



RUNNING OUT OF TIME

**The Escalation of Human Rights
Violations in Karenni State in 2024**

A report by the Karenni Human Rights Group

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Photo: Six civilians, including two children, were killed, and more than 20 injured when the junta bombed Kone Thar village in Loikaw Township on April 20, 2024, at 11 AM. More than 20 houses were destroyed.

BACKGROUND

In Karenni State, the human rights situation has significantly worsened in the aftermath of the attempted coup on 1 February 2021. Thousands have been arbitrarily arrested and continue to face charges in a compromised legal system dominated by junta-appointed judges.

Following the coup, a series of nationwide uprisings emerged in stark and unified opposition to the junta's blatant disregard for fundamental principles and pillars of democracy.

Civilians in Karenni State faced violence from junta-backed reinforcements that used bullets and threats to suppress dissent.

The regime was unsuccessful not only in its mission in Karenni State but across the country, as protests continued for days well into the evenings.

Despite the rapid escalation in clashes in Karenni State that began on May 21, 2021, the people have never wavered. During this time, the presence of the Burma Army eventually forced more than 100,000 Karenni people to flee.¹

Four years on, hopes for a federal democratic union have not been lost. The Karenni State Interim Executive Council (KIEC), established on June 6, 2023, is the first ethnic group to

¹ 'Mass deaths' alert in Myanmar as 100,000 flee junta's heavy weapons, United Nations, 9 June 2021

form an interim governing body following the attempted coup in 2021. It follows the establishment of the Karenni State Consultative Council (KSCC) in April 2021.

The IEC strives to be a grassroots, bottom-up approach to ensuring a democratically formed and established government that genuinely reflects the people, their concerns, and their aspirations. Its three primary objectives are to execute the functions of the interim state government, ensure checks and balances among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, and foster peace and stability in Karenni State. The IEC consists of 12 departments covering eight operational areas.

Each department has four leaders and includes representatives from armed groups, striking civil servants from the Civil Disobedience Movement, members of Parliament, and activists. The KSCC collaborates closely with other democratic entities established after the coup, such as the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) and the National Unity Government (NUG).

While many challenges lie ahead, the tenacity and determination of an end to military rule in Burma cannot be overlooked. Thousands of lives have been lost in the pursuit of truth-telling and an undeterred commitment to an end to decades of oppression by authoritarian dictators. There cannot be a free and promising democracy with coup leader Min Aung Hlaing at the helm of a military that is ordered and trained to kill innocent, unarmed people.

KnHRG has released two reports in the last two years addressing the ongoing challenges people in Karenni State face. In 2023, “*How can we survive in the future,*” *Atrocity Crimes in Karenni State*, documented human rights violations amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by junta forces in Burma’s Karenni State and

There cannot be a free and promising democracy with coup leader Min Aung Hlaing at the helm of a military that is ordered and trained to kill innocent, unarmed people.

surrounding areas between May 2021 and September 2022.² One year later, KnHRG published “*Trying to Stay Strong*” *A Situational Overview of the Civilian Impact of Human Rights Violations in Karenni State between January and March 2024*.³

Findings from both reports included testimonies from survivors and witnesses of the junta’s attacks on human life, including airstrikes, artillery fire, landmines, and drone strikes, who ‘*dare not return*’ to their homes for fear of being further attacked. The military is intentionally destroying villages and using warplanes to bomb local areas. Junta soldiers also burn down and raid people’s homes. These acts are being perpetrated deliberately to weaken the morale of the ongoing resistance and to terrorize civilians.

This analysis and review of the deteriorating human rights situation in Karenni State, titled “*Running Out of Time*” by the Karenni Human Rights Group (KnHRG), will examine how local people have been impacted by the junta’s attacks over the previous year in 2024. The cases and contextual analysis will urge the international community to prioritize the protection of victims who are in a race against time for their survival as they call for long-overdue justice.

Though hope for a war-free future persists, communities impacted by conflict face deep trauma and are concentrated on merely surviving day by day.

² “How can we survive in the future?” Atrocity Crimes in Karenni State, The Karenni Human Rights Group, the Kayan Women’s Organization, the Karenni National Women’s Organization, and the Kayah State Peace Monitoring Network, 7 February 2023

³ “Trying to Stay Strong” *A Situational Overview of the Civilian Impact of Human Rights Violations in Karenni State between January and March 2024*, The Karenni Human Rights Group, 10 December 2024

SUMMARY OVERVIEW OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN KARENNI STATE IN 2024

Since the failed coup on 1 February 2021, the situation in Karenni State has worsened due to the military junta's violent actions. The Burma Army is violating the rights of civilians daily through ongoing indiscriminate firing, including artillery and mortar shells, as well as through air strikes. As a result, the Karenni people have suffered immensely.

KnHRG has been extensively documenting the violations being perpetrated by the military junta. The Burma Army has arbitrarily arrested and killed civilians. They've been burned alive, and they have been fired at with guns. They've been used as human shields and brutally tortured. Homes and properties have been confiscated, raided, and burned down.

Alarming, the deliberate targeting of local infrastructure, including internal displacement camps and temporary shelters, by junta-deployed warplanes is also on the rise. The Blood Money Campaign – Action Network (BMC) reported that between early 2021 and November 2024, the junta conducted around 4,020 airstrikes across the country, leading to roughly 2,250 fatalities and approximately 3,400 injuries.⁴ This has resulted in a rise in displaced individuals, who are frequently and unjustly forced to abandon their homes.



