

Nationwide Flooding from Typhoon Yagi Sees Additional Hardships for Conflict-Affected Communities as the Junta Continues to Commit Human Rights Violations

Overall Analysis:

During the third quarter of the year, flooding amid the monsoon season created additional challenges for civilians who have been forced to flee their villages under attack by the military junta. These include a rise in water-borne diseases and challenges accessing health services due to roadblocks and increased junta checkpoints.

The death toll from Typhoon Yagi surged to over 350 people, and hundreds of thousands are internally displaced, with entire villages being evacuated across the country.

Internally displaced people (IDPs) from Karenni State are facing critical food shortages as the junta continues to carry out human rights violations amid the flooding, with over ten shelters for IDPs completely destroyed, adding further turmoil and uncertainty for trauma-affected communities. There is an urgent need for humanitarian relief as thousands are vulnerable and lack adequate housing.

Major Quarterly Developments in Karenni State: July - September 2024

- 74+ Civilians Killed
- 51+ Civilians Injured
- 129+ Homes and Buildings Destroyed, including at least 30 homes burned by the junta in Demoso
- 5+ Cases of Landmines
- 8+ Cases of Mortar Shelling
- 10+ Arbitrarily Arrested
- 6+ Airstrikes

The Karenni Interim Executive Council (IEC), estimated that nearly 40,000 people have been affected by floods in four Karenni and Pekon Township townships since September 9th, and at least 12 displacement camps have been submerged.

Local Karenni authorities issued several warnings amid the threat of landslides during the continuous rains as they worked alongside civil society organizations and first responders to aid in the humanitarian assistance effort. Worryingly, it was reported that the junta has taken advantage of the flooding to try and reinforce troops in areas controlled by the resistance.

By the end of September, flood-affected IDPs in Karenni were still grappling with the aftermath of the three-foot rise in water levels. Townships, including Loikaw, Demoso, and Hpruso and Pekon in Shan State, continued to see excessive rains and floods.

In Loikaw, as a result of the severe flooding since September 14th, three people died while trying to forage for food during the floods. Of utmost concern is that water levels continue to rise, with 80% of the city submerged. Many who lost their homes in the floods have sought shelter and refuge in abandoned buildings.

Photos:

Civil society organizations providing relief to flood-affected communities.

Credit: The Karenni National Women's Organization





Photo:

Impact of the rising flood waters in Karenni State which have submerged many homes and buildings.

The IEC added that there have been at least 26 confirmed deaths from the recent flooding, including three that occurred in Pekon Township.

Social services, already strapped for resources, now face additional challenges as flooding has infiltrated hospitals, clinics, and schools. In the Pon Chaung IDP camp in east Demoso, displaced civilians still require urgent aid in the aftermath of Typhoon Yagi. Communication blackouts caused by power cuts caused by the storm have delayed rescue efforts and made emergency relief work increasingly challenging.

Amid the rising flood waters, as civilians struggled to survive, the junta continued to carry out deliberate attacks on innocent villagers in Karenni State, including setting their homes and villages on fire. More than half of Burma's nineteen states were affected by the flooding, and yet, in the last week of June alone, the junta burned over 60 homes in Loikaw.

The Karenni Human Rights Group (KnHRG) has continued to document the arson attacks as well as additional widespread human rights violations, including airstrikes, mortar shelling and landmines. Since the beginning of the '1111' military operation, carried out by

resistance forces in Karenni State, clashes have been ongoing throughout Loikaw.

Homes were damaged by arson attacks, including seven that were set on fire and five destroyed by airstrikes in July of the reporting period. KnHRG documented that at least 50 houses were burned down and damaged in Loikaw Township by the military junta. By contrast, in August, at least 30 homes were burned down in Demoso township.

The junta also burned homes in Doposi village and 6-mile. Between 10 and 20 homes were damaged in these areas. Mortar shelling fired by the junta in Demoso township in August landed in local villages, damaged farmland, including rice and corn fields, three homes and killed livestock.

Civilians who have lost their homes and been forced from their villages have said they ‘dare not to return.’

Returning IDPs have found their villages in ashes by the Burma Army. Those who try to stop the blaze are attacked with gunfire or intimidating, violent actions by the military junta. The scorched earth tactic by the military junta is deepening the humanitarian crisis that has displaced thousands of Karenni people.

