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The Risks and Challenges Facing Children who Have Fled from the Civil War in Sudan

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF)

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I. Introduction & Background/history of Sudan

The Republic of Sudan is located in Northeast Africa and had an estimated population of approximately 51.7 million people in 2025 (United Nations Statistic Division, 2025). Sudan is classified as a low-income country within the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region (World Health Organization [WHO], 2026). Sudan's economy has historically depended on agriculture, livestock production, and natural resources extraction; however, structural economic fragility and limited public expenditure have constrained service provision and institutional capacity.

Sudan gained independence on January 1, 1956, from the joint British-Egyptian administration known as the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium (BBC News, 2011). Post-independence governance was characterized by repeated military coups, civil wars, and regional tensions. Longstanding between northern and southern regions ultimately resulted in the secession of South Sudan in 2011, following a referendum on

self-determination (BBC News, 2011). The loss of the south had a significant impact on the country, as Sudan used to be the largest country in Africa and much of the country's oil reserves were located in the south, which further strained Sudan's fiscal and political stability.

In 2018-2019, mass protests led to the removal of President Omar al-Bashir, and a transitional civilian-military government was formed. However, structural competition between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), combined with state fragility, undermined democratization efforts (Verhoeven, 2023). In April 2023, tensions between SAF and RSF escalated into widespread armed conflict in the capital, Khartoum, and rapidly spread to Darfur, Kordofan, and other regions of the country (UNICEF, 2024). Since that time, Sudan has remained in a state of war.

The ongoing conflict has generated one of the largest humanitarian crises globally. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 30.4 million people - approximately 64% of the population - require humanitarian assistance, with 20.9 million individuals targeted for aid in 2025 (OCHA, 2025). Approximately 11.5 million people have been internally displacement crisis in the world (OCHA, 2025). Acute food insecurity affects approximately 26 million people, famine conditions have been confirmed in parts of North Darfur (OCHA, 2025). As of January 2026, Al Fasher in North Darfur remains under near-siege conditions, with blocked supply routes and severe shortages of food, water, and essential services (UNICEF, 2026). Escalating violence in Kordofan and along the Chad border has generated additional displacement and placed further strain on the already overstretched health, education, and protection system (UNICEF, 2026).

Children are among the most severely affected populations in the current crisis.. Over 16 million children require humanitarian assistance, and millions remain out of school due to displacement and insecurity (OCHA, 2025). The collapse of health, nutrition, and protection systems has heightened children's vulnerability, particularly for those who have been displaced internally or forced to flee across borders. These conditions have created a complex child protection emergency that warrants focused examination of the specific risks and challenges facing Sudanese refugee children.

II. Key risks and challenges

Children who have escaped the civil war in Sudan face a number of challenges that are linked to each other and make their survival, growth, and long term health more difficult. Armed conflict and mass displacement have deeply impacted access to food, medical care, educational opportunities and security putting children at an even bigger risk for starvation, sickness and eventually death. Children who have been affected by conflict are much more likely to suffer from acute malnutrition due to displacement, food prices, and health infrastructure falling apart. These problems are made worse by siege conditions and limited humanitarian access (de Groot et al., 2025). In Sudan, the deterioration of food supply and nutritional food production has made an ongoing bad malnutrition crisis even worse. This makes children who are displaced or refugees

vulnerable to illness, slowed physical and mental development and death that in other cases would be preventable (Noorallah et al,. 2024). It is important to note these challenges don't cause an impact for a short period of time. Being food insecure and not having enough healthcare for an extended period makes poverty and negative health effects pass down from one generation to the generations to come.

Children who escape this crisis suffer serious emotional and safety difficulties that go beyond just staying alive. This displacement puts children in situations where they are separated from their families, exploited, abused, and a constant fear for their safety. This repeated exposure of violence and loss can also cause long-term psychological damage (Kamya, 2009). Research based on the insights of local educators and caregivers highlights the negative impacts of daily stressors including hunger, violence, and dangerous living conditions and the effect it has on children's emotional health, behaviour, and educational engagement, particularly in the context of war-related trauma (Heltne et al., 2025). As schools are damaged, made challenging to get into, or not given enough attention in humanitarian operations, many displaced children have to work, get married young, or stay out of school for extended periods of time which then makes them even more vulnerable (Heltne et al., 2025). These dangers show that children fleeing from the civil war in Sudan are in danger not just from the violence itself but also from the breakdown of the systems that are supposed to keep them safe and help them grow. This shows how important it is for humanitarian efforts to focus on children, as UNICEF's mission calls for.

