



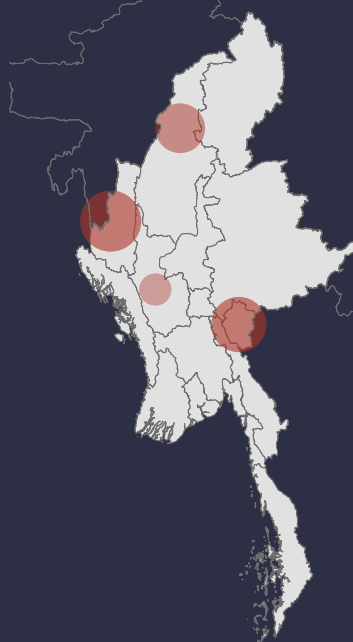
December & January

Women's League of Burma (WLB)

As the rest of the world celebrated Human Rights Day and the hopeful promises of a new year, the people of Burma/ Myanmar live in fear of exercising their basic human rights. State-sponsored atrocities, including **airstrikes** and on-ground offensives, intensified over the December and January period, leaving thousands more people internally displaced. Burning entire villages and indiscriminately murdering women and children, the junta's violence has propelled the country into a political, socioeconomic, and humanitarian crisis.

The junta increased its terror on the people during the months of December and January. While people all around the world were celebrating Christmas Eve with their loved ones, the junta were committing one of the most **brutal massacres** witnessed since the start of the coup. Just outside of Moso in Karenni/Kayah State, the Christmas Eve massacre claimed 40 civilians.

In mid-December, the Burmese Army raided Lay Kay Kaw, Myawaddy Township in Karen State. Lay Kay Kaw is a new town built with the support of the Nippon Foundation as a symbol of peace between the government and the KNU under "President Thein Sein." As a result, there was intense fighting between the Burmese Army and the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), and local Peoples Defense Force (PDFs). In late December, the Burmese Air Force bombed the area.



Between February and December 2021, **the junta burnt down or destroyed more than 2,200 houses and civilian properties, mainly in Chin (800), Karenni/Kayah (654), Sagaing (529), and Magway (223).**



The junta's offensive has intensified in other parts of the country, driving up already high numbers of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). As of January 31, an estimated **441,500 people** remained internally displaced across Burma/Myanmar since the start of the junta's offensive from late March 2021. Throughout the country, humanitarian assistance is needed more than ever. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has identified 14.4 million people in Burma/Myanmar in need of **humanitarian assistance**. IDP pregnant women are particularly vulnerable due to inadequate medical care and the physical and emotional trauma of displacement. The impact on these women is reflected in the growing number of reported stillbirths by WLB member organizations. Women are also at higher risk of experiencing domestic violence, which increases during times of instability.

The conflict has severely impacted Burma/Myanmar's emerging economy; with half the population predicted to be living in poverty in 2022. Women, in particular, are facing the effects of rising commodity prices and high unemployment. It is one of the biggest and most inevitable daily challenges for women who are traditionally responsible for managing household purchases and preparing food for their families. As a result, some women are making money by cutting their hair and selling it, other women in casual employment, mainly garment factory workers, have been laid off and have entered the sex work industry. The World Food Program (WFP) provides a monthly stipend of K15,000 per person (UD\$8.45) but it is only available in some places and is only enough to buy rice.

The number of Omicron cases has increased, including in IDP camps, where it is difficult to comply with the World Health Organization (WHO) directions. Food, medications, blankets, and clothes are in short supply. As the winter sets in, pregnant women, children, and the elderly are particularly vulnerable to malnutrition and sickness.

Since February 1, the WLB has documented **nine rape** cases committed by junta troops. This number is likely much higher, because of fear of reprisals, threats, and system breakdowns, rape, and sexual assault are significantly under-reported. Sexual violence against women by junta soldiers has increased dramatically since February 2021. Many live in fear of rape and sexual assault by the junta and those who are survivors of rape and sexual abuse are commonly forced to live alone with their trauma, unable to seek justice or counseling in the absence of the rule of law and mental health supports.

Impact of the Military Coup



1,499
 KILLED



107

11,801
 ARRESTED

1,527

Burmese Army checkpoints by land and water have greatly increased, making travel unsafe. Civilians attempting to pass through are interrogated and extorted for money and possessions. The junta continues to hunt for anyone they suspect of having ties to civilian armed defense forces or the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM).

