

# Tortured, beheaded and dismembered

A series of violent events in Sagaing

REPORT BY MYANMAR WITNESS, 12 May 2023

**WARNING: GRAPHIC** - This report contains extremely graphic imagery and links to graphic imagery shared online. While efforts have been made to blur details, the report contains information which some readers may find distressing.

## Key Event Details

- **Location of Incidents:**
  1. Ma Le Thar village (မလဲသာ) (22.115030, 95.455742) in Ayadaw township
  2. Pa Dat Taing village (ပဒတ္တိုင်း) (22.074770, 95.448303) in Myinmu township
  3. Kan Taw village (ကန်တော်) (22.027901, 95.569941) in Myinmu township
  4. Tar Taing village (တာတိုင်) (21.933220, 95.644867) in Sagaing township
  5. Let Ka Pin village (လက္ခပင်) (21.87949944, 95.48097992) in Myinmu township
  6. Swea Lwe Oh village (ဆွဲလွဲအို) (21.79330063, 95.3681488) in Myaung township
  7. Than Bo village (သံဘို) (22.72942924, 95.67418671) in Khin-U township
  8. Ta Ga Nan village (တဂဏန်း) (22.53455925, 95.68533325) in Shwebo township
- **Date/Time of Incident:** Multiple events between 23 February and 2 April 2023
- **Alleged Perpetrator(s) and/or Involvement:**
  - Light Infantry Division (LID) 99, based in Meikhtila
  - LID Commander: Major General Than Htike
  - No. 8 Military Training School, Shwebo township
- **Summary of Investigation:**
  - Myanmar Witness has investigated allegations related to 8 incidents of violence in Sagaing. 6 of these incidents involved the beheading of at least one individual.
  - Myanmar Witness has found that at least 33 people were killed in the 8 incidents investigated, 12 of whom were beheaded. One mass killing in Tar Taing led to the deaths of 17 individuals, including one beheading.
  - Myanmar Witness identified, and where possible verified, imagery and video footage associated with these events, including images showing dismembered and beheaded bodies. Myanmar Witness also identified and geolocated footage of a beheading near Myaung.
  - Many sources claim that the Light Infantry Division (LID) 99, under the command of Major General Than Htike, is responsible for six of the incidents.
  - Locals report that the beheadings in Than Bo (incident 7) was carried out by the Security Administrative Council (SAC) No. 8 Military Training School from Shwebo township.
  - Images showing SAC soldiers were identified but not verified in association with events in Let Ka Pin.

- The SAC released a statement admitting that SAC soldiers were involved in a clash in Tar Taing.

## Executive Summary

Between 23 February and 2 April 2023, a Myanmar military column reportedly traversed through part of the Sagaing region, conducting mass killings, fires, rapes, and raids in several villages. Myanmar Witness has identified, and where possible verified, imagery and video footage associated with a number of these events, which show bodies that were beheaded and dismembered. Myanmar Witness has found that at least 33 people were killed in the 8 incidents investigated, 12 of whom were beheaded.

This report investigates claims related to the following events:

1. Airstrike and ground troop incursion: Ma Le Thar
2. Myanmar military raid: Pa Dat Taing
3. Beheadings: Kan Taw
4. Mass killing and beheading: Tar Taing
5. Detention, mass killing and beheadings: Let Ka Pin
6. Beheading: Swea Lwe Oh
7. Beheadings: Than Bo
8. Beheading, dismembering and rape: Ta Ga Nan

Although Myanmar Witness has been unable to fully verify the perpetrators of these events, or the specific unit responsible, due to a lack of user-generated content (UGC) placing soldiers at the scene, UGC has revealed the aftermath of these events.

Many sources claim that the Light Infantry Division (LID) 99, under the command of Major General Than Htike, is responsible for incidents 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7. Locals report that the beheadings in Than Bo (incident 7) was carried out by the Security Administrative Council (SAC) No. 8 Military Training School from Shwebo township. Locals reported that incident 8 in Ta Ga Nan was likely Myanmar military soldiers. However, these claims have not been verified by Myanmar Witness.

Myanmar Witness identified images which purport to show SAC troops in Let Pa Kin (location 5). Additionally, the SAC released a statement [admitting](#) that SAC soldiers were responsible for a clash in Tar Taing. This increases the likelihood that the SAC were responsible for these violent attacks as it places the SAC in the vicinity. However, there is a lack of UGC which prevents Myanmar Witness being able to verify that the SAC is responsible for all of these incidents.

These violent incidents in Sagaing occurred after the SAC declared [Martial Law](#) in Shwebo, Wetlet, and Ayadaw townships on 22 February 2023. Pro-SAC media has [stated](#) that many of the bodies found were part of the PDF. These media [posts](#) claim that SAC troops “cleared the area” of PDF presence due to a “need for peace.”

This report documents a series of violent events, however it is not exhaustive. Additional allegations of beheadings and atrocities have been identified in the Sagaing region. Myanmar Witness will continue to monitor and investigate these claims.

