



KARENNI HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP

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Quarterly Briefer

The Karenni Human Rights Group’s sixth quarterly briefer will breakdown the human rights abuses committed by the Burmese military in Karenni state from July to September 2023.



Quarterly Highlight:

- ◇ In September, the IEC and members of the Karenni diaspora around the world [appealed](#) to the international community and donors for humanitarian aid. In a [press conference](#), the panelists discussed the growing IDP population, dwindling funds, and the expected food and supply shortages in Karenni state.
- ◇ In early September, [600+ Karenni refugees](#) (both voluntary and forcibly repatriated) returned to Mese township from Thailand, with conflict-displaced individuals returning to the original IDP camp.



Top Photo: Transporting supplies for IDPs
Bottom Photo: A Karenni carried out of damaged structure after an attack by the Burmese military.
Photos: KnHRG



Karenni children at one of the many displacement camps.
Photo: KnHRG

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ANALYSIS

Introduction

This quarter, the Burmese military's actions have resulted in the death of 15 Karenni civilians and injuries to 32 others. While these numbers represent a significant decrease from the second quarter's alarming statistics, it is still important to recognize the human cost of these casualties, including the tragic inclusion of children. Although with reduced frequency, the military continued to employ the same tactics - mortar shelling and shootings - to kill or injure Karenni, which have remained consistent over the last two quarters. However, the causes of injuries to Karenni civilians differ from those resulting in fatalities. Although mortar shelling remains a prominent method for inflicting harm, the military also resorted to arresting and detaining civilians, launching airstrikes, and employing other "outlier" means, such as drone attacks, rape, bombings, and battering. In addition, the junta's destruction to property this quarter primarily destroyed residential homes. A religious building, a community hospital, schools, and a car were also impacted by mortar airstrikes, torching, mortar shelling, and bombings.

This report also highlights the emergence of other human rights violations, including the restriction of movement of Karenni communities and repeated extortion of civilians by both the junta and the Karenni Nationalities Defence Force. Of particular concern are reports of sexual harassment against women during searches conducted by junta soldiers. Additionally, junta troops have been allegedly firing into the sky and villages during curfew hours and patrols, further exacerbating the distressing circumstances.



A Karenni child receiving aid after they were injured during an attack launched by the Burmese military.

Photo: KnHRG

Human Rights Violations

This quarter the Burmese military killed 15 Karenni civilians and injured 32 (Graph 1, Graph 2). This was a significant decrease from last quarter, which recorded 49 deaths and 73 injuries. There were at least two children amongst the casualties; a 13 year old who was killed, and a 3 year old who was injured.

The junta mainly employed the same tactics used in the last two quarters to kill Karenni civilians: mortar shelling and shooting. However, the frequency of both strategies decreased compared to the second quarter. Between April and June, there were over 100 mortar shelling occurrences in just one month whereas this quarter documented 21 attacks. The same holds true for the military's shooting tactic with 5 total occurrences from July to September, compared to the past quarter's record of 19.

That being said, some of the causes of Karenni injuries this quarter were different from the main causes of deaths. While mortar shelling was a similarly favored tactic for injuring Karenni, the military also utilized arrest and detention of civilians, airstrikes, and outlier means, such as drone attacks, rape, bombings, and battering. There were still no reported cases of civilians being used as human shields over the past three months. This may indicate two things: first, that there is a continued desire to fully eliminate Karenni at once without holding hostages for longer and/or second, that the military is getting better and hiding its kidnappings from the public eye.

Other human rights violations were reported this quarter as well, such as the restriction of movement through military controlled travel checkpoints, and repeated extortion of civilians traveling by both the military and the Karenni Nationalities Defence Force. Locals noted that soldiers started to display stricter conduct at the checkpoints, subjecting both people and cars to random searches. Women who were searched by soldiers report sexual harassment, sharing they were verbally abused as well, and forced to kneel. Junta troops have also reportedly been firing indiscriminately into the sky and villages at curfew times or while patrolling.

