

Media Update

25 May 2021

United Nations

SECRETARY-GENERAL MESSAGE

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL MESSAGE ON THE DAY OF VESAK

26 May 2021

I send my warmest greetings to Buddhists all over the world on Vesak, when we honour the birth, enlightenment and passing of Lord Buddha. Today, we recognize the contributions Buddhism has made to human spirituality and culture for more than two and a half millennia.

All of us, Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike, can find inspiration in the Buddha's message of honesty, compassion and respect for all living things. As we face the lasting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is clearer than ever that humility and deep empathy are essential to our wellbeing and that of our planet.

On this Day of Vesak, let's resolve to build lives of peace and dignity for all on a healthy planet.

Download Link:

Int'l clean,

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/downloads2.unmultimedia.org/public/video/evergreen/MSG+SG+/SG+VESAK+DAY+21+MAY+21/MSG+SG+VESAK+DAY+21+MAY+21.mp4>

Audio file mp3,

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/downloads2.unmultimedia.org/public/video/evergreen/MSG+SG+/SG+VESAK+DAY+21+MAY+21/MSG+SG+VESAK+DAY+21+MAY+21+Audio.mp3>

English sub-title,

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/downloads2.unmultimedia.org/public/video/evergreen/MSG+SG+/SG+VESAK+DAY+21+MAY+21/MSG+SG+VESAK+DAY+21+MAY+21+EN.mp4>

UNICEF

PRESS RELEASE

New UNICEF report highlights scale and impact of attacks on water and sanitation facilities on children in conflict-affected countries

NEW YORK, 25 May 2021 – Attacks on water and sanitation facilities and workers in conflicts around the world continue to put the lives of millions of children at risk and deny children and families access to critical water and sanitation services, UNICEF warned today.

In the 9 countries* highlighted in *Water Under Fire Volume 3: Attacks on water and sanitation services in armed conflict and the impacts on children* – including countries across the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Europe – almost 48 million people, including children, are estimated to need safe water and sanitation services.

Protecting water and sanitation services is critical to the survival of millions of children. In fragile countries, children under the age of five are 20 times more likely to die due to diarrheal diseases than to violence, and children in extremely fragile contexts are often more than eight times worse off across water, sanitation and hygiene indicators than children born into stable and protected environments.

“Access to water is a means of survival that must never be used as a tactic of war,” said UNICEF Director of Emergency Programmes Manuel Fontaine. “Attacks on water and sanitation infrastructure are attacks on children. When the flow of water stops, diseases like cholera and diarrhoea can spread like wildfire, often with fatal consequences. Hospitals cannot function, and rates

of malnutrition and wasting increase. Children and families are often forced out in search of water, exposing them, particularly girls, to an increased risk of harm and violence.”

The report examines the immense impact on children and families when water and sanitation infrastructure are attacked, damaged or destroyed, controlled or otherwise restricted in countries besieged by armed conflict. It highlights that children’s access to water has been threatened in nearly every conflict-related emergency where UNICEF is responding.

For example, Eastern **Ukraine** has experienced four attacks on water infrastructure since the start of the year, with 380 attacks recorded since 2017. Around 3.2 million people need water and sanitation services. Entering its sixth year of protracted conflict, **Yemen** saw 122 airstrikes on water infrastructure between March 2015 to February 2021. Around 15.4 million people urgently need safe water and sanitation as the cholera epidemic continues to make thousands of children ill every week. Since 2019, the **State of Palestine** has seen 95 attacks against 142 water and sanitation infrastructures. More than 1.6 million people live without access to these basic services.

The decades-long fragility of **Iraq** has resulted in massive damage to the water and sanitation infrastructure, leaving 1.85 million people cut off from regular access to lifesaving drinking water and safe sanitation. In **Syria**, around 12.2 million people need access to water and sanitation due to heavy infrastructure damage over the past 10 years of conflict. To urgently protect children in conflict and guarantee access to safe and sufficient water, UNICEF is calling for:

- **All parties to conflict** to immediately stop attacks on water and sanitation services and personnel, and fulfil their obligations to protect children in conflict, including protecting water and sanitation infrastructure;
- **States**, including Security Council members, to take firmer action to hold the perpetrators of these attacks to account;
- **Donors** to invest in water and sanitation in conflict situations, as it is the first line of defense against communicable diseases;
- **Public** to join our call to action to end attacks on children in conflict and add their voice to protect water and sanitation infrastructure and water workers.

UNICEF works in conflict-affected countries to protect children and provide safe drinking water and adequate sanitation services through improving and repairing water systems, trucking water, setting up latrines and promoting awareness of hygiene practices. In 2020, UNICEF led emergency water, sanitation and hygiene responses in 120 countries, reaching 39 million people with clean water and nearly 7 million with sanitation services.

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Notes to editors

*Central African Republic, Iraq, Libya, Palestine, Pakistan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen

Read the report [here](#).

Download multimedia content [here](#).

About UNICEF

UNICEF works in some of the world's toughest places, to reach the world's most disadvantaged children. Across more than 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone.

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UNODC

PRESS RELEASE

Free legal aid support by UNODC released more than 500 UTPs in Sindh

Karachi: Speaking at the **fourth provincial Legal Aid Network Coordination Meeting** on 25th May 2021 - organized by UNODC Country Office in collaboration with the Prison Department of Sindh in Karachi **Ms. Shamim Mumtaz, Chairperson**, Sindh Child Protection Authority and MPA Sindh Assembly appreciated the transformative role played by the Legal Aid Project of UNODC.

Among others, the provision of speedy justice to more than 500 Under Trial Prisoners (UTPs) through free legal aid was hailed as an exemplary initiative in prison reforms. These UTPs include a large proportion of women, children, juveniles, minorities, people with disability, elders, including poor and marginalized groups who are unable to afford representation in a court of law or access the legal system.

Implemented by UNODC in 22 districts of Sindh with support from the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs from the US Department of State, the Legal Aid Project has been providing free Legal Aid to the UTPs in Sindh prisons since 2017. The efforts are complemented through training of investigation officers and prosecutors on enhancing their cooperation in criminal cases for free and fair delivery of speedy justice.

Mr. Jeremy Milsom, Representative of UNODC - Pakistan commended the vision and cooperation by the Prison Department, Government of Sindh and contribution of the Project towards strengthening the foundational building blocks of a free and fair legal aid service for eligible and needy inmates in the prisons of Sindh.

The project has also built successful referral linkages with civil society organizations, pro-bono legal aid practitioners and services to uphold the rights of vulnerable prisoners, developing a unified roadmap on the provision of free legal aid in Sindh. This has helped to engender a community of responsible legal aid service providers.

The meeting was well-attended by eminent representatives from the criminal justice institutions and legal fraternity, including **Qazi Nazeer Ahmad**, IG Prisons Sindh, **Mr. Abdul Razaq**, Registrar Sindh High Court, **Mr. Shahid Shafiq**, Senior Faculty Member Sindh Judicial Academy, **Mr. Naeem Qurashi** President Karachi Bar Association, **Mr. Arif Dawood** Vice Chairman Sind Bar Council, representatives from Sindh Prisons Department, Sindh Prosecution Department, Civil Society Organizations and Legal Aid experts in Sindh. The stakeholders unanimously endorsed the Terms of Reference for establishing and sustaining a Free Legal Aid Service Provider within the Prison Department of Sindh.

For further information, please contact:-

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