

Volume 7, Issue 5: January - March 2025

Devastation in the Aftermath of the Earthquake in Burma Spark Fear & Alarm as Relief Efforts are Undermined and Restricted by the Military Junta

Overall Analysis:

This quarter, in addition to the ongoing attacks by the junta, the situation became increasingly more challenging when a 7.7 magnitude earthquake **struck** Burma on 28 March 2025. The natural disaster is the latest in the series of ongoing strife that the people have been forced to endure as critical infrastructure, including hospitals and clinics, collapsed, as did people's homes and shelters. In an instant, thousands of lives were lost.

Two Christian churches in NeeDuKhu and HohWam Upper Village in Demoso Township also collapsed. Communities have come together to raise funds to rebuild them and are appealing to those abroad. The Interim Executive Council is also helping with the relief effort.

Worryingly, despite the widespread destruction, the junta **deployed** airstrikes in emergency areas. The regime has also **sought to block** journalists from accessing affected regions and imposed conditions on the types of aid that can be allocated and where. This is yet another example of the regime weaponizing humanitarian assistance.

Major Quarterly Developments in Karenni State:

January - March 2025

- 22+ Civilians Killed
- 61+ Civilians Injured
- 84+ Homes and Buildings Destroyed by Mortar Shells, Artillery and Airstrikes by the Junta
- 8+ Cases of Landmines
- 33+ Cases of Mortar Shelling
- 22+ Arbitrarily Arrested
- 14+ Airstrikes

The Karenni Human Rights Group (KnHRG) echoed calls for the relief effort to be coordinated among trusted partners in aid, including civil society organizations, ethnic revolutionary groups and ethnic health organizations.

Those that were spared the worst of the earthquake have not been overlooked by the junta – with Karenni State repeatedly targeted from the air. Two days after the quake, the military deployed airstrikes in Hpruso Township with 500-pound and 300-pound bombs.

Civilians are struggling to survive amid the uncertainty of natural disasters and the military's attacks, which have led to increased poverty rates, sickness, trauma and protracted displacement.

The year 2024 was the deadliest for civilians since the coup. The deeply harrowing conditions on the ground in Burma have made survival an ongoing challenge, as conflict-impacted communities are overwhelmed with anxiety over the uncertainty of an unprovoked assault by the regime.

The junta's attacks against the most vulnerable, including internally displaced people (IDP), continue with ongoing blockages for life-saving support. More than 3.5 million people have been forcibly displaced as a result of the military.

Despite the immense challenges faced by those internally displaced by conflict as well as natural disasters, their hopes for the future have not wavered as they strive to remain strong.



Photos:

On 1 March at 2:30 PM, a youth under the age of 18 was killed by a mortar shelling in Phekon township. The explosion also injured two adults & two children.

Thousands continue to be killed, arrested and forced to confront the challenging realities of their lives, including a lack of livelihood opportunities and denied and neglected education pathways for many of the youth. Students in a village in Demoso township were recently **forced to hold their final exams in the forest** due to safety concerns following artillery firing and airstrikes by the junta.

Children have endured the **heaviest toll** in the junta's conflict. Their well-being is increasingly at risk due to the junta's airstrikes and ongoing artillery shelling, even in camps and local areas where civilians are presumed to be protected, although that protection is not assured.

Given the profoundly insecure conditions in their villages, IDPs have repeatedly shared that they **'dare not return'** to their villages for fear of the junta's presence. Now, the regime is blocking urgently needed humanitarian assistance to pressure them to go back.

Most people who stay in IDP camps are unemployed and rely on food from donors. However, this support does not cover all their needs, leading to food shortages. Over the years, they have faced increasing difficulties in accessing sufficient food. Some have had to borrow rice and cooking oil from relatives and neighbours. Others have returned to their villages to collect rations, even when dangerous. Initially, there were many donors and fewer refugees, so they received enough food, but since the coup, there are many refugee camps, and donors cannot support them with long-term costs.

There has been a significant reduction in donor funds and support which has devastating impacts on children who face malnourishment in their childhood development without enough food. There are

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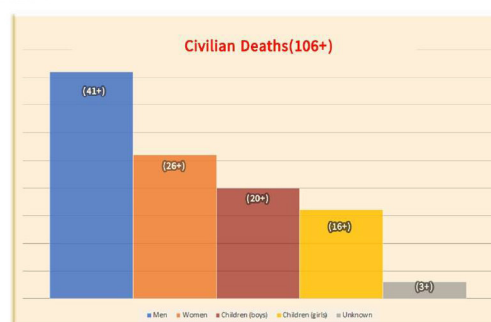
also elderly people in the IDP camps who cannot work anymore and depend on their children for food. Some of them have no one to rely on. The international community must work to fill these gaps in support by working with local organizations and communities.