## Violence in Sagaing

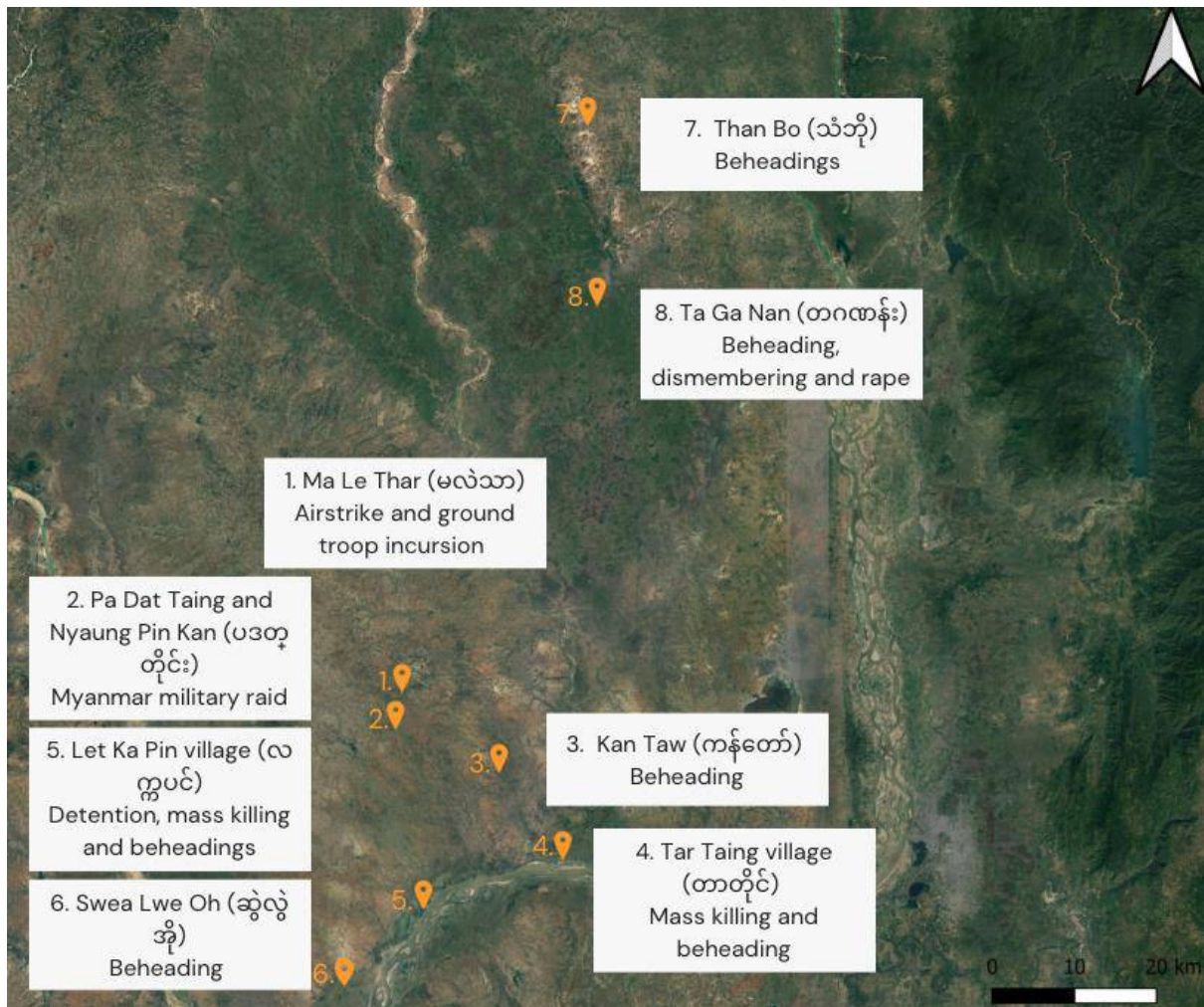
Between 23 February and 2 April 2023, a military column traversed through part of the Sagaing region, reportedly conducting mass killings, fires, rapes, and raids in several villages. The incidents occurred after the SAC declared [Martial Law](#) in Shwebo, Wetlet, and Ayadaw townships on 22 February 2023. At the beginning of February, [37](#) townships in Myanmar were placed under Martial Law - by the end of that month, the total stood at [50](#). By the beginning of March, the [UN reported](#) that violence had led to the displacement of over 750,000 civilians in the Sagaing region alone since the coup.

This report investigates claims related to mass violence and killings in seven locations, all within reasonable walking distance of one another. It is [reported](#) that between 70 and 90 SAC troops arrived in the village of Ma Le Thar (location 1) on 24 February 2023, and then [went](#) to Pa Dat Taing, Nyaung Pin (location 2) and Kan Taw (location 3) villages in Myinmu township. This column is then claimed to have left Myinmu and travelled along the banks of the Irrawaddy River by foot into Sagaing in the early evening of 28 February, before [reportedly](#) raiding the village of Tar Taing (location 4). The LID 99 then reportedly moved west from Tar Taing towards Let Ka Pin (location 5), where reports of human rights violations began to emerge on 5 March 2023.

The close proximity of these locations — along with other evidence including bodies from one location appearing in the next — increases the probability that the same forces were responsible for the incidents. Myanmar Witness has identified claims that the Senior Regional Commander and Light Infantry Division 99 are responsible. There has not been a public response from the State Administration Council (SAC) on these events. At the same time, pro-SAC sources claim that People's Defence Force (PDF) groups in the regions are behind the attacks.

Reports of other beheadings emerged in March in Than Bo (location 7) and in April in Ta Ga Nan (location 6); however there is no evidence to suggest that this was by the same unit. Local news media has reported that LID 99 moved down to [Yesago](#) in Magway after the events in Let Ka Pin (location 5). Myanmar Witness will continue to monitor these events in an attempt to ascertain who is responsible.

## Location





*Figure 1: Maps showing the location of the incidents*



## 1. Airstrike and ground troop incursion: Ma Le Thar (Ayadaw township)

On 23 February 2023, there were claims of several attacks (air and ground) in the Ayadaw area, around the village of [Ma Le Thar](#) (မလဲထာ). UGC shows damage to a high school and a hospital, [allegedly](#) the result of airstrikes carried out by a Mi-35 helicopter. The Mi-35 and a Mi-17 transport helicopter [reportedly](#) flew from the Northwestern Military Command base in Monywa (Namhka) to Ma Le Thar where it [dropped](#) troops at around 1400 local time. According to [Insecurity Insight](#), the ground troops then “...destroyed medicines and equipment at the hospital. There were no casualties as patients and staff had evacuated due to the anticipated attack.” Myanmar Now [reported](#) that an SAC column arrived in Ma Le Thar on 24 February 2023. This column was reported to have [moved](#) south towards Myinmu township shortly after.

Myanmar Witness has geolocated UGC showing damage to a medical facility in the village, but could not verify if the attacks occurred on 23 or 24 February 2023. This is because all UGC identified from this location was posted after 24 February.



*Figure 2: Imagery allegedly taken after the airstrike on Ma Le Thar. (Left) Damage to the hospital wall (22.113461, 95.452112). (Right) Damage to a nearby medical facility building (22.114029, 95.451988) (Source: [Ayadaw Post](#)).*

UGC uploaded by [Ayadaw Post](#) also shows fire damage to vehicles and other debris, including motorbikes which Myanmar Witness geolocated to near the hospital. This type of fire damage is inconsistent with the typical damage inflicted by an attack helicopter. Due to the localisation of the fire damage, it is more likely that the vehicles were set alight by ground forces. The destruction of vehicles has been monitored and reported on by Myanmar Witness, which has been seen in other incidents, including [‘the Moso Christmas Eve massacre’](#) and [‘Fire as a weapon in Sagaing’](#). Additionally, Myanmar Witness has previously verified footage of SAC soldiers saying ‘burn the motorbikes’, as documented in the report: [‘Thirsting for blood’](#).



Figure 3: Geolocation of UGC showing burnt motorcycles near Ma Le Thar hospital (22.113838, 95.451814).  
Source: [Ayadaw Post](#).



