



Human Rights Now

17 January 2022

[Statement] Human Rights Now Condemns the Killing of Civilians by the Myanmar Military

Human Rights Now, a Tokyo-based international human rights NGO,¹ expresses our outrage over the unjustified killings of civilians in Kayah state, formerly known as Karenni state, by the Myanmar junta's military in December and January. The incidents are part of a larger pattern of violence against civilians in other parts of the country, including Sagaing region, and Chin, Kachin, Shan, and Rakhine states, as well as the killing of more than 1,466 protesters and others supporting Myanmar's democratically elected government against the junta's illegal coup in February last year.²

On Christmas Eve 2021, the Myanmar military killed and burned the bodies of at least 35 villagers from a Christian community in east Kayah/Karenni state attempting to flee nearby combat in seven vehicles.³ The NGO Save the Children stated that 38 people had been killed in the incident, including two of their own staff of humanitarian workers. Physical evidence of the killings also indicates that several women, elderly persons, and four children (three teenagers and a child 5-6 years of age) were among the dead, and that they were bound at the time of their deaths.⁴ A military spokesperson and media outlet confirmed the military killed several people in a clash with what they described as recruits for a resistance group, which local resistance groups denied and which contradicts the evidence left from the strike.⁵

It was also reported that four border guard force members attempted to intervene and negotiate the release of the villagers but were also shot and killed by the military.⁶ The killings came a day after military airstrikes near the Thai border displaced thousands of people who fled into Thailand. Condemnations against the unjustified killings came from the European Union, the United States, and many other countries, as well as the UN Security Council, which also called for accountability for the act, for the immediate end of all violence, and for the government to respect human rights and ensure the safety of civilians.⁷

On January 7 six civilians were killed in a military attack on civilian targets in Loikaw, the capital of Kayah/Karenni state. Over the next two days, the junta's military subjected the city and nearby towns to airstrikes and shelling with tanks, helicopters, and heavy artillery, leading tens of thousands of residents to flee to avoid the strikes, adding to the tens of thousands of others throughout the state, more than half of its population of 300,000, that had already been displaced by violence since the coup.⁸ In the same period in January, the military also tortured and killed 10 civilians in Chin state that it had detained on

¹ For inquiries email us at info@hrn.or.jp or visit our website at <http://hrn.or.jp/eng>.

² <https://aappb.org/>

³ <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/more-than-30-killed-bodies-burnt-myanmars-kayah-state-2021-12-25/>

⁴ <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-condemns-reported-killing-least-35-people-including-four-children-and-two>

⁵ <https://www.voanews.com/a/relief-group-says-2-members-killed-in-myanmar-violence-/6372917.html>;

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/30/eu-readies-more-sanctions-on-myanmar-over-kayah-state-massacre>

⁶ <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/12/26/asia-pacific/myanmar-kayah-state-killings/>

⁷ SC/14754, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14754.doc.htm>; Al Jazeera, *supra*, note 5.

⁸ <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-military-regime-bombs-kayah-state-capital-from-the-air.html>

January 6-7 and reportedly used as human shields, including a teenage boy and a former news outlet editor-in-chief.⁹

Almost one year after the coup in Myanmar, the international community has not done enough to bring pressure against the junta or the military to end the coup and the continuing killing of civilians, nor to support and protect Myanmar's democratically elected National Unity Government (NUG) and its supporters from being arbitrarily imprisoned and attacked.

Human Rights Now strongly condemns the intentional killing and other violence against civilians committed by the Myanmar military, which appears to constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, and we call on it to immediately end all violence against civilians and to ensure accountability for it. We call on the junta to respect the outcome of the 2020 election, to end the arbitrary arrest of and attacks on NUG members and its supporters, and to provide humanitarian assistance to all displaced people in Myanmar. We ask all states to implement rigorous sanctions including an arms embargo against the junta. We request the UN Security Council to hold an immediate plenary meeting on Myanmar to adopt a resolution for an arms embargo and financial sanctions against the junta, and relevant institutions, including the Human Rights Council, to conduct an independent investigation and take effective measures to facilitate and ensure accountability for the violence. We finally call on all transnational businesses to end any business in Myanmar that could support the junta or military in Myanmar.

⁹ <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/ten-civilians-murdered-by-junta-in-western-myanmar.html>