III. International response

The international response to the crisis in Sudan has been mostly organized through humanitarian procedures sponsored by the United Nations. These structures have brought people together from all over the world to provide emergency help to deal with mass displacement, food insecurity, and the deterioration of basic necessities. Humanitarian response strategies have concentrated on providing life saving help such as food, health care, and nourishment, since over fifty percent of Sudan's population currently calls for humanitarian support (Fadul, 2025). International efforts have been severely limited by the lack of a long-term peace agreement, continued violence, and limited access to aid. Bureaucratic obstacles, including visa holds or delays and working permits, as well as instability and strikes on infrastructure have made it harder to distribute help and has caused action to be slower and less consistent than in past worldwide crises (Fadul, 2025). These limitations have drastically reduced the efficacy of international humanitarian efforts, especially for children and displaced individuals.

International political and financial choices have had an even bigger effect on the humanitarian responses limits and possibilities. Decreases in development aid and the enforcement of restrictions on aid in areas impacted by violence have been shown to raise the death rates of mothers and children by making already weak health systems even weaker by cutting off important services (Gibson et al., 2025). In Sudan, where health and nutrition depend significantly on outside funding and help, these problems make humanitarian distress worse which makes it harder to keep up with response efforts. Therefore, international organizations

have depended on temporary emergency measures such as mobile medical professionals and community oriented health initiatives to fill these large service gaps (Dulacha et al., 2022). These methods have made it possible to provide emergency care in dangerous places but they usually do not cover enough ground or last long enough. Even though there are many international laws that are supposed to help protect children in armed conflict, there is still a big gap between what countries promise to do and what actually happens. This means that local communities have to do a lot of the work amidst failing international collaboration and coordination (Denov & Akesson, 2016; Fadul, 2025).

IV. The role of UNICEF

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was established in 1946 by the United Nations General Assembly to provide humanitarian assistance to children affected by crisis and conflict. UNICEF's mandate is grounded in the Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC), which affirms every child's right to survival, development, protection and participation (United Nation, 1989). UNICEF operates in over 190 countries and territories and serves as a leading agency in child protection, education, nutrition, health, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) interventions in emergency contexts (UNICEF, 2024). In humanitarian context, UNICEF also coordinates sectoral responses and works closely with national governments, local civil society organizations, and international partners to ensure the delivery of life-saving services

In Sudan, UNICEF has maintained a long-standing presence and plays a central operational and coordination role in responding to the ongoing conflict. Following the outbreak of large-scale violence in April 2023, UNICEF activated its Level 3 (L3) Corporate Emergency Response, its highest emergency classification, allowing rapid mobilization of financial resources, surge staffing, and expanded field operations (UNICEF, 2025). Through this response, UNICEF has supported child protection services, emergency campaigns, and safe water provision in conflicted-affected areas.

UNICEF has also worked to sustain essential systems in areas where infrastructure has collapsed. Given that over 16 million children in Sudan require humanitarian assistance (OCHA, 2025), UNICEF has expanded temporary support programs, and supported disease outbreak prevention efforts in coordination with health authorities (UNICEF, 2025). Despite severe access constraints and insecurity in regions such as Darfur or Kordofan, UNICEF continues to deliver emergency supplies and maintain cross-border assistance channels to reach affected populations (UNICEF, 2026)

Despite significant scale-up efforts, UNICEF's response has been constrained by severe access limitations and funding gaps. OCHA (2025) identifies substantial shortfalls in humanitarian financing, and the L3 evaluation reports major funding deficits in child protection and nutrition programming (UNICEF, 2025). Moreover, children with disabilities, adolescent girls, and children in remote areas remain among the most underserved populations. The evaluation further notes that neither UNICEF nor the broader UN system was fully prepared for

the rapid scale and fragmentation of the conflict (UNICEF, 2025)

Overall, UNICEF's response in Sudan has focused on scaling life-saving services across nutrition, health, education, WASH, and child protection sectors. While significant interventions have been implemented, persistent insecurity, funding gaps, and systemic collapse continue to limit equitable coverage. The risks facing displaced children therefore remain acute, underscoring the complexity of delivering child-centered assistance in protracted conflict environments.

