



# *Spirited Resistance* Annual Report - 2024 in Review -

**The Karenni Human Rights Group**



## **KARENNI HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP**

*The Karenni Human Rights Group is incredibly grateful to our supporters, funders and long-time partners who have made our activities possible.*

**February 2025**

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Message from KnHRG Co-Founder, Ko Banyu Aung.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>KnHRG Goal, Objectives and Guiding Principles.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>KnHRG 2024 Activities.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Achievements (Advocacy and Programming).....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Testimony and Feedback from the Karenni Community and Fieldworkers.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Challenges.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Expectations for 2025.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Financial Overview.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Donors &amp; Supporters.....</b>	<b>38</b>



## Introduction

Since the attempted coup on 1 February 2021 in Burma, civilians across the country, including those in Karenni State, have experienced widespread suffering. Attacks by the junta have been both targeted and indiscriminate, with the most vulnerable in Karenni communities enduring immense hardship and struggle. The Karenni Human Rights Group (KnHRG) has documented an alarming number of deaths and injuries in recent years. In 2024, the military junta perpetrated airstrikes, artillery and mortar shelling, and others, which led to 106 civilians being killed and 234 wounded.

KnHRG is a grassroots, independent, Karenni-led human rights organization established on 18 May 2016. It operates across all seven townships in Karenni State and partially in the Karenni region (southern Shan State), Burma. KnHRG was formed by local Karenni people and experienced youth who are long-standing human rights activists, land issue advocates, women's rights activists, and community development practitioners, who have extensively documented the human rights situation.

Burma is experiencing a worsening humanitarian crisis driven by power-hungry generals and military commanders. As the offensives escalate, the number of refugees is also steadily increasing along Burma's borders with Thailand, China, India, and Bangladesh. During armed conflict, women and children suffer the most, as they make up the majority of internally displaced persons (IDPs). While thousands seek refuge, the regime has responded by blocking humanitarian aid to those most in need and targeting first responders.

According to documentation by KnHRG, the number of those displaced rose sharply from 180,000 in 2023, to 210,000 in 2024. This surge has caused significant shortages in health and protection services, as demand far exceeds the available funding and resources to address the gaps. Karenni civil society organizations, such as KnHRG, have focused on creating advocacy strategies and developing new projects through coordination and the sharing of materials. Even so, trauma remains widespread in conflict-affected communities. In response, civil society organizations (CSOs) are urgently working to provide compassionate and timely support.

Deliberate attacks on civilians by junta forces in villages and towns have forced civilians to flee. More than 40 percent of the estimated total Karenni population has been forcibly displaced. The five townships of Loikaw, Hpruso, Shadaw, Demoso and Pekhoh have been almost entirely abandoned. Countless people have lost their homes, businesses, and livelihoods in the wake of the junta's attacks. The military's mismanagement of the economy has also negatively impacted civilians. The value of the local currency, the Myanmar kyat, also continues to decline, and inflation is rising as the junta has restricted imports and exports.

In addition to ongoing indiscriminate attacks from both the air and ground, the regime has restricted the freedom of movement in Karenni State with increased military checkpoints in areas under their control. Civilians who pose any undetermined threat are taken out of their vehicles and interrogated in military custody, which can often lead to torture and ill-treatment. Internet shutdowns are also taking place simultaneously throughout the state, disrupting communications in emergencies.

Despite the many obstacles in the current socio-political context in Karenni State and across Burma, KnHRG has worked towards our vision of promoting a society that respects and upholds human rights and Karenni culture. Through its mission, KnHRG is committed to fostering a peaceful, tolerant, and democratic society.

KnHRG is sincerely thankful for its supporters, whose steadfast commitment and financial support have been crucial to our advocacy and activities. Our efforts are bolstered by the contributions of public and private donors, who have supplied the necessary resources and funding to enhance our capabilities, raise awareness, and inspire hope in these challenging times. Moreover, this assistance has made our accomplishments possible and united us in pursuing a federal, free, and democratic Burma.

This annual report summarizes KnHRG's significant achievements, and the ongoing challenges we are addressing. It will end with our plans and recommendations for key stakeholders in the coming year as well as our financial expenditures.

Throughout the year 2024, KnHRG reported the deaths of at least 106 people and 450 wounded, including the following:

### 2024 Statistics of Civilians Killed:

Human Rights Violation	Male	Female	Child (Male)	Child (Female)	Unknown	Total
Drone Strikes	4	2	1	0	3	10
Airstrikes	6	10	11	7	0	34
Deployment of Heavy Weapons	14	6	1	6	0	27
Executions	11	5	3	1	0	20
Indiscriminate Firing	2	1	0	1	0	4
Unexploded Ordnance Device	0	0	2	0	0	2
Landmines	5	1	1	0	0	7
Malnutrition	0	0	1	1	0	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>106</b>

# Message from KnHRG Co-Founder, Banya Khung Aung

Dear Friends and Supporters of Burma's Democracy Movement,

Reflecting on the last year, I do so with gratitude and humility. Upon entering the fifth year since the attempted coup in Burma on 1 February 2021, there remains a committed and unwavering mission to see the fall of the military dictatorship.

During these challenging times, I find inspiration in the courage of the many rights defenders who are active on the ground as first responders, teachers, humanitarian aid providers, and trauma-informed social workers. They are working to support the many displaced and impacted by the junta's war; a war fueled by profit and power. The spirit and resilience of the many human rights defenders inspire me to forge onward and focus on the journey ahead—achieving a federal, democratic Burma free from military rule.

The Karenni Human Rights Group was founded by young, experienced,

and active individuals, including long-standing human rights activists, land issue advocates, women's rights activists, and those with a community development perspective. All founders are members of the Human Rights Educator Network. We are united in a shared mission to promote a society that respects and upholds human rights and Karenni culture.