Arrested and Detained

This quarter documented a total of 9 civilians arrested and detained (Graph 3). There were two cases in July and it is still unsure if they have been released or not. The same is true for six Karenni who were also arrested in August. In this group, one of them is reportedly missing, and another was killed trying to escape. In September, a humanitarian aid worker was arrested. There was no additional information on the victims.

Mortar Shells

This quarter recorded 21 mortar shelling occurrences, leaving 4 dead and 9 injured (Graph 4). In July, one civilian was killed, and 4 injured by a mortar shelling attack. There were 15 assaults in August, resulting in two deaths and three injuries. September had five mortar shelling cases that killed one and injured two.

Landmines

There were a total of four landmine explosions this quarter (Graph 5). This resulted in two deaths and two injuries. There was one explosion each in July and August, and two cases in September. There were no reported casualties in July, but one civilian was injured in August, and two died in September.

Airstrikes

Over the past three months, the Burmese military carried out at least 32 airstrikes, killing 3 civilians and injuring 8 (Graph 6). In July,



A Karenni home destroyed after an aerial attack by the Burmese military.

Photo: KnHRG

there were 18 airstrikes, the highest recorded number over these three months. There were eight documented aerial attacks in August and six in September. The assaults in July killed two civilians, and injured six. There were two injuries and one death in August, and no reported casualties in September.

Shot on Sight

This quarter, there were five occurrences of junta soldiers shooting at civilians (Graph 7). Four of these cases resulted in deaths, and one with an injury. All of these casualties were reported in July, while there were no deaths and injuries in August and September.

Outlier (Armed Conflict/Found Dead)

There were four Karenni who died and seven who were injured by outlier means this quarter. In July, there were no deaths but four Karenni were injured (Graph 8). Among this group, two civilians were attacked by a drone. For the remaining two, one was battered and the other was raped. In August, one civilian was killed trying to escape arrest by junta troops, and is noted as an outlier death. The three recorded injuries this month came from a bombing attack by the military.

Destruction of Property

From July to September, at least eight structures were damaged or intentionally destroyed by the Burmese military (Graph 9). The damage included 73 houses, one religious building, one community hospital, five schools, and one car. One animal was also noted to have been killed but is not included in Graph 9. The main causes of the destruction were airstrikes, torching, mortar shelling, and bombings.

In July, airstrikes damaged and/or destroyed 14 structures. These included eight houses, one religious building (a church), one community hospital, three schools, and one car. In August, 67 more structures became part of the destruction, most of them houses. Of these homes, mortar shelling impacted 14 of them, airstrikes hit nine, two were bombed, and 40 torched. Two schools were also ruined by airstrikes. While it is not included in Graph 9, an animal was also killed this month due to mortar shelling.



Top Photo: Remnants of a structure after an attack by the Burmese military.

Middle Photo: Karenni home destroyed after an airstrike launched by the Burmese military.

Bottom Photo: Church heavily damaged during airstrike.

Photos: KnHRG



Top Photo: The provision of supplies to an IDP camp.

Bottom Photo: One of the shelters at an IDP camp.
Photos: KnHRG

Conclusion

This report's findings further cast light on the ongoing human rights violations faced by the Karenni people in Burma. While there has been a notable reduction in casualties compared to last quarter, there is still widespread, rampant suffering. The junta has remained consistent with two of its tactics to kill and injure civilians across these three quarters: mortar shelling and shootings. While these methods decreased in frequency from July to September, soldiers also began to utilize other forms of violence, such as drone attacks, rape, bombings, and battering. The lack of reported cases for civilians used as human shields also further raise questions about the Burmese military's evolving strategies and its increasing ability to conceal its actions of terror.

Junta troops also further spread fear through the destruction of property and tightening their control over communities in conflict areas. Over these past three months, residential homes have been mainly targeted and destroyed and there have been restrictions on movement with travel checkpoints and curfews. Civilians are subjected to random searches while going about their daily routine, and are typically extorted by both the military and the Karenni Defense Nationalities Forces.

