



## **The Karenni Human Rights Group Condemns Escalating Violence in Loikaw, Karenni State**

11 January 2024

*For Immediate Release*

The Karenni Human Rights Group (KnHRG) is deeply concerned about the escalation of violence against civilians by the Burma Army across Karenni State, particularly in Loikaw. The rapidly deteriorating human rights situation comes at a time when the junta is losing bases and territory, and various battalions are retaliating with relentless shelling and airstrikes. We condemn these harrowing acts, which are taking place in violation of international law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including the right to life, liberty, and security.

Reports from the Karenni Nationalities Defense Force (KNDF) indicate that various battalions of the Burma Army are deploying daily bombardments targeting civilians. Many have tried to flee as the Karenni State capital has been solemnly declared a battlefield. The violations being committed by the military junta include the destruction of properties, mortar shelling, torture, arbitrary arrest, and unlawful detainment, in addition to ongoing aerial and ground assaults. At least 280,000 of the 300,000 people living in Karenni State have been forcibly displaced since the attempted coup.

According to the latest documentation by the KnHRG, between October and December 2023, over 82 individuals were injured, 81 were killed, and more than 60 buildings were destroyed. These numbers reflect the increase in attacks in civilian areas, with 105 bombs dropped and at least 20 airstrikes during the last three months of 2023.

As a result of the intensifying war, fear and trauma are widespread, with gaps in the provision of counselling and other pro bono mental health-related services. The situation is even more difficult for communities forced to endure widespread and recurring attacks on their homes. It is not safe to work or go to school. Food shortages and inadequate access to health care services and justice compound

these stresses. These circumstances have had deeply challenging impacts on families and young people who are trying to survive amidst all the uncertainty. Civil society organizations active in Karenni State are working to ensure the basic needs of displaced populations are met with dignity and as quickly as possible.

Therefore, KnHRG calls for an immediate end to the violence by the Burma Army and for the international community to instill a global arms embargo and sanctions on aviation fuel, which would stop attacks from the air. Regional and global actors must lend their resources, capacity and agency to those suffering by working to hold the military junta accountable for crimes that span decades. This includes a referral to the International Criminal Court to signal an end to military impunity and that such violence and acts of terror will not be tolerated.

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*The Karenni Human Rights Group is a community organization dedicated to reporting on the current situation in Karenni State and the human rights abuses committed by the junta.*