Photos: On September 21, at 3:45 PM, the junta carried out an airstrike targeting a village where civilians and refugees live. Homes were damaged and a 31-year-old woman died. Nine people were injured, including five children under age 18.

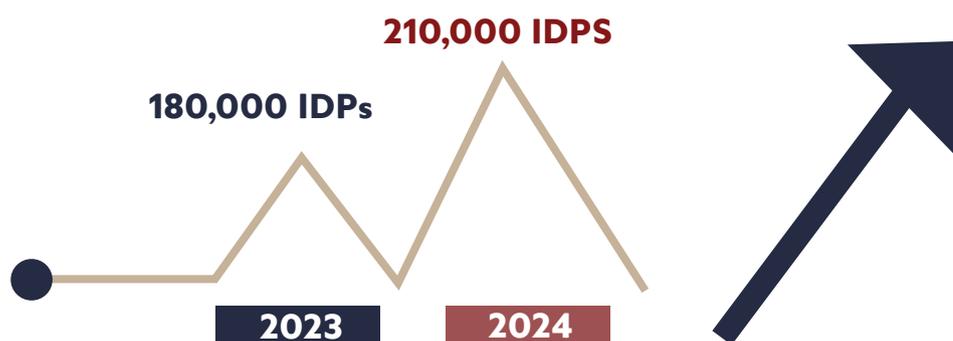
⁴ Junta Airstrikes Increasingly Targeting Civilians, Burma News International, 23 January 2025

The junta's brutality has caused widespread suffering, and repercussions on the economy, healthcare, and social services.

In 2024, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Karenni State reached at least 210,000.⁵ This is an increase from 2023 when KnHRG recorded 180,000 IDPs, representing roughly 40 percent of the population.⁶ Across the country, 19.9 million individuals urgently need humanitarian assistance, reflecting a worrying rise of over one million people since 2024.⁷ This includes 6.3 million children and over 7 million women.⁸ While the UN estimates the total number of displaced people at 3.5 million⁹, local organizations are reporting even higher figures in their target areas.

More than 80% of the Karenni population is forcibly displaced and living in over 325 temporary shelters and 93 internal displacement camps in Karenni State and 11 along the Karenni-Shan border.¹⁰ These places of refuge are not only under-resourced and funded but lack adequate shelter, including clean water.

In temporary shelters and internal displacement camps, the close living conditions and shortages of clean water supply are also contributing to the rapid spread of diseases, significantly impacting young children, the elderly and women. Of additional concern is that the military junta has not hesitated to fire upon IDP camps.



⁵ “Trying to Stay Strong” A Situational Overview of the Civilian Impact of Human Rights Violations in Karenni State between January and March 2024, The Karenni Human Rights Group, 10 December 2024

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Myanmar Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025 (December 2024), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 13 December 2024

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid

During the first six months of 2024 alone, the Karenni Interim Executive Council (IEC) found nearly 50 people had been killed in Karenni State by the junta.

During the first six months of 2024 alone, the IEC found nearly 50 people had been killed in Karenni State by the junta. The majority of the victims were innocent children who died from artillery shelling and airstrikes.¹¹ According to the IEC, of the total 48 civilian deaths, sixteen were caused by airstrikes, ten by heavy artillery shelling, four by landmines, one by gunfire, seven by being captured and executed while serving as human shields, two by indiscriminate firing, five by abduction and execution, one by drone attacks, and two from malnutrition.¹²

In addition, IEC reported that 142 civilians were injured during the six months, including 28 men, 21 women, and 58 children. The Burmese junta's corrupt quest for power continues to cost lives and traumatize conflict-affected groups. Over 500 innocent people have been killed in Karenni State since 1 February 2021.¹³

Of additional concern are the attacks against women and girls. The Women and Child Affairs Department of the IEC noted that there were over 40 cases related to gender-based violence reported in 2024.¹⁴ Among them, domestic violence ranked as the most prevalent, followed by instances of rape. Other instances included sexual exploitation, various types of physical harm, and abuse.¹⁵

Although local women's groups have long aided community capacity through gender-focused programs, much of this progress has collapsed as significant portions of Karenni State have become war zones. Awareness of gender equality is limited as individuals grapple with income generation, education, and basic survival.

¹¹ 48 Civilians Killed in Six Months in Karenni State, Including 16 from Air Strikes, Kantarawaddy Times, 11 July 2024

¹² Ibid

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Over 40 Cases Reported to the IEC Women and Child Affairs Department Within a Year, Majority Involving Violence Against Women, Kantarawaddy Times, 22 January 2025

¹⁵ Ibid

Women encounter threats to their physical safety and well-being, suffer from limited livelihood options, face forced displacement, and are at an increased risk of arbitrary arrest and detention by the junta.

Gender equality is critical since Burma's revolution has shifted from peaceful protest to armed resistance. Women and girls from all backgrounds fear the possibility of rape and conflict-related sexual violence being used as a weapon of war against them.

Pregnant women and new mothers also face significant barriers, worsened by the conditions of the civil war. In KnHRG's report, "Trying to Stay Strong," conflict-affected groups shared that attacks by the military junta prevent them from travelling to clinics safely, and inflation has made many services unaffordable.¹⁶

Further, in addition to the junta's erosion of fundamental rights and freedoms, the economy has been mismanaged egregiously, negatively impacting civilian livelihoods. The value of the local currency, the Myanmar Kyat, has dropped, and inflation continues to rise as the junta has limited imports and exports.

