

‘Stolen Childhoods’: KHRG 2025 Thematic Report on Southeast Burma Released (Press Release)

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The Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) is pleased to announce the release of its latest thematic report, **“Stolen Childhoods - Violations of children’s rights, urgent needs, and local agency in rural Southeast Burma during the conflict”**. Since the 2021 coup, the Burma Army has intensified militarisation and violence across Southeast Burma. Children in locally-defined Karen State are among the most affected by attacks and the armed conflict, facing killings, injuries, displacement, recruitment by armed groups, and the destruction of schools and clinics. Beyond physical harm, the induced collapse of education, healthcare, and protection systems has left children traumatised, malnourished, and deprived of their most basic rights –eroding the foundations of their communities and endangering generations to come.

To better understand these impacts, KHRG conducted 93 interviews with parents, children, and community members, and carried out several focus group discussions. The team also analysed 233 previously documented interviews and field reports concerning conflict-related impacts on children. By amplifying the voices of children and their communities, this report documents the harms they have endured between January 2024 and June 2025, and highlights their aspirations for safety, education, and wellbeing. Protecting children in Southeast Burma is not secondary to resolving the conflict; it is essential for meaningful and lasting peace.

KHRG’s findings show that children in locally-defined Karen State continue to live in constant fear as direct and indiscriminate Burma Army air and ground attacks strike civilian areas, with clashes involving other armed actors further compounding the threat. These attacks directly violate children’s rights and inflict deep and lasting psychological harm. Yet, in the face of relentless violence and deprivation, local communities show remarkable courage and resilience, keeping informal schools, health services, and child protection networks alive to safeguard children’s survival, wellbeing, and dignity. Any credible effort to address the conflict in Burma must urgently prioritise the protection of children and the essential systems that sustain their lives and development.

KHRG urges the international community, humanitarian actors, accountability mechanisms, and neighbouring states to take immediate, coordinated action to support local emergency responses. This report outlines the critical steps needed to protect children and uphold the rights of communities enduring relentless violence.

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