This situation highlights the pressing need for international attention to address the growing cruelty of the Burmese military and to support the Karenni population in their quest for justice, safety, and fundamental rights. Since the 2021 coup in Karenni state, 250,000 people have been internally displaced and live in more than 200 camps.

The Interim Executive Council (IEC) of the

state released a humanitarian [appeal](#) for aid to be delivered to the IDP population. The IEC has access to 150,000 IDPs, and works with experienced local organizations to deliver aid in accordance with international norms. It has resources that can help deliver aid effectively, such as a border-based system that avoids benefits to, or aid blockages by the Burmese military. The international community must take immediate action to alleviate the suffering of the Karenni people and donating to this appeal is one viable way to do so.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Direct coordinate emergency humanitarian aid provision efforts, including through cross-border channels, for the aid to reach the vulnerable population of more than 200,000 Karenni IDPs resulted from the military violence and airstrikes, and combat COVID-19, by providing resources and working in equal and meaningful partnership and collaboration with ethnic and community-based humanitarian and civil society organizations;
2. Impose further targeted sanctions against the military and its leadership, military businesses including specifically targeting Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprises (MOGE), military-linked business partners and network of arms dealers;
3. Impose a coordinated global arms embargo on the Burmese military;
4. Sanction the supply of jet fuel to the Burmese military to end airstrikes and impose no fly zone;
5. Recommend the International Criminal Court to accept the declaration lodged by the National Unity Government of Burma, under Article 12(3) of the Rome Statute accepting the Court's jurisdiction with respect to international crimes committed in Burma territory since 1 July 2002;
6. Formally designated safe zone for the internally displaced persons under United Nation agencies management where the Burmese military are not allowed to have access.



Pieces of recovered ordnance after an attack by the Burmese military.

Photo: KnHRG

FEARS FROM THE GROUND

During an interview with an IDP, they shared their fears of living in an temporary displacement camp.

I had to borrow money to get food. But there is no one to lend money. We only have one box of rice left. We haven't got any oil. Since we keep running out of rice, we've been humbly begging the lady next door. Livelihood is not going well and on top of that, I also have (6) children.

We grew corn because we wanted to sell it. However, we can't sell anymore because we don't even have enough to feed the family. We don't even have food scraps for the pigs. We have been eating corn mixed with rice every day. We've also been feeding our pigs with corn every year. Although we're raising pigs and chickens, they were not very successful because we couldn't provide enough food for them.

My son is old enough to go to preschool, but we can't send him to school. I had to take him while going to the mountains.

Because there are more people using drugs in the community, my husband also started using drugs. Even though I told him to stop using it, he didn't listen. My husband used to be a soldier. Now, he doesn't want to be a soldier anymore. The children are also sad to know that their father is becoming like this.



Karenni IDPs sheltered in the jungle at one of the many IDP camps

Photo Cred: KnHRG

Since I'm going to the mountains (to gather for food), I'm always worried about my children that I leave behind at home... what if there's artillery fired, or bombing from planes. As the eldest daughter has come of age, we're also in need of clothes and monthly expenses.

When will the fighting take place? When will the planes drop bombs? When will the big artillery fire?

We're always in constant fear of these things.