For far too long, victims of human rights violations have faced dismissal and denial of justice and accountability. The international community must not validate the junta's attempted power grab through any form of recognition. Prioritizing gender equality and promoting peace across Burma are essential to addressing and acknowledging the desire for a federal, democratic future.

¹⁶ "Trying to Stay Strong" A Situational Overview of the Civilian Impact of Human Rights Violations in Karenni State between January and March 2024, The Karenni Human Rights Group, 10 December 2024

MAIN FINDINGS: JANUARY - DECEMBER 2024 (BASED ON KNHRG DATA)

106+ Civilains Killed

235+ Civilians Wounded

1,256+ Damaged Properties

CAUSES OF DEATH

28

Mortar Shelling

40

Airstrikes

7

Drones

7

Landmines

11

Shot-on-Sight

2

Arbitrarily
Arrested and
Killed

4

Deployment
of Large
Weapons

7

Human
Shields

**An additional 21 people died in Typhoon Yagi*

CAUSES OF INJURY

84

Mortar Shelling

107

Airstrikes

14

Drones

3

Shot-on-Sight

9

Deployment
of Large
Weapons

18

Landmines

DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTIES

613

Damaged
Homes

129

Wildfires

30

Burnt Homes

454

Destruction
from mortar
shelling and
airstrikes

In addition, throughout the year 2024, KnHRG found:

1. The military is deliberating arbitrarily, arresting and detaining civilians. After the military arrests and kills people, they try to burn bodies and destroy evidence by disposing of bodies in undignified places such as sewers and swamps.
2. Civilians are being used as human shields and forced to porter under immense labour violations. While being used as human shields, civilians are threatened, deprived of food and water and starved.
3. Survivors of the junta's human rights violations are suffering from immense trauma and physical suffering. There are limited pathways for psycho-social services. However, locally-led women's organizations and various civil society groups are working to provide safe spaces for people to share their pain and be supported.
4. There remain many challenges to accessing safe, reliable and accessible healthcare and education pathways as civilians remain fearful of being killed or wounded in an airstrike or attack by the junta.
5. Since the military coup in Burma, the military has been expanding its battalions, which has led to more fighting. This resulted in higher numbers of civilian deaths, including those shot and killed. The military's losses on the ground to the resistance have also led to accelerated attacks from the air.
6. The security of women and children is worsening as they comprise the majority of those displaced and who are caught amid the junta's attacks.

7. Due to the shelling, people have lost their homes and are afraid to remain in their villages. They have also lost their livelihoods, and socio-economic activities have been put on hold. In the long term, they worry about how they will survive.
8. When the junta fighter jets bomb the area, it is usually in the late evening or early morning. The military knows when civilians are resting and target them intentionally. The locations where the military bombs with air strikes are places where there is no fighting, and civilians are specifically targeted.
9. Hospitals, clinics, IDP camps and schools are all being deliberately targeted by the military junta. There are not enough vaccines or medicine, and not enough services can be provided to civilians, as communication and transportation are extremely limited for civilians to reach the services they need.
10. There are no laws or policies which protect women and children. When the military expands its operations, it puts women at a higher risk of sexual violence. Therefore, there is no guarantee of their safety, and perpetrators face no consequences, thus emboldening military impunity.

QUARTER ONE OVERVIEW: JANUARY - MARCH 2024

Throughout Karenni State, there have been widespread fears and concerns about the increasing deployment of airstrikes. Between January and March 2024, KnHRG documented 45 instances of airstrikes during the first quarter of the year. This was mainly in response to the significant gains of the resistance and opposition forces.

Further, by the end of this first quarter in March 2024, the Karenni National Defense Force (KNDF) and allied forces had successfully seized control of 65 junta bases, camps, and outposts, comprising approximately 90% of Karenni State.¹⁷ The effects of this escalation revealed a stark reality of the human toll and devastation caused by the conflict, including 29 civilians who were killed, 79 wounded, and a staggering 304 properties destroyed.

Women and children suffered immensely as a result of the bombardment of attacks. With no place to call home, internal displacement camps and temporary shelters become the last resort for those who have fled. Leaders, first responders, and humanitarian organizations work tirelessly to address the urgent needs of these individuals. Women and children face particularly dire circumstances, suffering from malnutrition and waterborne diseases. The food supplies fall woefully short of meeting even the most essential requirements. Each day, people are struggling to survive in Karenni State.

A report on the worsening humanitarian crisis in Burma found that 14,317 battles took place between the military and resistance forces in regions like Chin State, Karenni State, Karen State, and the Tanintharyi and Sagaing regions as of April 2024.¹⁸ In Karenni State alone, the military junta carried out more than 1,636 airstrikes since the coup.¹⁹

Airstrikes increased notably month by month, beginning with three attacks in January, over 12 in February, and more than 30 in March. In the aftermath of these attacks from the air, KnHRG recorded that the majority of recorded casualties tragically included children, teenagers, and the elderly. Structural damage was extensive, with over 150 homes and buildings destroyed as a result of the airstrikes.

¹⁷ Karenni State Liberated From Myanmar Junta Control by Year end: IEC, The Irrawaddy, 24 April 2024

¹⁸ Humanitarian Aid Crisis Report 2021-2024, The Women's League of Burma, 21 October 2024

¹⁹ Ibid

As long as the junta has access to jet fuel and large-scale weaponry, civilians' lives will continue to be endangered. As highlighted in various campaigns advocating for aviation sanctions, if the warplanes cannot fly, they won't be able to bomb.