The Karenni Interim Executive Council (IEC) and KnHRG released a joint report on the overview of the human rights situation in 2024, noting that the terrorist military committed at least 108 rights violations in Karenni State, including harm to women, children and the elderly. Airstrikes, ongoing artillery fire and mortar shelling have made survival all the more difficult. Water shortages are widespread in IDP camps, and access to food, notably rice, is scarce.

Farmers also encounter challenges, such as being unable to produce a sustainable crop due to conflict and climate change, including the dry season, flooding and earthquakes. They face numerous obstacles, including a lack of water, climate change, and insufficient food and shelter. Every household has its hurdles. Civil society organizations are attempting to bridge the gaps in support, but ensuring that everyone's needs are met

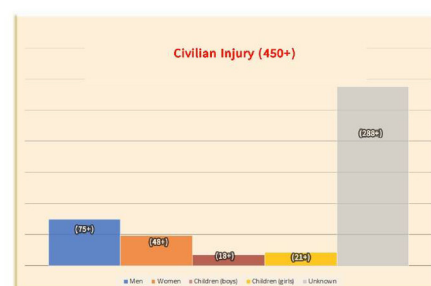
Photo: The IEC and KnHRG released a joint report on the overview of the human rights situation in 2024 which found that the terrorist military committed at least 108 human rights violations in Karenni State.

Civilian deaths



Deaths and injuries are primarily caused by artillery strikes and airstrikes, with injuries also resulting from drone strikes, executions, indiscriminate shooting, and landmine explosions.

Civilian Injury



On November 11th 2024, around 200 civilians returning from harvesting in Puchae village, Phekho Township were arrested and took away by the military troops. Additionally, on May 12, 2024, 38 civilians from Lolilin Lay village were taken and used as human shields. There are also people who have enforced

is paramount, despite the difficulties and given the limited funds and resources while operating in a highly hostile environment due to the junta's attacks.

The violence that surged in the last quarter of the reporting period started before the year began. On the evening of December 27th, 2024, the military junta **dropped a bomb** on Pi King village in Shan state's Pekon township. Three women were injured in the attack as the regime continued to target civilians. This attack came as unprecedented rates of airstrikes by the junta have accelerated. Between 1 February 2021 and November 2024, there were **213 airstrikes in Karenni State**.

Meanwhile, the junta **received more fighter jets** from Russia. These warplanes are not only a blatant misuse of funds but also the primary weapons targeting civilians. Schools, hospitals and camps for internally displaced people are routinely fired upon.



Photo:

Left: Two large weapons exploded in a village in Pekon Township at 9 PM on the evening of 20 January 2025

Additionally, the forced conscription mandate is being unlawfully enforced, resulting in separated families and forced farewells without any guarantee of safe reunification. During the first month of the year in January 2025, arbitrary arrests by the junta resulted in the unlawful detainment of two men in the Loikaw township. KnHRG has documented a concerning pattern of abductions of young men.

After the military arrests civilians, many have forcibly disappeared or have been made to enlist. In March, twenty people were arrested and detained in unknown areas by the junta.

The junta continues its pursuit of legitimacy while civilians bear the weight of conflict. According to the IEC, in 2024, 35 women and children were **killed** by the military junta, including 15 children under the age of 18 and 20 women, with some victims as young as one year old. KnHRG also highlighted the challenges that young women and girls encounter in our report released in February 2025 titled [“Running Out of Time: The Escalation of Human Rights Violations in Karenni State in 2024.”](#)

Throughout January, innocent civilians were targeted in their homes and villages, which the military destroyed. In one instance, two large explosions occurred on the eastern side of Pekon Township due to heavy artillery fire from the military junta at 9 PM on January 20, 2025. One man was struck and succumbed to severe injuries, and properties were also damaged.

In February, five civilians, including four children under the age of 18, were **killed** in Karenni State due to targeted attacks by the military junta. Among the five casualties were two 10-year-old children, two 17-year-old males, and an elderly woman.

The devastation of the junta’s attacks across Karenni State is widespread, as many struggle to survive in their hopes of returning home. Additional difficulties noted during the first quarter for civil

society organizations included suspending USAID funding, which has catastrophic effects on vulnerable communities.

