

MONTHLY OVERVIEW

Human Rights Situation in Mon State, Karen State & Tanintharyi Region

SEPTEMBER
2023



SUMMARY OVERVIEW & ANALYSIS

The Response to the Rapidly Deteriorating Human Rights Situation in Burma Demands Action and Accountability

SEPTEMBER 2023

Prospects for peace in Burma feel distant for civilians living in conflict-affected parts of the country. With over one million people displaced, the sentiment on the ground is discouraging. Battles waged by the military junta happen daily and routinely force people from their homes. The conditions have deprived children and youth of education, and families cannot access their livelihoods. The regime has targeted communities to deter any support for the pro-revolutionary forces, including People's Defense Forces (PDFs), Ethnic Revolution Organizations (EROs), the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), and others.

The Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) continues to document the extensive and ongoing crimes being committed. Among the most concerning for civilians is the airstrikes by the junta, which happen without warning, even when conflict is not active. The attacks from the air are difficult to survive. Homes, clinics, and schools are among those targeted. In August 2023, HURFOM condemned the ongoing targeting of civilians, including internally displaced people sheltering from the violence.

Despite the deliberate attacks on civilians from the sky, six ASEAN air chiefs attended a conference hosted by the illegal junta in Naypyitaw earlier this month. These types of engagements show a stark and unfortunate disregard for democratic norms and the value of human life.

However, ASEAN is not the only regional actor that has engaged openly with the junta through bilateral meetings despite the military being banned from high-level meetings. At the end of August, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Martin Griffiths, met with the military junta to negotiate aid access. HURFOM joined over 500 civil society organizations that condemned this meeting.

Even so, new details revealed that UNICEF is the latest UN affiliate to broker a deal with the junta worth 3 million dollars. UNICEF insisted that this arrangement “ensures that funds are used effectively and will share accountability and responsibility for managing the project's operations with the relevant ministries.” However, this also goes against the repeated calls for international organizations, including

SUMMARY OVERVIEW & ANALYSIS

SEPTEMBER 2023

the UN, to work with local organizations to deliver humanitarian aid through trusted, established pathways.

The reality is that the junta is losing the war. They are also grossly mismanaging the economy. In addition to recent announcements, the junta has ordered all overseas workers to transmit 25% of their earnings back home via regime-approved local banks according to a mandated exchange rate, they also continue to extort civilians. According to local sources, people who apply for new Identity Cards and household registration are being extorted by the officers of the Immigration and Population Township Department, asking for more than 100,000 kyats in Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State, from the time of the military coup until today. Residents of Thanbyuzayat have to apply and register for their ID card at age 18 and extend them at the township department of the Ministry of Immigration and Population.

“For those who can’t or don’t want to pay, the officers make appointments repeatedly, and those who pay as requested can register within the same day. Bribes are believed to be distributed at various levels within the department,” said a Thanbyuzayat township resident who registered for an ID card this year.

“I have been working in Thailand for more than ten years. When I returned to the city, I had to apply for a new household registration and ID card at the office in Thanbyuzayat. The officer said that I would have to pay 800,000 Myanmar Kyats if I did a new registration,” said a resident of Thanbyuzayat Township.

The registration department is not a first-come, first-served arrangement, but the staff’s acquaintances will be prioritized as a privileged class. There are also cases of extortion at the Maloa Taung checkpoint on the Yangon-Dawei road, where people who have not extended their ID card yet are extorted and interrogated more than regular travelers.

A resident who went to register said that he did not want to pay money, but he had to do it as a necessity because he was being pressured to change his registration during the military coup.

A 22-year-old local young man told HURFOM, “Before the military coup, people were asking for money like this in this area, but the amount was not as high as it is now.”

Similarly, the Ministry of Immigration and Population of Mawlamyine, Mon

SUMMARY OVERVIEW & ANALYSIS

SEPTEMBER 2023

State, has unfairly asked for more than 600,000 to 1,000,000 Kyats from the Muslims who applied for new ID cards. In comparison, the Muslims from Thanbyuzayat town had to pay up to 800,000 Kyats, according to a Muslim minority.

