

UNICEF: Lives of 24 million children threatened by conflict

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Violence and conflict in the Middle East and North Africa threaten the lives of over 24 million children, most of them in Yemen, Iraq and Syria, the United Nation's children agency said in a report Wednesday.

From cholera in Yemen to attacks on hospitals in Syria and the tens of thousands of [children](#) trapped in Iraq's city of Mosul, UNICEF said the violence is depriving children of essential health care. Water and sanitation services have been compromised, causing waterborne diseases to spread while [health care](#) and nutritious food are insufficient to meet children's needs, it said.

"Violence is crippling health systems in conflict-affected countries and threatens children's very survival," said Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF's director for the Middle East and North Africa.

"Beyond the bombs, bullets and explosions, countless children are dying in silence from diseases that could easily be prevented and treated," he added.

The glaring figures reflect the enormity of the disaster. According to UNICEF, Yemen tops the list, with 9.6 million children in need, followed by Syria, Iraq, Sudan, the Gaza Strip and Libya.

Yemen's two-year conflict has pushed the impoverished country to the brink of famine, with widespread severe acute malnutrition among children.

In Syria, 5.8 million children are at risk, including more than 2 million who live under siege and in hard-to-reach areas with little to no humanitarian aid. Many do not have access to life-saving vaccinations and those who fall ill or are injured struggle to get treatment, UNICEF said.

In Iraq, water supplies in camps for the displaced around Mosul are stretched to the limit, with new families arriving daily, many with malnourished children, the statement added.

U.S.-backed Iraqi forces are closing in on the last neighborhoods held by the Islamic State group in western Mosul, nearly three years after the extremists overran almost a third of Iraq.

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