

TRAJECTORY OF TERROR



An overview of human rights perpetrated by the Military Junta in Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi region



INTRODUCTION

Following widespread rejection of the Burma Army's attempted coup in February 2021, the military junta has been spearheading a campaign to disparage dissent through an unyielding campaign of terror. Unleashed and uncontrolled horrors perpetrated with impunity has isolated and frightened civilian populations. Hundreds of thousands have been displaced, and dozens have been killed by the regime.

A spirited rejection of the junta has come with targeted attacks against a growing resistance movement across the country. People's defense forces (PDFs) have been formed and the National Unity Government (NUG) which includes democratically elected Members of Parliament and long-time activists prevailed. Human rights defenders have not been discouraged and continue to exhibit great bravery by continuing to speak out and condemn the junta's atrocities. In the midst of chaos have been concerted attempts to restore peace and long-time calls by ethnic people for a federal democracy.

The Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) has documented the assaults on fundamental freedoms and the lack of relief civilians experienced in 2021. In target areas of Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi region, human rights continue to be blatantly disregarded by the Burma Army. Laws have been systematically changed and reformed in line with the junta's authoritarian agenda as innocent people are arrested, abducted and killed. Misinformation is being weaponised, alongside a propaganda campaign seeking to delegitimise opposition forces.

According to HURFOM, between February 7 and 6 December 2021, at least 2,184 civilians were arrested and detained, at least 303 injured and 60 killed. Residents have expressed ongoing fears and anxieties that they or their family members could be the next victim in the junta's warpath. A social worker from Three Pagodas Pass, Mon State, who communicated frustration over the state of affairs, and specifically in regard to the junta's lawlessness stated: "It seems they have a license to commit these crimes against us. Gangsters are ruling the country." The recent developments in Burma are disastrous for its people. The violence has created an unstable environment where hundreds are fleeing persecution and are fearful for what their futures hold.

"Trajectory of Terror," is a short briefing paper by HURFOM which outlines human rights violations committed in Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi region perpetrated by the military junta between the end of February until the end of November 2021.

FIELDWORKERS NOTE

HURFOM has fieldworkers in Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi Region, as well as human rights networks across the country. Three reporters are working from Mon and Karen State in areas controlled by ethnic armed organizations. Within this team, HURFOM will continue to monitor the human rights situation in our target areas as closely as possible. Given the new limitations that civil society organizations now face in the post-coup environment, we have found that the human rights situation is an even greater concern.

Fieldworkers continue to document human rights violations as best as they can, given the extreme risks they face on a daily basis. The growing threats to their safety only speak to the society of fear the junta has created. HURFOM's documentation and data is sourced from our network of field staff reporting on the ground. The restrictions imposed by the junta have made it much more difficult to access all of our target areas freely and without repercussions.

The Burma Army is known for intimidating and harassing fieldworkers documenting human rights violations. Soldiers often threaten survivors who share their stories with rights groups as well. At the moment, HURFOM is safely able to work in ceasefire areas and armed controlled territories of the Karen National Union and the New Mon State Party. Recording of events and testimonies is extremely high-risk outside of these areas.

The movement restrictions and curfews in place due to COVID-19 have also limited the amount of documentation possible, for security reasons. Therefore, the information outlined in this short briefing paper includes HURFOM data from the ground. Many of our estimates are likely significantly higher given the challenges we face collecting these data. Our team is immensely grateful to those who shared their fears and hopes for the future with HURFOM.

KEY FINDINGS



The COVID-19 pandemic has been further weaponized by the military junta as key routes for travel and transportation, including the flow of aid, continue to be blocked. In February 2021, there were **178** incidents of reported attacks on health care workers in Burma.



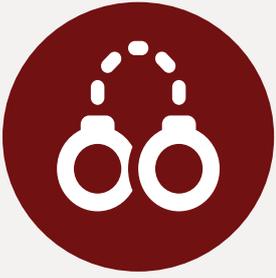
At least **654** youth were arrested and **3,647** civilians dismissed from their jobs for joining anti-coup activities including the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM). In addition, **60** civilians have been killed, **303** injured, and **2,184** arrested and detained.



Ongoing artillery strikes and indiscriminate firing by the military junta against the Karen National Union has forced thousands to flee. Over **234,600** people have been internally displaced due to frequent internal conflict since February.