The military junta scorches villages in part to terrorize and discourage local people from returning and to also hide evidence of the crimes they have committed. The widespread destruction of civilian properties by the military junta violates international human rights and international humanitarian law, which prohibits attacks on civilian objects such as villages, towns, and houses, provided they have not become military objectives (i.e. used for military purposes).

Deliberate attacks on civilians are prohibited under international humanitarian law and constitute a war crime.

The junta's many crimes of property damage and destruction are also in violation of the Geneva Convention, which Burma acceded to in August 1992. The Convention establishes the internationally recognized minimum humane standards of conduct to be observed in internal or external armed conflict situations.

Among other international accountability instruments, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2669 in December 2022, which condemned the junta's attacks and called for an immediate end to the hostilities it continues to deploy.

Worryingly, over the last quarter, fighting intensified in Loikaw, which is no longer under the control of the Karenni revolutionary forces. Karenni forces were forced to withdraw from Dawh Uku and Narnat Taw wards. However, the resistance is still occupying much of the State and is fighting to secure it once again.

As a result of the increased presence of Burma Army soldiers in Loikaw, farmers who had been relying heavily on tending to their fields to secure their livelihoods have been forced to abandon their crops to seek safety. Civilians have been warned by the resistance



Photos:

Homes have been completely submerged by the flooding caused by Typhoon Yagi in Karenni State.

to stay from the township, but the junta has continued to fire into local areas, leading to additional surges in displacement.

According to a report, on July 23rd, intensified military operations by the Burma Army forced villagers in eastern Loikaw to flee. Aid workers state that the increased number of IDPs has led to a greater demand for food aid as IDPs continue to face widespread food insecurity.

Crippling inflation by the junta has made life increasingly difficult for displaced communities who lack reliable and affordable access to food, clean water, and medicine.

According to local ground data, more than 10,000 people are displaced in the eastern part of Loikaw, and 250,000 across Karenni State live in 410 camps and temporary shelters.

Indiscriminate violence by the junta has made local people fearful of any interactions with the junta. On July 18th, at 10:45 AM, the Burma Army opened fire, unprovoked, with large weapons in Phe Kon township. Three innocent men were hit after an explosion in the village. Local homes were also damaged. KnHRG condemned the attack and ongoing violence ongoing attacks by the military.

In a related case, two young men who lost their way returning from work were shot and killed on sight in August when the junta saw them. These acts of violence are part of a pattern of widespread, systematic terror that the Burma Army has perpetrated for decades. A few weeks earlier, the military junta based in Demoso, launched a mass firing of weapons. A young girl was injured, and three houses were destroyed.

Further, over the last quarter, airstrikes continued to threaten the lives of civilians. On September 4th at 3 PM and 9:30 AM and 9:30 AM on September 5, the military used fighter jets to carry out attacks near Nanmal Khon in Demoso township in Karenni State without any fighting. For two days, the explosion occurred in three villages, injuring and killing civilians and damaging homes.

Then, on the evening of September 5th, targeting a camp for IDPs called the Bangkok IDP camp in La Ei village. Two 500-pound bombs were dropped directly onto those living below, killing at least ten people, including women and children, and injuring more than fourteen individuals. Several properties were damaged, and many locals remain missing in the aftermath of the attack. KnHRG condemned the affront to human life and called for an immediate end to long-standing military impunity in Burma.

“Nine bodies were found, including seven children and two women. There were also many injured and missing people. A teacher was among the dead,” said KnHRG Co-Founder Ko Banya on the junta-deployed airstrike.

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Photo: The aftermath of the airstrike on Bangkok IDP Camp.

On September 21st, at 3:45 PM, the junta carried out another air attack targeting a village where civilians and refugees live. Homes were damaged, and a 31-year-old woman died. Nine people were injured, including five children under age 18.

KnHRG has documented a worrying rise in the number of airstrikes in Karenni, with at least 30 occurring in March of this year alone. When weapons are fired from the sky, the chances of survival are little to none - leaving communities in constant fear. Countries must stop arming the terrorist junta with ammunition to kill innocent people.

