



# Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

## In the Dark

The crime of enforced disappearances and their impacts on the rural communities of Southeast Burma since the 2021 coup

November 8th, 2023

The Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) is pleased to announce the release of its latest thematic report, *"In the Dark: The crime of enforced disappearances and their impacts on the rural communities of Southeast Burma since the 2021 coup"*. Since the 2021 military coup, the State Administration Council (SAC) has taken villagers from their homes, deprived them of their liberties, provided no information of their whereabouts, and often denied the very fact that they are missing. Civilians are arbitrarily arrested and held for prolonged periods of time, many times also tortured and killed.

This report presents the testimonies of victims of enforced disappearances, including family members, in locally-defined Karen State and the suffering they and their communities had to endure. It shines a light on key factors driving enforced disappearances, including political targeting, and the agency strategies used by villagers to respond to the crime. The report also includes incidents perpetrated by other armed groups, including armed resistance groups. Finally, it presents villagers' demands for justice, accountability, and their desire for lasting peace and justice.

The SAC's actions, which amount to the crime against humanity of enforced disappearance, continue to occur with impunity. Therefore, this report seeks to inform national, regional, and international stakeholders about this underreported crime and the ways they can hold perpetrators accountable. There must be decisive action against the SAC's campaign of terror, and systems to support villagers' needs.

KHRG calls on the international community, NGOs, and regional and foreign governments to:

- Recognise that the SAC is at the origin of the current human rights and humanitarian crisis, and ensure that no legitimacy is given to the junta.
- Acknowledge villagers are politically targeted by the SAC, and expand the current protection services to reach all regions in Burma.
- Recognise that justice for this crime is currently not available locally, and advocate for the establishment of new legal challenges to national and international courts to try the SAC for the crime against humanity of enforced disappearance.
- Establish coordination and cooperation with local civil society and community-based organisations (CSO/CBOs) to make services accessible for victims of enforced disappearances and their families in rural areas, including the negotiation of the release of victims with perpetrators.
- Take diplomatic, political and technical action to protect human rights defenders from attacks.

Media Contacts:

Saw Nanda Hsue, KHRG Advocacy Coordinator, [hsue@khr.org](mailto:hsue@khr.org)

Naw Paw Lah, KHRG Advocacy Officer, [nawpawlah@khr.org](mailto:nawpawlah@khr.org)