Photo: The terrorist regime targeted two schools. Daw Si Ei school was hit by a series of bombs in February 2024, including one weighing 500 pounds. Four young boys between the ages of 12 and 14 years were killed. At least fifteen children were injured, including those under the age of three.

In January, KnHRG reported a minimum of three airstrikes: two bombs targeted IDP areas, and another bomb was dropped in a village field. This led to two fatalities, including a 50-year-old man in Demoso Township and another victim from Karenni in Southern Shan State. Additionally, jet fighters injured two people. In February, there were more than 12 airstrikes, resulting in five deaths and 42 injuries.

On 5 February at 10:15 AM, the military junta carried out ten airstrikes with three jet fighters, in addition to six rounds of mortar shelling on two schools. The attack lasted approximately one hour. The terrorist regime targeted two schools. Daw Si Ei school was hit by a series of bombs, including one weighing 500 pounds. Four young boys between the ages of 12 and 14 years were killed. At least fifteen children were injured, including those under the age of three. The second attack on Loi Nan Pa claimed the life of one man, and two teachers and five civilians were injured.

In addition, six other buildings and one church were damaged, and five homes belonging to internally displaced people and locals were also destroyed by the relentless firing.

Conversely, March saw airstrikes surpassing 30, destroying over 150 properties and causing five deaths and 20 injuries among the Karenni. In addition, junta forces attacked Pekon La Ei hospital from the air at least four times, contributing to two deaths—a 47-year-old man and a 17-year-old.

During the first few months of the year, reports also emerged of junta forces kidnapping civilians, including women and children, to serve as porters and human shields, only to later execute them.²⁰ KnHRG Co-founder Ko Banya, confirmed this stating:

“Two women with disabilities, a pregnant woman, three children, and a man were killed by junta troops. They were detained and used as human shields and guides before being fatally shot.”

Cases such as these reinforced the urgency and actions needed to hold the terrorist military junta accountable.

The worsening situation and rising threats posed to civilians on the ground in Karenni State resulted in an additional 3,500 IDPs in Hpawsaung and Shardaw towns by the end of the reporting period in March.

²⁰Myanmar junta troops murder seven IDPs in Karenni’s Shadaw Township, Myanmar Now, 8 February 2024.

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“Two women with disabilities, a pregnant woman, three children, and a man were killed by junta troops. They were detained and used as human shields and guides before being fatally shot” —Ko Banya, KnHRG Co-Founder

QUARTER TWO OVERVIEW: APRIL - JUNE 2024

Alarmingly, during the second quarter, civilians expressed concern regarding the suspected use of chemical weapons by the junta, as several opposition forces suffered combat injuries potentially linked to toxic substances.²¹ The production, storage, and use of chemical weapons are prohibited under international law, per the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which Burma ratified in 2015.

In combat within Hpa Sawng township, Karenni State, the Karenni Army reported that their soldiers suffered from symptoms such as shortness of breath, dizziness, and vomiting due to inhaling gunpowder fumes. This has sparked discussions about the possibility of chemical weapons being used by the junta. Reporting from *Al Jazeera* also found evidence of similar accounts reported by Karenni soldiers and medical doctors who stated that the combat wounds they treat are ‘different.’²²

For the first time during the reporting period last year, KnHRG documented the prevalence of drone strike attacks used by the junta. They serve as a surveillance tool targeting the opposition and civilians and are the latest misuse of technology that jeopardizes local livelihoods. *The New York Times* found that drones are transforming warfare in Burma.²³ These devices are inexpensive and produced on a large scale. The junta’s increasing dependence on drones comes as they are increasingly losing ground on the battlefields against the armed resistance.

Additional areas of concern were the junta’s ongoing use of human shields, in which, in May alone, 58 cases were documented by KnHRG. The military simultaneously threatens villagers to go back to their villages, where they become imprisoned and even shot on sight trying to leave.

Airstrikes continued to cause alarm. Data and analytics from Nyan Lynn Thit, an independent, non-partisan, and non-governmental research organization that supports a peaceful and secure society, released findings of airstrikes across Burma. They found at least 26 incidents of airstrikes in Karenni State between January and April 2024.²⁴

²¹ Myanmar Junta Using Chemical Weapons: Pa-O Army, *The Irrawaddy*, 8 March 2024

²² Anti-coup forces allege Myanmar military using banned, restricted weapons, *Al Jazeera*, 2 July 2024

²³ Drones Changed This Civil War, and Linked Rebels to the World, *New York Times*, 4 May 2024

²⁴ စစ်ကောင်စီ၏လက်ထပ်မှုများအသုံးပြုခြင်းနှင့်ဆက်စပ်မှုများ လေ့လာမှုအစီရင်ခံစာ, Nyann Lynn Analytica



Photo: On 10 May, junta battalion 102/427 attacked homes in Western Demoso at 11:30 PM. Several properties were damaged. The firing took place without any active conflict.

Attacks from the air threaten civilian security and safety and are of pressing concern, given that there is insufficient medical capacity to treat all victims.

KnHRG documented that ten people were killed in airstrikes, including five children. In addition, airstrikes injured thirty people. One 15-year-old boy was wounded by mortar shelling. Two people were hurt when bombs were dropped in Loikaw. Thirty airstrikes were carried out in May 2024 alone.

On April 11th, at 10:15 PM, the junta deployed an airstrike in Loi Yin-Pi Kin village, Pekon Township. Three civilians were killed, including two children, a 3-year-old boy and a 12-year-old girl. In addition, at least five civilians were injured.