Approximately **243** protests against the junta have taken place in townships of Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi region in the last ten months. Students in particular are regularly abducted for organizing pro-democracy activities and providing moral or monetary support to the various resistance movements.



Unlawful arrests target young men who are regularly abducted on suspicions of being affiliated with civilian defense forces. Family members are routinely taken hostage if those wanted by the regime are not home. Children as young as **two years old** have been taken hostage by the junta.



There are at least **29** cases of forced disappearances imposed by the military junta in Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi region. Of those in custody, over 153 activists and protesters have been sentenced to prison in junta courts.



There is a lot of **misinformation** within the community as all news – even news that is not true – spreads quickly. Internet service providers have very limited services in rural areas.



There are growing direct threats to people's personal safety, including the confiscation of phones, money, motorcycles and property. At least **500** motorcycles have been stolen by the military junta, in addition to millions of Myanmar kyat extorted from civilians during 'stop and frisk' tactics deployed at checkpoints. Mobile devices were also regularly taken if evidence of pro-democracy activities were found.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN MON STATE, KAREN STATE & TANINTHARYI REGION



Arbitrary Arrests, Unlawful Detainment

The arbitrary arrests of innocent civilians has contributed to growing levels of fear in local communities. The junta has been indiscriminately arresting and detaining civilians for many years. Since the attempted coup, these unlawful acts have intensified. The military junta has intentionally spearheaded a campaign of violence that includes emotional distress and uncertainty for families who have witnessed their loved ones being taken away without reason or just cause by soldiers.

In cases documented by HURFOM, information on the location and well-being of detainees is rarely provided. Ransoms are used to extort families for updates on those in military custody, or to retrieve the bodies of those killed during interrogations. Over the last nine months, HURFOM has documented 29 cases of forced disappearances.

Protesters were among the first to be illegitimately arrested by the military junta. In May 2021, HURFOM recorded at least 213 young people who were abducted from their homes. These arrests took place at the beginning of the regime's unsuccessful attempts to squander dissent and weaken the Spring Revolution. Students and protest leaders were quickly added to the junta's growing wanted lists and those caught were faced with outlandish sentences through Burma's Penal Code, which was reformed by the military almost immediately following the attempted coup.¹

By the end of May, over 200 people had been charged by the junta in areas of Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi region. One month later in June, HURFOM data indicated that an additional 122 activists and protesters were sentenced to between two to four years in prison. Many had been detained since March and April.²

The majority of those behind bars are young people who have stood tall and defiant against the military's barbarity. A civilian in Dawei remarked: "Kids that age are too young to be political prisoners. The junta has intentionally targeted young activists, and punished them with the heavy sentences to incite fear."³ In March, HURFOM was reporting daily arrests at anti-military protests.⁴

“Now, we are living in constant fear with no protection, no security and no rule of law.”

Approximately 20 youth were arrested in Karen State between the 25th and 26th of March and charged with sections 505(a) and 505(b) of the Penal Code. By the end March, over 473 civilians had been detained.⁵ In the months that followed, the situation did not improve. During the last week of August alone in Dawei, between 25 and 30 civilians were arrested.

Anti-military protesters are routinely met with violence. Their belongings, including motorcycles and mobile devices, are often subsequently confiscated by the military junta. Those abducted during protests did not always return home. On 4 May, the family of Zaw Nyein Tint, age 20, was informed that he died at a military hospital after being taken away by riot police on 2 May.⁶ Cases like this have become an unfortunate norm and have set a worrying precedent that anyone could be the next victim to the regime’s terror. The onslaught of assaults has forced young people, protesters and activists and families into hiding. A civilian from Ye township, Mon State described the current situation as the following: “Now, we are living in constant fear with no protection, no security, and no rule of law.”⁷

Hostage taking of family members who are arbitrarily arrested is an ongoing, worrying pattern observed by HURFOM. Children and the elderly have not been spared. On 6 July, a 68-year-old woman and her 13-year-old grandson were abducted by the special forces in Pyin Gyi village, Long Lone Township, Dawei.⁸ The mother of Zay Myo Sat, a young victim, said her son and son-in-law were kidnapped when junta troops came to arrest her husband.