Patients in need of critical care in refugee camps have been discharged, and clinics have begun to close.

Comparatively, by March, human rights violations by the junta led to five civilians killed, thirty-two wounded and twenty-five damaged properties. The ongoing undermining of civilian safety and the direct use of fear tactics by the military against innocent villagers has deprived children of security and denied them accessible routes to education and the right to play. Mortar shelling killed one child and injured two others. Two additional children were wounded in airstrikes, while landmines harmed four.

These distressing circumstances have now presented additional challenges to those who have endured many hardships. Healthcare, for example, is crucial for communities impacted by conflict, particularly those suffering from war-related injuries and trauma who depend on treatment from US-funded clinics. The halt in aid has already affected thousands and will likely cause further devastation to many more.

“If we had warning time – one month, two weeks – I think we can find our backup opportunity, we can find our sources to try and save people who are really in need. But just coming in one hour, everything has to be stopped – this kind of decision should not be [made] by these kinds of agencies supporting humanitarians,”
- Ko Banya, KnHRG Co-Founder

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There are now additional challenges in accessing reliable health care as many clinics formally supported by the US government have been forced to close. Amid the soaring rate of civilian deaths and injuries, there is also a **shortage of doctors** in Hpasawng Township, Karenni State, as locals voice the urgent need for medical services, emphasizing the necessity of healthcare facilities and professionals.

Further, funding for education and livelihood support is also temporarily suspended, which has further derailed the rebuilding of various community infrastructures.

Despite the immense challenges faced by those internally displaced by conflict as well as natural disasters, their hopes for the future have not wavered as they strive to remain strong. Community-based organizations also remain committed to various levels of support, including collecting and preserving evidence of crimes perpetrated against civilians and providing trauma-informed care to assist them.

The international community must acknowledge and respond to the recognition and response of this tested resilience, which must work with those inside Burma with trusted knowledge and access to respond meaningfully. Support for the struggle for democracy must extend to acting on calls by civil society, including an urgently needed global arms embargo and targeted sanctions on aviation fuel.

Human Rights Violations

Airstrikes & Drone Attacks

The ongoing escalation of airstrikes across Burma demands an urgent response to stop the supply of weapons to the military junta. Attacks from the air are killing innocent civilians, including women, children and the elderly. Between January and August 2024, there were more than 1639 airstrikes nationwide, with 60 civilians being killed during the first week of January 2024 due to airstrikes.

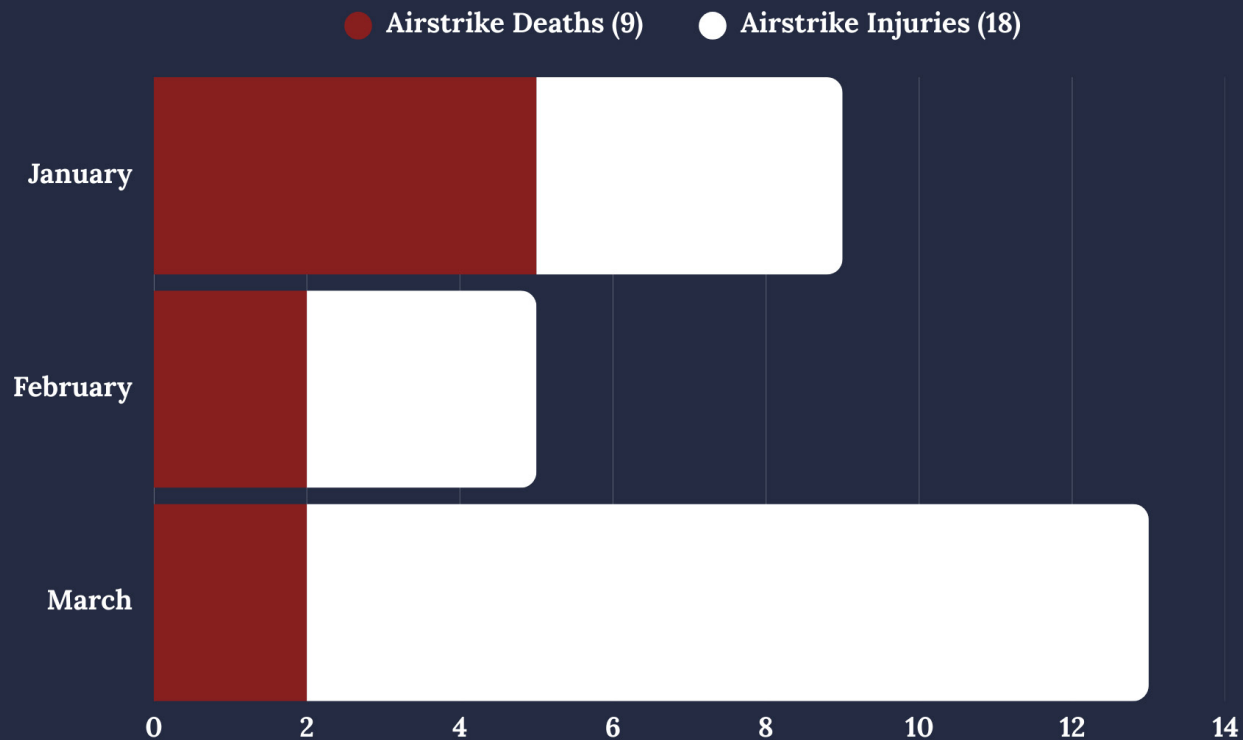
The junta's brutality is evidenced through the targeting of villagers during traditional holidays and ceremonies. On New Year's Eve, multiple aerial assaults were deployed by the military throughout the country, including in Karenni State, where a three-year-old child was killed during two airstrikes in the afternoon on an IDP camp in Loikaw.