Nine cases of mortar shelling killed six civilians, including two children, and caused almost two dozen injuries when the junta bombed Kone Thar village in Loikaw Township on April 20 at 11 AM. More than 20 houses were destroyed.

In June, a six-year-old girl was injured by mortar shelling, as well as four men and three women in the attack. In another case, mortar shelling led to the death of an infant, and two children died due to a lack of nutritional food. One was a newborn baby and less than three weeks old.

Concerns over landmines are also on the rise. According to the IEC, there have been more than 100 landmine victims in Karenni State since the attempted coup.²⁵ As of May 1st, 2024, at least 35 civilians have been wounded by them with at least two fatalities.²⁶ Since landmines are often hidden from sight, avoiding them is extremely difficult. The Burma Army intentionally places them in civilian zones to instill fear and terror in local communities.

Due to the ongoing conflict, the military is attempting to establish new battalions and expand their activities, which include planting landmines in these areas. As a result, villagers find it challenging to carry out their work and secure their livelihoods. Sometimes, they must wait for military operations to lessen before returning to their villages to retrieve food. However, upon their return, they discover that the junta has planted landmines around their homes. This poses a lethal threat as they try to access basic food and goods from their residences.

The majority of landmine victims and survivors are young people, women, and children. In April, a teenage boy lost his life to a landmine, and a man sustained life-threatening injuries. The following month, all reported fatalities and injuries resulted from landmines; one woman died, and three others were hurt. In June, a local woman was injured by a landmine explosion while returning to her village in Loikaw.

These cases have led to numerous challenges regarding their futures and have caused profound trauma. They are experiencing both mental and physical struggles. They feel uncertain about their future and have lost educational and livelihood opportunities while also facing both long- and short-term consequences due to their physical ailments and disabilities.

²⁵ Awareness of Major Landmine Risk in Conflict Zones Needs to be Improved, Burma News International, 25 May 2024

²⁶ Ibid



Photo: Civilian casualties are continuing due to landmines planted by the junta. The Karenni Human Rights Group recorded this video about a woman who was injured by a landmine.

Two displaced men from Pekon township were also wounded by landmines while returning to their communities with rations and medical equipment for a clinic.

In 2022, Amnesty International published findings regarding the Burma Army’s use of prohibited landmines in Karenni State, labeling it a war crime. Their investigation revealed that the military junta intentionally placed landmines near residential areas, agricultural lands, and church properties.²⁷ Burma recorded the most deaths from landmines globally, a devastating reality that demonstrates the harmful impact on local communities. A staggering 1,003 people died from landmines in 2023, with this number only continuing to rise.²⁸

As KnHRG and other Karenni community-based organizations noted in a 2023 report, customary international humanitarian law prohibits using weapons that are indiscriminate.²⁹ Landmines are victim-activated weapons that cannot distinguish between civilians and combatants.

²⁷ Myanmar: Military’s use of banned landmines in Kayah State amounts to war crimes, Amnesty International, 20 July 2022

²⁸ Myanmar tops grim world ranking of landmine victims, Radio Free Asia, 20 November 2024

²⁹ “How can we survive in the future?” Atrocity Crimes in Karenni State, The Karenni Human Rights Group, the Kayan Women’s Organization, the Karenni National Women’s Organization, and the Kayah State Peace Monitoring Network, 7 February 2023

The majority of civilians impacted by the landmines were foraging for food. Skyrocketing rice prices have added to the challenges for people trying to survive amid a worsening food crisis. In the past year, KnHRG has recorded incidents of displaced villagers returning to their homes to gather food and other necessary materials, only to be killed or injured by landmines laid by the junta. These crimes by the junta continue to affect the local population, even away from the battlefield.

Forty-eight homes and buildings were destroyed by the junta during the second quarter, including at least 50 homes which were deliberately set on fire in Loikaw.

QUARTER THREE OVERVIEW: JULY-SEPTEMBER 2024

Record levels of flooding from Typhoon Yagi had devastating impacts on IDPs who had already lost so much in the ongoing attacks by the military junta. The monsoon season presented numerous challenges for people in Karenni State who, in addition to seeking safety from the war, were also trying to salvage their homes and belongings from the heavy rains.

The death toll from Typhoon Yagi was over 350 people and left many more people displaced, with entire villages being evacuated throughout the country. In Karenni State, the IEC estimated that 24 people had died, and 30,000 were affected between 9 and 13 September.³⁰ Burma is regarded as the second most vulnerable country to climate change worldwide. This is mainly due to its significant exposure to extreme weather events such as cyclones, floods, and droughts and its largely unpreparedness to address such disasters.³¹

By the end of September, flood-affected IDPs in Karenni State were still grappling with the aftermath of a three-foot rise in water levels. Townships, including Loikaw, Demoso, Hpruso, and Pekon in Shan State, continued to experience excessive rain and flooding. In Loikaw, due to the severe flooding since September 14th, three people died while attempting to forage for food during the inundation.

³⁰ “Firstly, because of the flooding, it’s challenging to travel through areas to provide assistance. Secondly, there are military operations blocking some routes.” – Khon Matthias, Head of the IEC Department of Humanitarian and Rehabilitation), Burma News International, 30 September 2024

³¹ Concurrent Challenges of Conflict and Climate Change in Myanmar, The Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, 9 June 2024



Photo: Temporary shelters and camps in Loikaw, Demosso, Pha Saung, Shar Daw townships faced flooding and landslides during Typhoon Yagi.
Photo Credit: Karenni National Women's Organization

Rising water levels led to 80% of the city being submerged.³² Many who lost their homes in the floods sought shelter and refuge in abandoned buildings.

