



Statement of condemnation of the recent aerial attack against civilians in Sagaing region by the Myanmar military junta

12th April 2023

Yesterday morning, Tuesday 11th April 2023, State Administration Council (SAC) fighter jets dropped multiple bombs in an air strike conducted in Pa Zi Gyi village, Kant Balu Township, Sagaing Division, in northwest Burma. The air strike took place during a village ceremony, killing over 50 civilians and injuring 30 more, including children.¹ The Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) sends its deepest condolences to all the families who lost their loved ones and condemns in the strongest terms this deadly strike against civilians. These atrocious acts in Sagaing are representative of the systematic attacks perpetrated by the military junta against civilians throughout the country, with more than 3,239 civilians killed and more than 21,334 arrested.²

Since the 2021 coup, the SAC has increased violent offensives against civilians by different means, including the vast use of air strikes in civilian areas. On October 23rd 2022, the SAC conducted a deadly air strike in Hpakant town, in Kachin State, targeting a music festival attended by around one thousand people who were celebrating the founding of the Kachin Independence Organisation.³ The air strike resulted in the death of almost one hundred people and injured over a hundred more. Similarly, according to KHRG's documentation, in Karen State the SAC has conducted at least 155 air attacks since the 2021 coup, causing more than 50 deaths, injuring at least one hundred civilians, and destroying critical infrastructures on multiple occasions, including villagers' houses, schools, clinics and religious buildings.

Within the first three months of the year 2023 alone, the SAC has already perpetrated more than 30 air strikes in Karen State, killing at least 11 civilians. This past week, military clashes between SAC troops and revolutionary forces in Southeast Burma have increased, especially in Dooplaya and Hpa-An districts. During the fighting, the SAC continues to carry out indiscriminate shelling in civilian areas, as well as deploy air attacks in the surroundings, resulting in massive displacement

¹ The Irrawaddy, "[At Least 50 Civilians Including Children Massacred in Myanmar Regime Air Strike in Sagaing](#)", April 2023.

² Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), "[Daily Briefing in Relation to the Military Coup](#)", April 2023.

³ Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT), Progressive Voice (PV) and Women's League of Burma (WLB), "[The attack in Kachin State must prompt UN Security Council's urgent action against Myanmar military junta](#)", October 2022.

of local villagers, currently in urgent need of humanitarian support. Since the coup, around 600,000 villagers in Southeast Burma have been displaced, as of April 2023.

Under customary international humanitarian law, a distinction must be made between civilian and military objectives. Intentionally attacking civilian areas and protected buildings constitutes a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). As per the chain of command within the Burma Army, military junta leaders are in charge of ordering air strikes and therefore are responsible for these heinous acts, which may also amount to crimes against humanity.

The Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) is deeply troubled by the increase in air strikes deliberately perpetrated by the military junta against civilians across the country and urges the international community to take immediate action to end these abuses, including by:

- Supporting coordinated and targeted sanctions on the supply of aviation fuel to the junta, and oil and gas revenues, as well as sanctions against junta officials.
- Increasing financial support for local organisations and ethnic service providers currently operating on the ground delivering humanitarian aid and emergency response to victims and survivors of SAC attacks.
- Supporting current investigations and international proceedings and seeking out additional opportunities to hold the Burma military accountable for its vast array of crimes.

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