Meanwhile, active conflict has led to increasing threats against religious leaders. Residents of Kandaw Nee village and neighboring villages in Thaton Township, Mon State, are concerned that the deployment of military junta troops in the village will threaten fighting, and religious leaders have asked the military to leave.

However, according to local sources, the junta forces are still stationed among the residents, and they are likely carrying out a military operation to protect themselves among villagers.

The junta forces Light Infantry Battalion No.410, which is operating under No. 8 Military Operation Management Command, based in Thaton Township, Mon State, led by the brigade commander Nay Min Soe, has deployed their forces in the campus monastery of Kandaw Nee village in Thaton Township, Mon State, for more than 40 days.

The abbot of the Kandaw Nee monastery told the military junta brigade commander Nay Min Soe that “if your troops are stationed in our monastery and this village, the local revolutionary forces will come and attack, and then all the villagers may be injured and killed. So I begged you (the military brigade commander) not to deploy in the village that invites such a threat, but they keep deploying,” said another anonymous monk.

As of September 2, 2023, the Light Infantry Battalion No.410 continues to be stationed inside the Kandaw Nee’s monastery:

“We don’t know how much damage there is in the monastery and what has been done. They don’t treat the monks with respect. They are arrogant and rude and have made themselves look like they are on the battlefield. Many of our villagers are moving to places outside the village that they think are safe. Now, many families are leaving the village. It’s as if the villagers are being used as protectors for them,” said a 45-year-old man from Kandaw Nee village, Thaton Township.

Senior monks from Sangka Nayaka and community leaders from Pein Netaw village group, Thaton township, appealed to the coup terrorist military junta troops

SUMMARY OVERVIEW & ANALYSIS

SEPTEMBER 2023

to leave the monastery, saying that Nay Min Soe would leave; however, their troops are still deploying in the monastery.

In addition, on August 30, seven artillery weapons were fired from the Pein Netaw camp in Thaton Township by the military junta troops, fell into Min Lwin village, and exploded; some houses owned by local civilians were damaged, according to local news sources.

Ongoing clashes in Mon State have led to rising levels of displacement. Due to the clash in Alu Lay in Belin Township, Mon State, more than 2,000 residents of four villages fled to nearby locations and safe places. The Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), the joint PDF army, and the junta forces had an intense battle near Alu Lay village at around 8:00 AM on September 4.

“The villagers were worried as soon as the military arrived. When the battle started, artillery weapons fell continuously. People from the villages below Belin were also running, and some ran to the upper villages,” said a local resident of Alu Lay.

The clash of Alu Lay subsided by the late afternoon, but due to the ongoing

military tension between the two sides, most locals were concerned that the junta would continue to attack by air.

The regime is also targeting supporters of the resistance movement. They have failed to grab power in their attempted coup and continue to be engaged in a senseless, unearned bid for legitimacy.

According to residents, two local people, a husband and wife from Thein Gon ward, Thaton Town, Mon State, were arrested by the military Junta on the accusation that they were providing information to the People’s Defense Forces (PDF). On September 7, the military junta forces raided and arrested the couple, 31-year-old Ko Min Zeya Cho and 34-year-old Ma Hanni Kyaw, from Thaton.

“Ma Hanni wrote a comment under a Public Figure’s post. Junta informers found it and ordered to arrest her. The military also knew they were supporters of the National League for Democracy, so they must have been arrested under the section “discontented,” said a resident of Thaton. The couple is being interrogated.

In the military junta lobby Telegram accounts, they allege Ma Hanni Kyaw and her husband were informants of PDF

SUMMARY OVERVIEW & ANALYSIS

SEPTEMBER 2023

to do propaganda to monitor, inform, and give information about the activities of the police and departmental staff. This is yet another tool the regime uses to try and control all of the population's activities.

On 7 September, the military junta again arrested three families on suspicions of them providing financial support to PDFs. Sixty-year-old U Hla Tun from Mya Thida ward and his son and brother-in-law were abducted inside the house by the military, according to a person close to the family.

“Soldiers went to Yebyu for family matters, and a group robbed their money and car of people wearing masks and holding guns. They had to return to Kanbauk by bus,” said a person close to the arrested family members.

After that, due to the 20 million kyat found in the stolen car, the military raided their home at night for allegedly supporting the PDF. They are currently in military custody and have not yet been released.