Last year was the worst on record for civilians since the coup. In 2024, indiscriminate attacks resulted in a devastating loss of lives, with dozens of others injured. In addition, over 1,200 buildings were destroyed in Karenni State,



Upon entering the fifth year since the attempted coup in Burma on 1 February 2021, there remains a committed and unwavering mission to see the fall of the military dictatorship.

the majority due to airstrikes and mortar shelling by the military. Among these buildings were churches, monasteries, schools, and camps where displaced communities were sheltering from the violence that had bombarded their villages.

Of further concern to KnHRG are the interactions between key stakeholders, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), various INGOs and the United Nations with the junta. These meetings do more harm than good.

Worse, they risk legitimizing a brutal, terrorizing regime with a history of violence, including genocide. Shaking hands with such criminals only emboldens junta forces to target civilians with impunity, as they have done for decades.

Any existing relationships with the military must be ended immediately. Pro-democratic establishments, including the National Unity Government (NUG) and the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC), must be engaged as they represent bodies of elected officials. In addition, the Karenni State Consultative Council (KSCC) and Karenni Interim Executive Council (IEC) must also be recognized.

This executive council works on administration tasks as a federal unit of Karenni in new Burma. It has 12 departments with systematically organized roles, a clear mandate, and a solid mission to end military dictatorship and transform Karenni into a democratic federal state.

The IEC strategizes and meets with on-ground committees to structure good

governance and effectively coordinate with partners to serve its people. In addition, this new federal state executive council will empower and help bring equality, freedom, and peace development to the rest of the states in building a new federal Burma.

The IEC and KSCC continue to coordinate with the NUCC and NUG on matters related to the Karenni State and the union. Their existence and the emerging federal governing institutions across the country further indicate that the junta does not have the power it assumes it yields, nor does it have the people's support.

The military junta is undoubtedly the cause of violence and is wreaking havoc and terror on unarmed populations. The serious violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law committed by the junta are wide-ranging.

They include; both indiscriminate and targeted attacks on Karenni civilian populations, murder and mass killings, widespread destruction of civilian property, forced displacement on a massive scale, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and cruel treatment, sexual violence, and using Karenni civilians as forced labour and human shields.

Whenever there is armed conflict, women and children suffer the most. Already traumatized by the violations they have experienced, IDPs live in constant fear.

Many IDPs have been displaced multiple times. Junta forces continue their assaults on Karenni towns, villages, and IDP sites

unabated. In many cases, displaced people's homes have been destroyed, meaning they have nowhere to return. The uncertainties they face about the future are paralyzing.

Despite the numerous challenges, I hold hope—hope for a new and emerging Burma that does not assess the value of life based on gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic status—a future where we are all equal and where democratic norms and principles are not only upheld but protected.

I also hope for this next year to be one of strength, unity, and courage as we Karenni people, along with our ethnic brothers and sisters, seek resistance and resilience to the challenges that await us this year. I am sure that our fight and sacrifice are not without gain.

We are grateful to all of our supporters and are further unified and emboldened by your belief in our work.

*Banya Khung Aung*



Banya Khung Aung  
Co-Founder, Karenni Human Rights Group

# KnHRG Goal, Objectives and Guiding Principles

## **Goal:**

To promote a society which respects and upholds human rights and Karenni culture.

## **Objectives:**

- To raise human rights awareness among the local community through participatory educational methodology.
- To strengthen the local network and advocacy initiatives for human rights approach activities.
- To amplify the voices of the people and their calls for justice by documenting human rights violations
- To strengthen and mainstream human rights in community development with an innovative approach.

## **Operational and Organizational Overview**

KnHRG is a grassroots, independent, Karenni-led human rights organization established on 18 May 2016. It operates across all seven townships in Karenni State and partially in the Karenni region (southern Shan State), Burma. KnHRG was formed by local Karenni people and experienced youth who are long-standing human rights activists, land issue advocates, women's rights activists, and community development practitioners, who have extensively documented the human rights situation.

KnHRG operates with a bottom-up decision-making structure that emphasizes inclusivity. While it does not have a Board of Directors, its Advisory Council offers suggestions and guidance on our decisions regarding its respective outputs. KnHRG is currently negotiating to transition its founders into board members. The board effectively provides legal and policy direction. In practice, the roles of the board and management are clearly defined and separated. The board operates independently.

Our mission and values align with other local organizations, including women's groups and social action networks. Given the vast need for humanitarian aid, resources, and protection in Karenni State, we work hard to preserve our credibility by earning the trust of the community and other local stakeholders who engage with us. By working together, we can more effectively reach our goals and work towards securing peace and security in our State.

The KnHRG team continues to gather evidence of crimes committed by the military junta in Karenni State to ensure continuous reporting on how the junta is terrorizing and victimizing an innocent civilian population. The evidence is securely preserved through KnHRG channels and is used for appropriate distribution.

Further, KnHRG coordinates with local stakeholders in Karenni State to ensure no projects are duplicated. We also work with regional and international partners to present information on the human rights situation in Karenni State and call for action.

## Guiding Principles

- **Guiding Principle 1:** Enhance and integrate human rights policies and programs across all forms of localized community development.
- **Guiding Principle 2:** Increase awareness of human rights abuses by gathering and sharing information through monthly and quarterly updates, statements, reports and briefing papers.
- **Guiding Principle 3:** Strengthen local networks and advocacy efforts for human rights activities.
- **Guiding Principle 4:** Advocate for advancing a federal, democratic future with key Karenni Interim Executive Council (IEC) stakeholders.
- **Guiding Principle 5:** Highlight the resilience and commitment of civil society organizations, ethnic revolution organizations, women leaders and human rights defenders in providing humanitarian support and emergency relief.