Taking advantage of the chaos it created, the Burmese Army has increased its attack on women all over the country, committing acts of rape and sexual violence. Attacks by the junta's soldiers, police, and prison guards against women and girls continue with absolute impunity.

Fears grow for the welfare of woman reporter, Moe Myint who was **arrested** on January 18 and is still being detained. As of January 2021, the junta has detained 120 journalists, including four women editors, one woman co-founder, one woman photojournalist, and 16 women reporters. The junta has turned Burma/Myanmar into the second-highest **jailor of journalists**.

Women's experience in custody is different from men. In addition to other torture tactics, women are subjected to sexual violence as a method of torture and psychological abuse. At least eight women have died while in custody, four of whom were **tortured to death**. The living conditions in the prisons are dismal, and women detainees are denied the right to manage **menstruation with dignity**. Women are denied sanitary pads and are unable to wash regularly. There is extreme overcrowding, lack of food and clean water, little or no contact with family members, and COVID-19 is rife with inadequate healthcare. **Human Rights Watch** reported that over five hundred women are being detained in rooms that are only big enough for a hundred people, forcing women to take it in turn to sleep.

Internet access has been limited across the country, with the junta having cut internet access entirely in areas where there is widespread resistance and anti-junta protests. Since the start of the coup, social media sites are banned, but people have been able to access them via virtual private networks (VPN). In January, the junta adopted a new cybersecurity law that **bans the use of VPNs**. The law grants the junta unlimited power and violates peoples digital rights, privacy, human rights and freedom of expression.

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Impacts of Military Offensives and Human Rights Violations in Ethnic Areas

Many activists resisting the coup have fled from urban areas into the ethnic areas, where they have received shelter and assistance. Providing this assistance has increased political and security risks for the ethnic communities, as the junta continues to hunt the activists and arrest anyone who has helped them.

People in the IDP camps are experiencing significant psychological trauma; they fled to the IDP camps out of fear of the war, but the Burmese Army's deliberate airstrikes on the camps make many people fear there is nowhere safe for them. Those who have had family or community members burned by the Burmese Army are experiencing severe trauma with little to no psychological support.

IDPs are suffering from a scarcity of food assistance, medicine, and WASH essentials. The junta continues to block aid routes, preventing the distribution of lifesaving provisions and women's menstrual kits. Volunteers assisting IDPs have been threatened, arrested, and detained by the junta.

The need for food and medical assistance is escalating and many IDP camps are over capacity. Humanitarian aid efforts continue to be hampered by the junta; only a small number of humanitarian response teams were able to reach affected people in acute conflict areas in December. **Rising fuel** and food prices also make it more difficult for donations to reach the people who are in need.

Blankets and warm clothing are needed in all camps. Some IDP camps in Northern Shan State, Karenni/Kayah, and Rakhine State are beginning to face water shortages. Due to the scarcity of water, people are using muddy water for their daily cooking. Many people are suffering from skin lesions and typhoid from a lack of clean water for personal hygiene.

Women and girls experience additional threats to their health and safety in the IDP camps. In almost every IDP camp there are not enough bathrooms or toilets for women. Women must contend with the challenge of hygiene during menses with a limited supply of sanitary products and water. Dormitories, bathrooms, and toilets are shared with men, posing risk to women's safety. In Kyauktaw Township, Rakhine State, young women are being bullied by men about their personal hygiene during menstruation. Pregnant women and women with newborns face additional health risks from complicated labor and malnourishment.

CHIN STATE

The Burmese Air Force continues to indiscriminately kill civilians and armed resistance fighters in Kanpetlet, Mindat, and Paletwa townships. According to OCHR, more than **800 civilian homes** in Chin State have been burnt down since May 2021. Thantlang township has been attacked by the junta at least 20 times during the past four months. Without medical attention and food, more than 30 people from Thantlang died while fleeing.

Civilians desperately need aid, but the junta has severed internal supply routes with aid blockades and laid siege to towns. Humanitarian aid workers are frequently denied travel permissions, requiring local organizations to do most of the high-risk on-the-ground aid work. The movement of goods has almost completely stopped in Chin State as the number of people requiring emergency aid increases.