KnHRG reported that airstrikes killed two men and three women in January. Airstrikes also injured one man, two women and a child. Airstrikes damaged eight buildings, and drone strikes destroyed one building. The attacks came without any active fighting in the area, including an attack on the Daw So Phay IDP camp. Additional airstrikes occurred on the evening of 14 January near the Padanyay and Phayarni villages in Loikaw Township. Deputy Commander-in-Chief Soe Win visited the area at the time of the attacks.

On 13 February, the junta launched an airstrike in western Demoso and dropped four bombs. A school, a medical office and two residential houses were damaged. The junta also fired indiscriminately in Loikaw. Twenty bombs were dropped on Bawlake within a day on January 20th, targeting innocent villagers. Fears of drone surveillance and airstrikes conducted by the military junta are an ongoing concern for IDPs in Karenni State. The KnHRG Co-founder, Ko Banya, has repeatedly warned against drone technology and its devastating impacts on displaced communities.

KnHRG documented that three airstrikes by the junta in February led to the death of a woman and a child. Airstrikes also resulted in injuries for two women and a child, and four buildings were destroyed by airstrikes, including fourteen homes, in addition to two latrines, one church, two motorcycles and one rice mill. In March, a woman and man were killed in airstrikes. Further, airstrikes by the junta led to injuries for two women and a child. An urgently coordinated response is needed by the international community to bring an immediate end to these attacks.

Photo: On 13 February 2025, the junta launched an airstrike in western Demoso and dropped four bombs. A school, a medical office and two residential houses were damaged. The junta also fired indiscriminately in Loikaw.



Mortar Shelling

KnHRG documented that on the morning of January 9, the junta based in Loi Lin Lay, a village east of Loikaw, fired mortar shells, which killed a woman and two children under age 12. In addition, a 5-month-old baby and a 30-year-old woman were seriously injured. On the same day, the junta fired into a village in the eastern part of Pekon township. As a result of the indiscriminate attacks, one home was damaged, and two men were injured and experienced significant trauma in the aftermath.

Nearly two weeks later, on January 18th at 6 PM, two villages in the eastern part of Kon Township were attacked by the junta with heavy weapons, including 120 mm and 150 mm mortar shells. Four people were injured: two women and two men. Three houses and two motorcycles were also damaged. Two large weapons exploded in a village on the east side of Pekon Township due to heavy weapon firing by the military junta at 9 PM on the evening of 20 January 2025. One man was hit and died due to severe injuries. Properties were also damaged.

KnHRG documented that one man and two children were killed by mortar shelling by the junta in January, in addition to four men injured, as well as three women, three children and two unknown. Mortar shelling also damaged 20 properties.

In February, there was a total of thirteen cases related to the firing of mortar shells. Seven people were killed, including two men, two children and one unknown. Three men, seven women and three children were also wounded from mortar shelling. Among the damaged properties, sixteen were ruined due to the firing of mortar shells.

On 1 March at 2:30 PM, a youth under the age of 18 was killed by a mortar shelling in Phekon township. The explosion also injured two adults and two children. KnHRG condemned this attack and demanded accountability for these unlawful actions by the junta, which targeted civilians.