Figure 4: Vehicle fire damage reportedly from the Ma Le Thar village attack, these images have not yet been geolocated by Myanmar Witness (Source: [Ayadaw Post](#)).



## 2. Myanmar military raid: Pa Dat Taing and Nyaung Pin Kan (Myinmu township)

On 25 February 2023, an SAC column [reportedly raided](#) Pa Dat Taing (ပုဒဲးတိုင်) — less than 3 km away from Ma Le Thar (location one) — just across the border between Ayadaw and Myinmu townships. Pro-SAC media Fifty Two News [claimed](#) that the troops had raided a PDF base in Pa Dat Taing and confiscated weapons.



Figure 5: Weapons reportedly confiscated from a PDF base raided by SAC troops in Pa Dat Taing (Source [Fifty Two News](#)).

Insecurity Insight [reported](#) that a “... sub-rural health centre (public, primary-level), a library and 65 civilian houses were torched by the Myanmar military” (citing Mizzima as the source). Myanmar Witness has verified that there were fires in the village around this date using [Sentinel](#) data, but could not verify the exact buildings damaged.



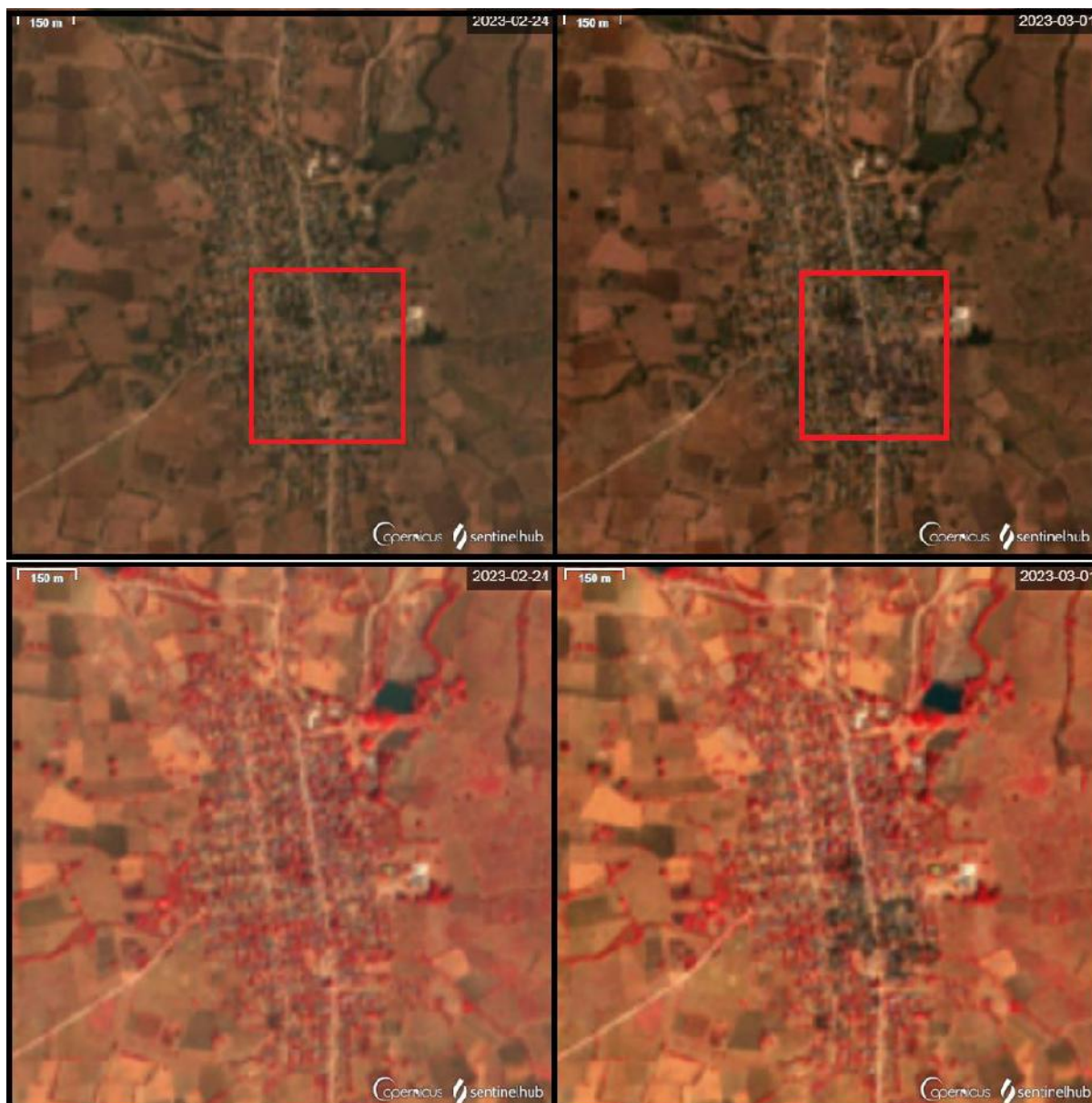


Figure 6: Sentinel data showing fire damage in Pa Dat Taing from 24 February to 1 March 2023. Top image shows visible light changes - showing the appearance of a slightly darker tone to the region affected. The bottom imagery shows Fire damage using false colour scales to emphasise vegetation alterations. Both show a high level of physical damage to the area.

After leaving Pa Dat Taing, the column reportedly [wandered](#) around Nyaung Pin Kan, where they allegedly found and [captured](#) two PDF youths who were laying mines.

On 26 February 2023, Myanmar Now [reported](#) that the column moved south toward Kan Taw, reportedly fighting with PDF forces along the way.

### 3. Beheading: Kan Taw (Myinmu township)

On 26 February 2023, 90 SAC troops [reportedly](#) raided Kan Taw village — roughly 14 km away from Pa Dat Taing and 8 km away from Nyaung Pin Kan (location two) — leading to clashes in the village throughout the day. It is claimed that the SAC troops [killed](#) five PDF members. Their bodies were found on 27 February 2023 with their heads and other body parts [severed](#). One pro-SAC media outlet [stated](#) that two of the individuals were members of a local PDF group while another pro-SAC media outlet [stated](#) that those committing the violent acts were PDFs themselves. Myanmar Witness could not confirm either claim.

The five killed allegedly included three individuals taken [hostage](#) from Kan Taw. Myanmar Now [reported](#) that the other two individuals killed were the two PDF youths captured in Nyaung Pin Kan (location two). According to CBS news, they had been [forced](#) to show the SAC troops where the local PDF camp was located. Different media agencies have speculated over the age of the boys, and they are believed to have been between 13 and 17 years old.