On 9 October, another family was taken hostage. At 8 am, joint pro-coup armed troops and militia forces arrested a mother and two children (age 2, and age 6) as hostages in SawPyar village, Thayet Chaung Township, Dawei region. They came and searched for Ko Nee Pun, a father and husband of the detainees. But when they could not arrest him, they kidnapped his family. The troops were led by militia leaders, U Aung Sein and U Maung Yee. While they were looking for Ko Nee Pun, they knocked on the doors of villagers and confiscated some mobile phones.⁹

The kidnapping of politicians and/or supporters of the National League for Democracy (NLD) is also an ongoing set of incidents taking place. On 6 May, three civilians were arrested at midnight in Mudon, Mon State: “Ko Ko Oo, an NLD member, and Yee Yee Htay, a CDM school teacher, were grabbed in a night raid in their houses by a group of 15 soldiers and police,” a friend of Koko Oo confirmed.¹⁰ A young man was also arrested for owning a pro-NLD t-shirt.¹¹

With accusations of supporting local PDFs and the NUG, the junta arrested at least ten civilians, including some social volunteers on 15 November. Ko Soe Thiha and his two colleagues from Kyaik Htoo’s Social Service Group were abducted along with six other people.¹² Those affiliated with or loyal to the NLD were targeted and arrested. A source said: “I am shocked that they are also targeting innocent social workers who have no business with any political activities.”

A few days later, the junta seized two homes belonging to Members of Parliament (MPs) of the NLD in Laung Lon Township, Dawei. They could not arrest them and their families as they had fled their homes a few months earlier. The military junta declared these officials as ‘terrorists’ and imposed anti-terrorism laws. Since May, the junta’s Ministry of Home Affairs has announced that all assets related to the ‘terrorists’ shall be confiscated.¹³

The junta police in Mottama, Paung Township, Mon State, opened a case against 15 detained Thae Eain-Su villagers under the Counter-Terrorism Law, Article 50(a)* for associating with the Karen National Union (KNU), which the local junta battalion designated as a terrorist group. These villagers included 14 men, of which one is an underage boy and women who are originally from Thae Eain-Su village. Most of them were rubber plantation workers and arrested on August 11.¹⁴

* Article 50 (a) carries a prison sentence of 10 years to life and a fine for causing severe damage to the security or the life and property of the public, or for forcing the government or any organization to commit an unlawful act or to refrain from following the law.

The arbitrary arrests and abductions of young people, and the taking of families as hostages by the junta has only amplified civil unrest. Armed with guns and weapons of mass destruction, residents are forced to comply or risk being killed.

There are dozens of additional cases documented by HURFOM related to arbitrary arrest and unlawful detainment. Hundreds remain unlawfully imprisoned and denied their rights to a fair trial and legal counsel. These circumstances reinforce the urgency to act to hold the junta accountable and ensure the release of all political prisoners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. All political prisoners must be immediately and unconditionally released.
2. Arbitrary arrests and the abductions of innocent civilians must be stopped immediately.
3. Those responsible for giving orders to arrest innocent civilians and those who follow through on the commands are guilty of human rights violations which they must be held accountable.



Artillery Shelling, Indiscriminate Firing

The military junta has intensified fighting in Burma's ethnic states. With a dark history of over 70 years of warfare, the Burmese Army has never been sincere in their commitments to peace. This is evident across a trajectory of broken ceasefires, including with the KNU.

Clashes began worsening in Karen State early in the year. Hundreds sought refuge in neighboring Thailand after airstrikes – the first in twenty-five years – displaced 90% of the rural Mutraw district.¹⁵ The onslaught of offensives resulted in documented extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and looting of civilian properties.¹⁶ On 7 April, the Burma Army launched artillery strikes against the KNU near Mon State which killed one villager and injured three others.¹⁷

By September, the clashes had displaced civilians in the Tanintharyi region as well. An estimated 1,000 villagers entered the jungle after the military began launching indiscriminate attacks and shelling on PinNae-Taung, Sar-Khae and Du-Yin-Pin-Yaung villages.¹⁸ Some villagers ran with only the clothes on their back. The majority of civilians from these three villages are Karen.

Targeting civilians is one of the junta's oldest tactics, especially whenever they have conflicts with their opponents. Local people know that the military does not have humanity. "The emergency relief and humanitarian aid providers should come and immediately respond to these people," a former KNU Brigade 4 commander said.

