



Republic of the Union of Myanmar
National Unity Government
Ministry of Human Rights



Statement on the Christmas Eve Massacre in Karenni State

5 January 2022

The Ministry of Human Rights (MOHR) of the National Unity Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar expresses its outrage at the military junta's Christmas Eve Massacre of civilians in Hpruso Township of Karenni State. The MOHR extends its heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and to the Karenni community at large.

On 24 December 2021, members of Light Infantry Division 66 forced an unconfirmed number of civilians from their vehicles in Hpruso Township of Karenni State. After binding their hands, the junta troops shot, stabbed or set the civilians on fire, burning many alive. Four Border Guard Force Battalion members who attempted to negotiate the release of the civilians were also bound, tortured and shot dead by the junta troops.

As many as 42 civilians were murdered in the massacre. Preliminary medical analysis has thus far identified 26 males, including a man with a disability and two humanitarian workers,¹ and five females including a girl. While identification efforts are continuing, some bodies were so badly destroyed by fire that they are impossible to identify or to distinguish from the incinerated remains of other victims. Five children are among the missing.

The MOHR welcomes the United Nations (UN) Security Council's swift condemnation of the incident and its call for accountability.² It similarly welcomes the statements issued by UNICEF and by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, each expressing outrage.³

¹ <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/save-children-staff-identified-among-dead-after-burnt-bodies-found-myanmar>.

² SC/14754, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14754.doc.htm>.

³ <https://myanmar.un.org/en/166610-under-secretary-general-humanitarian-affairs-and-emergency-relief-coordinator-martin>; <https://myanmar.un.org/en/167134-unicef-condemns-reported-killing-least-35-people-including-four-children-and-two>.

The military junta in its own public response offered no denial of the massacre and admitted to having set fire to the vehicles.⁴ While it claims that the civilians were “terrorists”, this makes no account for the presence or slaughter of women, children, and humanitarian workers. Furthermore, the fact that victims were immobilised and bound before being murdered proves that these killings were war crimes.

The Christmas Eve Massacre is just the latest in a chain of acts of terror. With its attempted coup d'état of 1 February 2021 broadly regarded to have failed, the military junta is escalating the scale and nature of its atrocity crimes to provoke terror. Burning people alive is one such tactic. In a similar incident in Salingyi Township of Sagaing Region on 7 December, 11 male villagers including five children were rounded up by junta troops, tied up, then set on fire.

An earlier act of terror and collective punishment was the junta's torture and mass killing of at least 40 men and boys in Kani Township of Sagaing Region during July 2021.⁵ Another still is its use of military vehicles to target and mow down peaceful protestors, as it did in Kyimyindaing Township of Yangon on 5 December, killing at least five civilians, injuring several more, and drawing UN condemnation.⁶

These terrorist acts are part of a widespread and systematic strategy in place across Myanmar and directed by the junta at the highest levels. Min Aung Hlaing and other senior junta members must be held personally responsible and brought to justice for their crimes.

The Security Council, acting on its call for accountability, must hold an immediate plenary meeting on Myanmar and adopt a resolution that blocks the flow of arms and cash to the junta and that refers the junta's atrocity crimes to the International Criminal Court. The Security Council must also take immediate steps to list the military junta for what it is – a terrorist organisation.⁷

⁴ https://myanmar.gov.mm/news-media/news/latest-news/-/asset_publisher/idasset354/content/press-release-on-statement-of-un-under-secretary-general-for-humanitarian-affairs-martin-griffiths.

⁵ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-59699556>.

⁶ <https://myanmar.un.org/en/161770-statement-ramanathan-balakrishnan-un-resident-coordinator-ai-kyimyindaing-violence>.

⁷ <https://specialadvisorycouncil.org/2021/12/briefing-paper-the-myanmar-military-is-a-terrorist-organisation-under-law/>.