Chin State has seen some of the worst violence since the coup. Indiscriminate shelling of civilian neighborhoods and towns, summary executions, and arbitrary arrests of civilians. On January 6, a human rights defender, journalist, and nine civilians, including a 13-year-old boy from Matupi township were found murdered, their hands tied behind them and gagged. A woman who was with the group of nine narrowly escaped the same fate by jumping off a cliff when the fighting began, she sustained **injuries** to her face and head.

The Burmese Army has sought to obstruct the collection of evidence of their crimes. Since September they have blocked internet and mobile phone services in twenty-four townships in Myanmar's northwest.

KACHIN STATE

The prevalence of using civilians as human shields persists in Kachin State, with 77 reported cases in December alone.

In Kachin State and Northern Shan State, women are worried about the safety of traveling alone during the day, especially women in rural areas. In July 2021, a Kachin woman was raped and killed by the (88) Division of the Burmese Army in Momauk township, another Kachin woman in Kutkai township was raped in November. These cases, and many more like them, have made women live in a constant state of fear of violence.

The impact of the military offensive on the local economy places women's safety more at risk, with reports of increasing incidents of motorcycle robbery and alcohol abuse.

In Kachin and Northern Shan states, the number of new IDPs is increasing month by month and the humanitarian response has not been able to meet their needs. Women IDPs face additional challenges in the camps.

Men are reportedly increasing their consumption of alcohol in response to the stresses of the COVID-19 pandemic and coup, this heightens the risk of family violence. There are also no separate spaces for women in the refugee camps, making it unsafe, especially for young women.

KAREN STATE

During December, the junta continued to send more of its soldiers, weapons, and supplies into all seven districts of Karen State, to expand and reinforce its army base. More junta checkpoints have been established where cars and boats are stopped and people are extorted for money, their property is stolen and people are assaulted and arrested.

Soldiers enter villages to harass, harm, and kill civilians, steal food and animals, and destroy property. The junta is still looking for CDM affiliates and takes photos of houses and families. They check the household registrations, looking for anyone absent, who is then suspected of taking part in the resistance movements. When villagers find out that Burmese Army soldiers are approaching their village, they try to flee to more remote areas. In Hpapun/Mutraw District alone, 82,220 people have been displaced.

The junta forces are using many different weapons, including heavy artillery, to harm civilians and destroy homes and farms. There are also frequent clashes between the Burmese Army and Karen armed groups.

On December 14, over 200 junta soldiers entered Lay Kay Kaw village, raided the area and arrested over 30 people. Many people fled in fear of more raids and fighting. As a result, on the next day fighting broke out between KNLA and SAC troops.

Between December 23 and 25, multiple airstrikes were launched on Lay Kay Kaw and the nearby area. The fighting and airstrikes have displaced **21,300 people** from Karen State in the Lay Kay Kaw area, with thousands fleeing to Thailand for safety. Those that manage to reach the Thai border are struggling to survive because of inadequate food, water, and medical assistance. Humanitarian workers are facing barriers to delivering life-saving aid to the refugees, with reports that the **Thai military** is arbitrarily stopping the flow of aid at drop-off points.

According to records of the Karen Department of Health and Welfare (KDHW), there have been 525,750 confirmed COVID-19 cases in Burma/Myanmar with over 38,000 cases recorded in the KNU controlled areas. The Burmese Army has used chemical weapons against the ethnic people in Burma/Myanmar in the past, creating extreme distrust for vaccines among the people in Karen State.

KARENNI/KAYAH STATE

The brutality of the Burmese Army was captured for the whole world to see on December 24 on a highway in eastern Karenni/Kayah State. It was one of the highest single-day casualty rates since the start of the coup. In Hpruso township, a local militia discovered the charred remains of 40 civilians. Many of the victims were found dead in their burned-out vehicles, others on the road with missing limbs and cracked skulls. Some of the bodies appeared to have their hands bound, and many were burned beyond recognition. Autopsies confirmed that some of the victims were **burned alive**. Of the victims that could be identified, five of them were women, one was a child and three were humanitarian workers.

Residents of Loikaw and other townships in Karenni/Kayah State were forced to flee their homes due to heavy artillery shelling by the Burmese Army. On January 17, a 7-year-old girl and an 18-year-old woman were killed when two junta helicopters **bombed** a displacement camp sheltering around 600 people in Hpruso Township. As of January 3, OCHA recorded 162,000 people from Karenni/Kayah and Karen State, including women and children, who remain **displaced** after fleeing their homes since May 2021. To date, 654 houses and other civilian properties, including churches, monasteries, and schools, have reportedly been burnt down or destroyed in Karenni/Kayah State.