These reports collected by HURFOM and the many other crimes that often go unreported due to security issues show how civilians' safety is being routinely threatened. While partnerships with the

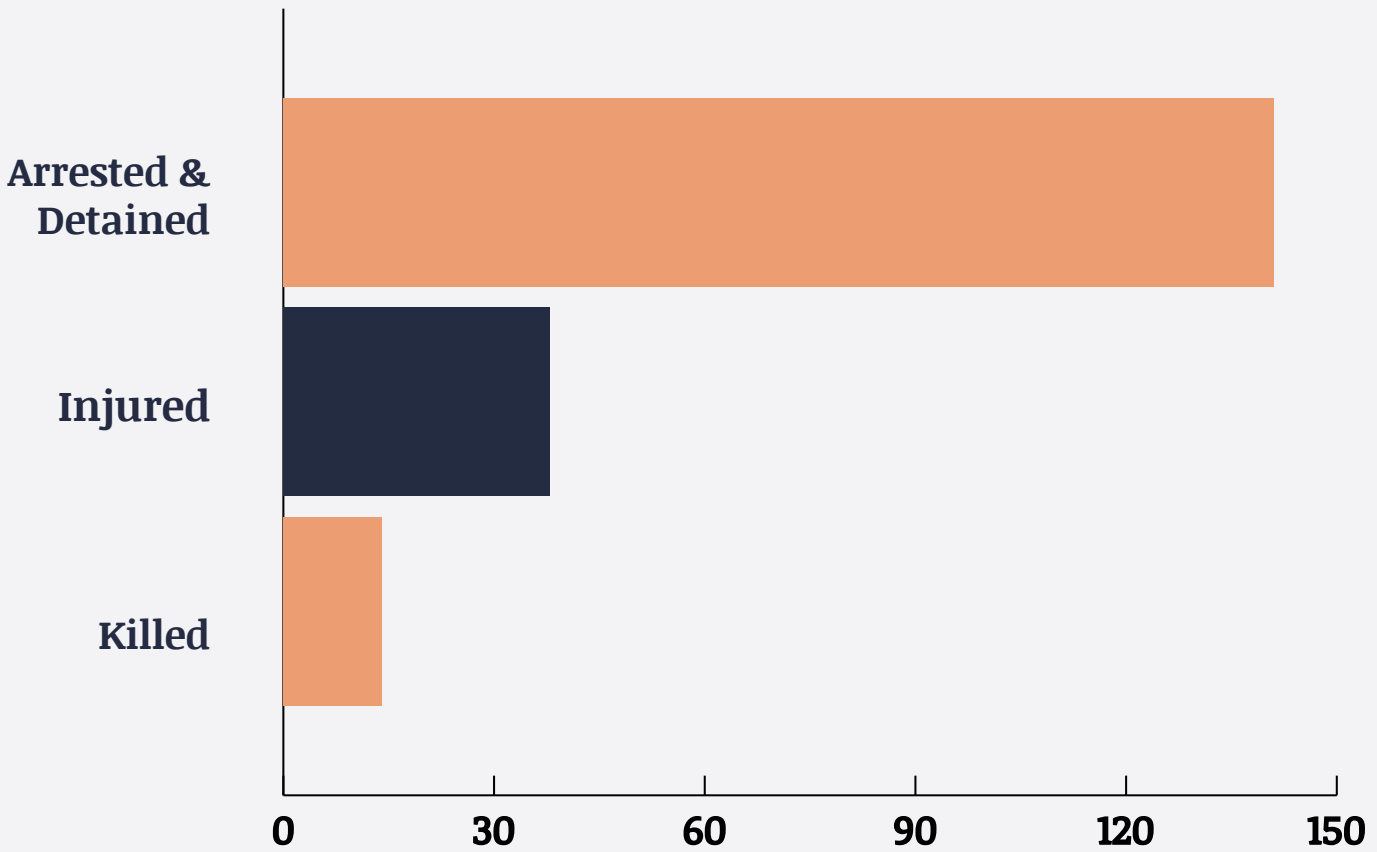
junta are established, and the international community forges new relationships, the people suffer. HURFOM's Peace Day statement notes that true and meaningful democracy is possible in Burma. Still, the international community must stand with those willing to do anything to defend it. Aligning with a murderous regime that has brought nothing but devastation will only end in more brutality.