On 30 March, one civilian was shot to death, and two were injured in Kaw Thaug during protests in the deep south of Tanintharyi region. A witness reported that junta forces opened fire into residential homes and began shooting indiscriminately.¹⁹ Fighting at the end of April near Three Pagodas Pass resulted in the township being locked down by the junta after two Burmese Army soldiers were killed.

As peaceful demonstrators continued to echo their calls against the junta, the Burma Army has become more volatile. At the end of May, a 40-year-old Dawei resident was shot to death around 9PM when approximately twenty soldiers began shooting in Kyet-Sar-Pyin ward. The victim was sweeping in front of his home when he was killed. His body was swiftly taken away by the military junta and not returned to his family. Another villager aged 39, Myo Min Hteik, who was a local boatman in Myeik District, was found dead with gunshot wounds on his body when a pro-military armed group entered his village, and fired gunshots while yelling obscenities.²⁰

A 30-year-old woman was killed, and a 5-year-old boy injured along with his 40-year-old mother when at 10:20 PM, a group of soldiers, police and newly recruited Administrators began to take on newly appointed duties by the junta in the village of Hmyaw Yit, Pyin Gyi Village, Long Lone Township, Dawei. They started to fire their weapons at random. According to a witness, the incident happened very quickly. ²¹Troops arrived in the village and did their sentry duty just after the young men finished the night strike in the village.

The ongoing threats to people's safety are being intentionally deployed to create disorder. The junta are the curators of the chaos.

RECCOMENDATIONS

1. The Burma Army must immediately retreat from civilian areas.
2. Reparations must be granted to victims and their families of artillery shelling and indiscriminate firing.
3. Funeral costs, counseling and related costs to trauma must be provided to the families who have suffered losses by the military junta.



Destruction of Properties, Extortion of Possessions, & Funds

The military junta is constantly finding new ways to extort civilians for money and possessions. Domination tactics have included physically intimidating interrogations at security checkpoints. The questions and demands being made by Burma Army soldiers have been so harmful that residents have been discouraged from traveling.

On 10 April, at 9:35 AM, a Karen villager was shot to death at a checkpoint in Byaw Taw Wa by the military junta. He refused to be searched and decided to turn his vehicle around when the soldiers began shooting. The same soldiers soon after stopped a group of five young people at the checkpoint and stole their phones and motorcycles.²² The attacks have become more and more violent as security forces do not hesitate to shoot those who refuse to comply with their orders. At the end of June, two young men were shot to death by the junta in Mupon ward, Mawlamyine when they drove by a military checkpoint and were shot in the back. The victims are Moe Zaw Oo and Zaw Min Oo.²³

On 15 September, a 40-year-old resident was also shot to death. His friend was severely injured, a network member from Thaton, Mon State reporter. The victims were stopped by the junta at a checkpoint and answered the questions they were asked. Then they were shot from the back when they left the security toll gate.²⁴

Security has tightened in Ye township, Mon State due to many bombs exploding around the area. There is a notorious military checkpoint near Chaung Taung, Ye Township. Those on a motorcycle are ordered off of it. Then civilians are forced to push the bike and walk to a checkpoint. Locals say most of these troops are thieves. If travelers have watches, smartphones, and other valuable belongings, the junta will confiscate it.

“Many villagers and travelers who use this road always face violations at this checkpoint,” a local said.

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At the end of November, another traveler was shot to death at Maw-Kanin junta’s security tollgate (Ye Township, Mon State) at 8:25 PM. The victim’s name is Daw Yi Yi Cho, aged 48. “The soldiers said they ordered the car to stop. However, our driver did not hear the order. When we tried to stop, it was too late. I heard two gun-shots, and one hit my mother’s waist,” said the son of the victim.²⁶

Mobile phones, watches, and jewelry are being taken away for no reason. Two young travelers’ smartphones were confiscated by a Sergeant from the same security toll gate for having photos of the Spring Revolution on his phone. Others were forced to pay 200 000 Myanmar Kyats as ransoms to be released.²⁷

Religious monuments and places of worship are being targeted by the junta as another means to weaken the morale of civilians – as well as to continue destroying places of haven and security for locals looking for safe shelter and places to flee. A battalion under the Military Operation Management Command No19 set fire to a Buddhist monastery in Kanin Kamoh village, Ye Mon. The arson was initiated after a senior monk refused to let the Army establish a base in the compound.²⁸ The junta has taken to using hospitals, schools, churches and monasteries as places for them to set up camp, which has been an additional detriment to the well-being of civilians.