More information about UNICEF can be found here: https://www.unicef.org/

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, the continuous fighting in Sudan has caused a complicated humanitarian situation, and children are among the people who have been hurt the most. This background information has shown that Sudanese refugee and displaced children are at danger of several things at once, including not having enough food, not getting enough nutrition, not being able to go to school, being exposed to violence, being separated from their families, and long-term mental trauma. These problems are not just the result of armed conflict; they are also made worse by the collapse of important systems that are supposed to keep children safe, healthy, and growing. Long-term relocation and restricted access to essential services make it more likely that these problems will last for generations, which keeps the cycles of poverty and instability going.

Although the international community has mobilized humanitarian assistance through United Nations–led mechanisms, response efforts have been significantly constrained by insecurity, access restrictions, funding shortfalls, and the absence of a sustainable political resolution. UNICEF plays a central role in addressing child-specific needs through nutrition, health, education, WASH, and protection programming; however, its ability to reach all affected children is limited by these structural and operational barriers. The situation highlights the persistent gap between international legal commitments to child protection and the realities of implementation in protracted and fragmented conflict settings.

To help Sudanese refugee children, we need more than just short-term rescue help. To defend children's rights and well-being, there has to be ongoing international involvement, more money for humanitarian efforts, better access for aid distribution, and better collaboration with local groups. If no one takes strong and collective action, the long-term effects on a whole generation of Sudanese children will only become worse. This will have major effects not just on Sudan's future stability, but also on the humanitarian responsibilities of the whole region and the world.

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Background Guide: Prepared byVictoria Migliazzo and Ashlee Watt

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Introduction and Background

Sudan, officially the Republic of Sudan, is located in Northeast Africa. It is bordered by Egypt in the north, the Red Sea, Eritrea and Ethiopia in the east, South Sudan in the south, the Central African Republic and Chad on the west and Libya in the northwest (Spaulding, 2026). Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, is roughly in the middle of the nation. It is the center for both government and commerce and is a part of Sudan's largest urban region (Spaulding, 2026).

Sudan has faced repeated wars and political instability, beginning around the time it gained independence. The Republic of Sudan formally attained independence from joint British and

Egyptian rule on January 1, 1956 (UCA, n.d.). However, tensions between the northern government and the southern regions had erupted months prior, into the First Sudanese Civil War (1955–1972), as southern groups demanded greater regional autonomy; the conflict killed an estimated 500,000 people and ended in a fragile peace agreement that failed to resolve underlying grievances. Political instability continued after Colonel Gaafar Nimeiry seized power in a 1969 military coup, abolished political parties, and later introduced Islamic Sharia law in 1983, triggering the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983–2005) to erupt between the central government and the Sudan People's Liberation Army. This war caused around two million deaths due to fighting, famine, and disease and ultimately led to South Sudan's independence in 2011. In 1989, Colonel Omar al-Bashir notably came to power through another coup and ruled for three decades, during which the War in Darfur (2003–2020) broke out after rebel groups accused the government of marginalizing non-Arab populations; the government's response resulted in mass killings, and led to an International Criminal Court arrest warrant for Bashir in 2009. Despite Bashir being officially removed from power in 2019, and a peace agreement was signed with rebel groups in 2020, unresolved political and military tensions remained (BBC News, 2023). These tensions later escalated into Sudan's current civil war.

Problem: The Civil War in Sudan

Following Bashir's removal in April 2019, senior officers of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) formed the Transitional Military Council (TMC), led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, to maintain authority. The TMC included the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a paramilitary group that had evolved from the Janjaweed militias—those responsible for widespread violence in Darfur beginning in 2003. In August 2019, military and civilian leaders agreed to share power through a "sovereignty council," but real authority remained with the military. This arrangement soon collapsed in October 2021 when the SAF and RSF—then allies—launched a coup that removed

civilian leaders entirely and halted democratic reforms. Following the coup, tensions increased between the SAF and RSF, particularly over political power and control of Sudan's gold industry, which funds armed groups. In 2023, disputes over integrating the RSF into the national army escalated into open fighting between SAF leader al-Burhan and RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemedti), triggering the current civil war (Gohar, 2025).

Sudan's conflict has devastated civilians, especially children, through widespread human rights abuses and the collapse of essential services. Violence against civilians has included rape (including of children), denial of humanitarian access, and other violations of international law.