*Figure 7: Images of severed heads. [Left] severed head left on a spike. This image has not been geolocated by Myanmar Witness, however it was released at the same time as the image on right. [Right] image of a severed head which Myanmar Witness has geolocated. The two individuals were allegedly captured at the same time, however the beheadings could have been in different locations. Myanmar Witness will continue efforts to geolocate the left image. Images posted online on 28 February 2023 (Source: Private).*

Pro-SAC social media channels [Fifty Two News](#) and [White Elephant](#) published imagery of a number of the deceased associated with this event. However, the images are inconsistent with images released by other news agencies. For example, in both the Fifty Two News and White Elephant images, the bodies are not decapitated, there is no blood nor debris surrounding the body, and there is no fire damage visible near the bodies. Additionally, weapons are laid neatly next to the body. In images from alternative sources, the same body is decapitated and next to a structure with visible scorch marks. This also signals that the individual was decapitated following his death. As the beheading was not the cause of death, the purpose of removing the individual's head could be to instil fear.





Figure 8: Kan Taw imagery from Fifty Two News showing one of the bodies with their head still attached (left image). The right image shows a lack of scorch marks throughout the area, with all imagery provided in the post showing no signs of fire (Source: [Fifty Two News](#)).



Figure 9: (Left Image) the same body appears to have been moved after the beheading and there is evidence of fire in the area, as can be seen through the scorch marks and ash (Right Image) (Source of left imagery [Khit Thit](#)) (Source of Right Imagery WARNING GRAPHIC: [White Elephant](#)).

Myanmar Witness has geolocated UGC showing one of the bodies (figure 7, right) to an area one kilometre north of Kan Taw village [22.027901, 95.569941]. The surrounding area appears to have recently sustained fire damage. Myanmar Witness can confirm that a fire took place in this location on the same day that the SAC troops allegedly raided Kan Taw village. [FIRMS](#) registered a fire at that location on 26 February 2023 at 1300 local time. Additionally, this was corroborated with sentinel imagery which shows fire damage in this [location](#) and in [Kan Taw](#), a kilometre to the south [22.015639, 95.575056], between 24 February and 1 March 2023.





Figure 10: Geolocation of UGC image (top left) of the site where the mutilated bodies of the five PDF members were reported to have been found (22.027901, 95.569941) (Source of UGC: [Irawaddy](#))

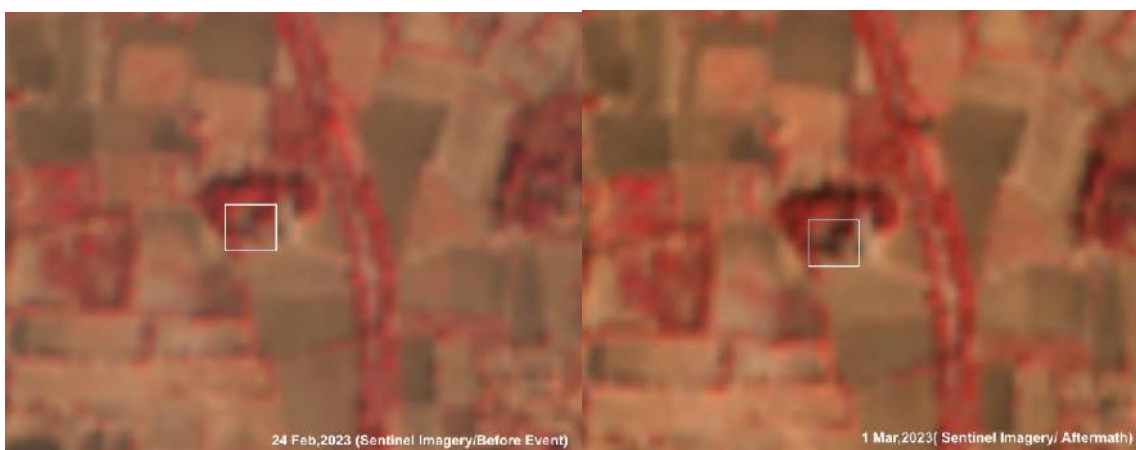


Figure 11: Sentinel imagery of the alleged beheading site on 24 February 2023 (left) and 1 March 2023 (right), showing fire damage.