Civilians endured further hardships and struggles in the aftermath of the cyclone, including flooded hospitals, clinics, and schools, which were already limited in resources. The influx of patients and communication power cuts only intensified people's concerns for survival, as emergency relief workers were forced to deal with additional challenges.

The military junta, in response to the natural disasters and climate devastation, only worsened the situation by blocking access to health services with roadblocks and additional checkpoints. They also used the crisis to weaponize it for their gain by attempting to reclaim areas they had lost to the Karenni resistance forces.³³

Furthermore, the junta persisted in their extensive assaults on civilians. Homes were damaged due to arson, with seven set ablaze and five destroyed by airstrikes during July of the reporting period. KnHRG recorded that at least 50 houses were either burned or damaged in Loikaw Township by the military junta.

In August, by contrast, at least 30 homes were burned down in Demoso township. The junta also torched houses in Doposi village and 6-mile. Between 10 and 20 homes were damaged in these areas. Mortar shelling by the junta in Demoso township in August struck local villages, damaging farmland, including rice and corn fields, three homes, and killing livestock. Civilians who have lost their homes and been forced from their villages told KnHRG that they 'dare not to return.'

Those who found their way back returned to see their villages ablaze and settling into ashes due to the Burma Army. Civilians who have tried to extinguish the flames were met with gunfire or violent intimidation from the military junta. The scorched earth tactic employed by the military junta is exacerbating the humanitarian crisis that has displaced thousands of Karenni people. Intentional attacks on civilians are prohibited by international humanitarian law and are considered a war crime.

³² Loikaw City Faces Floods, 3 Deaths Reported, Kantarawaddy Times, 27 September 2024

³³ Myanmar Junta Using Karenni Floods to Regain Territory: PDF, The Irrawaddy, 25 September 2024

KnHRG also documented that many young men were targeted in a series of unprovoked attacks by the junta. On July 18th, at 10:45 AM, the Burma Army indiscriminately opened fire using heavy weapons in Pekon township. Three innocent men were struck following an explosion in the village. In a related incident, two young men who had lost their way while returning from work were shot and killed on sight in August when the junta spotted them.

Airstrikes continued to pose an ongoing threat to civilian safety and security. On the evening of September 5th, the junta executed an airstrike targeting a camp for internally displaced persons, known as the Bangkok IDP camp in La Ei village. Two 500-pound bombs were dropped directly onto those residing below, resulting in at least ten fatalities, including women and children, and injuring more than fourteen individuals. Numerous properties were damaged, and many locals remain unaccounted for in the aftermath of the attack.

The junta flew over the camp, dropping ammunition for over five hours. The camp that was targeted was housing over 600 people in 160 tents. Those seeking shelter and safety had fled ongoing attacks by the junta in their villages. It was the seventh airstrike on the camp this year.

Then, on September 21st, at 3:45 PM, the junta carried out another air attack targeting a village where civilians and refugees live. Homes were damaged, and a 31-year-old woman died. Nine people were injured, including five children under age 18.

KnHRG has documented a concerning increase in the number of airstrikes in Karenni State, with at least 30 taking place in March of this year alone. In a report released by the IEC, nearly 50 people were killed in Karenni State by the junta between January and June 2024. The majority of the victims were innocent children who lost their lives due to artillery shelling and airstrikes. KnHRG reported one airstrike in July, none in August and at least five in September.

Eight cases of mortar shelling caused the deaths of seven people and the injury of a twelve-year-old boy. There were five instances of landmines which wounded two men in July. A child who discovered an unexploded ordnance device and unknowingly started to play with it was injured, and another was killed when it detonated.

In August, a landmine killed a 51-year-old man named U Aung Than while he was looking for food in Pekon township, Gaun Ei section. He lost both of his legs and desperately sought help but bled to death within 30 minutes. Landmines also wounded two men in August who were returning to their homes in Moe Bye, Wah Ree Sue PaHlain village. One, age 32, and the other, age 42, both sustained serious injuries to their bodies. There were no documented cases of landmines in September.

According to the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), over 339 people have been impacted nationwide by landmines,³⁴ though local groups have reported much higher numbers.

QUARTER FOUR OVERVIEW: OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2024

The final quarter of the year ended with more cases of debilitating fears and concerns from conflict-affected communities across Karenni State. Women and children continued to suffer immensely as they were targeted regularly by the military junta. They are deprived of their rights to play, learn, and live free from the threat of attacks by the Burma Army. Expecting and new mothers face challenges in providing their newborns with adequate nutrition.

A report by UNICEF found that an alarming 6 million children in Burma require urgent support as the humanitarian crisis worsens. Children comprise 40% of the more than 3 million displaced nationwide. Subsequent findings from the IEC's Council's Department of Women and Children also released a report that captured the immense struggles of families, of which, in many cases, the women are the heads of household in the post-coup conflict.³⁵

In addition, the findings from KnHRG's year-end report, "Trying to Stay Strong," showed that women and youth expressed many challenges and uncertainties about their futures. Due to the

³⁴ Myanmar Landmine/ERW Incidents Information, UNICEF, 2024.

