**Children of a Ruthless World**

**More than two years into Taliban rule, Afghanistan remains one of the poorest countries globally, with some of the highest humanitarian needs.**

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The last six months have been dreadful for the world, and one specific cause is the Israel-Hamas war. In this brutal conflict, more than 33,000 people have been killed, and thousands more are missing and feared buried under rubble. These numbers are continuously increasing and people in the Western world are quietly witnessing the pain of innocent lives through the internet.

What’s even more shocking is that out of these numbers, half of them were children. The Israeli forces have brutally killed more than 12,000 children. These are children who were just born and those who had no idea what was going on or why they were on the run, and yet they’ve been massacred. Children who should have been playing joyfully outdoors are now hiding in cramped spaces to escape the threat of death. Those who were meant to be sharing moments of laughter with their parents in the living room are instead found sobbing, holding onto the lifeless hands of their loved ones. The kids left behind in Gaza have clearly endured a lifetime of trauma with far-reaching consequences, having been robbed of their childhood.

[DG kicks off tree plantation drive in ICT](https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Apr-2024/dg-kicks-off-tree-plantation-drive-in-ict)

In the relentless onslaught of war, these children are given countless reasons to shed tears. Should they cry for the lost opportunity to go to school, where they once saw their friends frequently, uncertain whether their friends are still alive? Or should their tears fall for the homes now vandalized by airstrikes, leaving them without the only shelter they’ve ever known? Perhaps they should grieve for their loved ones who took their final breaths in front of their tearful eyes, knowing that after the war, they won’t have parents or siblings to share the relief and freedom with. Despite the overwhelming weight of these unfortunate traumas, they find themselves continually running from Israeli bombardment. War criminals have not only stolen their last shreds of hope but also divested them of the chance to mourn these moments of grief.

When the war ends, the focus doesn’t shift to who won what; rather, it turns to the remnants who lost the least. In this war, Palestinian children have lost everything they possibly could. In a different corner of the world, children are enduring unimaginable hardships, and another piece on the map is a particularly vulnerable place, especially for women and girls – Afghanistan. In not-so-recent developments, the Pakistan caretaker setup had made the bold decision to send back over a million undocumented Afghan refugees to the Taliban government. This decision was sparked by continuous attacks on Pakistani soil, with security agencies attributing the majority of these attacks to Afghans. The policy aims to curb the wave of terrorism, but it raises numerous unanswered questions.

[11 outlaws arrested in district raids](https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Apr-2024/11-outlaws-arrested-in-district-raids)

However, in this mass migration, children constitute 60% of Afghans returning from Pakistan. While living under the Taliban regime will haunt adults for the rest of their lives, it will torment the lives of the children who could have had a better future in Pakistan. More than two years into Taliban rule, Afghanistan remains one of the poorest countries globally, with some of the highest humanitarian needs. Under Taliban rule, Afghanistan has become the only country in the world where girls are banned from schooling beyond the age of 11. The group has also imposed a policy described as “gender apartheid,” banning women from most work and public spaces. The underlying reasons for low girls’ enrolment include insecurity and traditional norms and practices related to girls’ and women’s roles in society. The lack of female teachers, especially in rural schools, contributes to this issue. Only 16 percent of Afghanistan’s schools are girlsonly, and many of them lack proper sanitation facilities, further hindering attendance.

[SSP holds meeting to enhance traffic flow](https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Apr-2024/ssp-holds-meeting-to-enhance-traffic-flow)

In some parts of the country, a shortage of schools and insufficient transportation are the main obstacles to education. A long walk to school means fewer children attend. Geographical barriers, especially in mountainous areas, also make it hard for children to reach the classroom. Once children do make it, they often receive a lower quality of education because only 48 percent of their teachers have the minimum academic qualifications. Children, who should be enjoying their early years with laughter, play, and the comfort of home, are confronted with hostility instead of hospitality once they cross the border. Girls might be forced into marriages they never wanted, and boys are left with no option but to pick up a gun instead of a pen. It’s heartbreaking to wonder how such atrocities can happen to innocent children. On social media, we see people expressing sorrow and marching in solidarity in various cities. However, the quietness surrounding the mass migration is deafening. While it’s admirable that folks are speaking out against distant injustices, there’s a noticeable lack of response to the struggles faced by their Afghan friends, colleagues, and workers forcibly sent to an unfamiliar and troubled place.

[US vows to continue strengthening ties with Pakistan](https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Apr-2024/us-vows-to-continue-strengthening-ties-with-pakistan)

The weight of these hardships is carried by the shoulders of children, whose whole lives are ahead of them, now shadowed by these distressing memories. It’s a plea for action, not just for those suffering far away, but also for the silent battles faced by those close to home.

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