



ASEAN Meetings Risk Legitimizing Military Junta as Human Rights Violations in Karenni State Persist

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For Immediate Release

The Karenni Human Rights Group (KnHRG) strongly condemns the ongoing engagements between members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the military junta. Most recently, the Royal Thai Government gave the coup leader, Min Aung Hlaing, a red-carpet welcome on 6 August 2026. The meeting with the Thai Prime Minister is the latest in a series of talks since the sham election concluded with a stolen and corrupt victory for the junta.

The reality is that the people of Burma do not accept the military junta in any capacity, and interactions with foreign leaders risk creating a false sense of normalcy in the country, which is far from it. The suffering in Karenni State is widespread, with soaring rates of malnutrition as a result of ongoing displacement. Communities do not feel safe.

Just days before Min Aung Hlaing arrived in Thailand, five innocent civilians, including a baby, were killed in a drone strike by soldiers in Hpruso Township, Karenni State. The attack was carried out by the army he commands to target innocent communities. The junta has increasingly relied on drone strikes to instill terror and target civilians. On July 13, 2026, KnHRG documented the case of a woman who attempted to hide after hearing a drone approaching in Kaung Saung village (Linlet KyaeSein camp) in the Moebye group, Phekhon Township. The woman, Kaw Kala Ya, age 28, a resident of Don Du Than who was hiding, was hit in the forehead by the bomb and was seriously injured. Last month, KnHRG reported that 11 civilians were injured and two died. These casualties were largely due to airstrikes and drone attacks.

Min Aung Hlaing is a wanted war criminal who does not care about the protection and preservation of human rights. Jet planes across the country are relentlessly firing at families who are sheltering in their homes, depriving them of their basic humanity and their right to live in peace. This is a brutal regime with a history of terrorizing ethnic people and undermining their safety. Leaders of ASEAN must not roll out the red carpet but put pressure on the junta to adhere to international law and to forfeit power from their stolen rule.

As interim governments, emerging federal bodies, and human rights defenders bring visibility to the realities of the junta-fuelled conflict, they must be at the forefront of discussions, alongside their communities, to advocate for what true and meaningful progress looks like in Burma. The 'calibrated re-engagement' strategy that Thailand is proposing is not in the long-term interests of peace in Burma, especially as human rights violations persist with impunity.

For many, the rule of law remains weak. KnHRG strongly urges international partners to break the cycle of violence by bringing the human rights situation to the International Criminal Court and by collaborating with locally-led organizations to pursue accountability for the regime's decades of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

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The Karenni Human Rights Group is a community organization dedicated to reporting on the current situation on the ground in Karenni State and the human rights abuses committed by the junta.