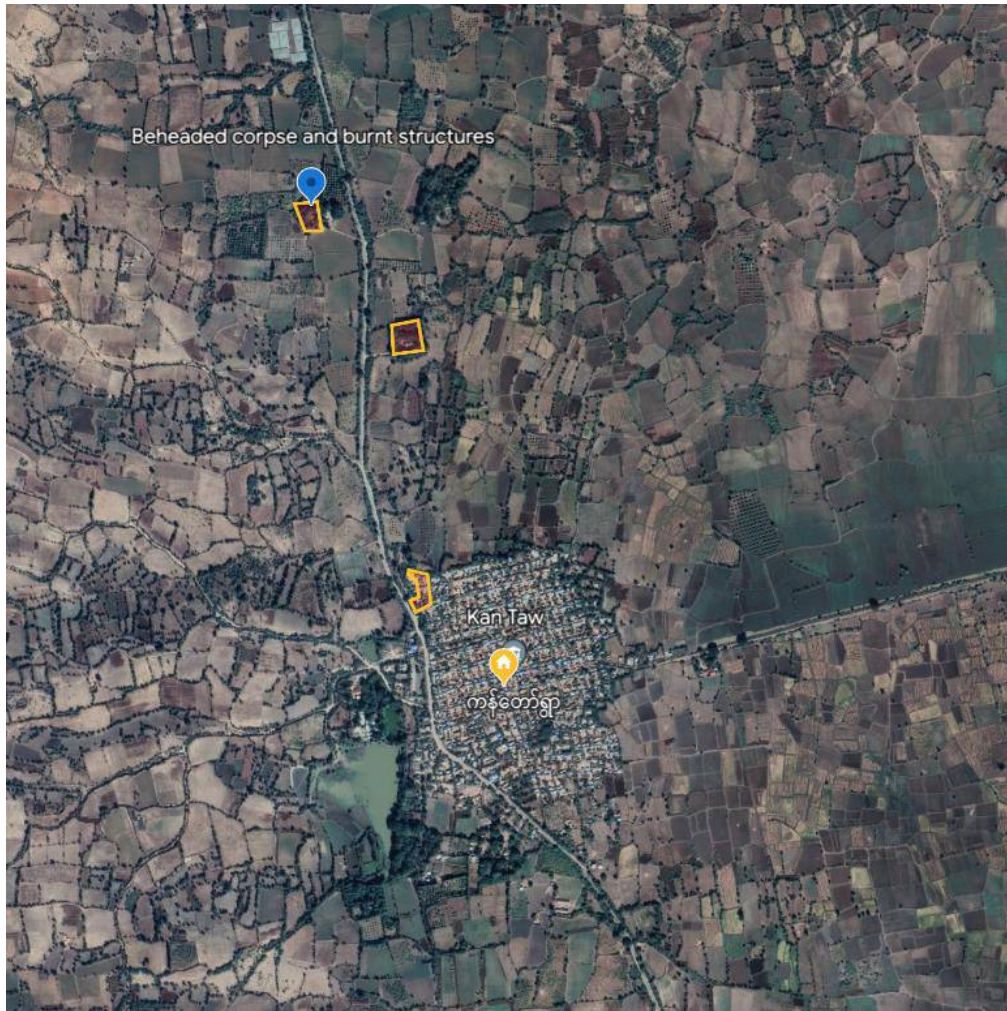


Figure 12: Google Earth map of the Kan Taw area with polygons indicating locations where fires occurred between 24 February 2023 and 1 March 2023.

## 4. Mass killing: Tar Taing (Sagaing township)

It is [reported](#) that the SAC column left Myinmu and travelled along the bank of the Irrawaddy River into Sagaing in the early evening of 28 February, before [reportedly raiding](#) the village of Tar Taing around 0300 local time the following morning, 1 March 2023. Tar Taing is around 12 kilometres to the south of Kan Taw, where the Irrawaddy and Mu rivers meet [21.933220, 95.644867].

[Reports](#) say that 15 villagers were used as human shields by the troops on the morning of 2 March 2023. The [bodies](#) of 14-15 local people, including three women, reportedly killed after being taken hostage, were later found along the west bank of the Mu River near the village (the number of deceased varied between sources). Three more [bodies](#) were [found](#) in different locations close by in the following days, bringing the total to 17 killed. The recovery of bodies was [reportedly](#) hampered as landmines had been placed around the locations.

An analysis of UGC associated with this event reveals that the victims sustained a number of severe injuries. At least one man was found [beheaded](#) with his limbs severed. Khit Thit identified the individual as a local PDF member. Myanmar Now reported that other bodies [showed](#) signs of torture, including [rape](#). Myanmar Witness has been unable to verify these latter claims using open-sources.

The SAC's formal [response](#) to this event was that there was a clash between Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and SAC military soldiers in this area and this was the result. This statement not only acknowledges the presence of SAC troops in the vicinity of this attack, but lends credence to claims that this unit of the Myanmar military were also responsible for the other incidents in the surrounding area, reported upon in this investigation - namely LID-99.

### **Geolocation of bodies being moved and cremated**

Myanmar Witness was able to geolocate and chronolocate multiple pieces of UGC to establish a chain of events following the identification of the bodies. The bodies were moved from one location down the river to a cremation site. Each geolocation and chronolocation will be outlined below.





Figure 13: Geolocation summary (Google Earth).

Myanmar Witness identified UGC showing bodies in a cart. The source reported that they had collected the bodies from a nearby field. Myanmar Witness geolocated these images to the banks of the Mu river [21.939221, 95.638152] (see figure 14).



Figure 14: Geolocation of UGC video footage of locals surrounding a cart containing several bodies [21.939221, 95.638152] on 2 March 2023 (Google Earth Pro) (Footage Source: [Khit Thit](#))

Myanmar Witness was able to chronolocate some of the UGC to establish the time when these events took place. For example, the images below showing the first set of bodies being carried out of the raft (figure 15 top right) occurred around 1400-1500 local time.

Images of the deceased in the second group of bodies, showing them found lying on the ground were taken at around 1600 local time (based on the images timestamps). These same bodies were then pictured in a set of images which were taken later in the day near the cremation site (figure 17 bottom right). In figure 15 (bottom right), the sky has changed colour, and more bodies are being unloaded, indicating that this occurred later on in the day. This could corroborate claims that these bodies were found later in the day at a different location to the first set of bodies, further away from the town.



Figure 15: Geolocation of the UGC imagery using Google Earth Pro [21.935199, 95.643877]. [Bottom right] UGC image showing a boat carrying bodies near the cremation site around sunset (Source: [Khit Thit](#)). [Top right] UGC video footage of locals carrying bodies from a raft, most likely preparing for the cremation nearby (Source: [Khit Thit](#))



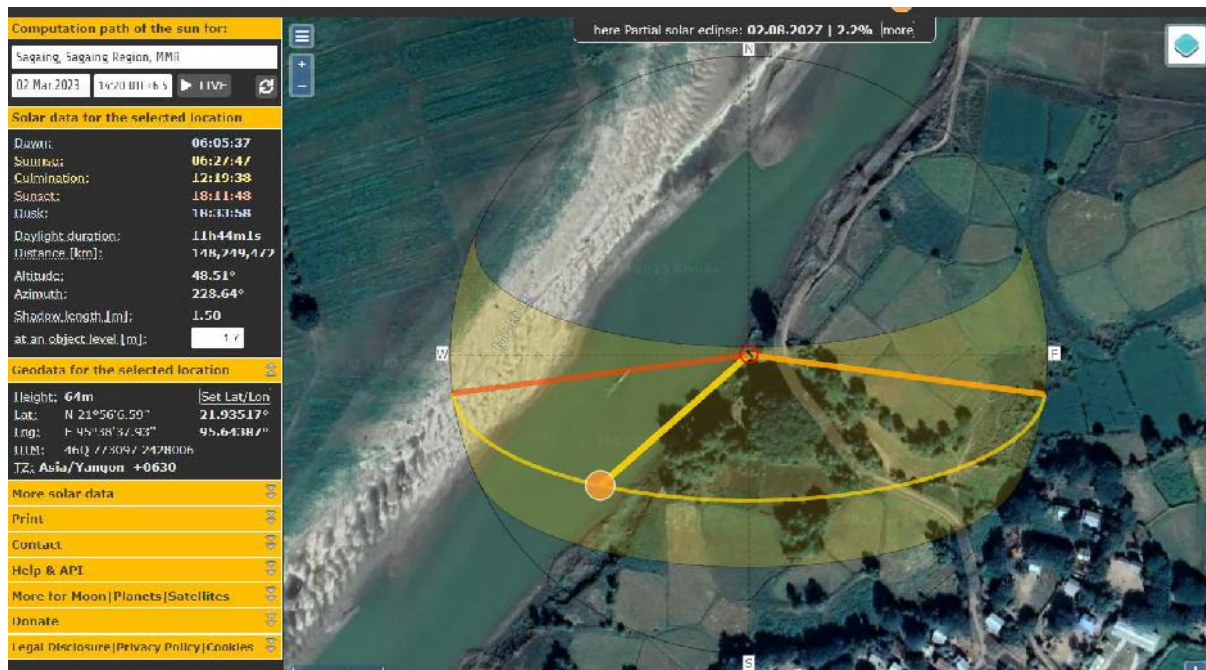


Figure 16: Chronolocation using [Suncalc](#) of the image in figure 15, showing the bodies being carried out of the raft, using shadows cast by the villagers. Suncalc is showing a time roughly between 1400 and 1500 on 2 March 2023.