“Soldiers went to Yebyu for family matters, and a group robbed their money and car of people wearing masks and holding guns.”

SCALED UP HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

HURFOM fieldworkers continue to take great risks to document the human rights violations being perpetrated in target areas of Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi region. By the end of **September 2023**, HURFOM recorded at least **82 arrested, 59 detained, 38 injured, and 14 killed** across all target areas.

Civilians Arrested, Injured & Killed in September 2023 in Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi region



2+

Pro-Democracy Activists Targeted by the Junta

10

PROTESTS ACROSS TARGET
AREAS IN SEPTEMBER 2023

7

TANINTHARYI
REGION

2

MON STATE

1

KAREN STATE



25,400+

CIVILIANS DISPLACED ACROSS TARGET AREAS

CIVILIANS TARGETED IN MON, KAREN STATE
& THE TANINTHARYI REGION

7+

DISMISSED FOR
INVOLVEMENT
IN THE CIVIL
DISOBEDIENCE
MOVEMENT

3+

PROTESTERS/
ACTIVISTS
SENTENCED IN
JUNTA COURTS

9+

ENFORCED
DISAPPEARANCES
BY THE MILITARY

22+

VILLAGERS WERE CAPTURED AND USED AS **HUMAN SHIELDS** IN DAWEI

58+

DAMAGED HOMES



38+

CASES OF MOTORCYCLE
CONFISCATION

7+

VEHICLES
CONFISCATED BY
THE JUNTA



AIRSTRIKES IN SOUTHEASTERN BURMA
REMAIN AN ONGOING THREAT TO THE LIVES
OF CIVILIANS AND THEIR SECURITY.



KAREN STATE

10,400+ Newly Displaced

12 Injured, 5 Killed



Mon State



Tanintharyi Region

The situation in Karen State escalated significantly in September. According to a statement from the Karen National Union (KNU) Thaton District, almost 2,000 local residents are fleeing as the military junta forces are firing artillery weapons into the village of Nyat Phaw Taw village, Kyaikhto Township, Mon State, every day.

Due to the military junta's artillery fire, 1,956 people from the 435 households in Padauk Taw, Zee Gone, Kara Wai Saik, and Nyat Phaw Taw villages have fled their homes.

“The junta forces are firing artillery weapons day and night, so no one dares to stay. They fire about 10 to 15 artillery weapons a day. There are also damaged houses. Now there is no one in the village,” said a Nyat Phaw Taw village resident.

The military junta force's artillery fire damaged four public houses, including a rural clinic in Padauk Taw village. One local home in Nyat Phaw Taw village and Zee Gone village was also damaged.

Residents fleeing due to artillery weapons fire have not returned to their homes until September 15 and need humanitarian aid, including basic food, said a local resident who fled the conflict.

The KNU Thaton district claims that the military junta troops stationed in Kyaikhto Township have been arresting and killing local residents, destroying roads connecting villages, and firing artillery weapons into the villages where civilians live daily.

On July 16, 2023, during the fighting between the two sides in Nyat Phaw Taw village in Kyaikhto Township, the military junta troops shot and killed Mg Paing Chit Oo, a young man from Padauk Taw village, and two civilian vendors who were selling goods from Kyaikhto Township, unprovoked.

On September 12, 2023, the residents of Khalae-Takhon Daing in Kyarinnsaikyi Township in Karen State fled from the conflict after the military junta forces stationed in their villages.

The junta forces entered Khalae – Takhon Daing villages in the Win Yaw area in Kyarinnsaikyi Township through the Taung Kalay and Taung Nyo mountain.

“We escaped to a nearby village and monastery for the emergency situation. Some people could not bring anything because they had to leave immediately. Currently, there are difficulties with food,” said a refugee.

The military junta force has been stationed at a local residential home and school in Khalae village, and currently, 1,200 local residents are fleeing and evacuating. It was the fifth time the junta troops had entered Khalae–Takhon Daing.

