

MONTHLY OVERVIEW

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

JULY
2022



The Military Junta is Continuing to Perpetrate Human Rights Violations with Impunity in Southeastern Myanmar

JULY 2022

It has now been nearly a year and a half since the military junta attempted their unlawful coup. The regime has failed to honor the wishes of the people who overwhelmingly showed their support for the National League for Democracy (NLD) in a landslide victory. Despite earning less than 10% of the vote, the junta claimed electoral fraud without evidence and has since continued to make decisions which have devastated the country's economy and social, political order. In addition, a humanitarian crisis has plunged one-million civilians into deep poverty as they are forcibly displaced from their homes. Their behavior in the days and months which have passed since 1 February 2021 have been increasingly violent.

As the month of July came to a close, human rights violations in target areas of the Human Rights Foundation of Monland continued to be scaled up. Homes have been deliberately scorched by the junta as arbitrary arrests and ongoing raids spark fear in local communities. The international community's slow will to act has led civilians to fear the worst is yet to come. Without concrete action and a response that makes clear that the junta is not above the rule of law, the Burma Army will continue to commit crimes with impunity.

Civilians, including the elderly have not been spared. On 26 June 2022, joint troops of the military junta and soldiers from Light Infantry Battalion No.46 raided five homes in Longlone Township, Dawei. A 60-year old couple were arrested, and had their hands tied behind their backs before being shot to death at close range. The victims were residents of Kadak Gyi village, U Thaung Win, age 61 male, and Daw Win Aye, age 62, female. Homes in Kadagyi village were also destroyed, and some valuables and banknotes were stolen.

Environmental degradation is also taking a toll on civilians. Villagers in northern Yebyu township claimed that there had been no compensation for their houses destroyed by a project survey conducted by Yadanar Natural Oil and Gas group in February 2022. In February 2022, officials from the "Yadanar Natural Oil and Gas Project" conducted a survey in the village of Pauk Pin Kwin, located in Yebyu Township, Tanintharyi Region.

The survey destroyed twelve houses, and those who suffered property losses have not received compensation. The Yadanar Natural Oil and Gas Project bought land plots in the village in 2002/2003 but the company did nothing with the land. Eventually local

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villagers built houses on these plots. After the coup, the company showed renewed interest in their project. Oil companies, like TOTAL, chose to withdraw from the project in light of human rights abuses conducted by the military since the coup. Only Nippon Oil and Gas Exploration and Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise, which is controlled by the military junta, continue to support the Yadanar project.

Young people, including students and affiliates of the Spring Revolution continue to be targeted by the military junta. A Mawlamyine University student, Ko Myo Thura Aung, who was abducted by the junta forces on June 30th 2022, has not been contacted by his family. He was studying in his fourth year of Physics and is accused of merging with the Civil Disobedience Movement. According to the Mawlamyine University Union, at least thirty students have been arbitrarily detained by the junta since the coup from the University. One student was murdered after being shot. Additional information has been difficult to obtain as the junta is increasingly blocking access to prisons.

Members of the NLD and pro-democracy affiliates also continue to be relentlessly targeted. A member of the NLD party chairman who was abducted by the junta forces on June 22, 2022 in Bilin Township, Mon State, was found dead in a ditch on 7 July 2022. According to the local villagers. U

Kyaw Myo Min and his coworkers, U Pan Myint and U Ko Ko Maung were arbitrarily arrested by the junta forces in Paw Kee village, Bee Lin Township, Mon State. Based on the NLD's Human Rights Record Group, the junta has killed nearly 50 former members of Parliament, and over 900 NLD lawmakers have been arrested since the attempted coup on 1 February 2021.