There were twelve cases of mortar shelling in March 2025, leading to the death of one child and wounding three men, seven women and three children.

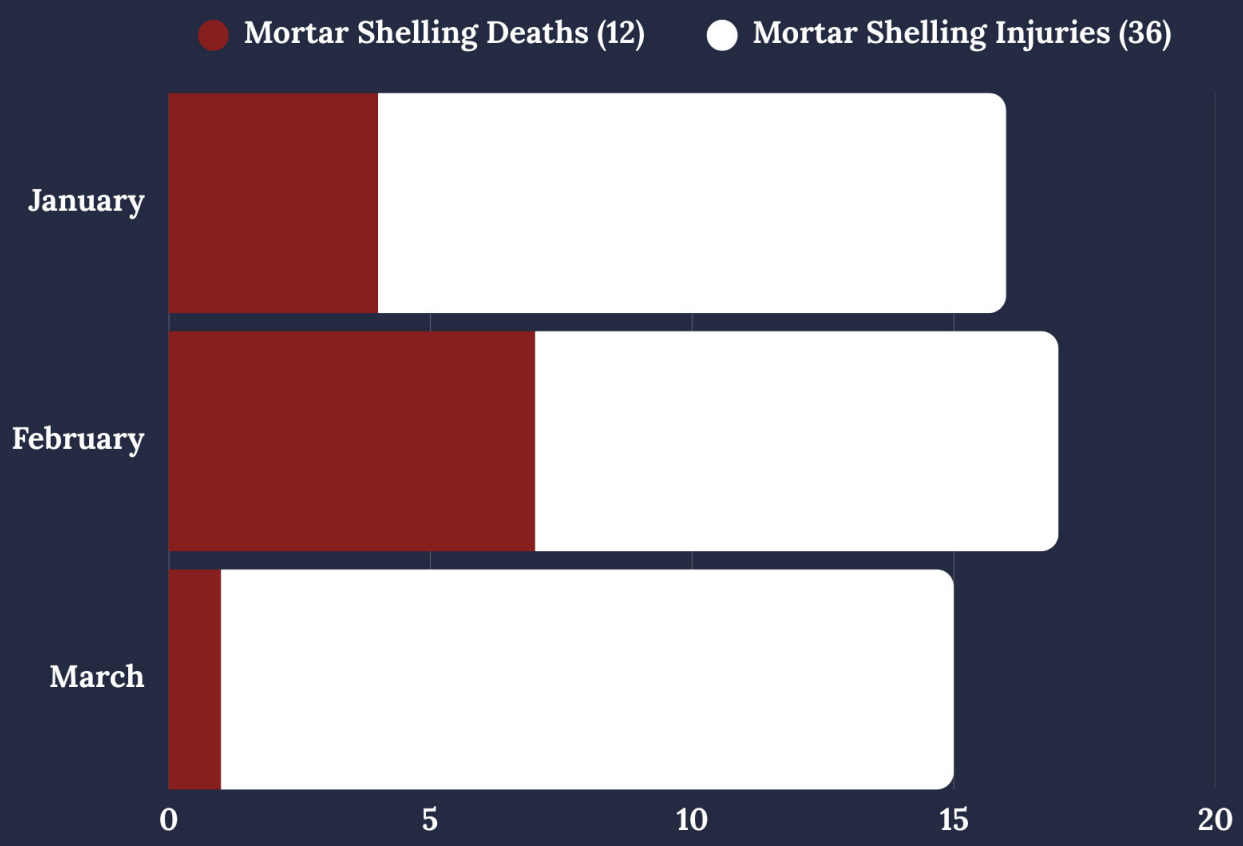


Photo: On January 18, 2025 at 6 PM, two villages in the eastern part of Pekon Township were attacked by the junta with heavy weapons, including 120 mm and 150 mm mortar shells.