## **KnHRG 2024 Activities**

The Karenni Human Rights Group has carried out four main activities: human rights education, human rights documentation, human rights advocacy, and humanitarian support and assistance.

# 1

## Human Rights Education (HRE)

▶ 4,005+ Beneficiaries

▶ 102+ Training Sessions

Since its establishment, KnHRG has regularly organized human rights awareness-raising sessions. We remain committed to knowledge as a tool for power to uphold and protect the rights of refugees and displaced communities. In 2018, KnHRG expanded its human rights training to include economic, social, and political rights.

In 2024, the Human Rights Education (HRE) Team conducted 102 training sessions, benefiting 4,005 participants (2,041 men and 1,964 women). The HRE Team provided training 78 times for community members and leaders in villages, 15 times for armed groups, and 11 times for government departments. The HRE team managed to conduct training not only in Karenni State but also in the southern Shan State, specifically in the rural areas of Phekon Township.

During the human rights education activities, the following training sessions were conducted: *International Human Rights Awareness Training, International Humanitarian Standards Training, International Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights Training, International Civil and Political Rights Training, Child Protection Training, Human Rights Trainer of Training, and Introductory and Preventative Measures Training.*

These trainings were provided to the community members, community leaders, ethnic armed forces, and government departments. The required modules for these training courses were newly developed by the HRE team.

## Further details can be seen below:

- In Loikaw, training was provided once for the Wa Ngot tract (2), the Hte Sae Kham Tract, and once for Sin San Kham camp (1).
- In the Hpruso District, training was provided four times for the Tawku tract, ten times for the Kaylar tract, eight times for the Dawla So Group, eight times for the Hoya tract, twice for the Kekaw tract, once for the Domosaw tract, and twice for the Ya Eprar tract.
- In Phekon Township, three times for the Rinewei tract and once for the Alaykayan tract.
- In Demoso township, training was provided eight times for the Htee Poe Ka Loe Tract, once for the Dawpu tract, three times for the Daw Ta Ma Gyi tract, twelve times for the Lwai Nang Pha, twice for Naw Pa Lae, twice for Saung Du La, twice for Lopu, twice for Panpak, three times for Lo Ba Kho, and five times for Wabanplo. In Mae Sae Township, one session was also conducted.
- Eleven sessions were held within the government departments, including seven times for the Karenni State Police, three times for the Rescue Department, and once for the Karenni Nationalities Defense Forces (KNDF) political department.

**The following activities were also carried out:**

**Human Rights Awareness training:** The human rights (HR) awareness training focused on youth and women from internal displacement camps and host communities in target areas across Karenni State. One day of basic human rights training was provided.

The training also targeted community-based learning centers across the target groups. Since several human rights training sessions were requested, the KnHRG Program Manager and the project coordinator managed the training by consulting, organizing, and facilitating.

Trainers prepare the necessary modules, pre- and post-calculators, and agendas for the training to ensure it runs smoothly and effectively. This includes delegating responsibilities, updating PowerPoint presentations, and preparing key points.

Throughout the year, training was extensively conducted across Karenni State with civilians, police officers, government departments, village leaders, and various groups, thus reaching a large audience.



*Photos to the left and below show human rights education happening in various townships across Karenni State and along the Thai-Burma border.*



On days when no training was scheduled, the trainers held team meetings. During these sessions, the staff reflected on and revised the training materials, shared experiences, and evaluated whether the training sessions conducted were satisfactory.

The HRE team submitted reports, timesheets, and any additional information requested by senior management at the end of each month. Additionally, in September 2024, the HRE Team conducted the Human Rights TOT organized by KnHRG, which included a 45-day training. Twenty-four participants successfully completed this training.

KnHRG staff also attended the training, which included topics on digital security, project cycle management, and related subjects. The HRE Team also met with human rights organizations within the state and attended CSO meetings organized by the IEC. As trainers, attending these sessions allowed us to better understand the conditions on the ground.

The HRE team gained insights into the situation in the field, the circumstances surrounding displaced persons, and the overall challenges faced by the Karenni people. When conducting training, the team coordinated with camp committees to ensure the smooth operation of the sessions, which led to greater familiarity and stronger relationships.

***When conducting training, the team coordinated with camp committees to ensure the smooth operation of the sessions, which led to greater familiarity and stronger relationships.***



## 2

## Human Rights Documentation (HRD)

▶ **654+ Survivors Interviewed**

▶ **31+ Cases**

The Karenni IDP population is estimated at 35-40 percent women and 30 percent children, while the rest are men. There are regular reports of food, water, and medicine shortages and a lack of sanitation facilities in camps and temporary shelters. Already traumatized by the atrocity crimes they have experienced, the IDPs live in constant fear of renewed attacks by junta forces. Since our establishment, KnHRG has made significant strides in human rights documentation.

The HRD team conducted the following activities:

- **Collection of human rights documentation and data entry**
- **Interviews**
- **Case follow-ups**
- **Produced awareness-raising videos on cases of human rights violations in Karenni State and human rights awareness days.**
- **Recorded testimony from survivors of human rights violations**
- **Organized TOT and joined training**

Under the human rights documentation process, some of the incidents the team reported on included bombings of civilian populations by air strikes, large-scale artillery shelling, drone bomb attacks, arbitrary arrests, indiscriminate firing, executions, enforced disappearances, property destruction, as well as landmines and unexploded ordnance devices.



*KnHRG has documented a worrying rise in the number of airstrikes in Karenni State using different means of evidence collection, including gathering witness and survivor testimonies with videos.*

Women, children, and men were all impacted. The incidents were documented through videos and written records. The group’s staff members gathered the information and edited the collected data. In 2024, the HRD team interviewed 654 people (219 men and 439 women) for human rights documentation.