On the evening of 2 March 2023, bodies were cremated. Myanmar Witness geolocated imagery showing the cremation to outside Tar Taing along the Mu River [21.9354372, 95.6442132], supporting claims that the deceased were residents of the village.

Myanmar Witness was able to chronolocate the UGC to establish that the images below (figure 17) were taken just before sunset at around 1800 local time. Based on natural lighting, the construction of the cremation site was begun well before sunset (shown in figure 17), but the pyres were not lit until later into the night, as shown by the darkness in the image in figure 19.





Figure 17: Geolocation of images of the cremation site (21.935004, 95.643895). [Top Right] UGC image of the cremation site (Source: [Khit Thit](#)). [Bottom Right] Video footage showing the cremation site (Source: [Khit Thit](#)).



Figure 18: Chronolocation using [Suncalc](#) of the image in figure 17 just north of the location where cremations were conducted, showing a timeframe close to 1800 on 2 March 2023.



Figure 19: Video footage of the cremation (Source: [BBC Burmese](#)).

## 5. Detention, mass killing and beheadings: Let Ka Pin (Myinmu township)

On 5 March 2023, [RFA](#) reported that SAC troops had held around 50 locals from Let Ka Pin — a village less than 20 km west of Tar Taing (location four) — hostage inside a local monastery [21.876964, 95.481531]. Locals [told](#) RFA that when the military entered the village they fired their guns, causing people to move to the monastery for shelter, where they were then found by the troops and held in detention.

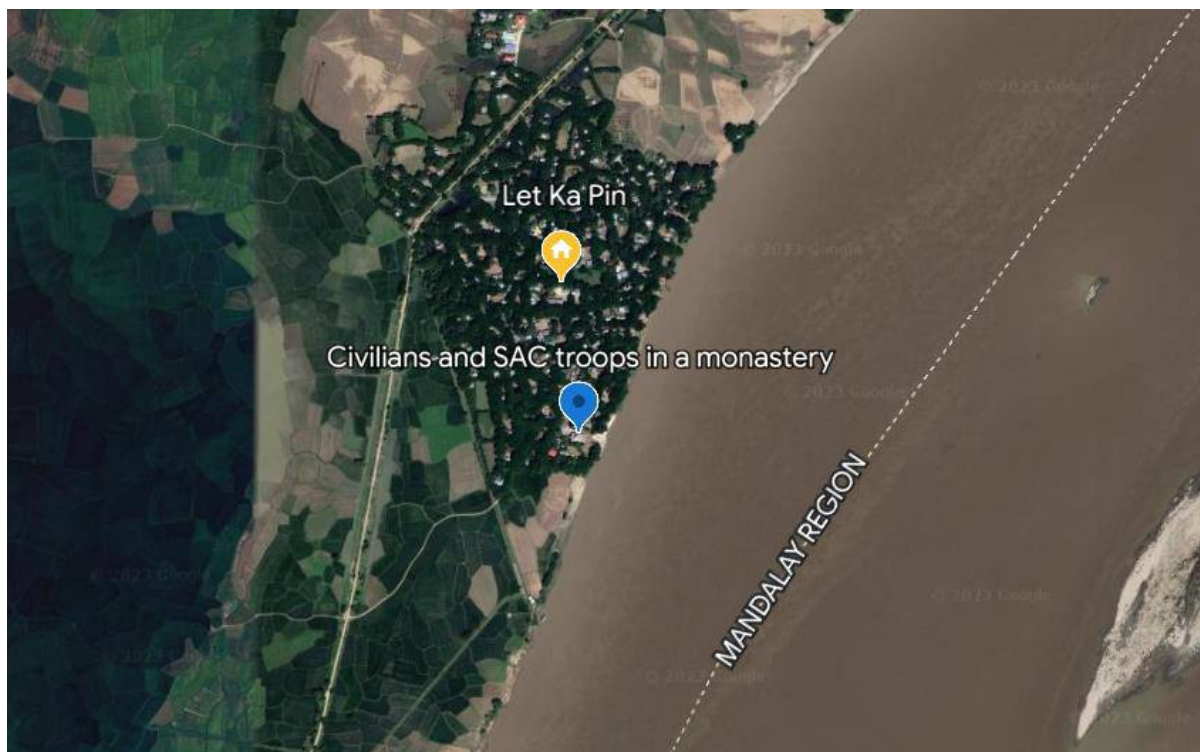


Figure 20: Map of Let Ka Pin and monastery site

The SAC troops [reportedly](#) left two days later, at the same time that seven locals and a priest were reported missing. Local reports [claimed](#) that seven bodies and three severed heads were dumped into the Irrawaddy River on 6 March, with imagery posted by [Khit Thit](#) media on 10 March 2023. Bodies were also reportedly [found](#) between 6 and 9 March 2023, after the troops had moved out of the village.





Figure 21: Body claimed to have been found in the Irrawaddy River, posted online on 10 March 2023 (Source: [Khit Thit](#)).

On 7 March 2023, [Fifty Two News](#) published images of soldiers with several people, including children, in a building, claimed to be the monastery. The post also claimed that landmines had exploded nearby and local PDF members had fled.



Figure 22: Images posted online originally by Fifty Two News and later by MFP with censored graphics (including blurring out the yellow Fifty Two News watermark), showing military personnel apparently checking people's possessions within the monastery (Source: [Mandalay Free Press](#)).