“From September 14, the military junta started firing with airplanes. We heard that the house was also affected. Now, we don’t dare to go back to the village, and we don’t know the specific situation,” said a resident who fled the war.

The military junta troops and the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) joint forces in the village of Khalae–Takhon Daing frequently confront fighting. Almost two hundred thousand refugees are in the Karen National Union (KNU) Brigade (6) area. In a statement released by the Karen Women’s Organization condemning the ongoing airstrikes, these attacks have killed and wounded at least 30 civilians, mostly women and children.



“We don’t dare to go back to the village because we don’t know the specific situation.”



MON STATE

6,500+ Newly Displaced

9 Injured, 3 Killed



Karen State



Tanintharyi Region

In an attempt to instill fear into the people, many of the junta's attacks appear random.

On 1 September, one local man from Mokanin Ywar Thit and another one from Mokanin in Lamine Sub-Township, Ye Township, Mon State, a total of two local men were beaten and detained by the military junta forces, according to local sources.

The junta forces arrived at the rubber plantation of Nai Soe Tin and asked him the way out of the main road. The People Defense Force (PDF) ambushed the junta forces while going along the road indicated by Nai Soe Tin and retreated.

“He was cutting forest in his rubber farm. The military junta forces asked the way out of the main road. He told them the way out,” a local said.

The junta forces were ambushed, and the shooting wounded four. They retreated back to the farm of Nai Soe Tin, beat and tortured him severely, and abducted him to Infantry Battalion IB No.588, based in the northern part of Ye Township.

“Nai Soe Tin was being beaten, the blood was all over his body. In fact, he knows nothing. When they asked how to exit the main road, he told them. Now he is being

treated,” said a nearby Mokanin Ywar Thit village resident.

In addition, at around 4:10 in the morning of last September 1, a 35-year-old man from Mokanin village, Nai Hong Dein, was going from his home on a motorcycle to his mother-in-law's house, was also beaten and detained by the IB No.106.

At about 11:00 a.m. that day, the parents and elders bailed out Nai Hong Dein, who had been beaten and arrested by the military under the pretext of martial law, and he was released after signing a forced confession. Nai Hong Dein is the youngest son of Nai Nyan Tun, the New Mon State Party (NMSP) from Dawei District. During the second week of last February, the military junta arrested three local people from Mokanin village and one businessman.

In a separate case, nearly 20 local people were arrested by the junta forces after they raided Uttadar and surrounding villages in Paung township, Mon State, according to people close to the military Junta, including the locals.

Starting from the last week of last August, after the junta's administrators, police stations, and general administrative departments in Paung Township were attacked, the junta forces raided the village.

Nearly 100 troops have been arresting residents since September 6, after entering Uttadar village in search of the People's Defense Forces starting a military campaign.

“They were arresting everyone they suspected and even a pregnant woman. About 20 arrests were made in Uttadar village alone. They targeted to arrest the men, but they would take the woman if they were not there,” said a Uttadar resident.

According to the local residents, the military junta forces are hunting and arresting the locals and checking the guest list in the surrounding villages, including Uttadar village, during the day.

“We heard that they would arrest more people. Those who have been arrested have been sent to Zin Kyaik police station, Paung, Mon State, and those suspected of being related to armed opposition groups have been sent for interrogation,” said a source close to the military junta police.

The military junta force has security patrols in the villages along the Mawlamyine-Yangon highway, such as Uttadar, Zin Kyaik, Yin Nyein, and some city wards, raising concerns among local residents.

After the attempted military coup, there were a few incidents of fighting between the military and the Local Defense Forces (PDF) in Paung Township, Mon State. However, it is also a township where military junta policemen and administrators were often shot and killed.



Tanintharyi region

8,500+ Newly Displaced

17 Injured, 6 Killed



Karen State



Mon State

The military is blocking key transportation routes in yet another act of paranoia and fear that the junta is losing the war they started. At the end of August 2023, although the military restricted and prohibited the importation of medicine, fuel, and rice from passing the gate at the end of Zawae Road entering the city, it was re-opened after about a week, according to the locals. However, now the road is closed again:

“The military has not announced how many days the gate will be closed. The news that the gate is closed is already spreading in the villages,” said a local.