The team supports documentation in the following townships: Demoso, Loikaw, Hpruso, Phekon, Shadaw and Mese. Throughout 2024, thirteen cases were documented in Demoso, eleven in Phekon, five in Loikaw and two in Hpruso townships.

Additionally, the cases collected incidents of individuals affected by airstrikes, landmines, mortar shelling, unlawful detainment, drone strikes and burned homes. A total of 29 case videos were recorded. The areas where these cases were collected include Demoso Township (13 cases), Phekon Township (10 cases), Loikaw Township (four cases), and Hpruso Township (two cases). Below is a sample of the data collected over the last year.

**Below is a sample of the data collected over the last year:**

Human Rights Violation	Injured Men	Injured Women	Men Killed	Women Killed
Airstrikes	1	3	3	2
Landmines	9	4	0	1
Mortar Shelling	2	1	0	0
Unlawful Detainment	1	0	0	0
Drone Strikes	0	1	0	0
Burned Homes	0	1	0	0

*Further details can be seen in a video by the KnHRG team in Burmese on our Facebook page:*

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?mibextid=wwXlfr&v=915312183895614&rdid=YJBJVD8qIHi7cBCA>

## Human Rights Advocacy

KnHRG regularly receives testimony of human rights violations from individuals affected by conflict in Karenni State. Many survivors have endured aerial raids and ground attacks by the junta, suffering serious injuries or losing family members and community members. Based on the evidence and findings, we release briefing papers, statements and reports with amplified calls to the international community.

We have partnered with other organizations, including the US Campaign for Burma and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, and local civil society organizations in our network. Media groups, such as *Burma News International*, *Myanmar Now*, *Radio Free Asia* and the *Kantarawaddy Times*, regularly report on KnHRG's documentation efforts and findings.

KnHRG collaborates closely with civil society organizations and the Interim Executive Council of Karenni State (IEC) to conduct various advocacy activities. The IEC, led by Khu Oo Reh, who also leads the well-established ethnic armed group the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), is guided by the Karenni State Consultative Council (KSCC). This council was established two months after the military coup. It has endorsed the Karenni State Interim Plan, which serves as the constitution currently utilized by anti-junta entities during this reporting period.

In addition, we have worked with UN groups, such as the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Burma, Mr. Tom Andrews. Additionally, we regularly share our activities, including human rights documentation and monitoring, with organizations in our network to develop strategic messages and enhance advocacy to the international community.

**BURSO** FOR THE PEOPLE

ONLINE PANEL

# All Eyes on Burma

Discussions about the **ongoing coup**, **updates**, and **resources/actions** people can take to support Burma

Tuesday, March 5 2024  
7 to 8 PM EST  
Via Zoom

Register here: <https://forms.gle/BvAXrrvr5rDPRiZ9>

**Ko Banya Khun Aung**  
Co-founder & Director, KHRG  
(Karen Human Rights Group)

**Karen Ames**  
Managing Director, USCB  
(US Campaign for Burma)

*Photos left show Ko Banya, Co-founder of KnHRG, in conversation on the human rights situation in Karenni. The photo on the right is the press conference of KnHRG’s report, “Trying to Stay Strong.”*

## 4 Humanitarian Support and Assistance

- ▶ **12+ Training**
- ▶ **Support in 5+ IDP camps with 1,390+ Participants**

The Karenni Volunteer Program offers humanitarian assistance in townships throughout Karenni State, including the 15 IDP camps in Demoso Township, the 3 IDP camps in Phekon Township, and the 17 IDP camps in Hpruso Township. It has provided food, and hygiene supplies for 6,056 displaced children. The program has facilitated child-friendly space

activities and child protection training in various IDP camps, such as the 3 IDP camps in Demoso and the 8 IDP camps in Hpruso Township.

Several key stakeholders are providing humanitarian assistance in Karenni State, including the Karenni State Interim Executive Council (IEC), the Kayin Rescue Committee (KRC), the Community Welfare Coordination Team (CWCT), the Karenni Humanitarian Response Team (KHRT), the Kayah Phu Baptist Association (KPBA), the Kayah Baptist Association (KBA), various charitable groups, and some national and international agencies operating at a lower profile in the state.

Simultaneously, ethnic revolutionary organizations (EROs), such as the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), Karenni Nationalities People Liberation Force (KNPLF), Kayan New Land Party (KNLP), Karenni National Solidarity Organization (KNSO), and Karenni National Peace and Development Party (KNPDP), along with area-based Humanitarian Response Committees or Camp Committees in those regions, play a crucial role in disseminating information, raising awareness, and providing humanitarian support in their respective areas.

KnHRG supported at least 28 victims and 13 men and 15 women, in 2024.



*Above, community members are seen attending various forms of training and human rights education.*

# Achievements (Advocacy and Programming)

## Advocacy

KnHRG strengthened its advocacy over the last year by working with various key stakeholders in the movement to advance, protect, and promote human rights in Karenni State. KnHRG works closely with the IEC to coordinate activities and advocacy regarding the situation in Karenni State.

In a joint report by the IEC and KnHRG released at the beginning of 2025, findings revealed that there were at least 108 human rights violations perpetrated against civilians by the military junta in 2024. These human rights violations even include airstrikes on civilians who are living far from the battlefield, as well as shelling and bombings. Civilians are increasingly facing a loss of protection and risks to their lives.

Our efforts in advocating for federalism are strengthened through meetings with various diplomats, United Nations agencies and embassies in Thailand to share our plan and coordination activities. The terrorist military continues to target and commit atrocities against civilians every year. Although various forces within the Karenni State, including KnHRG and the IEC, are actively cooperating to prevent such brutal and inhumane acts, the international community is urged to act.