The number of children killed or subjected to sexual violence specifically has sharply increased, and armed recruitment of children—especially in Darfur and eastern Sudan—has risen (OHCHR, 2024). The Rapid Support Forces (RFS) have also used fire as a weapon of war, destroying or damaging dozens of villages and settlements, especially in Darfur, including repeated attacks on displaced persons' camps (Khaled, 2024). With regard to health, risks have escalated due to acute shortages of food and clean water, leading to severe malnutrition and disease. Hunger specifically has reached catastrophic levels, with 17.7 million people acutely food insecure, and close to 4 million children projected to suffer acute malnutrition, including 730,000 expected to suffer severe wasting ("One year…", n.d.). Overcrowded displacement camps lack adequate shelter, sanitation, and healthcare, increasing vulnerability to malnutrition and deadly disease outbreaks ("Trapped in conflict", n.d.). The broader humanitarian and economic collapse has further worsened public health and food insecurity, while inflation and breakdowns in essential services continue to disrupt daily life (Mohamed & Lucero-Prisno, 2025). Education and protection risks have also increased, with schools being destroyed or converted into shelters for internally displaced people, education has become jeopardized and children are being exposed to exploitation, trafficking, and other risks (OHCHR, 2024). The country currently faces the world's

largest child displacement crisis in history, with over 4 million children displaced (OHCHR, 2024), nearly half of all children requiring humanitarian aid, and over 90% of school-age children lacking access to formal education ("One year…", n.d.).

For many children specifically, displacement does not mark the end of danger; instead, it exposes them to ongoing risks that can match or even exceed the violence they fled. Many children flee alone—more than 170 unaccompanied and separated children have arrived in places like Tawila without parents or relatives ("Crisis in Sudan", 2023), making them especially vulnerable to neglect, exploitation, and abuse. In displacement sites and host areas, families live in overcrowded makeshift shelters with limited access to clean water, food, and healthcare, and in some refugee destinations like Chad, one-fifth of young children arrive with acute malnutrition ("Crisis in Sudan", 2023). The journey itself exposes children to grave dangers, as many have experienced or witnessed harassment, abduction, rape, sexual assault, and other forms of abuse ("Sudans children are suffering", 2025), and reports indicate that at least 56 children aged between two months and 17 years were abducted during RSF advances in Darfur, with concerns about enslavement and other serious crimes (Levinson, 2026). Additionally, despite the high rates of anxiety and PTSD among children in camps like Al Jableen, little attention has been paid to their psychological wellbeing, underscoring the critical need for mental health interventions that foster coping mechanisms and resilience (Babiker, et al., 2024).

International Response

The global reaction to the crisis in Sudan has predominantly been marked by extensive regional hosting, with neighbouring nations like Egypt and Chad accommodating the majority of individuals fleeing the conflict, a significant number of whom are children and families (UNHCR et al., 2024). These frontline host countries have become immediate havens, aided by international

organizations such as UNICEF, UNHCR, and various partner NGOs, which have coordinated emergency registration, provided shelter, healthcare, child protection services, and ensured access to food and water for displaced individuals (UNICEF, 2024). For children, international initiatives have focused on safeguarding and ensuring continuity in education, with refugee camps and urban areas establishing temporary learning environments, distributing educational materials, and integrating children into the educational systems of host countries whenever feasible (Education Cannot Wait, n.d.). In Chad for example, Sudanese refugee children have been enrolled in educational programs that align with the national curriculum, allowing nearly 5,000 students to successfully complete their Baccalaureate examinations—an essential measure in maintaining academic pathways despite their displacement (UNICEF, 2024). In instances where formal education was either unavailable or overcrowded, international collaborators have introduced bridging programs and distance-learning initiatives, particularly aimed at secondary-level youth, as evidenced by peer-reviewed studies on refugee education within Chadian camp settings (Berridge, 2023). Nevertheless, despite these initiatives, considerable funding shortfalls persist, jeopardizing service delivery, with education, food assistance, and health programs experiencing cuts due to inadequate international funding (UNHCR et al., 2024). These limitations have immediate repercussions for the safety and educational continuity of children, as underscored by warnings indicating that food aid for Sudanese refugees in Chad may be halted, further intensifying the vulnerability of already at-risk child populations (Reuters, 2024). Overall, while the international response has provided critical protection and learning opportunities for Sudanese children, persistent resource shortfalls and protracted displacement continue to threaten their long-term wellbeing and development.