³⁵A Report on the Situation of Women, Children and the Elderly in Karenni State, Department of Women and Child Interim Executive Council of Karenni State, 25 November 2024.

economic crisis, pregnant women face primary problems related to transportation, financial issues, safety concerns, lack of proper nutrition, and access to medical aid. A woman who spoke to KnHRG shared her anxieties over being pregnant in Karenni State amid the ongoing violence and uncertainty of attacks:

“Before giving birth, I was very worried about heavy weapons or airplane bombings. I can’t sleep at night when I think about it. Also, I didn’t even have the money to give birth, so I had to borrow money from others. After giving birth, there is not enough milk or baby clothes.”

A lack of reliable transportation, medical personnel, and medications worsens the high risk of travelling to clinics that are often distant and financially inaccessible for many displaced individuals. Miscarriages and stillbirths occur as a result of attacks by the Burma Army.

When mothers are denied nutritious food, their health suffers, and they cannot access reliable treatment. Women who carry their pregnancies to term face additional fears and challenges after giving birth, including malnutrition and vaccine availability. They also worry that their infant might become ill due to the changing climate and the lack of warm clothing and materials.



Photo: On the evening of September 5th, targeting a camp for internally displaced persons called the Bangkok IDP camp in La Ei village.

These concerns are only worsened by the lack of funding and support for the IDP camps and temporary shelters that many are living in. Those residing in the camps primarily obtain their rations from donors, local markets, shops, and farms. Many heavily depend on donations but are forced to contemplate purchasing supplies at exorbitant prices when their needs are unmet.

Staple items like rice and cooking oil are often overpriced or unavailable. Due to widespread food insecurity, IDPs living in various camps and shelters throughout Karenni State are struggling to survive. The absence of job opportunities and arable land has made it increasingly difficult to obtain food. Some individuals depend entirely on donations and aid for their sustenance and support. Others have managed to return to their villages and resume farming, although this also carries the risk of being killed or injured in the junta's attacks.

During the last quarter of the year, KnHRG began to include data on drone attacks against Karenni people, given its increasingly volatile deployment of them by the junta. In November, drone attacks killed two people, and airstrikes damaged five buildings, including a church. In December, drone attacks killed one woman and injured five others. In a separate attack on an IDP camp in MoeBye, near the Shan–Karenni border, three people died, and one was injured.³⁶

There were also six airstrikes, and in one incident, a woman and two children were killed when the junta bombed Sin IDP camp, Loikaw township and Pekon township, Peking village.³⁷ Three women were injured in the attack as the regime continued to target civilians.

³⁶ Junta Launches Drone Attack on IDP Camp in MoeBye, Resulting in Three Deaths and Three Injuries, Kantarawaddy Times, 5 December 2024

³⁷ Air, artillery strikes set grim benchmark for civilian casualties in Myanmar in 2024, Radio Free Asia, 31 December 2024

Staple items like rice and cooking oil are often overpriced or unavailable. Due to widespread food insecurity, IDPs living in various camps and shelters throughout Karenni State are struggling to survive.



Throughout December, airstrikes by the junta wounded nine civilians, including one child. One of the cases took place during the Christmas and New Year holidays when fearful IDPs spent much of this time hiding in caves. Nonetheless, yet another airstrike targeting an IDP camp resulted in the death of a three-year-old child. According to the IEC, junta warplanes carried out two airstrikes at 4 PM.³⁸

When the junta launches airstrikes, no one is guaranteed safety.

KnHRG reported an increase in mortar shell attacks. In October, a man was killed by mortar fire from the junta in Pekon Township, Moe Bey. A four-year-old child also lost their life when the military dropped 120mm bombs on Van Mauk village in Southern Shan State, situated near the border of Ping Laung and Pekon.

During October alone, mortar shells injured a total of five men, and nine individuals were wounded in drone attacks carried out by the junta. The mortar shelling also caused damage to at least eight buildings, including local schools.

By contrast, in November, at least thirteen cases of mortar shelling documented by KnHRG led to the deaths of ten civilians, 11 wounded and two destroyed properties. Those killed included a 24-year-old woman, two infants, a teenage girl and a 40-year-old man in Kuyin village. The firing of mortar shells also destroyed two houses. Mortar shells fired by the junta also injured three men, three women, two children and two unknown victims.

In December, mortar shelling by the junta was the cause of widespread destruction. There were five instances of mortar shelling, resulting in the death of three people, including one man and two children, and injuring five others. Mortar shells also destroyed 60 homes. More than 50 religious buildings have been destroyed in Karenni State since the failed coup, with most ruined due to airstrikes, heavy artillery and arson.³⁹

³⁸ Children, IDPs among civilians killed by Myanmar junta's New Year's Eve airstrikes, Myanmar Now, 1 January 2025

³⁹ 52 Religious Buildings Destroyed in Karenni State During Military Coup, Mostly Due to Heavy Artillery Strikes, Kantarawaddy Times, 20 November 2024

In the last few months of 2024, the junta burned thirty homes in October near a public hospital in Pekon Township, and mortar shells fired by the military destroyed eight buildings, including schools.

In November, mortar shells destroyed two houses, and airstrikes damaged five buildings, including a church. By December, KnHRG reported that 78 properties were damaged throughout Karenni State, mainly by airstrikes and artillery firing and shelling.



Photo: On October 26, between 5 and 7:00 PM, the junta deployed large weapons and artillery, which damaged four homes and two classrooms when they exploded.

CONCLUSION

The ongoing crisis in Karenni State and across Burma requires a compassionate, cooperative response. There is an increasing demand for emergency humanitarian aid as thousands residing in temporary shelters and IDP camps struggle with water shortages and lack access to work, education, and justice.