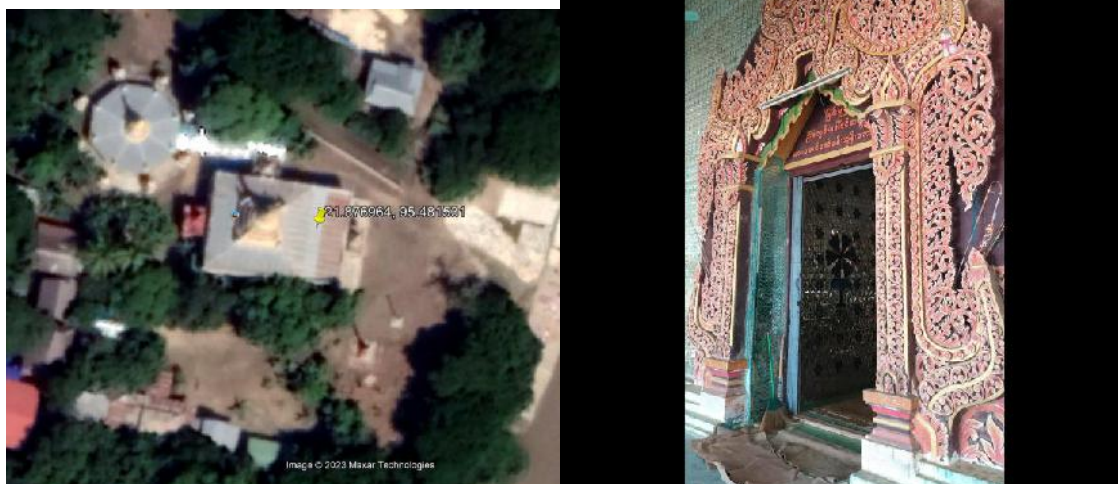


Figure 23: Satellite imagery of Let Ka Pin monastery and a [Google Maps](#) image of the monastery entrance, matching architecture and decorative patterns seen in figure 22 above [21.876964, 95.481531].

Myanmar Witness found limited UGC associated with this event to assist in verification. As the UGC of the monastery was internal, it is not possible to geolocate the imagery beyond noting the similarity of the wall decoration to that on the monastery's exterior.

The SAC column was claimed to have [moved](#) onward to Kyawt Min village (ကျွမ်းမင်း) [21.891029, 95.458489] after leaving Let Ka Pin village on 7 March 2023. By mid-March, the same column had allegedly [travelled](#) around Yesagyo township, Magway. Myanmar Witness has been unable to verify these claims.



## 6. Beheading: Swea Lwe Oh, Myaung (Sagaing township)

On 30 March 2023, drone [footage](#) was shared online showing an SAC soldier beheading an individual. The Myaung Township (Sagaing Division) Civilian Defense and Security Organisation (CDSOM) [identified](#) the individual as their Deputy Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Sin Yine. His head was reported to have been found on 31 March 2023.

These events allegedly followed an [attack](#) at a local resistance camp in Swea Lwe Oh (ဆွဲလွဲအို), which caused an emergency evacuation and led to three people being arrested, including Lieutenant Sin Yine. The other two arrested, 19 year old resistance fighters, were reportedly [killed](#) as they travelled outside of the village, before the beheading footage was captured. The 99 LID is also claimed to be [responsible](#).

The event was geolocated by Myanmar Witness to the side of a road just southwest of Myaung [21.791003, 95.375394], near Swea Lwe Oh village. In the footage, other SAC soldiers are seen in the background up ahead on the road and nearby the beheading site. Two weapons, appearing to be guns, lay on the road at the incident location, next to the body. It is unknown if Sin Yine was still alive during the beheading or if he had been killed before (as seen in other cases documented in this report).

Two soldiers are then seen walking away from the body, with one soldier carrying the head. After the beheading, the soldier walks away carrying the head and the body is left on the roadside. Analysis of the drone footage reveals that the other soldiers in the vicinity do not react to the beheading or attempt to prevent it.



Figure 28: Infographic created by Myanmar Witness on this beheading incident (Source: [Khit Thit](#)).





Figure 29: Footage from the Myaung beheading incident showing the aftermath, and two soldiers walking away from the body, with one SAC soldier, marked in yellow, still holding the head (Source: [Khit Thit](#)).

Myanmar Witness identified images which reportedly show the cremation of Sin Yine’s body (his head was found the following day). Myanmar Witness has not verified these images. The images were allegedly taken on the same day as the incident, around 1100 local time.



Figure 30: imagery claimed to be from the cremation of Sin Yine’s body with initial imagery posted on 30 March 2023, the same day as the incident. Timestamps on the images show that the ceremony was conducted around 1100 local time (Sources: Private).

## 7. Beheadings: Than Bo Village (Khin U township)

Reports of other beheadings emerged in March in nearby Than Bo (သံဘို) village. According to the [Irrawaddy](#), a local resistance member was beheaded and another was shot dead by SAC troops on 13 March 2023. Another two people were allegedly [arrested](#), one of whom was released shortly after.

The [Irrawaddy](#) (warning graphic link) reported that the SAC unit responsible was the No. 8 Military Training School from Shwebo township. According to local witnesses, this same training school has been responsible for other raids in Ye-U and Khin U township since early February 2023. Myanmar Witness has been unable to verify these claims.

After the attack, more than 2,000 people reportedly [fled](#) the region around Than Bo and Kyoet Kan (ကြို့ကန်), becoming internally displaced.

Images circulated online claiming to show the two deceased local resistance fighters. Multiple contrasting images of the individual who was decapitated were shared by different sources. In images shared by the [Irrawaddy](#) and [Yangon Khit Thit News](#) the individual has a head and there is no weapon visible near the body. However, images of the same body shared by Pro-SAC channel [Fifty Two News](#) shows a weapon next to the body (also before it was beheaded).



Figure 24: Imagery of the local resistance member who was allegedly shot dead by SAC troops on March 13 in Than Bo Village (Source: [Irrawaddy](#))





Figure 25: [left] Imagery of the local resistance member who was allegedly beheaded by SAC troops on March 13 in Than Bo Village (source: [Irrawaddy](#)). [Right]: image shows the same body as the left image however a gun has been put in the right arm. It appears to be staged (source: [Fifty Two News](#)).

Similar to the beheading in Let Ka Pin (location 3), images circulated online showing the deceased individual before and after the head was removed. The same individual as in figure 25 above was pictured without his head, and the head was photographed hanging by its hair from a tree (figure 26 below). This again signals that the head was removed after the individual was killed.



Figure 26: Location of where the beheaded head was found tied up to what appears to be a tree branch by the hair of the head (Source: [lrawaddy](http://lrawaddy.com)).

Myanmar Witness geolocated the location of the cremation of the two individuals to the western outskirts of Than Bo village [22.729376, 95.670042].







Figure 27: The cremation site was geolocated to the western outskirts of Than Bo village [22.729376, 95.670042]  
(Top images source: [Yangon Khit Thit News](#)) (Bottom image: Google Earth).

