of refugees are children, as well as 49 percent of internally displaced persons.

These figures, which are added to the poverty rates, also indicate that more than a third of the population in conflict countries is poor, in contrast to the 10 percent in countries where armed conflicts are not taking place.

Catherine Russell, Executive Director of UNICEF, stated that a child growing up in a war zone is much more likely to be out of school, suffer from malnutrition, or be forced to flee their home compared to those living in peaceful regions. "We cannot allow an entire generation of boys and girls to become collateral victims of the uncontrolled wars that plague the world," she said, asserting that this cannot be the new normal.

Since the Security Council began monitoring serious violations against children, the available data, which pertains to 2023, reveals the highest figures of these abuses. So the figures for 2024 could be terrifying.

Especially concerning is the situation of women and girls in conflict situations, against whom sexual violence is systematically committed in these contexts. Only in Haiti, the number of reported cases of sexual violence against children has increased by 1000 percent this year.

According to available records, 52 million children are out of school in conflict countries. Children in the Gaza Strip and many Sudanese have been out of school for over a year, as their educational centers have been destroyed or repurposed for other humanitarian purposes.

Another factor that has severely and publicly affected the global child population in war-torn countries is malnutrition. In that sense, UNICEF states that conflicts and armed violence continue to be the main causes of severe hunger, as they disrupt food systems, cause population displacement, and hinder access to humanitarian aid. They estimate that in 2024, more than a million children in five conflict-affected countries will suffer the most extreme situation on the food insecurity scale.

The lack of access to basic health services and the impact of conflicts on children's mental health have caused irreversible damage, leaving marks such as depression, nightmares, sleep disorders, and aggressive behaviors or sadness.

To all situations of violence, displacement, malnutrition, lack of basic services, and direct attacks, children with disabilities are disproportionately exposed.

In the deadliest year in history for humanitarian personnel, 281 workers lost their lives in the line of duty, fighting for their lives to save those of children who bear no responsibility in the conflicts that hinder their full development.

With this data, UNICEF once again called for immediate measures to end the suffering of children, ensure the respect of their rights, and fulfill their obligations in accordance with international humanitarian law.

[SOURCE: teleSUR]

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