Under the NRM project, various department activities were carried out, including consultation meetings, which were held 38 times (Demoso 18, Hpruso 6, Shadaw 7, Phekon, 3, Loikaw 2, Bawlake 1, Hpasawag 1) with 2,502 participants (1,823 males, 679 females). Intern department activities were conducted 13 times (Demoso 12, Hpruso 1) with 376 participants (198 males, 178 females). Staff capacity-building activities were held 3 times (Demoso) with 146 participants (89 males, 57 females).

***In a joint report by the IEC and KnHRG released at the beginning of 2025, findings revealed that there were at least 108 human rights violations perpetrated against civilians by the military junta in 2024.***



**Further, throughout 2024, KnHRG released the following awareness-raising and advocacy materials:**

- **Twelve monthly overviews**, including data on the various human rights violations perpetrated in Karenni State.
- **Four quarterly briefing papers** detailing the concerns about the rights situation in Karenni State were combined with desk research and data from KnHRG, which can be viewed here:

**January - March 2024**

**April - June 2024**

**July - September 2024**

**October - December 2024**

- **Five statements** condemning attacks on civilians by the military junta. They included:
  - ▶ *The Karenni Human Rights Group Condemns Escalating Violence in Loikaw, Karenni State | 11 January 2024*
  - ▶ *The Karenni Human Rights Group Condemns Airstrikes in Demoso Township, Karenni State | 5 February 2024*
  - ▶ *The Karenni Human Rights Group Strongly Condemns the Attack on La-ei Hospital in Pekhon Township, Southern Shan State | 22 March 2024*
  - ▶ *The Karenni Human Rights Group Condemns the Latest Airstrike in Karenni State, which Killed and Injured Innocent Civilians | 12 April 2024*
  - ▶ *The Karenni Human Rights Group Condemns the Airstrike on Bangkok IDP Camp in Phekon Township, southern Shan State | 9 September 2024*
- **One Press Conference** releasing the KnHRG report, **“Trying to Stay Strong,”** was held in person in Chiang Mai, Thailand., to share the report’s findings.
- **One op-ed** was co-authored by KnHRG Co-Founder Ko Banya and the Advocacy Coordinator Maggi Quadrini in Asia Times, **calling** for accountability and justice for the attacks against women and children.
- **Two panels** in which Ko Banya, KnHRG Co-Founder, spoke to address the human rights situation in Karenni State. In addition, KnHRG endorsed and signed onto at least seven statements.

- **Several media outlets interviewed** KnHRG on the situation in Karenni State to offer perspective as a co-founder and secretariat member of the IEC.
- **Two reports:**
  - ▶ On January 31st, 2024, KnHRG released an overview of the human rights situation in 2023.
  - ▶ The report “Trying to Stay Strong” was released on 10 December 2024 and outlined the challenges the Karenni people face in the current context.



*The cover of KnHRG’s end of year report in 2024, “Trying to Stay Strong.”*



# “Trying to Stay Strong”

*A Situational Overview of the Civilian Impact of Human Rights Violations in Karenni State between January and March 2024*



## **The Human Rights Education (HRE) Team**

The HRE team's ability to conduct numerous training sessions throughout Karenni State has become a significant strength of the organization. This is because the public, police, and displaced persons became aware of KnHRG's efforts and secured trust and reliability in providing services and raising awareness in Karenni State. Education is a crucial factor in KnHRG's key activities.

Collaborating as a team allows us to understand each individual's strengths and weaknesses better. As such, the Trainer Team has become more engaged, enabling KnHRG to revise and enhance the new Training Modules and pre- and post-components. KnHRG has also increased the capacity of trainers, resulting in the production of many new trainers.

During training sessions for the public, displaced persons, military units, and departmental organizations, we have noted that they welcome and engage with us positively. For International Human Rights Day on December 10, 2024, the HRE team also successfully carried out the event on a larger scale than in previous years.

In addition, KnHRG conducted ten human rights training sessions across the target groups for this project. At least 450 Karenni youth and women gained knowledge of human rights norms and principles, which empowered them to uplift themselves and their communities through awareness.

Since its establishment, KnHRG has regularly organized human rights awareness-raising sessions. We remain committed to knowledge as a tool for power to uphold and protect the rights of refugees and displaced communities.

KnHRG organized and conducted a separate international human rights law (IHL) training for community leaders and members across the state. This training targeted representatives from ethnic revolution organizations, including the Karenni National Progressive Party, the Karenni Nationalities Defence Force, and some People's Defence Forces. Various department staff from the Interim Executive Council also participated.

From October 2024 to June 2025, KnHRG conducted two training days, ten times for the targeted armed groups. The training targeted each group's middle-ranking members. After participating in the IHL, the armed organizations, community leaders, and members who attended were equipped with tools to enhance their understanding and application of basic human rights principles.

*Photos below show young people learning about human rights on International Human Rights Day on 10 December 2024*



## **The Human Rights Documentation (HRD) Team**

The Human Rights Documentation (HRD) team successfully increased public awareness of their organization and established stronger connections for Human Rights Training. Working as a team allowed them to coordinate with local conditions and effectively facilitate constructive actions.

Media outlets effectively highlighted the rising human rights violations documented by KnHRG and the resulting negative impacts experienced by affected communities. Support and team-building initiatives have also enhanced each staff member's skills and qualifications.

The knowledge gained was successfully applied in the workplace due to the training organized by the organization. Some of the key areas of learning were Project Cycle Management, Citizen Training, Explosive Ordnance Risk Education ToT Training, Human Rights Documentation Training, International Humanitarian Law (IHL) Training, Child Rights Training, and training on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

The Human Rights Trainer program helped produce essential human resources for the region. Other organizations have recognized KnHRG as an important ally that can be relied upon for resources and assistance to support displaced and conflict-affected communities and serve as a channel to advocate for calls for justice.