Further, the ongoing attacks from the junta have caused widespread suffering for people in Karenni State. Soldiers fire relentlessly from the air and ground at innocent civilians. KnHRG is deeply concerned over the worrying response by neighbouring countries, including China, Thailand, and India, who simultaneously supply the junta with weapons while refusing to adhere to principles of non-refoulement and are routinely forcing back conflict-affected refugees.

The UN, ASEAN, and other global actors must act on the human rights situation in Burma. They must immediately end their business and personal relationships and divest from the bullets waged on civilians. There must be a complete cut of all arms and sanctions on aviation fuel. Humanitarian assistance is urgently needed to alleviate the suffering of thousands across Karenni State and Burma. Aid is most effective when channeled through cross-border. Direct funding must be provided through local organizations to ensure safe and dignified delivery.

Without urgent action and effective coordination, the junta will continue to terrorize civilians and fuel a humanitarian crisis which has already displaced millions.

Human Rights Violations

Airstrikes

Airstrikes are happening every day in Karenni State. Yet, the international community is not effectively coordinating sanctions on aviation fuel. Exporters of fuel must also be held accountable for supplying weapons to the junta that kills innocent people. The local monitoring group Blood Money Campaign documented nearly 140 airstrikes during the last two weeks of July 2024.

The Ta’ang Political Consultative Committee (TPCC) and the Karenni State Interim Executive Council (IEC) issued a statement in early September, condemning the junta’s airstrikes, which have resulted in the deaths of innocent civilians, including children and women. In Karenni State, there have been 24 people killed and 40 injured this year.

There was one airstrike in July, none in August and at least five in September.