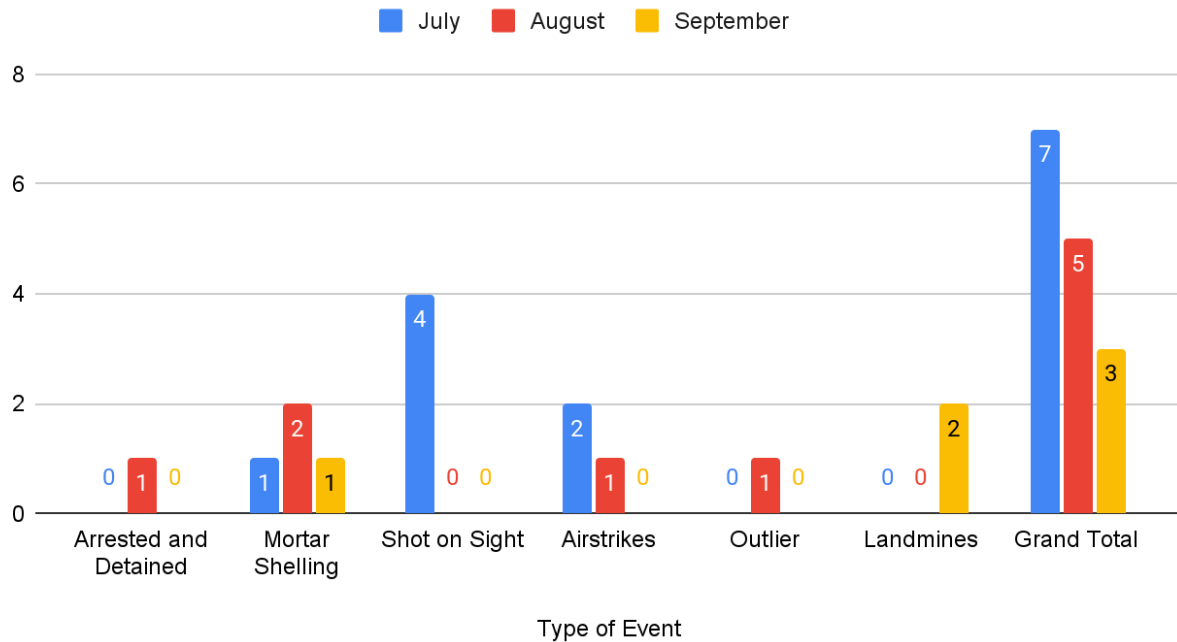
**Any identifying locations and/or names have been removed to protect the safety and security of the person discussed in this interview.*

Cut the weapons. Cut the cash. Cut the impunity.