Through victim support activities, which our organization had not previously undertaken, we assisted those in need by providing them with vital support during their challenging times.

In addition, the HRD team shared over 80 posts on KnHRG's Facebook page with the information they collected. They also took care and efforts to preserve the records of human rights violations. These posts were also shared on the social media platform, X, with context on the current situation to amplify calls for change.

In 2024, they acquired the necessary resources—such as computers, cameras, and microphones—to produce documentary videos. During the documentation process, they also completed the required forms to ensure the information was thorough. They strengthened connections with regional staff to gather as much information as possible regarding human rights violations across the townships in Karenni State. This facilitated improved data collection and enabled them to collaborate more effectively with the team.



*Photos of the human rights documentation team and their efforts to preserve documentation for evidence collection and justice.*

## **Humanitarian Support and Assistance**

Humanitarian support was provided to conflict-affected communities in Karenni State through coordination with other civil society organizations and the Karenni Interim Executive Council (IEC). As circumstances have worsened since the coup, KnHRG has regularly provided safe spaces for displaced populations, including women and children, to learn and safely access nutritious food and hygiene items. We focus on creating an environment for traumatized groups to heal collectively using healthy coping mechanisms.

KnHRG is collecting IDP data and voices of IDP and is closely working with IEC's Department of Humanitarian and Rehabilitation in the state as well as with various IDP camp leaders and ethnic and women's organizations.

KnHRG is also a member organization of the Community Welfare and Coordination Team (CWCT). In contrast, operating Humanitarian assistance with (8) member organizations in east Loikaw township, East Demoso, Shadaw and Eastern and the center of Hpruso Township in Karenni State since KnHRG's formal Director and Founder served as a Humanitarian Focal person at KSCC in the past year and currently serve as IEC Secretary 2.

## **Testimony and Feedback from the Karenni Community and Fieldworkers**

### **Human Rights Education**

The villagers, ethnic armed forces, and community leaders who participated in the training better understood human rights and international humanitarian laws. They became more understanding of one another and were more likely to report any violations they encountered.

The soldiers from the ethnic armed forces, in particular, have demonstrated changes in their actions and policies, showing that they have learned and understood the significance of these laws. This training process has resulted in positive outcomes, especially in fostering a deeper understanding of human rights, promoting mutual respect among individuals, and encouraging the readiness to report violations. Exposure to new environments has contributed to our professional development and broadened our perspectives regarding social interactions.

As trainers, KnHRG has forged new and strengthened connections with organizations, communities, and ethnic armed forces. This work has also allowed us to explore new and unfamiliar areas, overcoming various challenges while gaining new knowledge and insights. Furthermore, our relationships have expanded and developed more trust, which is critical in pursuing our activities and being accountable to the communities in which KnHRG operates.

### **Human Rights Documentation**

The villagers, soldiers from EROs, and community leaders who participated in the training improved their understanding of human rights and international humanitarian laws. As a result, people within the community began to show mutual understanding of one another, and if violations occurred, they were more likely to report them. Soldiers from ethnic armed groups, in particular, showed signs of changing their behaviours and responses to the training.

The Human Rights Trainer program has played a crucial role in developing essential human resources for the region. Regarding human rights, KnHRG has gained recognition from other organizations as a significant entity. Through the victim support activities that KnHRG had not previously undertaken, we could assist conflict-affected communities, offering them vital support and help during difficult times.

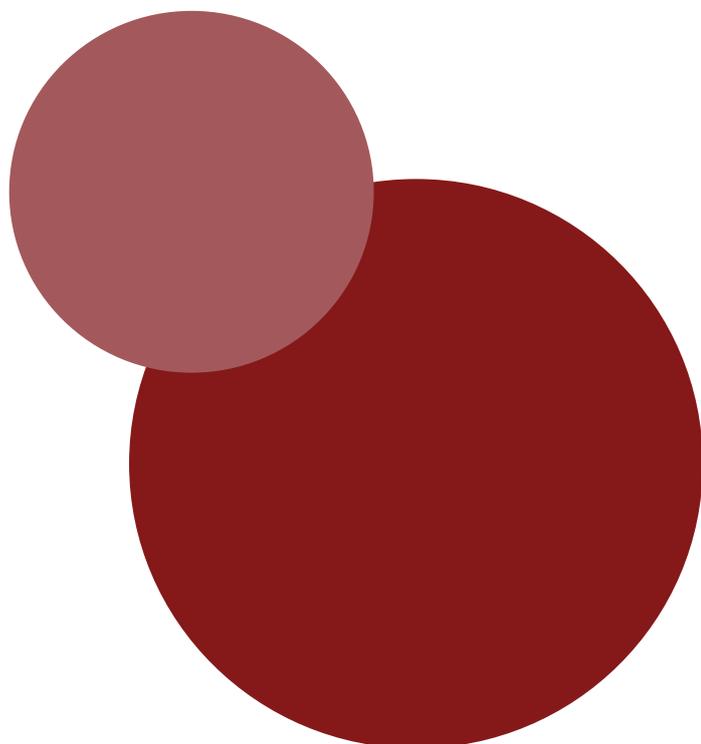
The fieldworkers not only learned about the situation of the civilians but also gained insight into the human rights violations occurring within the state. They learned about the different types of violations through the various case categories.

By engaging in conversations with displaced populations, they could clearly understand their situations. During interviews, they also encountered psychological distress, and through these experiences, they learned methods of psychological self-reconstruction to manage and cope with these challenges.

Furthermore, as training sessions increased, new experiences and knowledge were gained. The trainers also realized that there are still areas that require further learning and improvement to ensure the delivery of higher-quality training in the future.