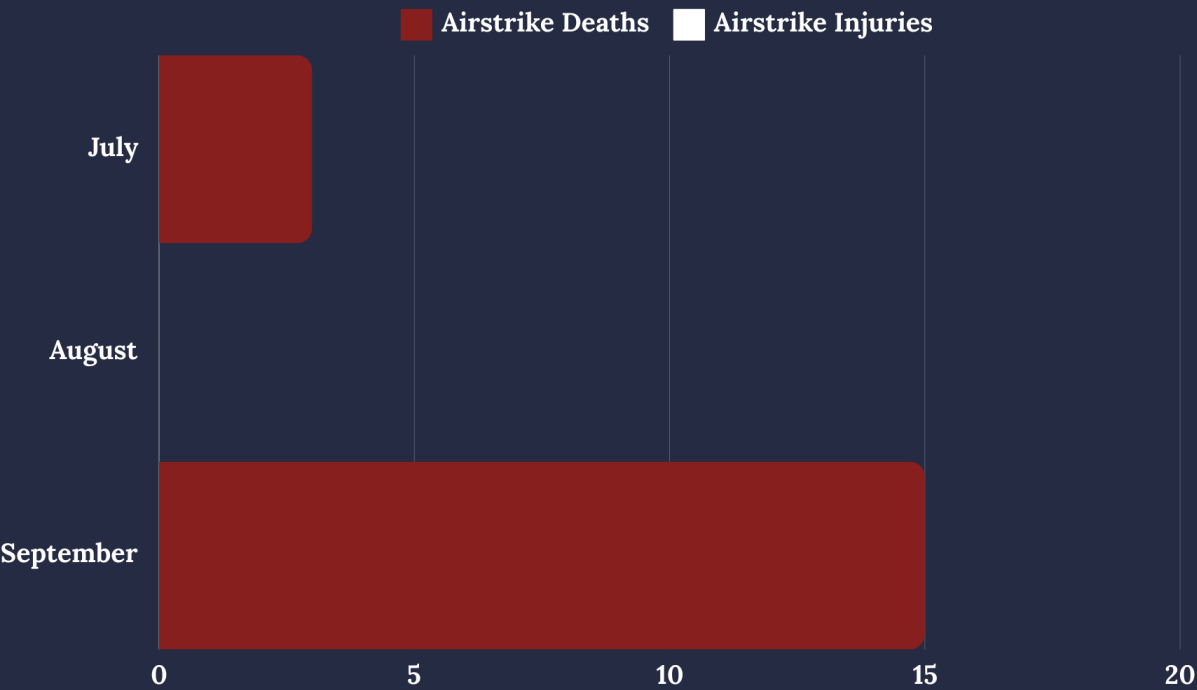


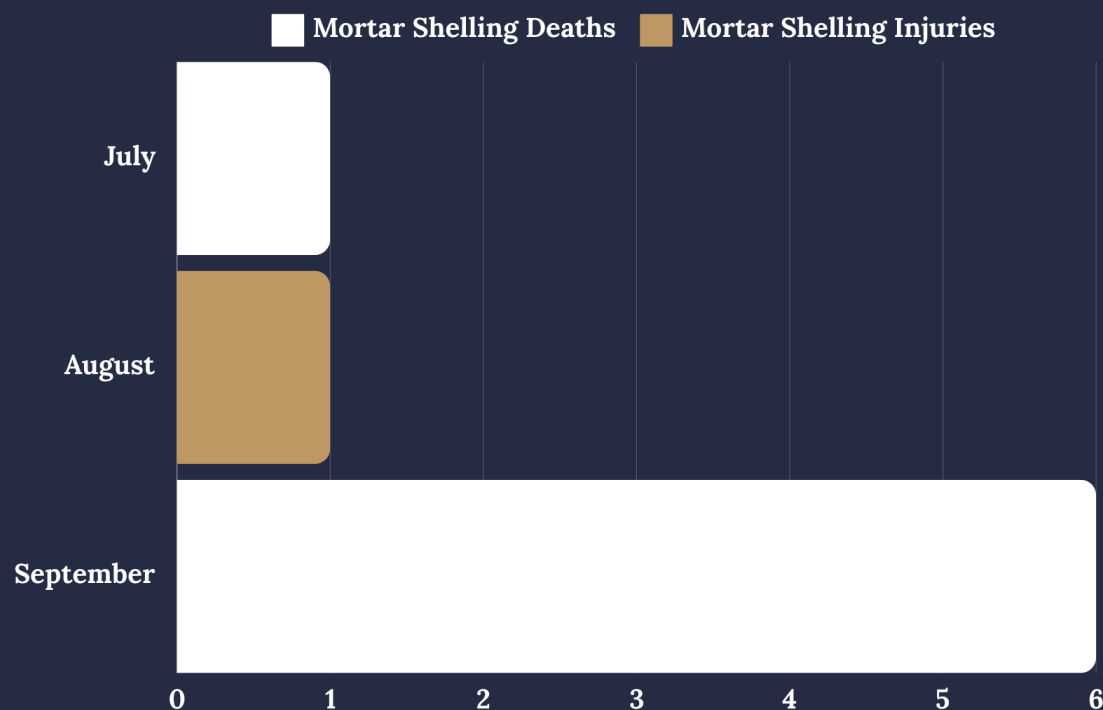


Photo:

Aftermath of an airstrike the junta carried out targeting a village where civilians and refugees live.

Mortar Shelling

Mortar shells are regularly deployed into civilian areas by the military junta to evoke fear and terror. A 37-year-old man died from mortar shells fired by the junta in July. In August, mortar shelling fired by the junta in Htee Po Kalo village, Demoso Township, injured a 12-year-old boy. In September, mortar shelling occurred four times and killed six men.