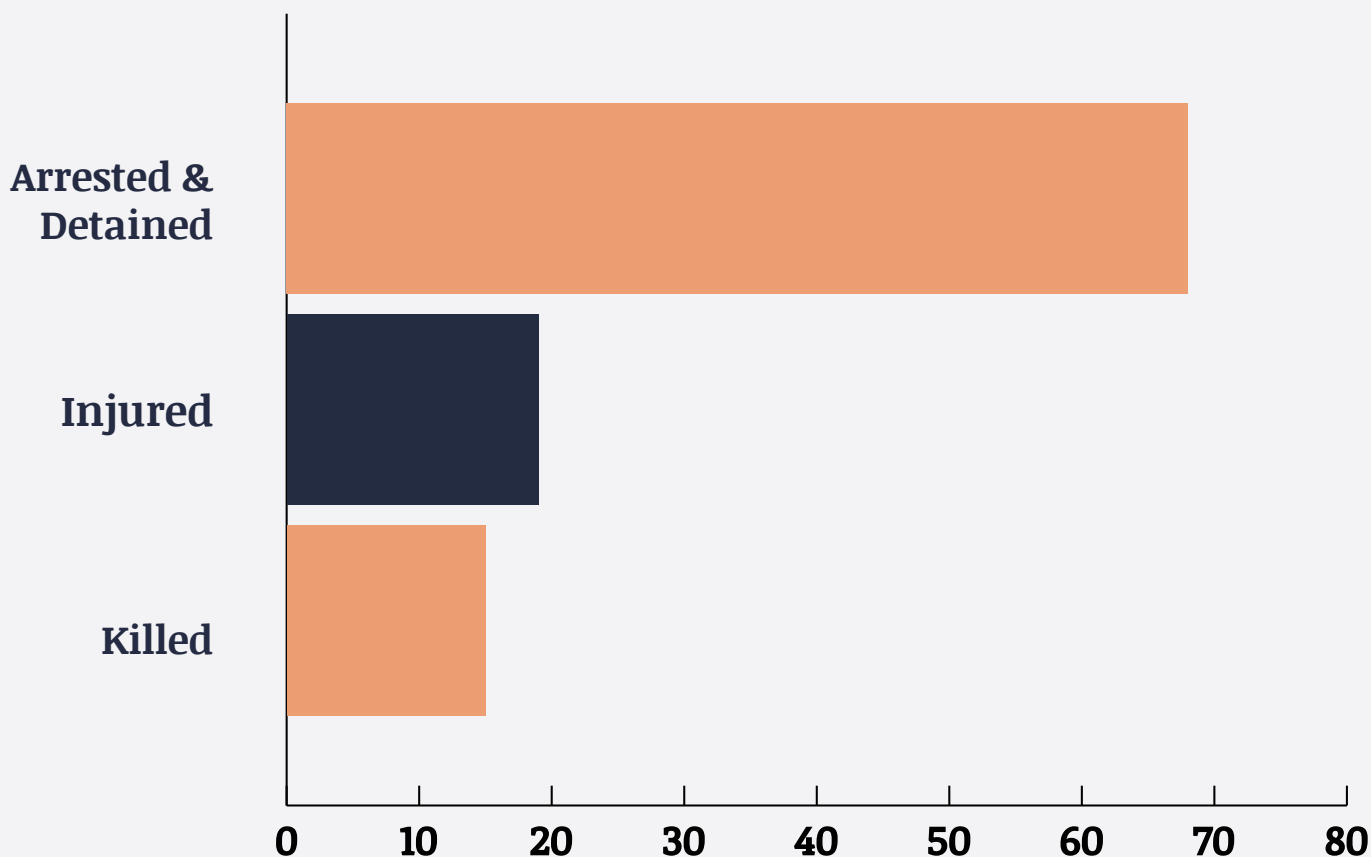
Meanwhile, as the junta expands their militarized operations into civilian areas, more people are being forced to abandon their livelihoods and flee. Internally displaced people (IDPs) and war-affected refugees at the Palaw IDPs camps in Tanintharyi are facing food shortages, according to an emergency response team member. The number of IDPs in the Palaw resettlement sites and camps has increased from 1,166 last month to almost 1,950 families this month. This is a rough estimate and may be higher.

Crimes such as these are continuing with impunity, and further setting a dangerous precedent that suggests the military junta is above the law. Villagers who have been murdered by the junta during their power spree must be granted justice. The military is guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity. These acts have been on display for the world to witness, including news that the military junta executed four political prisoners on the morning of 25 July 2022.

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 July 2022, HURFOM recorded least **42 arrested, 24 detained, 19 injured and 15 killed.**

Civilians Arrested, Injured & Killed in July 2022 in Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi region



6+

Members of Parliament and their families targeted by the military junta.

12

PROTESTS ACROSS TARGET
AREAS IN JULY 2022

9

TANINTHARYI
REGION

2

MON STATE

1

KAREN STATE



12,950+

CIVILIANS DISPLACED ACROSS TARGET AREAS

CIVILIANS TARGETED IN MON, KAREN STATE
& TANINTHARYI REGION

28+

DISMISSED FOR
INVOLVEMENT
IN THE CIVIL
DISOBEDIENCE
MOVEMENT

7+

PROTESTERS/
ACTIVISTS
SENTENCED IN
JUNTA COURTS

5+

ENFORCED
DISAPPEARANCES
BY THE MILITARY



KAREN STATE

2,900+ Newly Displaced

3 Injured, 1 Killed



Mon State



Tanintharyi Region

Worsening hostilities in Karen State have prompted calls from rights groups in Burma, including the Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG), who have drawn attention to the human rights situation. KHRG noted that the junta is continuing to deploy air and ground attacks in civilian areas.

