



KACHIN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION THAILAND

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Date: 2nd April 2021

Urgent update press release:

Amid deadly crackdowns on urban protests, regime's troops commit fresh war crimes in northern Burma

While the media spotlight has focused on atrocities by the regime's security forces in urban areas since the February 1 coup, the Burma Army has been committing fresh crimes against rural villagers amidst escalating conflict in northern Burma.

A new update by KWAT documents known violations against civilians by the regime's security forces from February 1 to March 30, 2021, in Kachin State and Muse District of northern Shan State, in rural conflict areas as well as in towns.

In towns, military and police have been using live ammunition against protesters, killing eleven people, including a 15-year-old boy and a 36-year-old mother of two. At least 63 people have injured, including women and children, some of whom were bystanders. 410 civilians linked to the protests have been arrested in Kachin State and Muse. 217 of these have been released, after detention of up to 27 days. Over 190 remain in detention, the majority in Myitkyina Prison, where they have not been allowed visits by family members.

In rural areas, during escalated conflict with the KIA, Burma Army troops of Infantry Divisions 99 and 33 have indiscriminately shelled villages, killing one man and injuring seven people, including three women and three children. Two motorcyclists were shot at, one killed instantly, and the other kicked and beaten to death. Six men and one 15-year-old boy were used as human shields. Hundreds of villagers have been freshly displaced.

While the coup has plunged the entire country into insecurity and chaos, the escalation of conflict in northern Burma will have especially dire consequences. Our communities remain ravaged by the Burma Army's renewal of war against the KIA since 2011. Large swathes of countryside remain deserted, and 120,000 villagers remain in IDP camps, already with insufficient aid. New upheaval and displacement will worsen the existing humanitarian crisis.

We strongly urge concerted international pressure on the military coup leaders to immediately end violence against civilians across Burma, release all political prisoners, and withdraw troops from ethnic conflict areas. The 2008 Constitution must be abolished, a new federal constitution approved, and a new federal democratic government elected.

We support calls to the UN Security Council to impose a global arms embargo on Burma, and to refer the situation in Burma to the International Criminal Court.

We urge all foreign governments to announce that the coup regime is illegitimate, and to impose sanctions on any businesses giving revenue to the regime.

We also urge all foreign donors to ensure that their aid is not legitimizing or subsidizing the regime in any way, and to redirect humanitarian aid through cross-border channels, including for those fleeing the regime's crackdown and sheltering in ethnic-controlled areas.

Finally, we urge all Burma's neighboring countries, including China, to provide safe refuge to those fleeing conflict and persecution, and allow them access to humanitarian aid.

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