APPENDIX

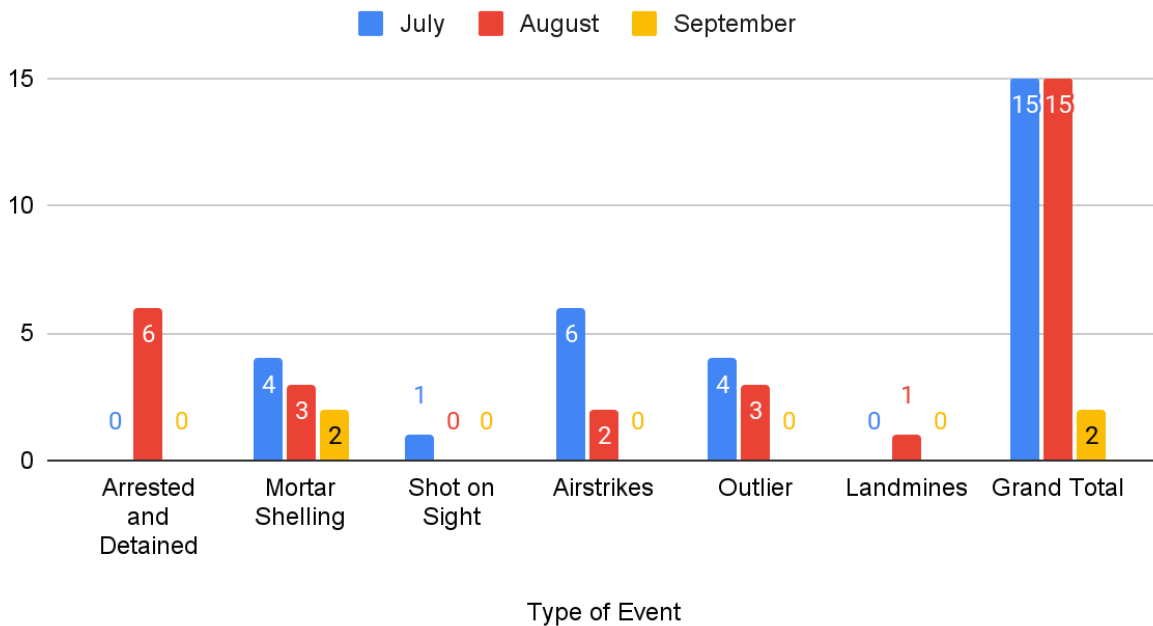
Graph 1

Number and causes of Karenni deaths in 3rd quarter



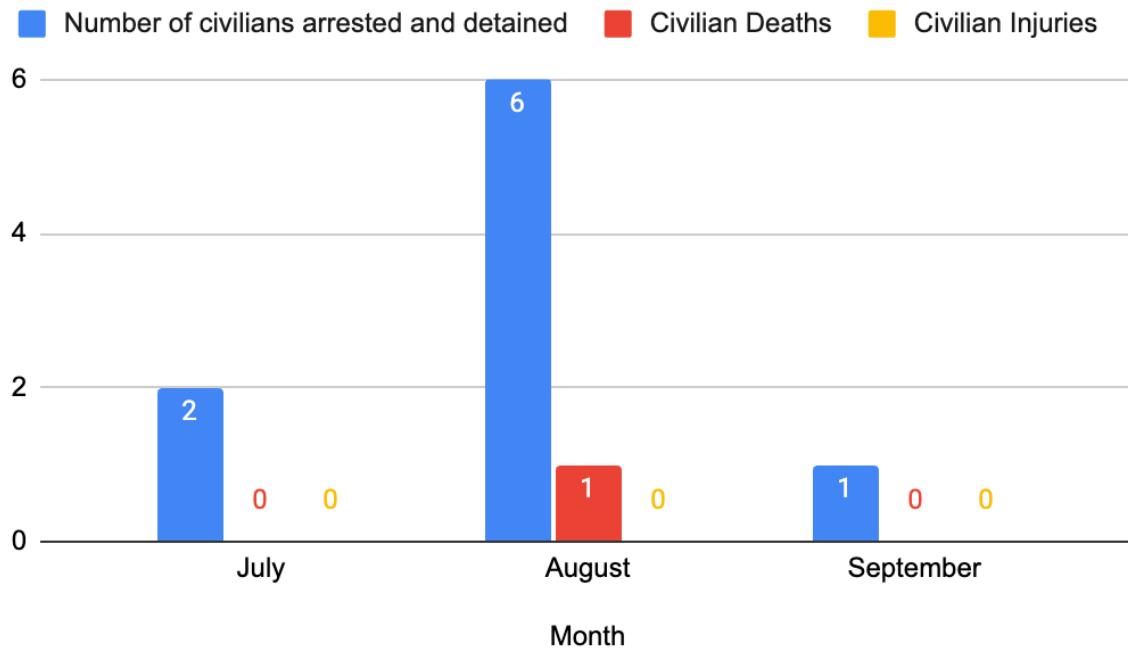
Graph 2

Number and causes of Karenni injuries in 3rd quarter