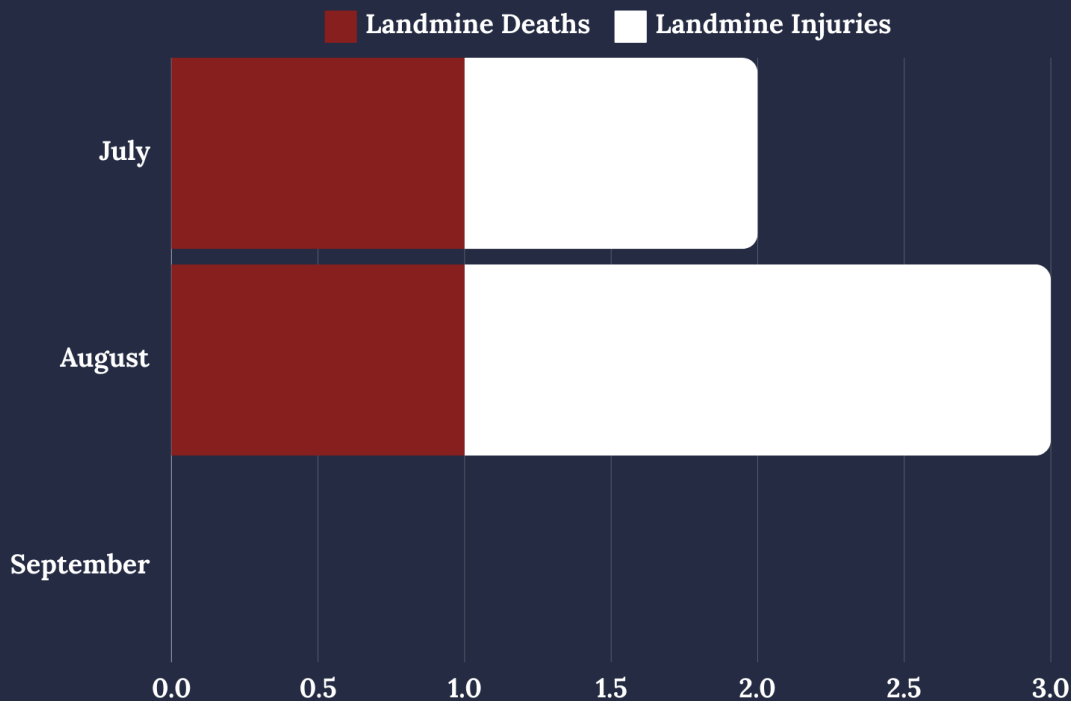
Landmines

Civilian casualties continue due to landmines planted by the junta. In July, landmines injured two men. In addition, while playing with an unexploded ordnance device, one young boy was injured, and one young boy was killed when it exploded.

In August, a landmine killed a 51-year-old man named U Aung Than while he was looking for food in Pekon township, Gaun Ei section. He lost both of his legs and desperately sought help but bled to death within 30 minutes.

Landmines also wounded two men in August who were returning to their homes in Moe Bye, Wah Ree Sue PaHlain village. One, age 32, and the other, age 42, both sustained serious injuries to their bodies. There were no documented cases of landmines in September.

According to the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), over 339 people have been impacted nationwide by landmines, though local groups have reported much higher numbers. In addition, Burma ranks fifth among all countries with the highest death rates due to landmines.



Property Damage

On August 7th, at 7 AM, the junta carried out attacks which destroyed farmlands and villages. At least ten homes were ruined this week alone. Throughout August, 30 houses were burned by the military. With no place to call home, civilians are being denied their right to safe housing.

The terrorist junta set fire to at least 20 homes in Demoso Township. The IEC noted that smoke rising from the scorched homes could be seen. Nearly 50 properties were damaged in September, including 44 houses, one hospital, and one farm. Most of the villages were attacked by the military without any prior fighting.

International humanitarian law prohibits attacks on civilian objects such as villages, towns, and houses.

