



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma



K P S N

Statement of condemnation of the recent mass killing of civilians by the SAC in Kler Lwee Htoo District, Southeast Burma

12th May 2023

On May 10th 2023, soldiers from State Administration Council's (SAC) Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #599 under Military Operations Command (MOC) #13, together with other SAC infantry divisions and battalions, deliberately killed at least 18 civilians, including five children, in Nyaung Pin Tha village, Moo Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District. Following an armed clash between SAC and Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) forces, SAC soldiers killed and burned villagers at night, mainly women, children and elders, demonstrating a complete disregard for human life. The Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) and the Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN) condemn this inhumane attack on civilians and extend our deepest condolences to the victims' families and loved ones. We stand in solidarity with all communities throughout Burma who suffer the abuses of the military regime, and will continue to work for the protection of justice and human rights in the country.

The escalation of the Burma Army's operations in Southeast Burma following the 2021 coup has led to a significant increase in human rights abuses. Civilians are regularly deliberately targeted by the SAC following armed clashes in the region, including by conducting air strikes and indiscriminate shelling towards villages, as well as shooting villagers on sight, torching villagers' houses, planting landmines near critical infrastructure, arbitrary arrest and torture. Since the 2021 coup, at least 79 civilians, including 38 children, have died in Southeast Burma as a result of SAC attacks, as reported to KHRG, and at least 500,000 civilians have been displaced.

The impunity faced by the Burma military in their continuous campaign of violence against civilians is appalling and alarming. The recent mass killing in Kler Lwee Htoo District is a perpetuation of the long history of atrocities committed by the Burma Army against villagers in Southeast Burma. The deliberate targeting of civilians constitutes a grave breach of international humanitarian law, amounting to war crimes. The murder of civilians in a systematic and widespread manner is also a crime against humanity. Furthermore, as can be seen in the photographs widely shared on social media of the remains of the victims of this latest mass killing, the Burma military dealt with the villagers' bodies in an egregious manner, which violates customary rules applicable to armed conflicts. All those responsible must be held accountable for their actions.

The international community cannot continue to turn a blind eye while the junta perpetrates atrocity crimes throughout the country. Immediate and meaningful action must be taken to stop these attacks and bring justice for its people. The Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN) and the Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) call upon international stakeholders, including foreign

governments, and the civil society to unite in condemning this mass killing of civilians by the SAC and take the following actions:

1. Support coordinated and targeted sanctions against the military junta and its leaders, including restrictions on financial resources, trade, arms supply and aviation fuel.
2. Increase direct financial support for civil society and community-based organisations, and local humanitarian aid providers operating on the ground, ensuring that they have the necessary resources to deliver critical assistance to victims and survivors of attacks.
3. Support current investigations and international proceedings and actively pursue additional avenues to ensure the Burma military is held responsible for the wide range of crimes they have committed.

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