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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.

[5 February 2024]

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



Requesting that the United Nations Takes Immediate Action to Stop the Continuing Violence Being Perpetrated against Civilians and Christians in Myanmar

1. Introduction

Previously, the European Centre for Law and Justice, The / Centre Européen pour le droit, les Justice et les droits de l'homme has submitted at least nine reports to this Council detailing the atrocities that continue to be carried out against Christians and innocent civilians in Myanmar. In particular, civilians in predominately Christian states, such as Chin State and Keyah State, have had their villages raided, pastors killed, and churches destroyed.(1) Because of this, Myanmar has been listed as the 17th most dangerous country for Christians to live in.(2)

2. Background

In February 2021, the military of Myanmar took control of the government.(3) Since then, Christians and innocent civilians have been the target of relentless raids and airstrikes. On Average, 130 civilians are killed every month as a result of artillery fire, airstrikes, and gunfire.(4) In November 2023 alone, 196 civilians were killed as a result of airstrikes.(5) The Free Burma Rangers, our on the ground source, have reported that in the past two months alone more than 10,000 people have been displaced from their homes in western Karen State.(6) As we will demonstrate below, Christians and other civilians in Myanmar continue to live under the threat that they may be killed, or their villages and homes bombed or raided.

3. Violations

Hostilities in Myanmar have escalated since October 27, 2023, when three armed organizations began attacking military posts along Myanmar's northeastern border with China.(7) Since then, violence has resulted in the deaths of more than 378 civilians and has injured 505 more.(8) A further 660,000 people have become displaced adding to the nearly two million that have been displaced since the coup began in 2021.(9)

In January 2024, the Myanmar army conducted airstrikes on a village in Northwest Myanmar that killed seventeen civilians, nine of whom were children.(10) An additional twenty civilians were wounded in the attack.(11) A local rescue worker reported that a jet flew over and dropped three bombs on the village.(12) Most of the residents in the village are part of the Chin ethnic minority and are predominately Christian.(13) In addition to the loss of lives, approximately ten houses were destroyed.(14)

In December 2023, armed forces raided Pan Chi village resulting in the death of one civilian and the destruction of thirty homes.(15) One villager described the horrific raid:

The junta troops entered the village with loud gunfire. They started burning a house that they thought belonged to the village chief. One man, who has since died, returned to the village to rescue his parents He planned to carry them on his back, as his parents were not able to run during the raid. But he was shot in the chest before he reached his parents.(16)

In a separate attack that same month, an airstrike took the life of a seven-year-old girl in the northern Sagaing region.(17) Later that month, a helicopter opened fire on civilians in Paungbyin's Tha Yau, killing a thirty-year-old civilian and injuring five others.(18) According to a local village administrator:

A monastic school building, a market, the road, the soccer field and a highway station were shot at It took only 25 minutes, but the helicopter turned around twice and continued firing. People were not aware and were calm because there had been no fighting. People are in shock. Women and children are very scared. People didn't have time to dodge and were shot as soon as they heard the sound of the helicopter.(19)

On November 26, 2023, the Myanmar army bombed the pastoral center of Christ the King Cathedral in Loikaw.⁽²⁰⁾ Even though no one was killed in the bombing, the ceiling of the pastoral center collapsed and the bishop along with eighty refugees taking shelter were forced to flee.⁽²¹⁾

On November 21, 2023, the Myanmar army bombed a church belonging to Seventh Day Adventists.⁽²²⁾ Just six days later, the Myanmar army took over another church in Kayaah State, which displaced 50 civilians who were in the church taking shelter.⁽²³⁾

On November 15, 2023, airstrikes conducted by the Myanmar army killed eleven civilians, including eight children under the age of twelve.⁽²⁴⁾ According to Ngai Tam Maung, a deputy minister of humanitarian affairs and disaster management in the National Unity Government, two military jets dropped bombs over an isolated village, one of which was on a building where children were studying.⁽²⁵⁾

In October 2023, an airstrike was conducted by the Myanmar army in Kachin State, a majority-Christian state.⁽²⁶⁾ The airstrike killed twenty-nine Christians and injured fifty-six more who were at a camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs).⁽²⁷⁾

In September 2023 alone, airstrikes and artillery bombardment carried out by the Myanmar army resulted in forty-four civilians being killed and 142 injured.⁽²⁸⁾ For example, on September 28, 2023, four family members were killed when an artillery shell landed on their house.⁽²⁹⁾

Our on-the-ground sources reported that, on September 24, 2023, the Myanmar army placed landmines around the village of Law Kyay Khu. The Karen National Defence Force told villagers not to return, and began working to clear the landmines. Tragically, one villager returned to her home before the landmines were cleared and was killed by a landmine that was placed at the doorway to her home.