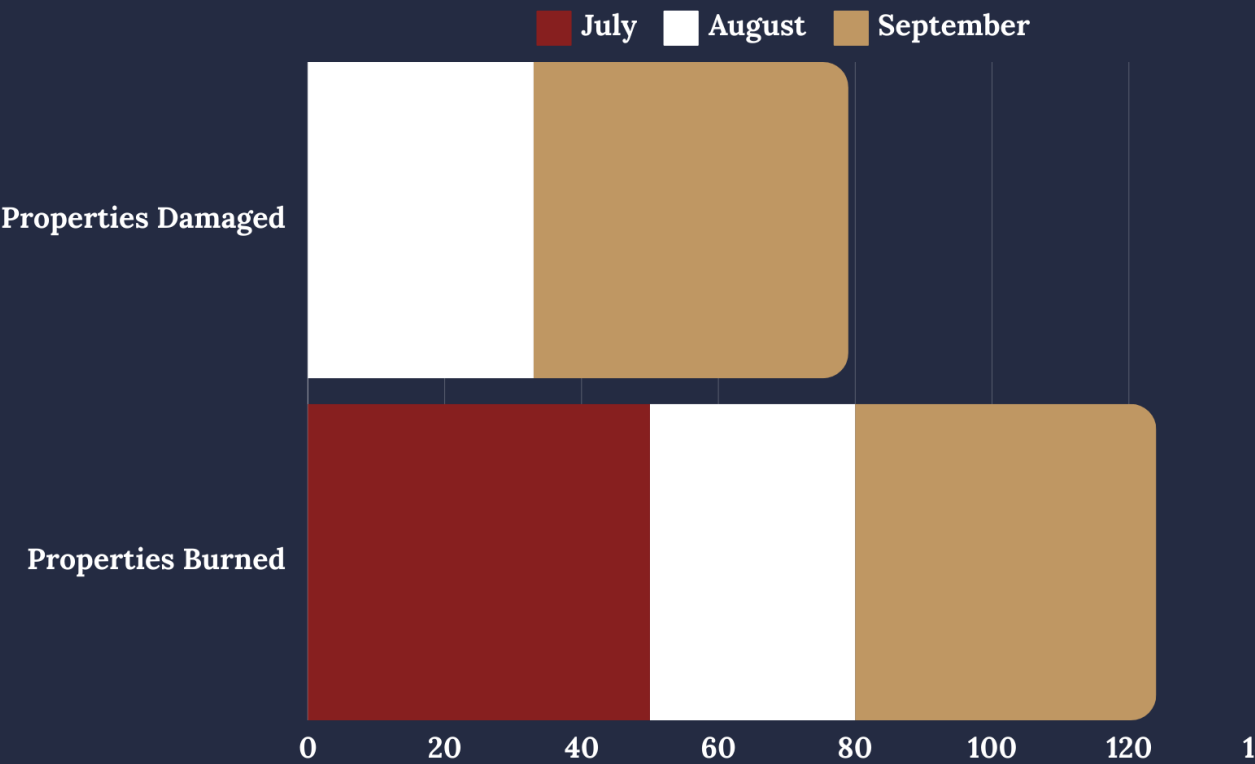
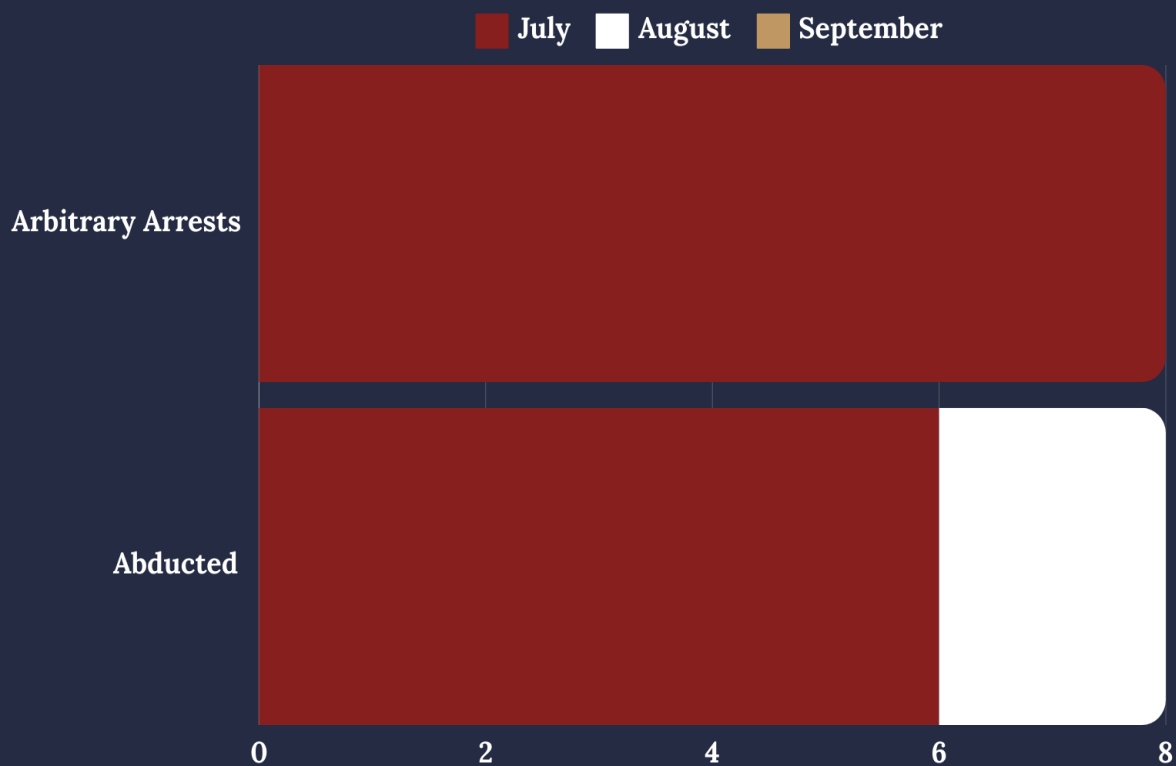


Photo:
Devastation and destruction following the junta's attacks from the air and ground on local infrastructure.