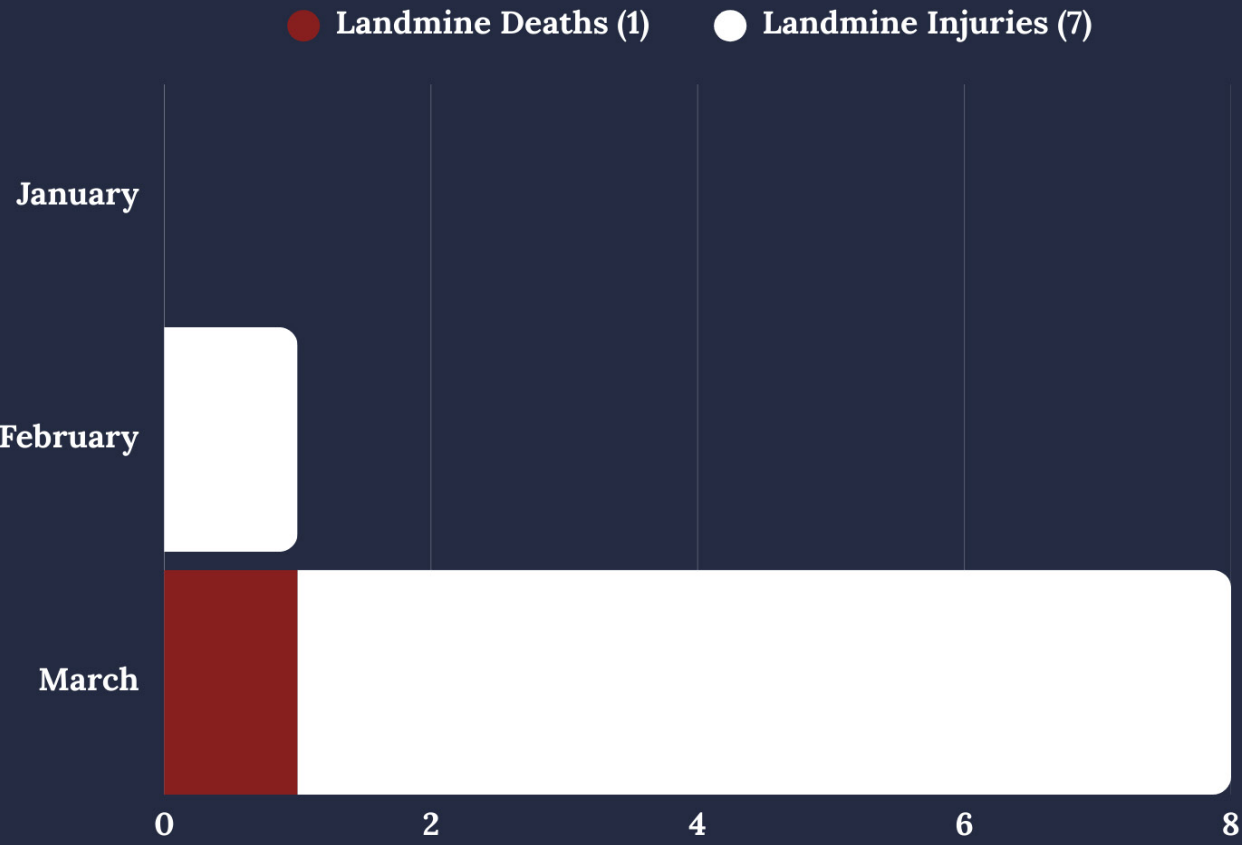
Four people were injured: two women and two men and two homes were damaged.

Landmines

Before the coup, 70% of people living in rural areas depended on farming as their primary source of livelihood - now, these systems have been utterly destroyed by the junta. Further, according to the IEC, there have been more than [100 landmine victims](#) in Karenni State since the attempted coup.

Between January and March 2025, there was one landmine case in February and several in March. A landmine killed one man, and one man, two women, and four children were injured.

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Destruction of Properties

The junta continues to target civilian infrastructure during artillery attacks, mortar shelling and airstrikes. This is yet another tactic that the regime uses to instill a sense of fear and lack of security. According to the Karenni National Defense Force Battalion 15, 223 homes have been destroyed by shelling and arson in Hpruso township since 1 February 2021. KnHRG reported that between May 2021 and September 2022, 1,190 homes in 87 Karenni towns, wards and villages were damaged.

