



Weekly Update on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar: Post-Coup

13 DECEMBER - 19 DECEMBER 2021



1346+

KILLED



11,047+

ARRESTED



8100+

DETAINED



1964+

EVADING
ARREST

SUMMARY OVERVIEW



In 2016, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), one of the members of the Network for Human Rights Documentation - Burma, released a report on prison conditions in Myanmar, and the urgent need for reform. Among their key findings, overcrowding in cells led to the deterioration of health conditions of inmates. Prisoners were regularly subjected to torture and inhumane treatment leading to deaths in custody.

In 2018, another report: "Activism and Agency," also authored by AAPP looked at the experiences of female prisoners specifically which drew similar findings including sexual, physical and psychological abuse and harassment. Across decades, those detained in Myanmar's various detention centers are not safe. Since February, thousands of innocent civilians including human rights defenders have been arrested, detained and subjected to harrowing treatment in military custody. Despite the many calls of groups like AAPP the junta has not reformed prison conditions to be in line with international standards in the slightest.

Over the last week, more evidence emerged of unlawful treatment of prisoners, including a freelance journalist who became the first member of the press to be tortured to death by the junta in prison. Following a nationwide strike held on 10 December (Human Rights Day), inmates at Insein Prison participated in solidarity with the pro-democracy movement by refusing to leave their cells. They also sang an anti-dictatorship song when the junta interrogated them about the leaders of the protest within the prison. The regime

responded violently by beating prisoners until they were no longer conscious and then subsequently denied them medical treatment.

The All Burma Federation of Student Union expressed worry for those who had been beaten, and then held in solitary confinement. Ko Bo Kyi of AAPP has said on multiple occasions that prison conditions have significantly deteriorated since the failed coup as the junta continues to abuse prison rights with impunity.

Systematic use of torture in prisons is a violation of international law. The junta is lawlessly detaining innocent civilians and then further subjecting them to conditions which deprive them of their dignity, safety and well-being. Human Rights Watch, BBC, the New York Times and the Associated Press are among the many who have documented the atrocities committed against civilians behind prison walls.

Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners outlined by the United Nations Office for Humanitarian Affairs make clear that 'all prisoners shall be treated with the respect due to their inherent dignity and value as human beings.' The illegal junta has failed to protect and uphold prisoner rights. The international community has an obligation and responsibility to respond to the atrocities taking place to set a precedent that no one is above the rule of law, and to protect the lives of detainees.

CONFLICT IN ETHNIC AREAS



KAREN

With over 80 000 displaced, Karen villagers are in need of warm clothing as the cold season takes its toll on civilians forced to flee increasing junta offensives. The military junta has not eased in its brutal campaign of warfare against the Karen which has gone on for decades. On 15 December, reports emerged that over two-hundred soldiers had invaded the civilian town of Lay Kay Kaw, which is controlled by Brigade 6 of the Karen National Union. Dozens of activists were arrested as it provoked further instability as clashes took place with the Karen National Liberation Army.

According to the Karen Information Center, the junta was firing with large weapons at areas where they suspected the civilian defense forces to be hiding. Tensions had been building since 14 December, and forced several hundred civilians to begin fleeing.

KAYAH

In Kayah (Karenni) State, displaced villagers are distraught over more instability threatening their livelihoods. Ongoing conflict has made it impossible for them to work as the presence of soldiers has made locals fearful of going too far outside of their villages. Farmers have been unable to tend to their fields, and have lost opportunities to harvest food and sustain an income.

To make matters worse, the illegal junta continues to block key routes needed for the delivery of humanitarian aid to internally displaced people (IDPs). Places where civilians would typically take refuge, such as churches and temples, have been taken over as military base camps. As the cold weather begins, IDPs have no choice but to seek safety and shelter in the jungle where living conditions are harsh.

SAGAING

The worsening situation in Kayah (Karenni) State has forced thousands to flee. Those who have sought safety in IDP camps have a multitude of fears, including the possibility of food running out. A local humanitarian organization expressed concern that the violence which has displaced civilians has led to food shortages. If the situation does not see any form of stability, food could run out within one or two months. Any delay in the provision of humanitarian aid only exacerbates the suffering of IDPs on the ground. Meanwhile, youth in Hpruso and Demawso Townships continue to be targeted by the military junta.

According to the Karenni Civil Society Network, over 150,000 people—more than half the population of Karenni State. Civil society organizations are working tirelessly to provide food, shelter and survival materials to those deprived of their basic access to goods and services.

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“Prison guards enthusiastically torture. Conditions are worse under the military regime. Guards will be held accountable in the future,”

— Ko Bo Kyi, Joint Secretary of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners



*Photo: Insein Prison in Yangon. Credit The Irrawaddy
Source: Reuters*

TIMELINE OF EVENTS



13 DECEMBER

Human Rights Watch released a timely report on the military junta's ongoing blocking of aid and humanitarian resources to displaced populations, including the most vulnerable. The denial of life-saving aid has worsened an already deeply dire situation on the ground for local people.

14 DECEMBER

It is announced that Soe Naing, a freelance journalist in Myanmar, was killed by the military junta while in custody of the regime. He was arrested and brought to an interrogation center while covering protests. Over 100 journalists have been detained since 1 February.

15 DECEMBER

Clashes between the military junta and the Karen National Liberation Army take place after the Myanmar Army refused to leave civilian areas in Llay Kay Kaw, Karen State. Thirty activists were arrested, including a National League for Democracy Member of Parliament.

16 DECEMBER

Approximately 4000 Karen villagers from Lay Kay Kaw, Htee Meh Wah Kee, Yay Thit Gu, P' Hi Klaw & Maw Toh T'law fled to Mae Wah Khee village and Palu Village, according to the Karen Peace Support Network following non-stop offensives by the military junta.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS



17 DECEMBER

Campaign group, Global Witness, says Graff, Bulgari, Van Cleef & Arpels, and Sotheby's are among the companies that could be funding the military junta.

18 DECEMBER

International Migrants Day is marked with a somber tone in Myanmar where hundreds of thousands have been forced to flee persecution to neighboring countries for work and safety.

19 DECEMBER

The National Unity Government appeals for urgently needed humanitarian aid for IDPs and refugees impacted by the junta's violence. Refugees fleeing violence from Karen State were pushed back by Thai authorities.



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