Arbitrary Arrests

Six men from Loikaw, NaiHu village/ Loikaw- Loylin and two women from Loikaw, Tar Yu, were arbitrarily arrested by the junta in July and remain missing. The junta uses arbitrary arrests as a fear mongering tool and tactic to instill uncertainty. Throughout the country, more men are disappearing while returning from work or errands after being detailed and violently interrogated.



Feature:

In August of 2023, KnHRG interviewed an internally displaced person (IDP)* about the difficulties they were facing.



In August 2023, an interview with a Karenni IDP highlighted some of the struggles and hardships they faced, which are still prevalent today. Fears of food insecurity, dwindling supplies, and aerial attacks continue to impact the displaced community. While efforts to establish a school were welcomed, there were still not enough school supplies for the teachers and students - a problem that still persists because of surging inflation rates. Even a little over a year later, these hardships continue to exist, preventing Karenni IDPs from improving their quality of life or returning home.

“We’ve been avoiding war but have been displaced for six months. There are donations, but we haven’t received any in two months. Since our displacement, we’ve been struggling with our livelihood. Some can go home but are not allowed to bring back rice. Here, if we store rice for too long, it gets destroyed. There aren’t enough rain covers for the shelters. Only two households can work on the farm. We can open only one market. The essentials needed are rice, oil, and rain covers.

The camp opened its own school. They called the teachers from the village and asked them to teach here. The school has KG to 5th grade. The school opened a month after we were displaced. There are four teachers and 30 students. For the teachers, the school gives them some pocket money, but not regularly. Additional monetary support was collected from the parents and the teachers.

We also don't have enough school supplies. To go back to the village, transportation will be really difficult and far. Sometimes, when the road closes, we can't go back at all.

We're becoming sick more easily with no medicine and not being used to the weather and area. Since it's a colder region, our bodies ache when we shower. When anyone gets sick, we see a doctor in K village. Since the medicinal supplies are not fully stocked sometimes, the vaccines we want aren't there. Most of those who went to their village and came back also caught the flu. There's coughing, runny noses, and some even have high blood pressure. Some kids also have some form of itching on their skin. There's no medicine for those with high blood pressure. The most worrying thing is that we don't have a complete medicinal supply.

"We get scared when there are a lot of planes flying around."



The situation is not that bad, but we get scared when there are a lot of planes flying around. A week or two ago, there were people traveling, and we're also worried about their safety.

We have to stay in another village. We need bamboo to build a house. We've been here for a while, and the bamboo has become infected with insects. To fix it, we need new bamboo. We've been avoiding war for over two years and living in the jungle north of the village. After that, we moved here (to the IDP camp). There are about 40 households avoiding war.

**Name and locations removed for safety and security.*

Recommendations

1. Direct coordinate emergency humanitarian aid provision efforts, including through cross-border channels, for the aid to reach the vulnerable population of more than 200,000 Karenni IDPs resulting from the military violence and airstrikes, and combat COVID-19 by providing resources and working in equal and meaningful partnership and collaboration with ethnic and community-based humanitarian and civil society organizations;
2. Impose further targeted sanctions against the military and its leadership and military businesses, including specifically targeting Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprises (MOGE), military-linked business partners and a network of arms dealers;
3. Impose a coordinated global arms embargo on the Burmese military;
4. Sanction the supply of jet fuel to the Burmese military to end airstrikes and impose a no-fly zone;
5. Recommend the International Criminal Court to accept the declaration lodged by the National Unity The government of Burma, under Article 12(3) of the Court's jurisdiction concerning international crimes committed in Burma territory since 1 July 2002;
6. Formally designated safe zone for internally displaced persons under United Nations agencies management, which the Burmese military is not allowed to have access to.