A lack of international action and condemnation has granted impunity to military junta soldiers who are continuing to deprive innocent people of their immunity. HURFOM observed rising numbers of displacement as the presence of the Burma Army has led to more villagers fleeing to safer areas in search of refuge and protection. Across HURFOM's documentation, it is evident that the junta is using the same policies of scorched earth, divide and rule as well as the four cuts.

The Burma Army increased their attacks particularly in Karen State, promoting calls for Karen rights groups to call for urgent action including sanctioned aviation fuel, and a global arms embargo. Airstrikes on 1 July, in Thay Baw Boe village and Dooplaya district wounded five civilians, with three in critical condition. HURFOM has documented the growing numbers of

internally displaced people (IDPs) in Karen State as the junta increases their presence, despite multiple orders from the Karen National Union (KNU) for the military to immediately retreat and withdraw all their forces.

The junta forces in southeastern Dooplaya have been deploying relentless attacks against local villages in the areas with heavy mortar shelling and with airstrikes. At least 7 airstrikes targeted 16 villages located in Dooplaya District. Throughout the month of June 2022 alone, HURFOM reported nearly 3,500 civilians newly displaced in Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi region.



MON STATE

2,750+ Newly Displaced

4 Injured, 4 Killed



Karen State



Tanintharyi Region

The military junta has adopted its scorched earth campaign tactics in Mon State where villagers are unable to return home due to their homes being deliberately set on fire. Residents of Lim Bo Lai village, in the Karen National Union (KNU) administrative area of Thaton Township, saw 61 of their houses burnt to ashes, as well as a monastery and a school. Three villagers were also killed. The bodies of the three villagers were found in the ashes of burned houses. It is possible they were burned alive or burned after being killed. Those who were killed by the military were Saw Samu, age 39, Saw Maung Lupyo, age 55 and Htee Doh Pawee, age 54 who was also a Buddhist monk. The perpetrators of this brutal attack were the junta's Light Infantry Division No. 44. ***"In this situation, even if we can return home, there are often no houses left to live in,"*** said a villager.

Light Infantry Battalion No. 9 continued to burn remaining houses, destroying more than 60 houses in 4 villages in Thaton township. More than 110 civilians' houses in 7 villages in Thaton township have been burned to the ground since June 26, 2022.

An ongoing concern for civilians in Mon State is the fear of clashes between various armed opposition groups, and

the military junta as well as junta-backed militias. They are concerned over the possibility of being targeted by the regime, and subsequently investigated, arrested and tortured. During the first week of July 2022, an unknown armed group invaded No 1023 military base of the Border Guard Force (BGF) located near Htaw Pa Law village, Hla Ka Zine village track, in Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State. The BGF has since abandoned the base after it was burned down. Following this, they retaliated and conducted a search of vehicles passing through the checkpoint. There have been frequent armed clashes in Kha Lae- Da Gon Die area, and now the military base has been burnt down. Local villagers are afraid of being subjected to the junta's brute force. ***"They left their houses and fled,"*** said a villager. Most people moved to Mudon Township, Mon State until it is more secure to move back. Another local who spoke to HURFOM said. ***"I've closed my house and just come back once a week to check its condition. I'm worried that the soldiers will burn down my empty house now that I've moved to Mudon."***



Tanintharyi region

7,300+ Newly Displaced

12 Injured, 10 Killed



Karen State



Mon State

Tensions in the Tanintharyi region have led to growing instability as ongoing clashes threaten civilian livelihoods. The uncertainty plaguing what unknowns lay ahead has been the cause of ongoing stress and anxiety for residents, many of them displaced multiple times and in need of urgent materials.

Junta forces looted and burned homes in Taung Pyouk village track, Dawei. At least ten civilian houses were burnt down between July 15 - 18, 2022, according to the local villagers: “The junta forces burnt down at least five houses only in Ah Lae Su village, which is part of the Taung Pyouk village track, located in Tha Yet Chaung Township,” a local villager told the reporter. Before burning the houses, the soldiers removed all the valuable belongings from the homes, a local source said. Another recalled, **“I heard gunshots. There were no armed clashes. It’s just random shooting from one side. I moved my belongings with a truck to Thel Chaung Gyi village,”** said a 35 years-old villager from Ah Lae Su village. The military juntas’ forces have bases in the Mya Nadi Mount in Taung Pyouk village track and they have been randomly shooting at nearby villages with heavy weapons every day, according to local sources.

More indiscriminate attacks and firing has set course for the worst. On July 19th in the early morning, the junta battalion LIB No. 285 indiscriminately fired with artillery into the Pain-Nae-Taung village, Palaw township, Myeik, Tanintharyi. Villagers said that these attacks killed a 20-year-old man, two injured, and destroyed more than ten homes. Ko Zin Wine, age 20, was killed on the spot. The weapon hit him in the head and neck. The junta forces continued to fire heavy weapons at nearby villages and mountain areas till midnight on July 19, a male villager reported. An estimated 180 villagers fled their homes.