Tasks of the Committee

The current warfare between competing military factions has exacerbated displacement, interrupted essential services, and dismantled social infrastructure, placing children at an increased risk of malnutrition, illness, exploitation, and psychological distress (Center for Preventive Action, n.d.; Berridge, 2023). In response to this dire situation, UNICEF has adopted a three-pronged approach aimed at sustaining lifesaving services in areas of conflict, assisting newly displaced individuals and their host communities, and safeguarding vital health, nutrition, water, sanitation, hygiene, and child protection services throughout Sudan's 18 states ("The Sudan crisis", n.d.). Since the onset of the conflict, UNICEF has provided millions of children and families with vaccinations, health resources, safe drinking water, sanitation services, nutrition screening and treatment—including ready-to-use therapeutic food—financial assistance, psychosocial support, and educational opportunities through safe spaces, even in the most hazardous conflict zones ("One year brutal war", n.d.; "The Sudan crisis", n.d.). In the year 2023 alone, UNICEF reached over 6.4 million individuals with health resources, nearly 6 million with access to safe drinking water, and more than 5.4 million children with nutrition screening, while efforts in 2024 have persisted with broadened vaccination initiatives, mental health assistance, and educational access despite significant insecurity ("One year brutal war", n.d.; UNICEF, 2024).

Despite the good work being done thus far, there are several areas in which UNICEF could further strengthen its humanitarian aid efforts. For starters, UNICEF could scale up child mental health and trauma-informed care. Given the length and brutality of the conflict, long-term trauma care is likely under-resourced. To address this gap, UNICEF could train more local counselors, teachers, and community volunteers in trauma-informed approaches, expand mobile mental health teams for hard-to-reach or newly displaced populations, and integrate structured mental health programming into schools and child-friendly spaces. These efforts would help address not only immediate distress, but also long-term developmental and emotional harm. In addition, UNICEF

could strengthen protections against child exploitation and recruitment. As social systems collapse, children face heightened risks of child labor, early marriage, and recruitment by armed groups. UNICEF could further expand community-based child protection committees, increase monitoring and reporting mechanisms for violations against children, and partner more deeply with local leaders to prevent harmful coping strategies such as child marriage. Taken together, these improvements would enhance both the immediate safety of children and their long-term recovery and resilience in conflict-affected settings.

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The Risks and Challenges Facing Children who Have Fled from the Civil War in Sudan

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Hi my name is Jennifer K. I am a third year Global Studies major, working towards a legal studies option as well. My journey to taking Global Studies was not linear, as I started out in the BBA program and found that business was not my passion. I learned that the time we spend here in university is about discovering what you are passionate about, and it is okay to change paths.

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A Brief History on the Myanmar Civil War

The ongoing civil war in Myanmar, triggered by the military coup of February 1, 2021, has escalated into one of the most severe and drawn out crises in Southeast Asia, with significant regional ramifications. Initially sparked by mass pro democracy protests against the ousting of an elected government, the situation has transformed into a multi actor armed conflict involving the military junta, resistance groups aligned with the National Unity government (NUG), and various ethnic armed organizations (McKenna & Teekah, 2025). This conflict has resulted in widespread human rights violations, economic collapse, and large-scale displacement, forcing millions of civilians to flee both internally and across borders.

Thailand has become one of the primary destinations for people fleeing violence, persecution, and economic hardship in Myanmar. While Thailand accommodates millions of Myanmar nationals, many find themselves in precarious legal situations due to Thailand non-ratification of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its reliance on temporary or ad hoc protection

mechanisms (Khai, 2025). Consequently, displaced Myanmar civilians face intersecting vulnerabilities related to legal insecurity, labour exploitation, gender based violence, and restricted access to healthcare and education. Thus, the crisis therefore represents not only an internal conflict within Myanmar but also a broader regional humanitarian and protection challenge that directly engages United Nation human rights mechanisms and international migration governance frameworks (OHCHR, 2023).

Problem: Humanitarian Crisis if Myanmar Citizens within Thailand borders

This briefing note addresses the escalating humanitarian and human rights crisis resulting from the ongoing civil war in Myanmar, which has led to cross border displacement into Thailand. Since the 2021 military coup, civilians have faced violence, including arbitrary detention, extrajudicial killings, forced conscription, and deliberate displacement through military counterinsurgency tactics (OHCHR, 2023). These abuses have broken civilian safety and governance structures, compelling millions to flee their homes both internally and internationally. The military's response to rebel groups from the military has been a "Four-cuts" strategy aimed at cutting off food, funds, intelligence, and recruits to the rebel groups (Grundy-Warr & Wong, 2002). This has greatly affected the Myanmar nationals, as it destroyed their food stores, and those who are non identifiable are assumed rebels and executed (Grundy-Warr & Wong, 2002).

