



**Karen Human Rights Group**

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

## **Statement of condemnation of the air strikes and shelling against the civilian population in Deemaw Soe, Karenni State**

7<sup>th</sup> February 2024

On Monday, February 5<sup>th</sup> 2024, State Administration Council (SAC) forces conducted 10 air strikes and fired six mortar shells into two villages in Deemaw Soe Township, Karenni State. The attacks killed seven civilians and injured at least 20 people, most of them children. In one hour, two schools, a church, and six civilian buildings were destroyed or severely damaged. The Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) strongly condemns these attacks by the military junta deliberately targeted at civilians and calls on the international community to take immediate and decisive action to prevent further suffering.

As [reported by the Karenni Human Rights Group \(KnHRG\)](#), the strikes on February 5<sup>th</sup>, at 10:15 am, targeted two schools. In Daw Si Ei School, four boys between 12 and 14 years old were killed, and at least 15 children, including some under the age of three, were injured. The second attack, which targeted Loi Nan Pha School, caused the death of one man and two teachers, and five other civilians sustained injuries. A church and six buildings belonging to local villagers and displaced persons were also damaged.

Air strikes and shelling into villages are part of wider, systematic attacks by the SAC in Eastern Burma and other ethnic areas, where fighting with local armed resistance forces has escalated since the 2021 coup. These SAC attacks not only specifically target civilian settlements, critical infrastructure, and places of refuge for thousands of internally displaced persons, but also show intentional targeting of buildings dedicated to education. Children benefit from a special protection under international humanitarian law because of their unique vulnerability and needs. Intentionally attacking buildings dedicated to education puts children at exceptional risk and render them even more vulnerable. International humanitarian law requires a distinction to be made between civilian and military objectives, and therefore the SAC attacks on civilian objects, particularly educational and religious buildings, are a serious violation of the law of armed conflict. Moreover, intentionally attacking protected buildings may amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

International criminal law further imposes criminal liability on superiors who order the commission of crimes or fail to prevent or punish the criminal activities of their subordinates. SAC leaders are responsible for ordering air strikes through the chain of command and shall be held accountable

for these heinous crimes. The international community must take immediate and concrete action to end these abuses, including by:

- Supporting coordinated and targeted sanctions on the supply of weapons and aviation fuel to the military junta, on oil and gas revenues, and sanctions against junta officials.
- Supporting ongoing investigations and trials and seeking additional ways to hold the Burma Army leaders accountable for their many crimes.
- Increasing financial support for local organisations working on the ground to assist the civilian population in need.

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