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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Written statement* submitted by European Centre for Law and Justice, The / Centre Européen pour le droit, les Justice et les droits de l'homme, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[25 May 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Need for the United Nations to Recognize the Continuing Violence Against Christians in Myanmar and to Take Immediate Action to Protect the Citizens of Myanmar

1. Introduction

Since the military of Myanmar took control in February 2021, Christians and civilians have been forced to endure raids, bombings, and the destruction of homes, churches, and schools.(1) Between May 2021 and November 2022, nearly 40,000 homes have been burned or damaged by the Myanmar military.(2) In addition to the destruction of property, more than one million people have been displaced in Myanmar, with more than seventeen million people in need of humanitarian assistance.(3) Political opposition is another issue in Myanmar, with 18,218 political prisoners still being detained and another 3,558 people killed by the Myanmar military.(4)

2. Background

The European Center for Law and Justice has previously submitted at least seven reports to this Council detailing the atrocities being committed against Christians and innocent civilians in Myanmar. Myanmar is the fourteenth most dangerous place for Christians, according to the World Watch List.(5) Myanmar's ranking on the World Watch List has improved from twelve in 2022, not because persecution has decreased in Myanmar, but because persecution has increased in other countries.

Since the country's military took control in February 2021, Christians in Myanmar have endured violent attacks and displacement.(6) Additionally, Christians face persecution from not only the government, but also from other groups, like Buddhist, Muslim, or tribal communities.(7) Christians are disproportionately affected by Myanmar's civil war between armed religious groups and the country's military.(8) As fighting has escalated in predominately Christian states such as Chin, Kachin, Kayin, and Kayah, Christians are regularly displaced or killed and their churches attacked and destroyed.(9)

3. Violations

On May 21, 2023, a Free Burma Ranger was killed as he was protecting villagers from the advancing Myanmar military in Thaton District, Karen State, Myanmar.(10) The Free Burma Rangers is a humanitarian group working to protect and provide aid to innocent civilians who are living in conflict zones in Myanmar, Iraq, and the Sudan.(11)

During April 2023, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) clashed seventy-six times with the Myanmar military.(12) In addition to these clashes, the KIA reported sixteen human rights abuses by the Myanmar military during April, including killing civilians, burning homes, and destroying property.(13)

Between April 18 and 25, 2023, over 140 people were taken from two villages in Kachin State by the Myanmar military.(14) The military used the people as human shields by forcing them to travel along the roads as the military moved to its base.(15) One person was killed and five others wounded on April 18 alone. On April 26, fifty of the 140 people initially taken were released by the military.(16)

On April 24, 2023, the Myanmar military killed Aung Kyaw Myint and another unidentified man in Mazup Yang village in Kachin State.(17) The men had been taken by the military several weeks earlier from another village in the region.(18)

On April 11, 2023, the Myanmar military attacked Mae Ka Nae in Kayin State by ground attacks and bombings.(19) The village's church was destroyed and set on fire by a 500-pound bomb. Other buildings and homes were burned after the military occupied the town.(20) For days later, the military continued to attack the surrounding area with mortar and machine-gun fire.(21)

On April 2, 2023, fighting broke out between the Myanmar military and rebel groups.⁽²²⁾ As a result of artillery fire, a fifty-year old man was killed and five more were injured.⁽²³⁾ In addition, several houses along with a church were damaged.⁽²⁴⁾

In March 2023, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) reported that there were a total of ninety-four military clashes that month alone along with fifteen human rights violations committed by the Myanmar military.⁽²⁵⁾ These violations included, but are not limited to, killing innocent civilians and burning property.⁽²⁶⁾

On March 30, 2023, nine people were killed as the result of a bombardment.⁽²⁷⁾ Included in those killed were a pastor and his two children.⁽²⁸⁾

In March 2023, twenty-two civilians including three monks were killed in a monastery located in Shan State.⁽²⁹⁾ Many of the victims found had received multiple gunshot wounds.⁽³⁰⁾

On March 23, 2023, troops from the Myanmar military burned down two civilian homes in Shwegu Township.⁽³¹⁾

On March 19, 2023, approximately thirty members of the Myanmar military and police destroyed civilian houses in Hpakant Township.⁽³²⁾

In February 2023, the KIA reported that a total of eight civilians were killed that month as a result of bombings and shootings.⁽³³⁾ In addition to those killed, three children were wounded that month as a result of landmines.⁽³⁴⁾

On February 4, 2023, two artillery shells destroyed Our Lady of Sorrow Church during a clash between military and rebel groups in the Christian majority Kayah State.⁽³⁵⁾ Thankfully, no one was killed in the attack.⁽³⁶⁾

On February 2, 2023, members of the Shanni Nationalities Army (SNA), a proxy force of the Myanmar military, shot and killed five civilians in Indaw Township.⁽³⁷⁾

On January 14 and 15, 2023, the Myanmar military burned down a historic Catholic church, which was more than a century old, in a predominately Christian village in the northwestern Sagaing region.⁽³⁸⁾ In addition to the church, the priest's house, the nuns' convent, and many homes were burned down.⁽³⁹⁾ The military arrived in the town on the evening of January 14 and burned many houses, before staying the night in the church.⁽⁴⁰⁾ The next morning, when people were expected to gather at the church for worship, the military set the church on fire.⁽⁴¹⁾ This was the fourth attack on the village in eight months.⁽⁴²⁾

On January 12, 2023, a military fighter jet dropped two bombs on Lay Wah Village in Kayin State, which killed four people and wounded two others.⁽⁴³⁾ Among the victims were a mother and her baby, as well as a pastor and a deacon.⁽⁴⁴⁾ The two-year-old child and mother, N.M. and N. L. K. P., both died with a hole in the back of each of their heads exposing their brains.⁽⁴⁵⁾ The pastor, Saw Cha Aye, was nearly completely disintegrated by the bomb.⁽⁴⁶⁾ The attack also destroyed several structures in the village, including two churches and a school.

4. Request

As demonstrated above, by just a few examples from this year, Myanmar's military has committed mass atrocities against the minority Christian population as well as other innocent civilians. This ongoing conflict has resulted in the loss of life and property and has further displaced thousands of innocent civilians. We urgently request that the United Nations provide aid and protection for the people of Myanmar and work to put an end to the atrocities they are facing on a daily basis.

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- (3) Myanmar Appeal, UNICEF (2023) <https://www.unicef.org/appeals/myanmar> (last visited May 19, 2023).
- (4) Political Prisoners Post-Coup, Assistance Association For Political Prisoners, <https://aappb.org/> (last visited May 19, 2023).
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- (14) Id.
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- (17) Id.
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- (20) Id.
- (21) Id.
- (22) “Myanmar: Church Hit by Burmese Army in Shan State”, FSSPX News (Apr. 2, 2023), <https://fsspx.news/en/news-events/news/myanmar-church-hit-burmese-army-shan-state-81677>.
- (23) Id.
- (24) Id.
- (25) “The Burma Army Levels Village in Light of Battlefield Setbacks: Burma Army Attack Report in Northern Burma”, March 2023, Free Burma Rangers (May 11, 2023), <https://www.freeburmarangers.org/2023/05/11/the-burma-army-levels-village-in-light-of-battlefield-setbacks-burma-army-attack-report-in-northern-burma-march-2023/>.
- (26) Id.
- (27) “Myanmar: Church Hit by Burmese Army in Shan State”, supra note 23.
- (28) Id.
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- (30) Id.
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(40) Id.

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(42) Id.