The closed gate from Myeik Township to Tanintharyi Township at the Zawae Road junction gate is the main crossing point for the upper part of Myanmar to transport the goods. The locals are worried that the gate will be closed for a long time. Since the attempted military coup, the Zawae gate has been free to pass by the military, though frequently closed.

Violence in Tanintharyi village has seen many villagers shot and killed. From 5:00 am to 12:00 pm on September 11, according to the local people and the revolutionary forces, after the battle in Pitut village, the military shot a civilian and abducted some villagers.

The clash occurred between the military junta troops, around 30 forces, and the People’s Defense Forces (PDF) from the No.1 Battalion of Myeik District, according to the No.1 Battalion announcement. Several people were taken captive when the military Junta retreated around noon during the clash. A resident said the military junta troops also shot and killed a 20-year-old man called Yout Soe and took jewelry from his house.

Before leaving Pitut village, the army of the military Junta smashed and destroyed the villager’s homes. They also took the accessories, clothes, food, and valuables from the houses.

There was military tension between the two sides, and there have been daily clashes and shooting for the past four days in Palauk, villages in Pyi Char village groups, Pala town, Pitut, Mya Daung, and Kyauk Gar, and the villages near the sea in Palaw Township.

At about 9 AM on September 9, Ko Myat Phyo Wai, around 23 years old, who lived near Lakku High School, was hit by a shooting in the abdomen and died.

Daw Khin Aye, 41 years old, from Pyin Htain village, was also injured by the attack in her abdomen and is being treated in a hospital in a critical condition, and her son, an 8-year-old boy, was also hit by the fire.

In August, an old woman in Lakku village was killed, and three houses were damaged due to the artillery shells fired by the military.

On September 1, 5 teenagers from Ward No.3 of Pala town were injured by the artillery weapons fired by the Pala Police Station. The fire injured a woman over the age of 30, and two of them were receiving treatment at Myeik Hospital with serious injuries.

Pala town in Pulaw Township in Tanintharyi region is a city where incidents like artillery weapons fired, clashes between the two sides, and arrests and killings by the armed forces, including the Junta forces, occur almost daily.

Therefore, as the fighting in Pulaw Township may intensify, the local public and villagers should carefully pack essential documents and valuables and always be on military alert. Villagers are informed and requested to respect the announcements by the People's Defense Forces and allied forces.

Since last August, the number of people abducted by an unidentified armed group in Launglon Township has increased to 7 people in two months, and there has been no news of them until now, according to the people close to those who have been abducted.

On September 14, two young men over the age of 20 from Inn Zauk village in Launglon Township were also arrested by an unknown armed group they two are the members of Inn Zauk village funeral charity group, and they are Ko Tauk Tauk and Ko Aung Naing Shein.

Locals reported that when Ko Tauk Tauk returned from work around 5:30 in the evening, while he was buying betel nuts, three armed men hit him on the ear and took him away on a motorcycle.

In the second week of last August, 40-year-old U Thein Soe, and 80-year-old U Hla Shwe from Inn Zauk village in Launglon Township, five people, including Ma Wa Wa, a Waidee villager, were arrested by unidentified armed men.

According to local sources, the five victims have not been released, and there is no news about them yet. Three People's Defense Forces are mainly based in Launglon Township and are active in the military. DDT Division three of the People's Defense Forces and the Dawei Guerrilla Revolutionary Force have announced that the 5 people arrested in August and another 2 victims abducted four days ago have nothing to do with them.

Some people were abducted and shot dead brutally by the unknown armed group in Dawei, Thayat Chaung and Yebyu townships within Dawei District, just like Launglon Township.

The picture is Ko Tauk Tauk

Destruction of property, particularly the devastation of homes, is a tactic that the junta continues to deploy. Since noon of September 16, the People's Defence Forces (PDFs) and the military junta troops fired repeatedly in Lakku village. According to locals, the Burma Army shot and killed four civilians in Pyin Phyu village in Pulaw Township and destroyed their homes.

On September 16, those who were killed were 69-year-old U Ba Kyin, his son, 40-year-old U Ngwe Soe, his daughter, 37-year-old Daw Kalama, and his niece, 40-year-old Daw Yi Win. U Ba Kyin's home in Pyin Phyu village, his son U Ngwe Soe's home, and his niece Daw Yi Win's home in the Lakku village tract were also burned down.

