



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

**Statement of condemnation of mass killing in Let Htoke Taw village,  
Myinmu Township, Sagaing Region**

17<sup>th</sup> May 2024

On the morning of Saturday, May 11<sup>th</sup> 2024, State Administration Council (SAC) soldiers carried out a violent raid on Let Htoke Taw village, in Myinmu Township, Sagaing Region, killing at least 31 civilians who were seeking refuge in nearby monasteries. This mass killing underscores the extreme cruelty of the SAC's campaign of terror, and is part of the widespread and systematic attacks against the civilian population. The Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) strongly condemns this heinous attack on civilians, stresses that such violence is rampant throughout Burma and that the perpetrators continue to enjoy impunity for their crimes. KHRG urges the international community to take immediate and decisive action to prevent further atrocities and to hold the perpetrators accountable.

As reported by several news agencies, on that morning, around 70 SAC soldiers entered Let Htoke Taw village at 5 am, opening fire and forcing residents to flee for safety. Over 100 villagers sought refuge in nearby monasteries, however, SAC soldiers followed them, seized control of both the East and West monasteries, and held villagers captive. The men were then separated from the group and taken outside the monastery where they were questioned about their support of the People's Defence Force (PDF), tortured, and, ultimately, executed. At least 31 civilians, including minors and elderly, were killed. More than 12 villagers were injured. In addition, the soldiers set fire to more than 170 houses in Let Htoke Taw village and destroyed key civilian infrastructure, such as water pumps. Finally, as the troops withdrew from the area, they took 17 villagers, women and children, hostage and used them as human shields. The villagers were released at the monastery in Gway Bin Taw village, Chaun-U Township, at about 3 km distance. One of the wounded villagers died on the way to the hospital, and an elderly woman died inside of her burning house, bringing the civilian death toll to 33.<sup>1</sup>

Local villagers recognised the soldiers as being from units stationed at the two army camps along Monywa Road, in the villages of Nat Ye Kan and Gway Pin Taw.<sup>2</sup> The National Unity Government (NUG) released a statement identifying the following units as being involved in the recent attack:

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<sup>1</sup> See: Myanmar Now, "[Myanmar military massacres more than 30 in Sagaing Region](#)", 14 May 2024; AP News, "[Reports of army killing of villagers in Myanmar supported by photos and harrowing tale of a survivor](#)", 14 May 2024.; AAPP, "[Daily Briefing in Relation to the Military Coup](#)", 13 May 2024. See also: Yangon Khit Thit News Agency, "[မြင်းမူမြို့နယ်၊ လက်ထုတ္တောရွာတွင် စစ်တပ်က ပြည်သူ ၃၀ ကျော်ကို အစုလိုက်အပြုံလိုက် ပစ်ခတ် သတ်ဖြတ်](#)", 11 May 2024; Myanmar Pressphoto Agency, "[Myanmar Military Massacres 30 Displaced People in Sagaing's Myinmu Township](#)", 11 May 2024; APP data at [bit.ly/3taCmp3](https://bit.ly/3taCmp3).

<sup>2</sup> AP News, 2024, above. Myanmar Now, 2024, above.

Infantry Battalion (IB) #13, Light Infantry Division (LID) #33, Battlefield Engineering Battalion (BEB) #909, Support and Communications Battalion (SCB) #929, and the Pyu Saw Htee militia.<sup>3</sup>

The assault on Let Htoke Taw village, marked by the targeted destruction of life, property, and civilian infrastructures, exemplifies the SAC's systematic campaign of terror. These acts of violence align with a pattern of widespread attacks against civilians perpetrated by the military junta, particularly in ethnic regions experiencing heightened clashes with local resistance groups following the 2021 coup. These abuses, encompassing indiscriminate air strikes and shelling, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, property destruction through arson, landmine contamination, and the use of human shields, have created a dire human rights and humanitarian crisis, and compose a pervasive climate of violence and abuse impacting daily life within communities throughout Burma.<sup>4</sup>

International humanitarian law requires a distinction to be made between civilian and military objectives, and therefore the SAC's attacks on civilians not taking direct part in hostilities and civilian objects, particularly essential infrastructure and religious buildings, constitute serious violations of the law of armed conflict. By committing extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, ill-treatment and torture, hostage-taking, destruction of civilian property, and by seizing control of protected buildings dedicated to religion during their presence in Let Htoke Taw village, the actions of the military junta forces as a whole amount to the war crime of attacking civilians pursuant to Article 8(2)(e)(i) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

International criminal law imposes criminal liability on superiors who order the commission of crimes or fail to prevent or punish the criminal activities of their subordinates. Burma Army leaders and local commanders are responsible through the chain of command for ordering, or failing to prevent or punish, the attack on Let Htoke Taw village in May 2024, and shall be held accountable for these heinous crimes. The international community must take immediate and concrete action to end these abuses, including by:

- Refraining from giving any legitimacy to the junta, and from engaging in any form of collaboration with the junta, including military, economic or humanitarian collaboration, that will help them to continue their cruel human rights abuses against civilians.
- Supporting coordinated and targeted sanctions on the supply of weapons, on oil and gas revenues used to fund atrocity crimes, and individual sanctions against junta officials.
- Supporting ongoing investigations and trials, and seeking additional ways to hold the junta leaders accountable for their many crimes.
- Increasing financial support to local organisations working on the ground to assist the civilian population in need.

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<sup>3</sup> National Unity Government (NUG), "[A Statement On War Crimes And Crimes Against Humanity Committed By The Terrorist Military Junta's Forces In Lethoketaw Village, Myinmu Township](#)", 12 May 2024, para. 3.

<sup>4</sup> KHRG, [Undeniable: War crimes, crimes against humanity and 30 years of villagers' testimonies in rural Southeast Burma](#), December 2022; Progressive Voice, "[Nowhere to Run: Deepening Humanitarian Crisis in Myanmar](#)", Sep 2021.