Even monuments have not been spared by the destruction of the junta. On 6 June, The Martyrs Monument, located in Hpa-an in Karen State, was torn down by the junta around 8 PM, according to local sources. These historic monuments pay tribute to fallen defenders. By destroying them, the junta is attempting to erase history.²⁹ In addition, a memorial statue commemorating the 1988 uprising was destroyed and removed by junta troops in Bago. Over 100 soldiers and police officers desecrated the monument, and arrested a committee member of the memorial.³⁰

The offices and homes of civil society leaders have been raided and destroyed by the junta. The Youth and Development Institute, based in Ye Phyu village, Lon Lone Township was raided by junta soldiers. At least 30 youth attending the training were there, and although no arrests were reported, all of the motorcycles were confiscated.³¹

The attacks, destruction of homes and properties and confiscation of possessions are all taking place without warrants. Junta security troops arrested two local civilians despite not having any formal documentation to explain the intrusion after raiding a house in Tha-Baw-Seik-Pyin Village, Long Lon Township, Dawei Region. A witness explained that the two men arrested were not the ones they wanted so the junta took two others as hostages. When the military left the village, they forcibly took three Honda motorcycles, a tank of oil and also robbed three million Myanmar kyats from the villagers.³²

At some checkpoints in Mon State, the junta's security forces do not allow motorbike passengers to wear masks and helmets. They are also banned from wearing caps and black sunglasses. Local people feel these new orders are ridiculous and limit their freedom of movement. Starting from the second week of November, the junta has announced that there are new rules regarding motorcycles. Two men cannot be on a motorcycle together, and a woman cannot be driving with a male passenger.³³

These are not isolated incidents. On 31 March, the military junta declared the following as illegal possessions: Thai satellite sim cards, virtual private networks and other bypassing applications. All of these unlawful acts are being committed in violations of laws and internationally binding conventions that the junta has continued to show a blatant disregard for. The military is constantly seeking out evidence of pro-democracy activities and are using unjust practises to detain those with such. Travel has become a headache for civilians who are extorted and harassed on their journeys.

RECCOMENDATIONS

1. All stolen and extorted properties and funds by the military junta must be returned to civilians who were exploited, or provided with monetary compensation for their losses.
2. For all security checkpoints in Burma to be staffed by competent, fair and law-abiding citizens who do not take advantage of travelers for personal and financial gain.
3. For all homes destroyed by arson, artillery fire or other means by the military junta to be restored.



Forced Displacement

In HURFOM target areas, at least 2000 are fleeing ongoing threats and violence in their attempts to find work opportunities in other parts of the country, or in neighbouring countries, such as Thailand. The lack of security in these areas has only exacerbated people's fears.³⁴ Many are forced to relocate at least temporarily as they hope for conflict to end so that they can return safely to their communities.

As documented in depth in HURFOM's June briefing paper, *"Displacement on the Rise: A Crisis in Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi region,"* there are several primary reasons why civilians are being forcibly displaced. The first is political dissidents who are trying to escape oppression by the junta. Those wanted by the regime must constantly be on-the-go. It is estimated that 500 dissidents from Mon State have been forced to flee for political reasons.³⁵ In addition, 300 have fled in Hpa-An, Karen State and at least 700 in Dawei.³⁶ Across all three target areas, over 1500 have had to seek safety away from their home for their political activities.³⁷

On 13 June, 32 young CDM protesters were sentenced up to two years imprisonment by the junta court. Most of them were arrested mid-March and charged with Penal Code 505 (a) and (b) included in the judgements. A source close to one of the detainees from Eain Du, Hpa-an, said those arrested instead of their family members who were involved in CDM and in hiding, were included in the charges.³⁸

Civilians are also fleeing indiscriminate violence by the military junta. On 22 October, at 8 am, three plain-clothed junta-backed armed men killed two villagers in Pandalell village, Lon Lone Township, Dawei. Three gunmen climbed out of a truck with handguns and started firing indiscriminately into a tea shop. They killed two civilians named U Aung Myint and Ko Nay Nay on the spot. Another two villagers were injured.³⁹ Many Pandalell villagers decided to flee because they were afraid of more attacks.