SAGAING REGION

Scorching of homes and escalating human rights abuses has intensified in the Sagaing region. Clashes between the junta and resistance forces have seen a sharp increase in civilian casualties, the destruction of homes, and widespread internal displacement. As of January 17, verified sources indicated that more than 529 houses and other **civilian properties** have been burnt down in the Sagaing region as a result of the conflict since May 2021. Since then, on January 25, an estimate 15,000 residents from more than 10 villages in Shwebo township fled their homes as the junta **burnt** them down.

At least **38 people were killed**, including a 13-year-old girl, during military raids on villages in Myinmu, Pale, Wetlet and Kani townships between January 28 and February 6. Junta helicopters fired indiscriminately on a crowd on January 31 killing at least 20 people, including three women in their 50s. Later, the remains of six people with their limbs and head cut off were found burnt. Many of the victims were elderly, unable to flee.

Heavy fighting broke out in January 2022 in villages south of Kale township between the junta and local defense forces leaving thousands displaced. On January 4, junta **airstrikes** killed a woman in Gahe, Indaw Township, and two 15-year-old girls and a 5-year-old girl.

On December 7, the junta captured and burned alive eleven people from Salingyi township, five of whom were children.

On December 29, an 80-year-old woman was shot in the thigh by a military council gun in Hakha Lay village, Kale township and later died from loss of blood. The dead body of the grandmother could not be buried for two days.

WLB member reported an account from an IDP from Nat Chaung village:

An elderly woman was hiding in a flooded stream despite the bad weather, so her face turned pale this morning. Last night, the shooting held all night. People do not dare to light a fire and live in darkness and they do not dare to go out.

A local aid worker reported there are thousands of people in the IDP camp in Nat Myaung, and an increasing number of stillbirths. In Nat Chaung village, a pregnant IDP woman with labor complications could not access adequate medical care in time because of military tensions and power outages, she delivered her baby stillborn.

Eight civilians including women were **killed** on December 20, 2021 and almost 40 houses destroyed by five junta aircraft on Yay Myat Village in Ye-U Township.

SHAN STATE

On top of clashes between two **Shan armed groups** that has displaced thousands of people since March 2021, the Burmese Air Force ramped up attacks in the Shan State during December, **displacing 14,400 more people** from their homes. **Two young girls**, aged 1 and 4, were injured by artillery fire in Namkham on January 5. In Hona Village, a 2 and 5-year-old, were **injured** alongside two elderly women in their sixties.

Between January 1 and 8, the Burmese Army launched 10 airstrikes in Karenni/Kayah State, resulting in over 30,000 Karenni/Kayah residences **fleeing** to southern Shan State. Many more people are seeking refuge from the war-torn regions, however food and shelter in the camps is scarce, limiting the camps capacity to take in more people.

The dire economic situation has placed significant stress on family life, and the Shan State is not an exception. Sick people are unable to access medical treatment and women are giving birth without adequate medical care. There are difficulties accessing birth control pills increasing the number of pregnancies. Women living in rural areas are finding it more difficult to earn a living from farming, due to COVID-19 and the conflict.

The conflict and instability has increased rates of violence against women in communities. Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) **documented** numerous acts of violence against women in southern and northern Shan State. On January 23, a man broke into the home of a teenage girl and raped her while her family was not home. A military man shot a woman who refused to accept him as a boyfriend. On December 25, a twenty-one-year-old woman in Yawnghwe/Nyaung Shwe township was gang raped by her boyfriend and his two friends when she did not consent to intercourse. According to some young women from Mong Kung, **forced marriages** between Wa soldiers and local young women has increased along with other sexual violence.

3

Women's Human Rights Defenders

Women have assumed prominent roles at the forefront of the CDM. Their leadership and bravery has made them a prime target for the junta, who fear their voice and determination. Since the coup, 1,527 women have been arrested.

Women have the right to stand up for their rights and raise their voices, especially during a political crisis. At the same time, in Burma/Myanmar women must navigate the status quo to survive. One of the many difficulties that women human rights defenders (WHRD) face is the silence she must maintain while she documents the human rights abuses against the women around her.

WHRDs continue to face arrest and detainment. Since the military coup, in Eastern Shan State, more than 10 women activists have been arrested, interrogated, and released. One teacher is still being held.