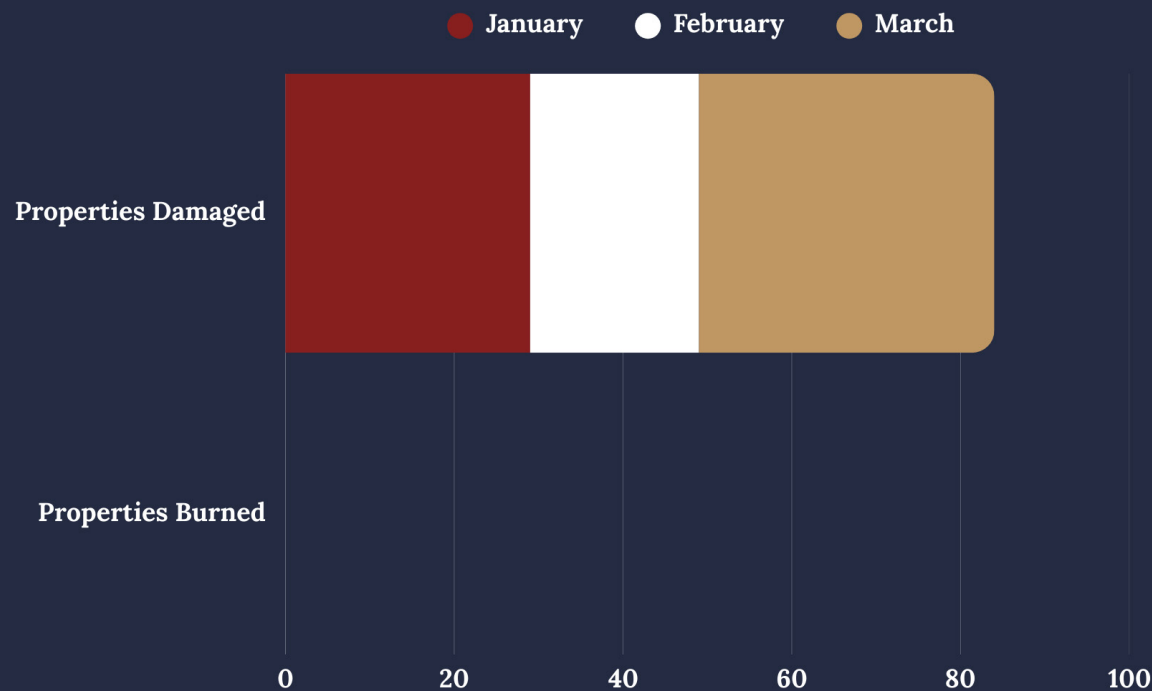
KnHRG Co-founder Ko Banya says the junta's continuous use of firebombs in residential areas of Moe Bye obstructed around 30 civilian homes in February, compared to 50 in January 2025. There have been frequent artillery shelling, firebomb attacks and airstrikes.

In January, KnHRG recorded 29 damaged properties. Mortar shelling damaged 20 properties, airstrikes damaged eight, and drone strikes destroyed one building. The attacks came without any active fighting in the area, including an attack on the Daw So Phay IDP camp. In February, there were twenty instances of property destruction. Among the damaged properties, sixteen were ruined due to mortar shelling and four from airstrikes.

In March 2025, 35 properties were damaged. The military junta destroyed eleven houses, twelve schools, two religious sites, and one public transportation route.