In Karen State at the end of August, the junta deployed several troops near KyayZu-Taw, Hnan-Kyae, Shin-Ta-Vee, and MineThone-Zae villages under the KNU's Brigade No.4 controlled areas in northeastern Yebyu township. The Coastal Regiment Command and MOC 19 directly command these troops, according to a KNU warfare source. A local villager who witnessed the deployment in the areas said some personnel were plain-clothed with weapons. Due to these threats by the junta battalions, approximately 130 families were forced to flee their homes.⁴⁰

The offensives continued in early September, according to HURFOM network members in Palaw Township, southern Tanintharyi Region. After the military began launching indiscriminate attacks and shelling on PinNae-Taung, Sar-Khae and Du-Yin-Pin-Yaung villages, everyone fled to the jungle.⁴¹

Many civilians have died in the crossfire of violence, including peaceful protesters. Fifteen peaceful demonstrators on the western border of Mon State were killed by police, and nearly forty were injured.⁴² People were unable to retrieve the dead bodies because the junta blocked all of the roads. Hundreds were subsequently forced to flee to the Mon Border.⁴³

Many young people and children are suffering in this current socio-economic climate. Children are among those who have been arrested when migrating across the Thai border and mothers are separated from their children. This alone is enough reason for Thailand to act on humanitarian grounds and offer protection to the thousands of newly displaced IDPs.⁴⁴

The communities in HURFOM target areas and across Burma cannot afford to wait any longer for aid. They need immediate humanitarian assistance. The reality is that displacement is on the rise. It is a devastating indicator of inhumanity when a person is denied the right to feel safe in their own homeland.

RECCOMENDATIONS

1. The international community must use their leverage to hold the Burma Army accountable to put an end to the economic and human rights crisis they are responsible for.
2. Donors and international agencies focusing on war-affected refugees and IDPs must recognize the work of local community-based service providers, organizations, and civil society groups who are already trusted by the beneficiaries to coordinate an effective and efficient humanitarian response.
3. Neighboring countries which border Burma such as India and Thailand must protect refugee rights. They must sign on to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, to ensure refugees are granted protection and access to UN agencies and humanitarian organizations for their immediate assistance.



Murder and Torture Ending in Death or Severe Injuries

The junta's detention centers have been described as 'hell on earth,' by those who were detained by the military junta. For decades, investigations by journalists and rights groups into the conditions of prisons have sparked calls for reform. Conditions are in violation of prison standards and minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners, as outlined by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.⁴⁵ A 2016 thematic report by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners goes into detail about how prisoners are treated inhumanely due to overcrowding, torture and mistreatment, solitary confinement and deaths in custody.⁴⁶

A description of the prison conditions from a family member of a detained protester in Taung Paw Dan Ward, Mawlamyine, Mon State, told HURFOM: "Those thrown in the cells are beaten and tortured by the police. But they were not all anti-coup activists or even involved in the protests. According to my brother, cells are always overcrowded. There is inadequate drinking water and dirty rice."⁴⁷

A similar testimony was recounted by a volunteer lawyer from Mawlamyine providing legal assistance to detained prisoners. He said: "My friend, Ko Han Win, was detained and tortured. He was transferred to Kyaikmayaw Jail. There is no doubt the authorities will commit human rights abuses against the detainees."⁴⁸

Deaths in the custody of the junta police are ongoing. Ko Aung Yu, 35, a resident of Daung Ngu Ward, Dawei, was abducted by junta security forces on the accusation of associating with those who shot a Police Corporal on the afternoon of August 11th.⁴⁹ The victim's wife told HURFOM: "My husband is not associated with any violent actions related to the armed groups in the area. He is a peaceful man and a good husband. I was shocked when I got a phone call of his death from the Police Station."