For those who escape to Thailand, displacement does not guarantee safety or stability. Thailand's failure to ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol leaves most displaced Myanmar nationals without formal refugee status or long-term legal protection (Khai, 2025). Consequently, many are classified as irregular migrants, exposing them to detention, deportation, labor exploitation, and limited access to healthcare and education. Women and children, in particular, face compounded vulnerabilities, including heightened risks of gender-based violence, family separation, and economic insecurity (Koning, 2024; Wight et al., 2021).

Migrant women assume a triple role encompassing reproductive, productive, and community work. They are expected to fulfill roles as mothers and caregivers while also contributing economically and socially to their communities (Koning, 2024; Wight et al., 2021). Many women fleeing Myanmar to Thailand serve as the primary providers for their children and rely on four childcare strategies: caring for their children while working, being the sole caregivers without employment, sharing responsibilities with extended family or older siblings, and, less commonly, delegating childcare to non-family members (Koning, 2024; Wight et al., 2021).

Aside from the triple role that women take on, many also experience intimate partner violence

(IPV) across first, second, and multiple generations. Because Thailand has not signed the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, these women are considered stateless and not having proper documents prevent them from seeking help out of fear. There are four frameworks that help to explain why these women are experiencing IPV trauma, social violence, structural violence, and social disorganization (Koning, 2024). From a trauma informed perspective, partners can experience symptoms of PTSD and have violent outbursts and re-experiencing trauma can increase male perpetration. Perpetrators and IPV victims can both experience emotional numbing which can prevent recognition of danger. Intergenerational violence can also perpetuate a cycle in which IPC becomes normalized (Koning, 2024).

The continuous nature of the conflict intensifies these challenges. Displacement has become long term rather than temporary, creating cycles of poverty and insecurity that extends across generations (Grundy-Warr & Wong, 2002). At the same time, regional political constraints and limited international enforcement mechanisms have prevented accountability for human rights violations inside Myanmar. The failure to properly address both the root causes of displacement and the protection gaps faced by displaced populations represents a challenge for the international community.

Role of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is the United Nations' primary intergovernmental body responsible for promoting and protecting human rights worldwide. Its mandate includes monitoring violations, commissioning investigations, appointing Special Rapporteurs, and adopting resolutions that establish international human rights standards. The situation facing Myanmar ethnic minorities displaced along the Thailand–Myanmar border falls within the UNHRC's scope due to widespread and systematic human rights violations linked to the conflict in Myanmar and the resulting cross-border displacement (OHCHR, 2023).

Although Thailand has not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, it remains bound by international human rights law, including the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits returning individuals to situations where they face serious harm (Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination [CERD], 2022). The UNHRC therefore addresses both violations occurring within Myanmar and the human rights implications of displacement and legal precarity experienced by affected populations in Thailand. However, the Council does not possess enforcement authority and relies on documentation, advocacy, and international pressure

to advance accountability and protection.

International Response

The international response to the Myanmar crisis has largely centered on the condemnation, targeted sanctions, humanitarian assistance, and human rights monitoring. The United Nations, through the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), has repeatedly documented violations committed by Myanmar's military and called for accountability, including referrals to international justice mechanisms (OHCHR, 2023). However, enforcement has been constrained due to geopolitical divisions within the UN system and ongoing support for the junta from international actors.

Through fact-finding missions, Special Rapporteurs, and thematic reports, the UNHRC, supported by the OHCHR, has repeatedly condemned the conduct of Myanmar's military authorities and highlighted the human rights consequences of forced displacement and cross-border fight. These findings emphasize the scale and severity of abuses occurring within Myanmar and the resulting regional protection challenges.

