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Press release by the Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT)

Bloodstained Gateways: escalating SAC abuses in northern Burma pave the way for BRI expansion

A new report by the Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT) links escalating abuses by SAC troops in Kachin and northern Shan State to the regime's attempts to secure transport routes for expansion of China's Belt and Road Initiative.

The report documents a sharp increase since mid-2022 in the number of casualties of aerial bombardment, up to nearly 200, and in the number of villagers forced to be human shields, up to 221, compared to the previous fifteen months.

Other widespread SAC abuses documented by KWAT include thirty incidents of shelling into populated areas, inflicting 61 civilian casualties, and arbitrary arrest of 441 people, including Kachin religious leader Dr. Hka Lam Samson. Dozens of those arrested have disappeared.

Mapping shows most SAC abuses clustered along the main transport routes in northern Burma, vital gateways for development of BRI infrastructure. KWAT analyzes this as a deliberate strategy of collective punishment to secure control of key transport arteries.

"With conventional warfare failing against resistance forces, the regime is increasingly resorting to attacks against civilians," said KWAT spokesperson Ja Ing

KWAT exposes that the devastating airstrike on the concert in Hpakant last October, which inflicted over 170 casualties, was direct retaliation for heavy SAC losses suffered a day earlier during a failed attempt to seize KIA positions on Lung Ja mountain – the highest vantage point in southeast Kachin State, overlooking key transport corridors to China.

The attacks and abuses have fueled fresh displacement of nearly 14,000 villagers during the past fifteen months, even as the regime has been pushing ahead with plans to close down existing camps in northern Burma housing over 107,000 IDPs.

KWAT is calling urgently for increased diplomatic and economic pressure on the SAC regime to stop their attacks on civilians throughout Burma, and for donor countries to step up aid to existing and newly displaced IDPs, prioritizing cross-border channels.

KWAT also calls on China to halt its planned acceleration of BRI projects in Burma.

"China is taking a huge risk by pushing ahead with BRI projects in partnership with the military regime," said Ja Ing "There are no guarantees of security, and China will find itself complicit in the mounting atrocities associated with the planned projects."



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