4. Request

As we demonstrated above, military forces in Myanmar continue to indiscriminately attack civilians and burn down homes and churches. These attacks have resulted in massive loss of life and have created an even bigger humanitarian crisis as millions of civilians have been forced to flee their villages and homes in order to escape the violence. We respectfully request that this Council work to stop the senseless violence being perpetrated against Christians and other innocent civilians in Myanmar and provide them with aid and protection.

(1) Myanmar, OPEN DOORS, <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/myanmar/> (last visited Jan. 11, 2023).

(3) Myanmar's Coup and Its Aftermath Explained, THE NEW YORK TIMES (Dec. 9, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/article/myanmar-news-protests-coup.html>.

(4) Number of Civilians Killed by Myanmar Junta Since Coup Surpasses 4,000, THE IRRRAWADDY (Sep. 2, 2023), <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/conflicts-in-numbers/number-of-civilians-killed-by-myanmar-junta-since-coup-surpasses-4000.html>.

(5) Civilian Death Toll Jumps 7-Fold in Myanmar in November, RADIO FREE ASIA (Dec. 7, 2023), <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/myanmar-civilian-death-toll-12072023215952.html>.

(6) Watering Plants in a Bombed Home: A Mission to the Plains of Burma, FREE BURMA RANGERS (Jan. 26, 2024).

(7) Myanmar: Military Should be Investigated for War Crimes in Response to "Operation 1027", AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL (Dec. 22, 2023), <https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/myanmar-military-should-be-investigated-for-war-crimes-in-response-to-operation-1027/>.

(8) Id.

(9) Id.

(10) Grant Peck, An Air Attack in Myanmar Kills 17, Including Children, but the Military has Denied Responsibility, AP (Jan. 7, 2024), <https://apnews.com/article/myanmar-conflict-sagaing-chin-airstrike-school-religion-711fcd7dcfdd2b899ba311c57e909bd2>.

- (11) Id.
- (12) Id.
- (13) Id.
- (14) Id.
- (15) Junta Kills 3 During Raid in Central Myanmar While Torching a Village, RADIO FREE ASIA (Dec. 13, 2023), <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/junta-kill-3-in-sagaing-12132023052058.html>
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- (18) Id.
- (19) Id.
- (20) Peter Pinedo, Catholic Cathedral Complex Bombed, Bishops Flees with Refugees in Worsening Myanmar Civil War, CATHOLIC NEWS AGENCY (Nov. 29, 2023), <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/256136/catholic-cathedral-complex-bombed-bishop-flees-with-refugees-in-worsening-myanmar-civil-war>.
- (21) Id.
- (22) 73 Churches Attacked in War-Torn Myanmar Since 2021, INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONCERN (Dec. 11, 2023), <https://www.persecution.org/2023/12/11/73-churches-attacked-in-war-torn-myanmar-since-2021/>.
- (23) Id.
- (24) Airstrike in West Myanmar Reportedly Kills 11 Civilians, VOA NEWS (Nov. 17, 2023), <https://www.voanews.com/a/airstrike-in-west-myanmar-reportedly-kills-11-civilians/7359506.html>.
- (25) Id.
- (26) At Least 29 Christians, Including Children, Killed Following Airstrike on IDP Camp in Myanmar, OPEN DOORS (Oct. 17, 2023), <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/news/latest-news/myanmar-christians-attacked/>.
- (27) Id.
- (28) Airstrikes and Shelling Killed 44 Civilians in Myanmar in September, RADIO FREE ASIA (Oct. 2, 2023), <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/myanmar-airstrikes-and-shelling-10022023053726.html#:~:text=Search-Airstrikes%20and%20shelling%20killed%2044%20civilians%20in%20Myanmar%20in%20September,heavy%20artillery%2C%20RFA%20data%20show.&text=A%20junta%20gunboat%20on%20the,27%2C%202023>.
- (29) Id.