***By engaging in conversations with displaced populations, HRD staff could clearly understand their situations.***

***During interviews, they also encountered psychological distress, and through these experiences, they learned methods of psychological self-reconstruction to manage and cope with these challenges.***



## Challenges

As a relatively new organization, KnHRG is focused on raising awareness in our communities, advocating for the protection of civilians, and recognizing the Karenni Stater Consultative Council and Interim Executive Council.

Since the coup, several challenges have emerged. The presence of the Burma Army soldiers in local areas and villages has made civilians feel unsafe. Their security and fundamental freedoms are regularly under attack. Furthermore, inflation and the need to frequently update required expense records and necessary forms also pose challenges in successfully implementing the activities. Many obstacles on the ground have highlighted the resilience of local organizations as they adapt and persevere to ensure activities are safely carried out and monitored.

***Additional challenges are as follows:***

### Advocacy

The increasing recognition of the military junta by the international community, including regional actors such as the ASEAN, has risked legitimizing the regime. For decades, the Burmese Army has stained the country's human rights record with their abhorrent actions that have seen thousands displaced before 2021, and now millions.

The advocacy team has worked to promote messages of condemnation as the junta continues its vengeful attacks against civilians, which have included airstrikes against displaced communities and innocent lives. Sanctions must be coordinated to be effective, requiring organization and clear, strategic communication with international stakeholders.

KnHRG has released briefing papers, reports, and statements to highlight the widespread and systematic injustices while sharing testimony from survivors and conflict-affected groups. These clearly indicate that the junta is not interested in meaningful dialogue. Thus, meetings with the junta by United Nations officials and international NGOs pose significant challenges as they convey a concerning message that the military is a partner in peace, which there is no evidence to support.

However, the KnHRG advocacy team will continue to promote a forward human rights agenda that presents the realities of the situation on the ground with evidence and testimony and urges an end to all engagements and business deals with the junta. The regime must no longer profit from a war that has plunged thousands into deep poverty. Our advocacy will be rooted in calls from the communities and townships where KnHRG works.

## Human Rights Education

When the HRE Team conducts training, there are occasions when access to the designated areas is not possible, which can present a challenge. For instance, in Loikaw District, Mae Sai, Thailand, and some training sessions on the western side of Demoso, the focus of work indicates that other townships should also be involved in the activities.

Additionally, on days with numerous training sessions, the time needed for pre- and post-report submissions can sometimes lead to submission delays. Due to limited availability, the team has also faced difficulties securing equipment such as generators and projectors for these training sessions.

The HRE Team has faced challenges with monthly staff meetings and evaluations, which could not be consistently carried out due to the ongoing conflict, which prevented safe operations. Furthermore, the HRE Team lacks a proper system for organizing and storing completed training records. Trainers have also faced delays in submitting reports, photos from the training, and other required materials to the manager on time.

When the HRE Team conducts training, the political situation sometimes makes travelling difficult due to a lack of safety, especially in areas with landmines or road blockages. During some training sessions, we encountered situations where we had to conduct the training close to weapons fired, which was quite intimidating and challenging. In some cases, the training venues themselves were not ideal, primarily when conducted in IDP camps.

Completing pre- and post-evaluations during training sessions can also be challenging, especially when the participants have varying levels of education, which may lead to a lack of engagement or discussion.

Occasionally, when external trainers join the sessions, issues such as the unavailability of equipment (e.g., generators, projectors) or uncomfortable seating arrangements arise. Additionally, when meeting new military units or department staff, there are challenges in responding effectively to questions and inquiries from participants, as this is the first encounter with some of them.

## Human Rights Documentation

The HRD team still faces challenges in obtaining comprehensive documentation, videos, and necessary information about some human rights violations from people in Karenni State. Due to technological limitations, the team is still weak in systematically storing and processing data. Additionally, more documentation of human rights violations is needed to collect evidence and hold the junta accountable.

There are also additional challenges, such as difficulty accessing areas where human rights violations occurred due to conflict, including continuous artillery shelling, airstrikes, and road infrastructure issues. In some cases, the lack of permission from ethnic armed forces prevented data collection.

Specific areas where data needed to be collected presented security risks due to natural disasters, minefields, past military occupation by the junta, or regions previously impacted by conflict. In these areas, ensuring safety while travelling was difficult. The lack of identification cards issued for staff members as part of security measures delayed building trust with community members, mainly when staff members visited to collect information. This resulted in time delays and difficulties.

There are also ongoing fears of reprisals by the junta if survivors or victims of human rights violations speak out about the attacks against them. The risk of a retaliatory attack against a community sometimes discourages those who have had a human rights violation perpetrated against them from speaking out.

## Humanitarian Support and Assistance

The ongoing conflict also poses many difficulties in terms of meeting the many needs of IDPs in the Karenni State, the majority of whom are women and children. Even though the Karenni armed resistance forces control 90% of the State, the military is targeting civilians in retaliation.

The junta is trying to regain control of lost territory by airstrikes and other forms of aerial bombing. The fighting worsened in Karenni in May 2021. Since then, very few people have been able to return to their villages. They are afraid of being attacked as there are also no reliable justice referral pathways in Burma. The military-drafted 2008 Constitution, 1959 Defense Services Act and Law No. 25/2016 Presidential Security Act provide immunity from prosecution to all past and present military personnel and government officials for acts committed during their duties.

An additional challenge has been the military's humanitarian restrictions, which impede the operations of local relief organizations, which must proceed cautiously to avoid being detained and interrogated by the Burma Army. The interception of medicines and other essential supplies has likely resulted in the preventable deaths of hundreds of displaced civilians and has contributed to a nutritional crisis of malnourished children. In carrying out our programs, we must carefully conduct thorough risk assessments to determine any threats that could undermine the activity by putting our staff or target beneficiaries at risk.