Five young men, including Ko Aung Yu, from Dawei were arrested by the junta on August 11th. All detainees were believed to have suffered from severe torture during their investigation in custody, according to their relatives. On 7 April, a resident of Kaw Thaug, age 32, was killed at a military detention center.⁵⁰

On July 28, three villagers were abducted by LIB 406 who accused them of smearing red paint and handprints on the junta Village Administration Office wall and street. Twenty soldiers from LIB #406 entered Ye Phyu village and arrested these three villagers, brought them to the village school, and beat them during interrogation. One was only 18 years old.⁵¹

Intrusions into local villages have been met with more violent arrests and abductions resulting in death or severe injuries. On 14 June, it was reported that seven villagers were abducted after a Police Inspector from the local police station was killed by two unknown gunmen in Maung Ma Ngan village, Dawei at 10 AM.⁵² A group of ten soldiers came and arrested these young villagers. Among them, one villager was shot by the security troops on his left calf and injured. He was accused of being one of the gunmen who killed the police inspector. Villagers insisted that he was just a simple villager with no ties to any armed group.

The frequency of those killed by the junta probed a local to remark: “Our lives are not safe anymore. How many more need to be killed?”⁵³

RECCOMENDATIONS

1. The military junta must act in accordance with laws on the treatment of prisoners in their custody including refraining from all violence and torture. All political prisoners must be released.
2. The junta must immediately halt all torture tactics being used on detainees which amount to serious violations of international laws.
3. The international community must amplify and increase the pressure on the junta to cooperate with human rights mechanisms that strongly prohibit the use of force on civilians.



Violence Against Women and Girls

For decades, the Burmese Army has evaded accountability for state-sponsored crimes perpetrated against civilians. Among their most brutal tactics has been the ongoing subjugation of women and young girls.

Throughout the month of September, HURFOM witnessed a steady increase in the targeting of young women in Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi region by the junta. Students in particular are regularly abducted for organizing pro-democracy activities and providing moral or monetary support to the various resistance movements.⁵⁴ Several female students are among those who were recently abducted by junta security forces.

In Dawei on 20 September, three students were arrested. One of the detained students, Soe Me Me Kyaw, attempted to commit suicide by drinking a sanitizing solution at the detention center after she was violently interrogated by military intelligence officers. She was treated in the intensive care unit at a military hospital.⁵⁵

Women abducted and detained by the junta are taken violently. On 25 October, two young civilians from No. 2 Ward, Hpa-An Township, Karen State were abducted and brought to the prison. The junta and military intelligence officers grabbed a young woman and man from Ahmat Hnit ward. The troops came with three trucks into Ward No.2, arrested them after checking their mobile smartphones. On August 21, a witness reported a group of six plainclothes military intelligence officers handcuffed a young woman in front of No.2 High School in Mawlamyine at 3:30 pm. The reason for her arrest is unknown. Another local source assumed the woman led a student protest in March with Mawlamyine University.⁵⁶

Indiscriminate firing and shelling have also led to violence being deployed against women and resulted in them being killed or injured in the crossfire of violence. Ma Ei The Moe, 27, a pregnant woman and mother of one child, was shot dead by the junta in Ka-Dike village, Paung Township, Mon State in the evening. Her husband suffered from severe injuries as well.⁵⁷

The junta is continuing to deny families the bodies of loved ones killed in their custody. Two women killed on 29 May at 10:20 PM were cremated at a military hospital without consent. The victims died in Thaboh Seik village, Laung Lone Township, when troops indiscriminately opened fire on residents. “The military authorities from Long Lone sent us photos of the cremation. I did not have a chance to see her for the last time. We have to make merit without her,” said U Soe Soe, husband of one of the victims, Daw San Po. When the troops entered the village, they indiscriminately shot at villagers’ homes. These two women were on the street. When the women saw the soldiers, they ran in fear. Then the soldiers shot them from the back and took their bodies on the truck with serious injuries.⁵⁸

The targeted gendered violence and abduction of young women and girls is symptomatic of a wider problem of impunity, which incites further violations of human rights. The junta has created systems which shield soldiers from accountability and embodies a deeply flawed entity which lacks moral consciousness and compassion of the harm they are willingly perpetrating. They have also long denied and dismissed the lived experiences and trauma of ethnic women who have been violated by the Burma Army.

