



The Human Rights Foundation of Monland Condemns Increasing Violence Against Civilians in Mon State, Burma

29 December 2023

Ongoing violations of human rights are being perpetrated by the Burma Army with impunity in Mon State. Between November and December 2023, the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) reported a steady increase in crimes against civilians. These violations include arbitrary arrest, destruction of properties, indiscriminate firing of weapons and interrogations that resulted in death. In December 2023, HURFOM documented that 22,000 people in Mon State were forcibly displaced, at least 22 people were injured, and 10 were killed.

Most recently, according to a statement from residents and the Karen National Union, Thaton district, nearly 1,500 people have fled due to artillery weapons launched by the military during a battle at the Win Tar Pan camp near Win Tar Pan village, Bilin Township, Mon State.

The following are cases recently reported by the HURFOM. We strongly condemn these attacks and express our utmost concern for those on the ground who are impacted by the ongoing violations of human rights and call for their immediate protection.

1. Forced Inspections, Extortion

Forced inspections of homes and vehicles are among the most common tactics being deployed by the junta as yet another of their tools meant to control the population. Those who fail to cooperate are at risk of extortion - or worse, military detainment, which could result in death. The military junta routinely stationed themselves at various checkpoints and questioned them.

In Kyaikmayaw Township in Mon State and Kaw Ka Rate Township in Karen State, where fighting often occurs, locals seeking to escape can only bring valuable things while fleeing. Many people cannot bring their identity cards and household lists

because they are trying to carry food and clothing. When travelling by vehicle, they are routinely stopped, questioned, and extorted for their possessions and funds before they can pass.

2. Destruction of Property

Local civilians in Mon State are fleeing because they are seeking refuge and safety from the violence that has become an almost daily occurrence. According to residents, a civilian was killed, and six houses were damaged due to the military junta launching artillery weapons into Shwe Yaung Pya village, Bilin Township, on December 6, 2023.

The No. 314 Artillery Battalion of the military junta based in Bilin was attacked with a drone by the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and the People's Defense Forces (PDF). After the attack, the Artillery Battalion launched at least 20 artillery shells from their base into Ah Won Gyi, Shwe Yaung Pya, and Pan Aung Gone villages in Bilin Township. Saw La Aw, 46 years old, who was riding a motorcycle, was hit by the explosion of artillery shells and died on the spot.

"Approximately ten artillery weapons fell into Shwe Yaung Pya village. The villagers entered the bomb shelter immediately, but unfortunately, a villager who came to the village for work died. A motorcycle was also damaged," said a local Shwe Yaung Pya resident.

Shwe Yaung Pya, Ah Won Gyi, and Pan Aung Gone villages, where the military junta attacked with artillery weapons, are the villages under the control of the Karen National Union (KNU).

3. Arbitrary Arrest and Unlawful Detainment

On the morning of December 10th, at least 20 residents of Thanbyuzayat were arrested by the military junta. Those captured were from the Aung Zay Ya extended ward, the six intersections, Aung Chan Thar, and around the school ward.

"Those arrested were accused of supporting and contacting pro-democracy groups, including the National Unity Government and the People's Defense Forces. They keep arresting people in Thanbyuzayat city," a resident said.

Out of nearly 100 people arrested in Thanbyuzayat, 50 have been released. According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), it was announced on December 19, 2023, that more than 800 civilians were arrested due

to various pretexts by the military junta in Mon State since the attempted coup on 1 February 2021.

4. Torture Resulting in Death in Military Custody

The military junta arrested nearly 70 residents in Thanbyuzayat Town, Mon State, after accusing them of supporting the People's Defense Forces. They also seized at least five homes and businesses.

Among the detainees, U Mya Tha, who was arrested with a pistol and some bullets and Ko Min Min, who was subsequently arrested, both were killed in the military interrogation center of the Well Ka Lee Artillery Regiment. The junta did not allow either person to meet with their family members. It is believed they were not provided food and were tortured to death.

"They were killed on December 9th, but the junta has not informed their family members nor returned their bodies," said a local source.

Another resident added, "They came to the houses of those who have opposed them every day and searched for the persons they wanted, but they had already run away," another source told HURFOM that the junta plans to arrest another 100 residents in Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State.

5. Artillery Shelling and Indiscriminate Firing

A pregnant mother died from the explosion of an artillery shell in Thaton Township, Mon State. The Burma Army fired artillery weapons into Kyone Main village, Kaw Hlaing village tract at nearly midnight on 19 December. At least 20 shells were launched when civilians were sleeping. There was no active conflict at the time of the attack.

The victim, a 26-year-old woman named Naw Phaw Ta Mae, died after suffering direct hits to her legs and thighs. Though she survived the initial impact, she died of excessive bleeding when she was not immediately sent to the hospital. She was two months pregnant with her second child. She is survived by her two-and-a-half-year-old child and her husband.

According to the locals, this artillery weapon was launched by Light Infantry Battalion No. 24 soldiers or Artillery Battalion No. 402, based in Thaton. There are reports that there are explosions of artillery weapons almost every night.

Kyone Main village, home to over a thousand people, is the Karen National Union

(KNU) Brigade (1), a controlled area in Thaton Township of Thaton District, where many Karen people live.

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The uptick in violence in Mon State has caused widespread fear and uncertainty. The cases listed above are just a tiny sample of the dozens of pieces of evidence that HURFOM has collected. The military's actions indicate a worsening situation that the international community fails to take seriously.

HURFOM reinforces our condemnation of these attacks and calls for the immediate protection of civilians. International norms, principles and laws must be recognized and enforced to ensure the dignity of those impacted by the ongoing atrocities have access to justice pathways, including referrals. The violence in Mon State will only worsen if immediate action is not taken. HURFOM calls for a global arms embargo, sanctions on aviation fuel and a referral of the human rights situation in Burma to be referred to the International Criminal Court.

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HURFOM was founded by exiled pro-democracy students from the 1988 uprisings, recent activists, and Mon community leaders and youth. Its primary objective is restoring democracy, human rights, and genuine peace in Burma. HURFOM is a non-profit organization, and all its members are volunteers with a shared vision for peace in the country.