## 8. Beheading, dismembering and rape: Ta Ga Nan village (Shwebo township)

On 2 April, 2023, claims circulated online that a woman's dismembered body was [found](#) in a canal in Ta Ga Na (တဂကနဲ) village. She had allegedly been raped repeatedly and killed with both legs and the head removed. Images accompanied these claims and were published by [Chindwin News Agency](#).



Figure 31: Images showing a female body found in the canal in Ta Ga Nan village, posted online on 3 April 2023  
(Source: [Chindwin News Agency](#)).

Analysis of the imagery reveals what appears to be several sharp force trauma sites, potentially stab wounds, in the abdominal region (not featured for privacy and graphic reasons) as well as on the deceased woman's back shown in figure 31 above and 32 below. Her legs were removed just above the knees. Both arms were removed at the shoulders. Her head is missing and is not shown in any of the imagery posted online.

Small volumes of red fluid, believed to be blood mixed with water, can be seen on the black tarp in figure 32. The body doesn't show any signs of decomposition including putrefaction or



skin alterations, indicating that the individual was likely killed, dismembered and dumped in the canal recently.



*Figure 32: Anterior view of the body with 4 sharp marks that appear deep in the back (Source: Private).*

There is no confirmed attribution for this violent act, but the local villagers believe it could have been the SAC military due to their [arrival](#) in the area on 28 March 2023.

## Attribution

Ma Le Thar (location 1), Pa Dat Taing and Nyaung Pin Kan (location 2), Kan Taw (location 3), Tar Taing (location 4), Let Ka Pin (location 5) and Myaung (location 6)

There have been repeated claims that Light Infantry Division (LID) 99 is the SAC column responsible for the acts in locations 1-5 above. Despite a multitude of reports on LID-99's movements through Sagaing at the time, and repeated allegations on social media, Myanmar Witness was unable to fully verify that LID-99 was the column responsible for these attacks due to a limited amount of UGC showing SAC soldiers present at the locations of the violence. However, SAC officials [admitted](#) to SAC soldiers responsible for a clash allegedly with KIA forces that resulted in the Tar Taing deaths on 2 March 2023. This places SAC soldiers in the region and increases the likelihood that they may have been present in the other locations at the time of the violent events documented within this report.

LID-99 is [based](#) in Meiktila, Mandalay, with part of its division (claimed to be the [LIB 708](#)) dubbed the “[Ogre](#)” column which is renowned for its brutality. The LID-99 has a history of violence, with allegations of brutality made against the column from [2017](#) onwards, particularly in Kachin and [Rakhine](#) states. The LID has recently been [sanctioned](#) in 2022 by the United Kingdom for its human rights violations starting in 2021 since the coup. The column's brutality in the Sagaing region has been reported on in a recent documentary by [Channel 4](#), who attributed a number of violent attacks to the Ogre Column, including the events in Pa Dat Taing, the beheadings in Kan Taw, the massacre in Tar Taing and the beheading in Swea Lwe Oh.

The regional commander for LID-99 is [Major General Than Htike](#), who's responsibility covers the entirety of Sagaing and any division that is present within the region. The Major General has a [reported](#) history of violence, particularly since his [takeover](#) of the leadership position last year, conducting actions that have led to [sanctions](#) against him, including an attack on a school in Tabayin in September 2022 (which was covered in Myanmar Witness' report: '[The Tabayin School attack](#)'). His regional [command](#) includes all of Sagaing, Magway, and Chin states, including a Monywa-based Northwestern Regional Command base (Namhka) reportedly known for [deploying](#) Mi-35s for airstrikes.

As mentioned, there was limited UGC showing SAC soldiers present in the region which could be geolocated or chronolocated to verify their involvement in these events. Myanmar Witness identified imagery posted by both pro-SAC and pro-democracy [sources](#) showing the presence of soldiers in the region at the Let Ka Pin monastery, allegedly taken on 7 March 2023. The pro-SAC [source](#) which released the image claimed that the SAC [cleared](#) the PDF from the area. A red badge on the right arm of the soldiers is visible. This can indicate an LID column, but it also can represent another LIB or IB within the Myanmar Military. As a result, Myanmar Witness cannot confirm which division these soldiers are from.





Figure 33: imagery from Let Ka Pin allegedly taken on 7 March 2023, showing soldiers within the monastery going through what looks to be possessions (Source: [Mandalay Free Press](#)).

Under the 99 LID, there are [10 Light Infantry Battalions](#) (LIB) (9 LIBs and 1 IB) all from Meiktila in Karen State. The Division badge is featured in Figure 34 which is normally worn on the soldier's left arm. However, these soldiers were not wearing an armband, so Myanmar Witness was unable to confirm the exact column they are from.



Figure 34: 99 LID badge that should be seen on the left armband but is missing from the images of soldiers in Let Ka Pin, thus unable to verify the division (Source: [Global Security](#)).



Figure 35: Another soldier seen talking to villagers in Let Ka Pin village (according to *Mandalay Free Press*) with no badge seen on left arm (Source: [Mandalay Free Press](#)).

### Than Bo Village (location 7) and Ta Ga Nan village (location 8)

Local people claim that the events in locations 7 were carried out by the No. 8 Military Training School from Shwebo township. Locals believe that the dismembering of the women in location 8 was also carried out by the SAC. There is limited information to support these allegations so Myanmar Witness has been unable to verify these allegations and cannot provide attribution. Myanmar Witness will continue to monitor information on these events.



## Conclusion and Future Monitoring

Sagaing has been a focal point of resistance since the Coup. These 8 incidents identified, and where possible verified, by Myanmar Witness, show a pattern of excessive violence by the perpetrators, including beheadings, dismembering and torture. Across the 8 incidents, at least 33 people were reportedly killed, 12 of whom were beheaded and 2 were dismembered. In one incident alone, in Tar Taing, at least 17 people were killed.

In a number of these cases the individuals were killed and then beheaded. As the beheadings serve no functional purpose, they represent a dramatic and horrific warning to those resisting military rule.

While there is limited verifiable evidence tying the LID-99 to several of these attacks, there are countless claims from locals and local media, including pro-SAC channels, which suggest they were not only present in the vicinity of the attacks, but also responsible for at least six of them. In Tar Taing, the site of a massacre, the SAC released a statement admitting that SAC soldiers were responsible for the clash. This indicates that they could have been responsible for other events nearby. Myanmar Witness will continue to monitor for additional information which could corroborate these claims.

This report documents a series of violent events; however, it is not exhaustive. Additional allegations of beheadings and atrocities have been identified in the Sagaing region. Myanmar Witness will continue to monitor and investigate these claims.