

Burmese Junta Abducted 125 Kaman Muslim from Kyauk Ta Lone IDP camp for Forced Conscription

London, UK / Yangon, Burma - The military junta led by Min Aung Hlaing abducted 125 Kaman Muslims as conscripts in Kyauk Phyu Township in Rakhine State on 28 February. The victims are from Kyauk Ta Lone camp for internally displaced people (IDP) since 2012. Although Kaman Muslim are recognised by 1982 law as one of the ethnic of Burma, despite that being Muslim they have been targeted along with Rohingya in Rakhine state.

The abduction followed a visit by junta troops to the camp on 17 February to ask for at least 150 conscripts. The soldiers are from the Light Infantry Division no 542, which is under the command of the Regional Operation Command No. 5 based in Taunggyup Township in Rakhine State, an IDP in the Kyauk Ta Lone camp who spoke to Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) on the condition of anonymity said. He said the soldiers forced the IDPs to join the military.

The Kyauk Ta Lone IDP told BHRN that the soldiers threatened the IDPs who are between 18 and 55 years old to join the military or face the consequences of the military's brutality on their families. He said that's why the IDPs, who had fled, had to return to the Kyauk Ta Lone camp.

The source said the junta soldiers put up barricades at the gate of the IDP camp on 27 February and did not allow anyone inside the camp to leave. At 7 a.m. of the next day, they abducted 107 IDPs who were aged between 18 and 45 and also 18 IDPs aged between 46 and 55 were reportedly taken into the headquarters of the Light Infantry Division no 542. The source said IDPs were not interested in joining the military but could not run away because of fear of reprisals against their families by the junta forces.

Kyauk Ta Lone camp is situated on the outskirts of Kyak Phyu and close to a military barracks, ocean, and mountainous terrain, making it difficult for IDP youth to flee from the camp. Those who managed to run away were arrested at military and police checkpoints.

The IDPs were residents of Kyauk Phyu town, but sectarian violence in 2012 pushed them out of their homes. They have lived in the camp's harsh conditions for more than ten years. They may now potentially be used as human shields for the Burmese military, which is facing strong resistance from pro-democracy forces as well as ethnic armed groups.

The source said Muslims in Rakhine State who have been facing discrimination for the past many years are also facing the danger of oppression by the ethnic armed group, the Arakan Army (AA), who recently seized several towns in Rakhine State from the Myanmar military in recent months.

BHRN's Executive Director, Kyaw Win, said, "The Burmese Army's mandatory conscription has resulted in an exodus of young people from the country and pushed others to join rebel groups. In their continuing desperation, they are kidnapping the most vulnerable in the country and forcing them into service against international law and norms. The Burmese military are not a legitimate government and should be viewed as an occupying force since the 2021 coup, which means they have no right to mandatory conscription, especially when coerced through threats of violence and harm."

BHRN calls on the international community to hold the Burmese army accountable for every violation of international law. Forced and coerced conscription of the Kaman IDPs should be considered forms of forced labor and in violation of the **Forced Labour Convention** that prohibits "all forced or compulsory labour, which is defined as 'all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily.'" **The Fourth Geneva Convention** also prohibits any "pressure or propaganda that aims at securing voluntary enlistment." As the junta is losing the war, the international community must ensure that every member of the military knows they will be held accountable for their actions.

Background on the Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN)

Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) is based in London and operates across Burma/Myanmar works for human rights, minority rights and religious freedom in Burma. BHRN has played a crucial role advocating for human rights and religious freedom with politicians and world leaders.

Media Enquiries

Please contact:

Kyaw Win

Executive Director

Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN)

E: kyawwin@bhrn.org.uk

T: +44(0) 740 345 2378