((TITLE: UNICEF/ CHILDREN IN CONFLICT

HEAD: Children in Conflict Suffer from Shocking Levels of Attack

TEASER: There is no safe place for children caught in conflict who are deliberately targeted and attacked in their homes, schools and playgrounds

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((INTRO)) A new report by the UN children’s fund finds 2017 has been a particularly brutal year for children caught in conflict, as children around the world have been subject to shocking levels of attack by the warring parties. Lisa Schlein reports for VOA from Geneva.

((TEXT)) The UN children’s fund says there is no safe place for children caught in conflict. The report finds children are being targeted and exposed to attacks and brutal violence in their homes, schools and playgrounds. This, in blatant disregard of international laws established to protect the most vulnerable.

The report presents a numbing catalogue of abuse in conflicts around the world—in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and even in Europe, in eastern Ukraine. It reports children are deliberately targeted, used as human shields, killed, maimed and recruited to fight.

It says children are raped, forced into marriage, abducted and enslaved. The physical and mental impact of this brutality upon children it says is unbearable and deeply traumatic.

///ROHINGYA CHILDREN ON RIVERBANK///MIX UNDER….

This video of Rohingya refugees on a riverbank in Bangladesh, newly arrived from fleeing violence in Myanmar, is heart-rending. It shows groups of weeping children and a severely malnourished baby being treated by a UNICEF doctor. With the right nutritional feeding, some of the many malnourished children will survive, but many others will not.

The report details the direct and indirect price children are paying in several African conflicts. It notes a dramatic increase in violence in Central African Republic has led to children being killed, raped, abducted and recruited by armed groups.

It notes 850,000 children have been driven from their homes in the Kasai region of Democratic Republic of Congo, more than 19,000 children have been recruited as soldiers by armed groups in South Sudan, and in northeast Nigeria and Cameroon, at least 135 children have been used as suicide bombers.

UNICEF says children are killed, maimed, denied access to food and water, and pushed to the limits of suffering from malnutrition, disease and trauma. It says this happens in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and other conflicts where the rights and needs of children are violated with impunity.

((Lisa Schlein, for VOA News, Geneva))