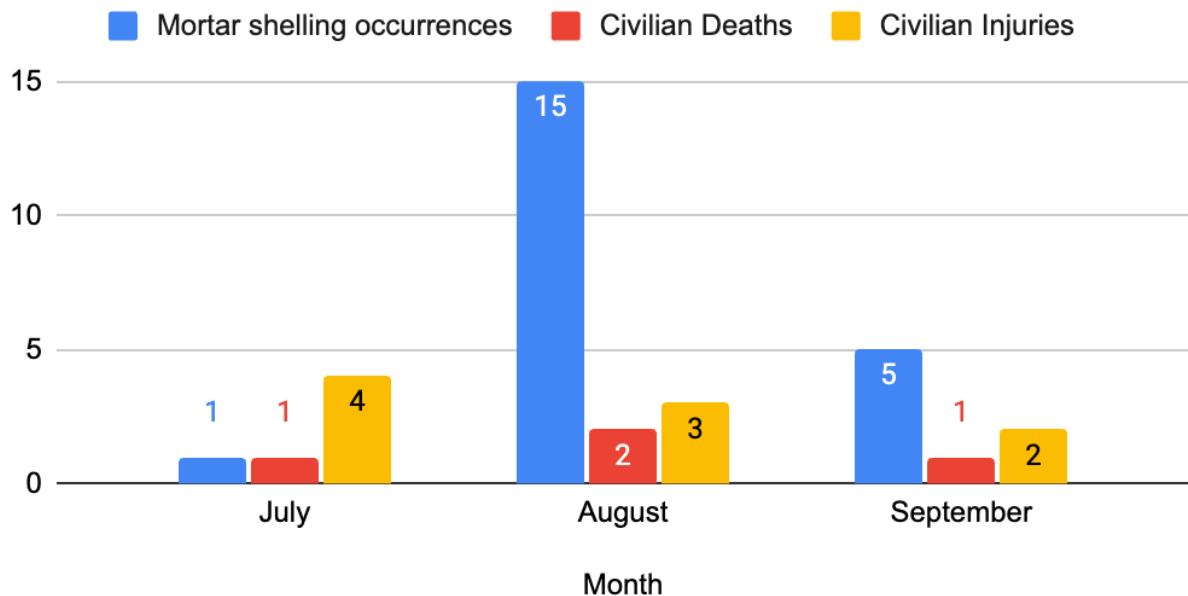
Graph 3

Arrested and detained occurrences and impact on civilian deaths/injuries



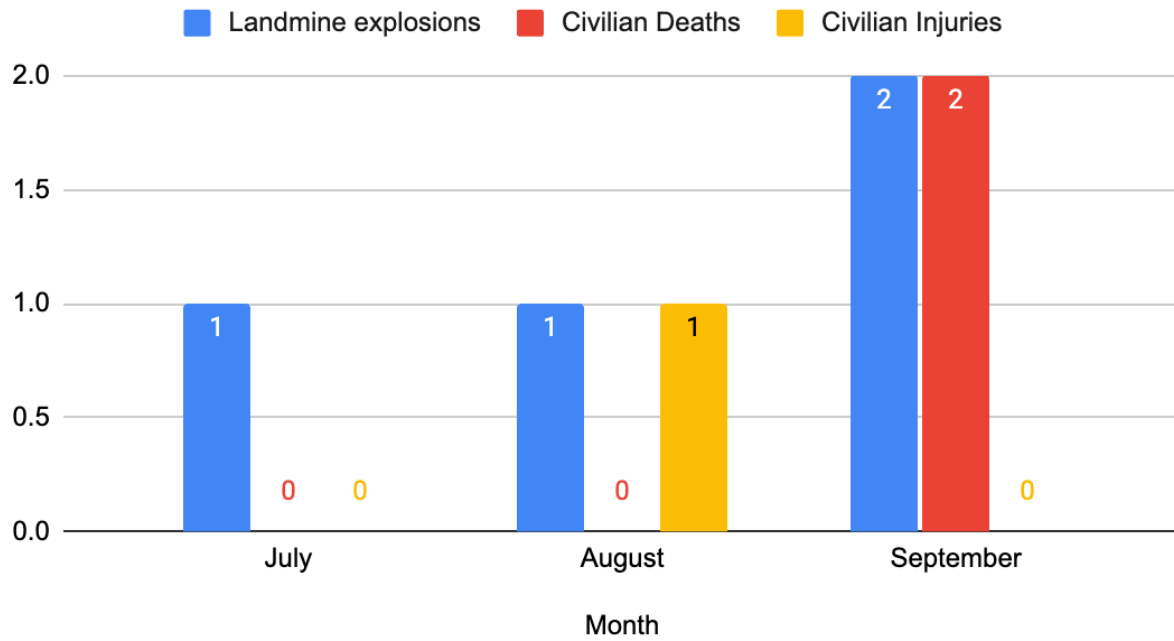
Graph 4

Mortar shelling occurrences and impact on civilian deaths/injuries