Women who are actively involved in politics are facing the most difficult times, living with the constant threat of arrest, torture, and execution. The detainment and execution of some elected women Members of Parliament have been reported in the media, while others are hiding in liberated areas. Liberated areas have enabled WHRD from across the country to continue their work, documenting human rights abuses, and providing support to communities and IDPs.

ACTIONS BY WOMEN'S LEAGUE OF BURMA (WLB) AND HER MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

Burmese Women's Union (BWU) continued to collect and report on the wellbeing of women in Burma and the current human rights situation.

Kachin Women's Association of Thailand (KWAT) provided education and training to women on health education, political awareness, including on women's rights and gender perspectives, and specialized training on livelihood support skills for young IDP women. KWAT also provided financial assistance for people who had suffered a stroke to receive treatment and women survivors of domestic violence. KWAT continues to collect and record information on human rights violations and assists activists when they are arrested.

Karen Women's Organization (KWO) provided support to refugees across seven camps and distributed 5,000 UNICEF Protection Kits, as well as food packs to the most vulnerable. KWO was also able to provide support to 162 families in Karenni/Kayah State, just north of Karen State. KWO also established an Income Generation Project to sell KWO traditional weaving products.

Kayan Women's Organization (KyWo) rescued more than 800 people trapped in Loikaw in December. KyWo has been supporting vulnerable groups with food and medical supplies and counseling sessions. KyWo has held meetings with refugee and village committees and led discussions on women's participation. KyWo has also supported gathering census data.

Kuki Women's Human Rights Organization (KWHRO) provided support to CDM and WHRD, including the provision of dignity kits to women. KWHRO has also been building the capacity of women leaders in the village and providing legal education and workshops. KWHRO continues to run training and discussions on CEDAW, violence against women, democracy, and human rights.

Lahu Women's Organization (LWO) has been fundraising to support people in the CDM and those who have suffered from COVID-19 and the political crisis. More funding is needed as current donations have not met the increasing demand for support. LWO is also implementing systems to deliver its organizational activities online.

Pa-O Women's Union (Pa-O) held an information-sharing workshop with local youth to raise awareness of the situation on the ground. They provided leadership training to Pa-O women remotely via zoom and continue to document human rights abuses in the region. The Pa-O Women's Union also provided food and shelter to IDPs.

Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) provided support to members of the CDM, and field health workers to address the lack of healthcare in certain areas. SWAN created COVID-19 information videos and promoted them through social media. SWAN continues to collect data and documenting rates of GBV in Shan State.

Women for Justice (WJ) supported political and human rights activists and CDM from Sagaing, Mandalay and Magway Divisions, and Chin State. They are also collecting IDP census data in Sagaing Division and Chin State and assisted in some IDP camps.

CONCLUSION:

Indiscriminate airstrikes, violent massacres, rapes and arrests intensified throughout December and January. The violence propelled Burma/Myanmar into a humanitarian crisis, with mass displacement and economic turmoil, creating a dangerous environment where disease, and malnourishment add to fear, insecurity and suffering. Among many displaced, by the violence, 8,604 people manage to flee the country and seek safety in **Thailand**. However, Thai authorities have made living conditions so unbearable by stifling humanitarian efforts that **6,373 refugees** were forced to return home to conflict zones.

The international community, especially the **UN Security Council** must lead with action not empty words; writing statements alone is not enough to stop the junta from continuing to commit crimes against humanity. Inadequate action from the international community to hold the Burmese Army to account for their crimes, has ultimately made the people of Burma/Myanmar realize that it is they themselves that will be the ones to succeed in this revolution.

We need action! We need global arms embargo immediately!

International Community must



**REJECT MILITARY
COUP/SO-CALLED**
State Administrative
Council



REFERRAL TO ICC
for its crimes against
humanity



**GLOBAL ARMS
EMBARGO**

- SUPPORT local rights defenders who are providing safe houses/shelters for peaceful protestors, especially women human rights defenders.
- SUPPORT those in the country with ensuring a political space for women's rights organisations and civil society
- SUPPORT our advocacy to end system of impunity for all forms of violence against women and girls including conflict-related sexual violence and sexual assault & sexual harassment in custody

WOMEN'S LEAGUE OF BURMA

The Women's League of Burma is an umbrella organization comprising 13 women's organizations of different ethnic and political backgrounds. WLB was founded on 9 December 1999.

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