RECCOMENDATIONS

1. The military junta must be held accountable for their crimes against women, young girls and children through a referral by the United Nations Security Council to the International Criminal Court.
2. Human rights organizations must be permitted to document and collect human rights violations being committed by the junta, and subsequent referral pathways must be made available without discriminatory procedures undermining justice for victims.
3. Women human rights defenders must be supported by the international community as they work closely with survivors and victims of sexual violence perpetrated by the military junta. This includes concerted action on funding programs to end violence against women and girls.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, HURFOM has been forced to conclude that Burma is on a dangerous trajectory. The military junta has intentionally sabotaged pathways to peace and acted with merciless authority. A response by the international community which meets the gravity of the peril's civilians are being confronted with on a daily basis is long overdue. As the year ends, it is with the most profound urgency that HURFOM reiterates the calls of our network and allies to respond to the many crises which are worsening daily.

Each individual case of suffering reflects the sentiment of thousands of civilians facing the same pain across the country. Protection is desperately needed for human rights defenders who still remain in hiding. Humanitarian assistance is required for the over 200,000 internally displaced persons in Burma today. The unlawful arrest and detainment of civilians must be met with international consequences, along with their immediate release.

Further, the developments in Burma are disastrous for its people, as well as the region as a whole. They create the potential for thousands of people to flee violence and persecution, as well as a volatile regional environment. Moving forward into the New Year, the international community must take seriously the plight of local people who are experiencing mounting levels of violence which threatens their over well-being. It is imperative that action meets the widespread condemnation being vocalized.

ENDNOTES

- 1 See HURFOM Briefer: [“We have lost our private sphere,”](#) September 2021
- 2 See [HURFOM June Situation Update](#)
- 3 See [HURFOM July Situation Update](#)
- 4 See [HURFOM March Situation Update](#)
- 5 Ibid
- 6 See [HURFOM May Situation Update](#)
- 7 See [HURFOM July Situation Update](#)
- 8 See [HURFOM October Situation Update](#)
- 9 Ibid
- 10 See [HURFOM May Situation Update](#)
- 11 Ibid
- 12 See [HURFOM November Situation Update](#)
- 13 Ibid
- 14 See [HURFOM August Situation Update](#)
- 15 [“Regime airstrikes have displaced 90% of rural population in embattled Karen District,”](#) Myanmar Now, 25 May 2021
- 16 [“Terror from the Skies,”](#) Karen Peace Support Network, 25 May 2021
- 17 See [HURFOM April Situation Update](#)
- 18 See [HURFOM September Situation Update](#)
- 19 See [HURFOM March Situation Update](#)
- 20 See [HURFOM October Situation Update](#)
- 21 See [HURFOM May Situation Update](#)
- 22 See [HURFOM April Situation Update](#)
- 23 See [HURFOM June Situation Update](#)
- 24 See [HURFOM September Situation Update](#)
- 25 See [HURFOM November Situation Update](#)
- 26 Ibid
- 27 Ibid

- 28 See [HURFOM April Situation Update](#)
- 29 See [HURFOM June Situation Update](#)
- 30 See [HURFOM May Situation Update](#)
- 31 Ibid
- 32 See [HURFOM November Situation Update](#)
- 33 Ibid
- 34 [“DISPLACEMENT ON THE RISE: A Crisis in Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi Region,”](#)
Human Rights Foundation of Monland, June 2021
- 35 Ibid
- 36 Ibid
- 37 Ibid
- 38 See [HURFOM June Situation Update](#)
- 39 See [HURFOM October Situation Update](#)
- 40 See [HURFOM August Situation Update](#)
- 41 See [HURFOM September Situation Update](#)
- 42 Ibid
- 43 Ibid
- 44 Ibid
- 45 See in full: [UNODC: The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners](#)
- 46 [“Prison Conditions in Burma and the Potential for Prison Reform,”](#) Assistance Association for
Political Prisoners, 2016
- 47 See [HURFOM June Situation Update](#)
- 48 Ibid
- 49 See [HURFOM August Situation Update](#)
- 50 See [HURFOM April Situation Update](#)
- 51 See [HURFOM July Situation Update](#)
- 52 See [HURFOM June Situation Update](#)
- 53 Ibid
- 54 See [HURFOM September Situation Update](#)
- 55 See [HURFOM October Situation Update](#)

- 56 See [HURFOM August Situation Update](#)
- 57 See [HURFOM September Situation Update](#)
- 58 See [HURFOM June Situation Update](#)



TRAJECTORY OF TERROR

*An overview of human rights perpetrated by the Military
Junta in Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi region*

DECEMBER 2021