

## **Karen Human Rights Group Condemns the State Administration Council's Targeted Attacks on Civilian Populations**

March 30<sup>th</sup> 2021

Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) condemns the aerial attacks on civilian populations in Mu Traw District that occurred from March 27-30 committed by the State Administrative Council's security forces that have killed at least 3 people, including 1 child, and injured dozens more. Currently, over 2000 confirmed villagers have fled as a result of the attacks, seeking refuge in the forest without access to food or shelter. Indiscriminate bombardments of civilian populated areas are a violation of international humanitarian customary and criminal law and those who commanded and perpetrated the attack must be held to account by the international community.

The bombing began on March 27 at 7:45 pm when fighter jets fired upon five villages in Lu Thaw Township and continued in the area until the most recent attacks in Dweh Lo Township at 1:15 pm, March 29. In addition to the civilian casualties, several homes have been destroyed along with schools in Ler Htoo Poe Village and Kloe Bay Hta Village. The air assaults are the most significant attacks against targets in Southeast Myanmar in years and are dangerous indications of escalating violence in the region.

The bombardments have created an exodus of thousands of refugees that have only added to countless others who have fled from nationwide government violence against civilian protestors since the February 1 military coup. KHRG and other civil society organizations are warning the international community of a growing humanitarian crisis on the Thai-Burma border. Even as government forces attack civilians, the Thai Government has forced asylum seekers back across the border to Burma. The forced return of refugees when there are serious risks of harm and human rights violations is prohibited under international human rights law.

The international community must not stand idle as the military State Administrative Council commits murder against villagers and attacks against civilian targets. KHRG implores that the following actions be taken in order to prevent more civilian deaths and hold those accountable for violating international laws:

1. The military must immediately step down and refer the power to a democratically elected and internationally recognized government. All military forces must return to their barracks and cooperate with investigations and prosecutions conducted by civilian courts.
2. The Thai Government must meet its international obligation and offer safe refuge to all Burmese civilians seeking asylum and protection within its territory. The international community must provide aids and shelters to Burmese refugees in Thailand.
3. Perpetrators of international crimes must be held accountable. The UN Security Council must uphold its responsibility to protect the civilian population of Burma with a resolution endorsing humanitarian intervention. The Council should also refer the crimes committed by the military junta to the International Criminal Court for prosecution.

History will remember the actions taken by the international community in the face of the Burmese military's violent and criminal behavior. The people of Burma need the world to act.

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