Impunity and the lack of rule of law in Burma mean that Burmese military perpetrators has yet to face consequences for their actions, leaving civilians—and women and children in particular—in grave danger. The safety net of impunity emboldens the Burmese military it has created for itself within the domestic legal system.

KnHRG urges the international community to acknowledge and act upon recommendations that demand accountability for the war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated by the junta.

Regional and global stakeholders must demonstrate their solidarity by responding to the requests of local citizens and backing pro-democracy organizations like the National Unity Government.

Additionally, international players should deliver emergency humanitarian aid via local channels and pursue accountability for the

junta by referring the human rights situation in Burma to the International Criminal Court.

Moreover, the continuous assaults by the junta have inflicted extensive pain on the people of Karenni State. Soldiers are incessantly firing from both the air and the ground at unarmed civilians.

KnHRG expresses profound concern regarding the alarming reactions from neighbouring nations such as China, Thailand, and India, which are simultaneously providing the junta with weaponry while disregarding the principles of non-refoulement and routinely pushing back refugees affected by the conflict.

The UN, ASEAN, and other international entities urgently need to address the human rights crisis in Burma. They should immediately cut ties and divest from businesses that supply bullets used against civilians. All arms sales must cease, and sanctions should be applied to aviation fuel.

Humanitarian aid is critically needed to relieve the suffering of thousands in Karenni State and Burma. The most effective assistance is delivered through cross-border initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS



TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND INTERNATIONAL DONORS:

1. Direct coordinated emergency and humanitarian aid through cross-border channels to ensure the secure delivery of assistance to conflict-affected communities in Karenni State living along the Thailand-Burma border or in temporary shelters.
2. Impose targeted sanctions against the Burma Army leaders, their entities, and their cronies while supporting a coordinated global arms embargo to halt the junta's access to weapons that are routinely used to kill innocent people, including women and children.
3. Advocate for international accountability mechanisms that would seek justice for the thousands of people impacted by the brutality of the Burma Army. This includes recommending that the International Criminal Court accept the declaration the National Unity Government lodged under Article 12(3) of the Court's jurisdiction concerning international crimes committed in Burma territory since 1 July 2002.
4. Refuse to recognize the military junta as a partner in peace or politics. Deny any legitimacy to the Burma Army and fully acknowledge the National Unity Government as the democratically elected governing body.
5. Call for the release of all political prisoners in Burma who have been unjustly detained and arrested by the junta under their corrupt and broken legal system.
6. Collaborate with grassroots leaders, including women's human rights defenders and community-based organizations, civil society organizations, environmental defenders, and ethnic revolution organizations, while supporting and amplifying their documentation efforts to ensure greater visibility of the regime's crimes and promoting meaningful democratic engagement in Burma.

RECOMMENDATIONS



TO THE NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT AND THE NATIONAL UNITY CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL:

1. Engage and collaborate with Karenni civil society organizations to gather the most current information on the region's humanitarian crisis and human rights conditions. Support conflict-affected communities and advocate for UN-managed safe zones for internally displaced persons.
2. In accordance with UNSCR 1325, ensure all armed groups fully adhere to international law and implement specific measures to protect women and children from sexual and gender-based violence while guaranteeing women's meaningful participation with a minimum 30 percent representation at all decision-making levels across sectors.
3. Establish a federal democracy that includes all stakeholders and ethnic nationalities throughout Burma.
4. Ensure the advocacy for the unconditional release of all political prisoners;
5. Revise the national justice system to conform with international human rights standards and uphold the rule of law, focusing mainly on justice for women who have experienced sexual and gender-based violence and their rights under CEDAW.



TO ASEAN AND ITS MEMBER STATES

1. Disregard the unsuccessful Five-Point Consensus and create a new strategy in collaboration with civil society organizations, community-based organizations, ethnic resistance groups, and the National Unity Government (NUG).
2. Implement coordinated, actionable measures through international bodies, such as the UNSC, UNGA, and UNHRC, to hold the military regime accountable for its crimes while

RECOMMENDATIONS

facilitating the nation's shift towards an inclusive federal democratic state and ending military violence against civilians.

3. Bar all representatives from the Burmese military junta from all ASEAN summits and meetings. Suspend Burma's membership in ASEAN until the military regime acknowledges the NUG as the legitimate authority while engaging with an official NUG representative and supporting their participation at ASEAN summits or special meetings in Burma's place.
4. Thailand must restrict its airspace to prevent the Burmese junta forces from launching air strikes, aiming to safeguard internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in border regions. Thailand must also adhere to the principle of non-refoulement and provide protection and support for refugees from Karenni areas and other parts of Burma seeking refuge within the borders of ASEAN Member States.
5. Establish secure humanitarian aid corridors managed by local civil society organizations, community-based organizations, ethnic resistance groups, and the NUG.

RUNNING OUT OF TIME

The Escalation of Human Rights Violations in Karenni State in 2024

About the Karenni Human Rights Group

The Karenni Human Rights Group (KnHRG) is a grassroots, independent, Karenni-led human rights organization established on 18 May 2016. It operates in all seven townships in Karenni (Kayah) State and partly in the Kayan region (southern Shan State), Burma.

Local Karenni people from Burma formed KnHRG and experienced young and active people who are long-standing human rights activists, land issue activists, women activists, and community development perspective persons. The vision of KnHRG is to promote a society which respects and upholds human rights and Karenni culture.