

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Avoid pushing back refugees from Thailand to Myanmar, says Save the Children

Bangkok, 30 March – The Government of Thailand should open its borders to people fleeing violence and repression in Myanmar, refrain from pushing refugees back, and allow aid groups unfettered access to the new arrivals, Save the Children said today.

More than 4,000 people have crossed the border from Myanmar into Thailand since 27 March, according to local sources and media reports. Among them are thousands reportedly fleeing airstrikes in Karen State, including children and elderly, where fighting between the Myanmar military and ethnic armed groups has flared up.

It is still unclear how many children are among those who have fled, but Save the Children is concerned for the safety and wellbeing of children who have had to leave their homes.

Save the Children said:

“Children are always among the most vulnerable in any crisis. Being forced to flee your home is extremely traumatic and can have a serious impact on a child’s mental health.”

“Their access to schooling, healthcare, food and other essentials will also be disrupted, which can have an extremely harmful effect on children’s development. It is crucial that refugee children get the help that they need to ensure this crisis doesn’t cause life-long harm.”

Save the Children urges authorities in Thailand to respect the principle of *non-refoulement*, the absolute ban in international law on returning refugees to places where they are at risk of serious harm or human rights violations. As in any refugee situation, a screening mechanism should be established to assess the asylum claims of those fleeing, in coordination with the UNHCR, Save the Children urged.

“Those fleeing must have access to the services and support they need, including adequate measures to support longer-term stays in case the situation in Myanmar continues to deteriorate,” the organisation said.

“This should include services such as education, mental health support, child-friendly spaces, healthcare and nutrition. To ensure this, it is crucial that aid agencies are allowed unfettered access to the refugees in order to provide lifesaving support.”

“We also urge the international community to support the Thai authorities and aid agencies in this response, including through the provision of adequate funding to ensure these efforts are sustainable in the long-term.”

Save the Children is an independent and impartial child rights agency that has been present in Thailand since 1984. Its teams and partners are providing services to improve the lives of children in 19 provinces across the country, including in education, protection and health and safety.

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Über Save the Children

Im Nachkriegsjahr 1919 gründete die britische Sozialreformerin und Kinderrechtlerin Eglantyne Jebb Save the Children, um Kinder in Deutschland und Österreich vor dem Hungertod zu retten. Heute ist die inzwischen größte unabhängige Kinderrechtsorganisation der Welt in über 110 Ländern tätig. Save the Children setzt sich ein für Kinder in Kriegen, Konflikten und Katastrophen. Für eine Welt, die die Rechte der Kinder achtet. Eine Welt, in der alle Kinder gesund und sicher leben und frei und selbstbestimmt aufwachsen und lernen können – seit über 100 Jahren.