According to additional confirmation, one woman and one man were injured because of the artillery attacks. The PDF and junta forces repeatedly clashed in Palaw township during the second week of July. At least three local defense members were killed, including a 30 year old male villager.

Locals from Kyaung Shar Kwin area, Yebyu Township, Tanintharyi Region have told HURFOM that they had to abandon their plantation due to landmines: **“A landmine exploded near my plantation. After that, I have not gone back. Another explosion can take**

place any time.” Between late 2019 and 2020, there have been 10 victims who suffered from landmine explosions in Yebyu Township. Five victims were from the Kyaung Shar Kwin area. Local plantation owners are frightened to go to their lands due to frequent explosions: ***“I’ve abandoned my plantation. I am afraid to go there. All landmine victims have been my neighbors. If I were injured, my family would be in trouble. That’s why I’ve abandoned my betel nut plantation for three years now,”*** said a plantation owner from A Lae Sakan village. Both ethnic armed organizations – the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and the Karen National Union (KNU) are active in this area, but no group has taken responsibility for the landmines. The Dawei District office released a statement on March 16, 2022 stating that both NMSP and KNU had A responsibility to find a solution.

Civilians are targeted and extorted regularly on suspicions of supporting or being affiliated with People’s Defense Forces (PDFs). Kyauk-Hlay-Kar village in Thayet Chaung Township, Dawei was attacked and extinguished by the junta forces, killing five villagers accused of being PDF members and supporters, according to locals. A 45-year-old Kyauk-Hlay-Kar villager, said three local people were killed when about 70 Junta troops stormed the village on July 10 2022: “They arrested two more villagers on suspicion of being PDFs. Then they shot and killed those villagers when these military columns arrived at Yaung Maw village. A total of five villagers were killed as many locals were fleeing the village. It was estimated about 200 families are fleeing to safer areas. Names of the victims; the exact personal accounts, and locations are being examined by HURFOM.

In a related case, on the night of 14 July 2022, two tutors from Myeik University of Technology and Computer University were accused of being linked with the CDMs’ assets and abducted by the junta security forces. They both are female tutors: Daw Ei Ei Phyo and Daw Thi Thi Swe. Some witnesses reported that during the forcible arrest, the soldiers continued beating them. On July 15 night, a fourth year Computer University student, Ma Thuzar Win Htet, 21, was also abducted by the Junta forces with no warrant from her residence. The witnesses reported that the junta troops raided Ma Thuzar’s parents’ home and were arbitrarily arrested. All arrested Tutors and this female student were brought to unknown detention centers, and the updated information was still being investigated.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

1. Other armed and violent groups like the Pyu Saw Htee and Black Kite Brotherhood are believed to be sponsored by the junta, and they have targeted innocent civilians, predominantly those affiliated with the pro-democracy movement.
2. Organizations providing legal support to women and children have reported increases in domestic assaults and rape - particularly of children. Families are scrambling to make a living and provide for themselves and often children are left at home and subject to abuse from strangers, and even family members.
3. Civilian fears over landmines in their villages and places where they farm and secure their livelihoods have posed threats so grave that many dare not return to work or home, in fear of being killed.
4. Prominent pro-democracy politicians and activists, including those affiliated with the National League for Democracy, continue to be targeted by the junta. They are also increasingly being charged under draconian laws and face long, unjust sentences. Devastatingly, four political prisoners were executed by the junta at the end of the month.
5. Clashes have led to forced internal displacement in Burma as instability and tensions force people from their homes.
6. Motorcycles, mobile devices, and money are regularly confiscated and extorted from civilians at checkpoints stationed by the junta deliberately along key-routes. Civilians were forced to pay excessive bribes to retrieve their possessions. However, very few were able to afford the high costs.
7. Torture remains rampant in Burma, and across target areas where innocent civilians are subjected to grueling, horrifying acts by the junta to extract information.
8. The international community including UN bodies and ASEAN are not responding swiftly enough to the situation on the ground in Burma, which demands urgent attention and consequences for the junta.
9. Military impunity remains deeply ingrained into the institutions representing the Tatmadaw, which only emboldens the junta to continue perpetrating human rights violations.
10. The rise of plain-clothes 'security' officers is backed by the military junta and have been using intimidation tactics and threats to extort civilians out of money, and their possessions. Cases have been reported across HURFOM's main target areas.
11. The arbitrary arrests and unlawful detention by the junta are ongoing, as are warrantless raids and indiscriminate firing into civilian areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A referral of the situation on the ground in Burma 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, as well as their families, which puts holds on their financial assets and possessions and undercuts their ability to do corrupt business dealings abroad.
5. Strengthened and renewed protection mechanisms which grant civilians who are vulnerable and at risk of assault in a position where they are able to 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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