The gaps in service provision in Karenni State have primarily been filled by workers from civil society organizations who risk their lives to ensure humanitarian support is available to vulnerable communities. The Burmese military confiscates material support at military checkpoints to sabotage relief efforts. In some cases, humanitarian aid has been burned or destroyed.



***The gaps in service provision in Karenni State have primarily been filled by workers from civil society organizations who risk their lives to ensure humanitarian support is available to vulnerable communities.***

Due to donor constraints imposed on local groups, more sustainable, long-term funding is also needed. Reporting has become challenging, and at times, the lack of donor flexibility and understanding can cause tensions and misunderstandings. KnHRG seeks to strengthen youth capacity to fill these gaps, especially regarding documentation and technical expertise in design, mapping, and evidence collection regarding human rights violations. One of the main challenges is securing funding beyond three to six months. Long-term, core funding will enable KnHRG to expand the scope of its work and activities.

In addition, people are growing frustrated due to the lack of justice and accountability. KnHRG works with local and international bodies to advocate for civilian protection and accessible justice referral pathways. Securing long-term core funding is a significant challenge in addressing the needs of the affected communities. This means donors must support local calls for accountability, including a global arms embargo and targeted sanctions on aviation fuel.

## **Expectations for 2025**

In 2025, KnHRG will work towards our planned activities for the year. We will continue leveraging the strengths from 2024 and transforming weaknesses into gains. Our focus will be on activities that align with KnHRG's mission and are guided by our advocacy plan. To be successful and accountable to our supporters and beneficiaries, KnHRG will build on the strengths and achievements in 2024 while being mindful of the challenges and weaknesses we face that must be overcome.

***Human Rights Documentation: We aim to document as many human rights violations in Karenni State as safely as possible.***

We aim to document as many human rights violations in Karenni State as safely as possible without compromising the safety of our teams or communities impacted by the junta's ongoing attacks. KnHRG will make every effort to gather direct contact information for the communities we engage with, ensuring effective communication and connection. We will produce thematic reports and briefing papers, as well as statements and press releases, to raise attention and urge a response to the many challenges unfolding due to the junta's operations.

***Training: It would be more beneficial to respond to various requests for training types accordingly.***

Regarding training, it would be more beneficial to respond to various requests for training types accordingly. Training sessions should be held with proper preparation to prevent any delays or issues with necessary data input. Prioritizing effective planning for training events is essential, as insufficient preparation has caused problems in the past. Our focus will continue to be on training and data collection in conflict-affected areas while ensuring that local community members are engaged in the process and receive the attention they deserve as part of our efforts.

***Fundraising: KnHRG will work with partners, long-time supporters, and existing donors to strengthen our fundraising capacity.***

While many challenges remain, especially funding constraints, KnHRG will work with partners, long-time supporters, and existing donors to strengthen our fundraising capacity. Our community has many needs, significantly since the majority of the Karenni State has been forcibly displaced. There are severe shortages of medicine, clean water, food, and shelter. These basic needs denied to innocent people are a byproduct of decades of military impunity, which has shielded the regime from accountability. The severity of the humanitarian situation across the country demands immediate action by the international community.

***It is critical to KnHRG to report testimonies from the ground to share with the international community and urge action on the human rights situation.***



## Conclusion

Impunity and the lack of rule of law in Burma means that military perpetrators face no consequences for their actions, leaving civilians, and women and children in particular, in grave danger. The safety net of impunity emboldens the junta even more. Therefore, there is a global moral and legal obligation to intervene in the many crises unfolding in Burma.

The overall tightening of restrictions by the junta while increasing their assaults on the civilian population deprives the humanity of those who suffered immensely. The strategies being deployed by the Burma Army are rooted in power and fear. Establishing the Interim Executive Council in Karenni State is a well-noted step forward as Karenni State evolves into an example of how to establish and sustain federalism locally.

While it is still in its formation, it has resources that can help deliver aid effectively, such as a border-based system that avoids benefits to or aid blockages by the Burmese military. The international community must take immediate action to alleviate the suffering of the Karenni people.

We know that justice takes time—it can span decades. Human rights violations in Karenni State need to be meticulously recorded.

We require support from the international community to advocate for reliable justice mechanisms that acknowledge the lived experiences of survivors. This extends beyond the obligations of the global community. It is a matter of humanity.

Due to the protracted conflict, poverty is widespread in Karenni State. To address their concerns directly, the international community should focus on increasing its engagement and connections with local human rights groups, the NUG, and the IEC.

KnHRG requires flexible partnerships and long-term, sustainable funding to continue its work effectively and safely. It is important to KnHRG that the people and organizations we work with are not affiliated with the junta, as this directly undermines the democratic movement and the people's efforts for peace.

## Financial Overview

### 2024 Program Expenditures

Cost	Myanmar Kyat
Human Rights Documentation Program	82,245,300 MMK
Human Rights Education Program	274,896,950 MMK
Humanitarian Assistance and Recipience Program	85,339,400 MMK
Human Rights Advocacy Program	38,328,804 MMK
Administrative Costs	45,825,680 MMK
<b>Total</b>	<b>526,636,134 MMK</b>

## Donors & Supporters

*KnHRG is extremely grateful for the support of the following:*

1. The Border Consortium
2. Global Fund for Human Rights
3. Advance Myanmar
4. Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
5. Burma Relief Center
6. Paung Ku
7. Danish Church Aid
8. Terre Des Hommes
9. Diaspora Communities.





***Spirited Resistance***  
**Annual Report**  
**- 2024 in Review -**

**The Karenni Human Rights Group**