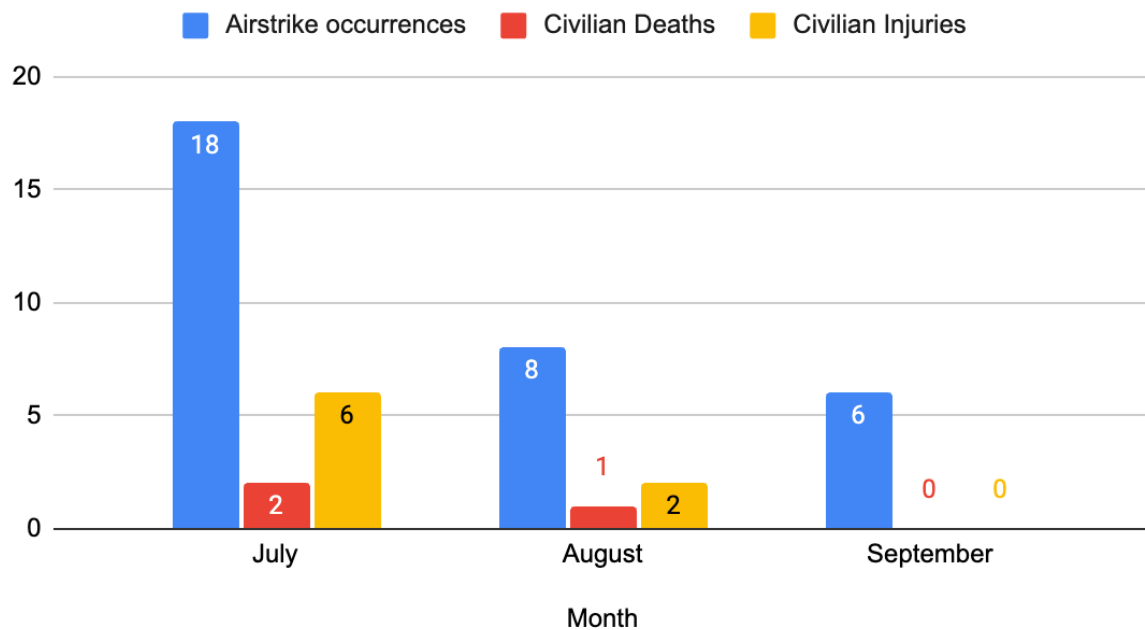
Graph 5

Landmine explosions and impact on civilian deaths/injuries



Graph 6

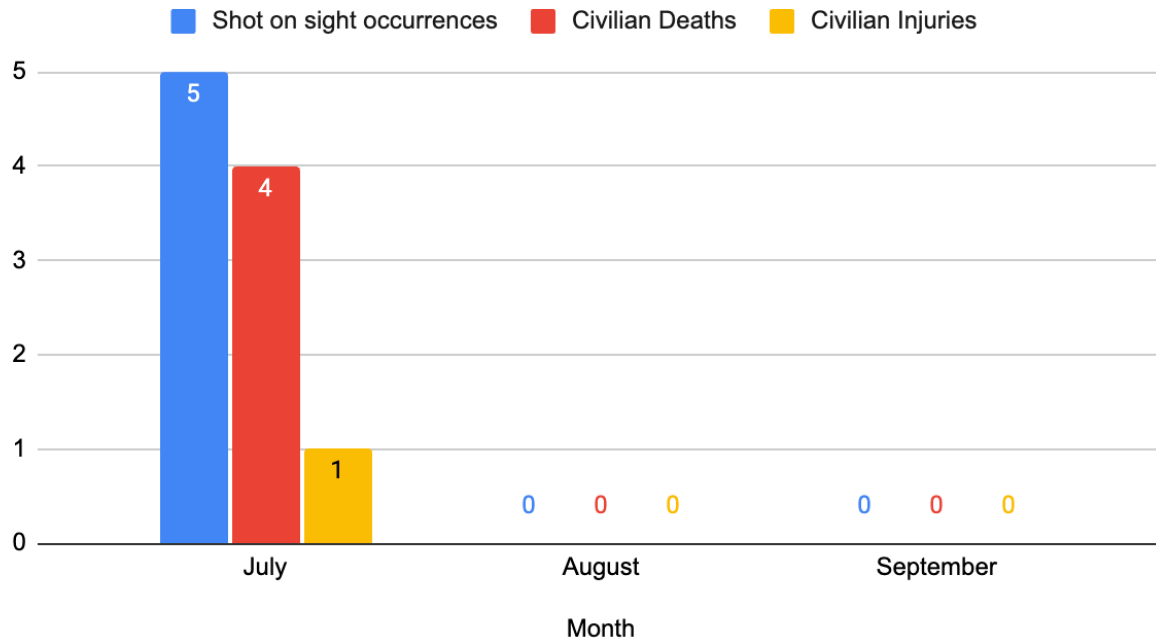
Airstrike occurrences and impact on civilian deaths/injuries