At the regional level, ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) attempted to mediate the crisis through the Five Point Consensus, which called for an end to violence and inclusive dialogue. This initiative has largely failed due to the junta's refusal to cooperate and the absence of enforcement structure (McKenna & Teekah, 2025). Despite sustained international documentation and condemnation, the absence of enforcement powers has limited the UNHRC's ability to produce immediate changes on the ground, shifting responsibility toward regional and domestic actors. Individual ASEAN member states, including Thailand, have pursued bilateral or domestic policy responses rather than coordinated regional protection frameworks. Thailand has implemented several measures aimed at managing migration from Myanmar, including labour regularization programs, bilateral memoranda of understanding, the National Screening Mechanism designed to identify individuals who cannot safely return to their country of origin (OHCHR, 2023). While these initiatives represent progress, they remain limited in scope and do not provide complete protection for all displaced persons. UN treaty bodies, such as the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, have expressed concern over racial profiling, indefinite detention, and treatment of ethnic minorities and stateless migrants in Thailand (CERD, 2022).

Humanitarian organizations and UN agencies have continued to provide essential

assistance along the border, particularly health, education, and protection services. However, restricted access, funding shortages, and legal barriers have constrained the effectiveness of aid delivery, leaving many displaced populations without consistent support (Khai, 2025).

Education and Displacement at the Thailand-Myanmar Border

Access to education is a critical yet severely constrained aspect of protection for Myanmar ethnic minorities displaced along the Thailand-Myanmar border. Ongoing conflict, forced displacement, and legal precarity have disrupted schooling for thousands of children and youth, turning education into both a human rights concern and a long-term development challenge (OHCHR, 2023).

Although Thailand has made progress in allowing migrant children to enroll in public schools regardless of nationality, barriers persist in practice. Families lacking formal documentation often fear arrest or deportation when traveling to and from schools, limiting regular attendance and increasing dropout rates (Khai, 2025). Language barriers, discrimination, and indirect costs such as transportation and school supplies further restrict access, particularly for children living outside formal shelters or in urban and informal work settings. As a result, many displaced children rely on informal or community-based education programs operated by humanitarian organizations along the border, which provide essential learning opportunities but lack long-term funding and official accreditation (OHCHR, 2023).

For migrant mothers, education access for their children is shaped by broader household survival strategies. Displaced women frequently assume a triple role, balancing income-generating work, caregiving, and community responsibilities under conditions of economic insecurity (Wight et al., 2021). In these contexts, older children may be withdrawn from school to provide childcare or contribute to household labour, reinforcing cycles of intergenerational disadvantage. Fear of state authorities and unstable employment further limit parents' ability to prioritize consistent schooling (Khai, 2025).

Education also functions as a protective mechanism. Limited access to schooling increases children's vulnerability to labour exploitation, trafficking, and early marriage, particularly in border regions characterized by weak oversight and informal labour markets (CERD, 2022). In situations of protracted displacement, the denial of education contributes to long-term marginalization, undermining future livelihoods and social integration while perpetuating dependence on precarious work and informal networks (Grundy-Warr & Wong,

2002). Ensuring sustained access to education for displaced Myanmar children is therefore central not only to fulfilling human rights obligations, but also to addressing the long-term consequences of displacement for individuals, communities, and host societies.

Task of the Committee

Given the scale and persistence of human rights violations linked to the conflict in Myanmar and the resulting cross-border displacement into Thailand, the UNHRC has convened to examine the situation of Myanmar ethnic minorities living in conditions of prolonged legal and social precarity. Since the February 2021 military coup, the UNHRC, supported by the OHCHR, has documented widespread abuses committed by Myanmar's military authorities, including forced displacement, arbitrary detention, and violations targeting ethnic minority populations (OHCHR, 2023). As the UNHRC does not possess enforcement authority, delegates must operate within the Council's mandate, which emphasizes human rights monitoring, documentation, norm-setting, and international advocacy rather than coercive measures.

Delegates should consider how the UNHRC can strengthen existing mechanisms for documenting violations and maintaining international attention on the situation in Myanmar, particularly where displacement has produced cross-border protection challenges. Special attention should be given to the human rights consequences of displacement into Thailand, including restricted access to education, healthcare, legal recognition, and protection from labour exploitation and gender-based violence (OHCHR, 2023). Delegates may explore ways to support coordination between the UNHRC, OHCHR, and regional actors to ensure sustained reporting and visibility of these issues.

In developing resolutions, the Committee may also examine how neighbouring states, particularly Thailand, can be encouraged to align domestic policies with international human rights standards. This includes reinforcing the principle of non-refoulement, improving transparency and safeguards within Thailand's National Screening Mechanism, and expanding access to education and basic services for displaced children and youth (CERD, 2022). While the UNHRC cannot impose sanctions or compel state compliance, it can recommend best practices, call for increased international cooperation, and support accountability processes through sustained documentation and advocacy.

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