"So many people are missing. There is also no phone line connection. Was the line cut off? There are many injured people," said a Lakku villager fleeing the conflict.

Most of the villagers of Lakku, Myaw Kyaung, and Pyin Phyu villages have to flee; some villagers are trapped in the village, some villagers are missing, and the people who have fled the clash need help.

On September 17, the military junta soldiers returned to Lakku village through the seaside village of Pyin Phyu village. What followed was an intense battle between the two sides. Lakku village is being attacked with artillery weapons and small arms and using land and waterways by the junta forces.

These attacks are ongoing because of the protection granted to the military junta by ASEAN and regional leaders who are complicit in committing crimes. This includes people from countries like Russia, India, China, and Singapore who provide weapons to the terrorist regime. These weapons are then used on women, children, and innocent people. A global arms embargo and sanctions on aviation fuel must be urgently implemented.

At least five locals were abducted as human shields, and people from seven villagers fled after the military entered the eastern area of Dawei. Residents of the villages along the road are fleeing the conflict because the military junta troops entered the east forest area of Dawei Township, in Dawei District, in two columns.

On the morning of September 18, the military came out from the side of the Htee Kee border along the forest road and arrived at Kyauk Mae Taung Police Station through Metta Town. In addition, another junta troops with a force of around 50 arrived from the Dawei side to the east forest area.

As the incoming and outgoing junta's reinforced troops arrived, the local residents from Wa Gon, Bawa Pin, Thingan Gon, Laik Kyal Pyaung, Thayat Nyauk, Ramazu and Pakhat villages were fleeing the conflict on September 19.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

1. Inflation across all target areas has devastatingly affected civilians who cannot meet their basic needs.
2. Mon women's groups are warning of increased child sexual abuse incidents in villages across Mon State with no action being taken by the authorities.
3. Clashes have led to forced internal displacement in Burma as instability and tensions move people from their homes.
4. Police and junta-backed militias continue to initiate door-to-door checks and arrest those on their wanted lists.
5. Motorcycles, mobile devices, and money are confiscated and extorted from civilians at checkpoints stationed by the junta deliberately along critical routes. Civilians are forced to pay excessive bribes to retrieve their possessions. However, very few were able to afford the high costs.
6. Torture remains rampant in Burma and across target areas where innocent civilians are subjected to gruelling, horrifying acts by the junta to extract information.
7. The international community, including UN bodies and ASEAN, is not responding swiftly enough to the situation in Burma, which demands urgent attention and consequences for the junta.
8. Military impunity remains deeply ingrained in the institutions representing the Tatmadaw, which only encourages the junta to continue perpetrating human rights violations.
9. Children are targeted by the military junta and deprived of basic needs, including medical attention, food, education, and the right to live safely.
10. The junta's arbitrary arrests and unlawful detention are ongoing, as are warrantless raids and indiscriminate firing into civilian areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A referral of the situation on the ground in Burma is to be made immediately by the United Nations Security Council to the International Criminal Court.
2. Concerted and coordinated action by global actors for an urgently mandated global arms embargo which would prevent the free flow of weapons into the hands of the murderous junta.
3. Aviation fuel sanctions to put an effective end to the airstrikes in Burma, which have contributed to significant loss of life, particularly among innocent civilians.
4. Targeted sanctions on military junta officials and their families and holds on their financial assets and possessions undercut their ability to conduct corrupt business dealings abroad.
5. Strengthened and renewed protection mechanisms grant civilians who are vulnerable and at risk of assault a position where they can access justice referral and accountability pathways.
6. Renewed and continued funding support for local organizations responding to the needs of their communities on the ground. Cross-border aid pathways must be accessed, and all humanitarian aid in the hands of local actors.
7. Foreign investors in Burma must immediately cease their operations and withdraw their involvement from all development projects in the country, including but not limited to airports, seaports, and cement businesses.
8. An abrupt and immediate halt to the use of torture by the military junta, and further, we call for investigations to probe the unlawful deaths of civilians in Burma who have been tortured to death, as well as those who have been forced to endure trauma and long-term injuries as a result.

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