Cut the weapons. Cut the cash. Cut the impunity.

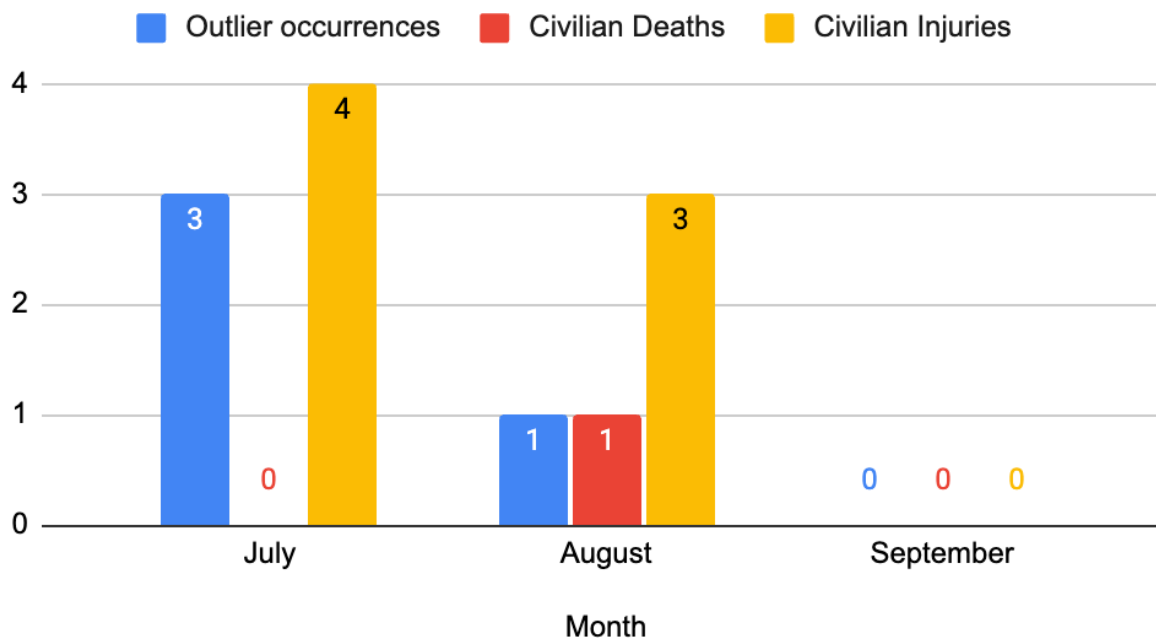
Graph 7

Shot on sight occurrences and impact on civilian deaths/injuries



Graph 8

Outlier civilian deaths/injuries



Graph 9

Destruction of property in 3rd quarter