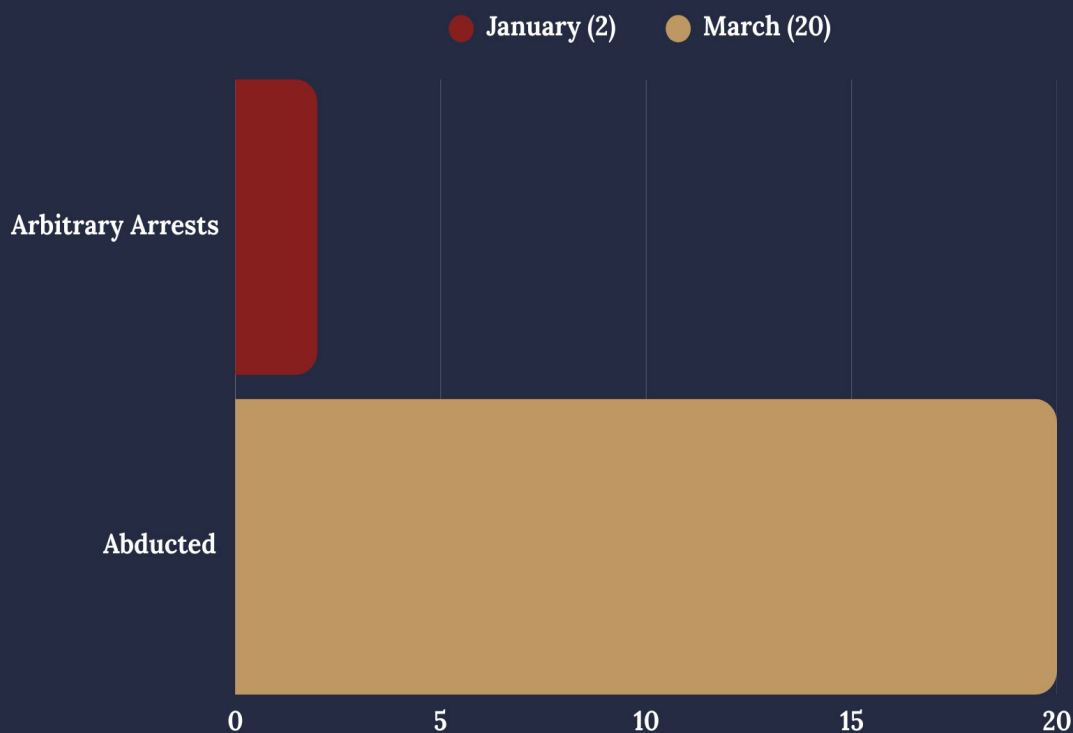


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Arbitrary Arrests

In January 2025, arbitrary arrests by the junta led to the unlawful detention of two men in Loikaw township. KnHRG has documented a troubling pattern of abductions of young men amid the junta’s ongoing forced recruitment. Following these abductions and arrests, many forcibly disappeared. Additionally, in March 2025, twenty people were arbitrarily arrested, including at least members of the Civil Disobedience Movement. Some were detained in military custody, and others were forcibly enlisted as part of the junta’s illegal conscription bid.



Feature:

KnHRG spoke to a civilian impacted by the ongoing conflict in Karenni State as unmet needs and calls were addressed:



This year's rice production was also low due to climate change, resulting in almost no self-sufficiency. This situation makes it more difficult for us. Some refugees have come to live in the village, but donors have not provided much assistance. Consequently, people have had to borrow food due to the insufficient rice supply. Some individuals work hard to improve their income; however, after working all day, they can't even afford a bottle of oil.

While villagers' living conditions are generally comfortable, their houses' shelters are inadequate for those fleeing the war. Donors have not contributed in a long time, resulting in cracks forming in the shelters. The roofs are also leaking, leaving them without safe shelter. There are elderly people in the village who depend on their children for sustenance.

Furthermore, we face a water shortage in the summer. Water is piped to the village but is insufficient during this season. Living conditions are challenging, and every household faces its issues. Additionally, during the coup and the revolution, the prices of goods rose higher than before.

In terms of education, there are not enough teachers in the village. The class is open to 5th grade. There are only three teachers. There are insufficient teaching aids and teachers at the school. Children need school textbooks, writing supplies, pencils, erasers, and pens. The preschool is not open yet; some parents are helping as much as possible with their children's education.

There is currently no security, and the school doesn't have a fence yet. The Sel Thel group and Ka Yaw literature support teacher salaries. There is no collection from the parents because many of them cannot find work in the current situation.

We also face many challenges regarding our health. Clinics are far, expensive, and very risky to travel to due to the presence of the military junta. There are also shortages in medicine and life-saving assistance and supplies.

The roofs are also leaking, leaving them without safe shelter. There are elderly people in the village who depend on their children for sustenance.

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Recommendations

1. Direct coordinate emergency humanitarian aid provision efforts, including through cross-border channels, for the aid to reach the vulnerable population of more than 200,000 Karenni IDPs resulting from the military violence and airstrikes, and combat COVID-19 by providing resources and working in equal and meaningful partnership and collaboration with ethnic and community-based humanitarian and civil society organizations;
2. Impose further targeted sanctions against the military and its leadership and military businesses, including specifically targeting Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprises (MOGE), military-linked business partners and a network of arms dealers;
3. Impose a coordinated global arms embargo on the Burmese military;
4. Sanction the supply of jet fuel to the Burmese military to end airstrikes and impose a no-fly zone;
5. Recommend the International Criminal Court to accept the declaration lodged by the National Unity The government of Burma, under Article 12(3) of the Court's jurisdiction concerning international crimes committed in Burma territory since 1 July 2002;
6. Formally designated safe zone for internally displaced persons under United Nations agencies management, which the Burmese military is not allowed to have access to.
7. For international courts, including those in Argentina, to issue international arrest warrants for coup leader Min Aung Hlaing, who is responsible for genocide against the Rohingya. Additional international accountability pathways must be established and pursued to ensure justice and reparations for all victims and survivors of the junta's ongoing war crimes and crimes against humanity.