



JUNE - JULY 2022

Women's League of Burma (WLB)

The execution of four pro-democracy political activists was announced on July 25, sending ripples of anger, sorrow and **condemnation** across Burma/Myanmar and the world. Despite many appeals across the world to reconsider the sentences, the junta carried out the **first judicial execution** in Burma/Myanmar in 30 years.

The verdict to execute the four political prisoners was made at a military-controlled court. The trials were secretive, there was a lack of due process and they were grossly unfair. Under **international law**, executions carried out following an unfair trial violates the prohibition against **arbitrary deprivation of life**, as well as torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment.

Concerns grow for the **77 people** currently in detention on death row, including **nine women**, and 121 others who have been sentenced to death in absentia.

The executions were a direct act of power and intimidation; the junta's only desire is to instill fear and silence the population. The junta's execution of the political prisoners is a reminder to the world that they will do anything to hold onto power, and that the regime is fundamentally indifferent to appeals from the international community.

The executions prompted global leaders to express 'outrage' and 'condemnation', and increased pressures from civil society to impose sanctions against state-owned **Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE)**, which is estimated to generate US\$1.5 billion annually. The executions also prompted Hun Sen, the chairman of **ASEAN to "rethink"** its approach to the Burma/Myanmar crisis.

It remains to be seen whether global 'outrage' over the executions will lead to concrete and coordinated action from world leaders. The resistance movement has made incredible wins in spite of the international community's continual weak stance on targeted sanctions and inaction on a global arms embargo. The international community must not lose sight of the fact that the judicial killings occurred in an ocean of suffering, they represent the daily impunity experienced by the people of Burma/ Myanmar.

It is feared the coming months will see an increase in violence, surveillance and intimidation, as the junta seeks to pave the way for its sham national election to legitimize its regime. Junta Chief, Min Aung Hlaing announced a **formal extension** of the junta's hold on power for another six months, claiming he would redouble efforts to form a "public security system" of state-sponsored militia groups.

SITUATION UPDATE

Leaked documents indicate the junta has been arming extremely violent pro-military militia groups, known as Pyu Saw Htee in an attempt to instill fear through violence. An increase in Pyu Saw Htee presence has been felt in Sagaing and Magway regions, and other parts of the country that had previously been free of conflict prior to the coup.

Aggressive surveillance is part of the junta's strategy to control the population through fear and violence. Surveillance has a psychological impact that is a lived reality for all people in Burma/Myanmar. The junta has reportedly deployed China-made CCTV with facial recognition capabilities, making it easier for them to locate people on their arrest list.

Over the past 18 months, the junta has committed thousands of arbitrary arrests and extrajudicial killings, many of them abhorrently violent, amounting to crimes against humanity.



Abhorrent prison conditions and the use of torture and degrading treatment has been a signature practice of the junta. The infamous colonial relic, Insein Prison is known for its grisly **history and unimaginable suffering**. In June, the prison authorities cut off the supply of drinking water to the cells of women political prisoners, after they protested the poor living conditions in response to woman being denied medical treatment after suffering an avoidable miscarriage. It has been reported that the women have been forced to **drink water** out of the toilet and some of the women have contracted cholera.

WLB member interviewed family members of detained women and found that women prisoners experience brutal interrogations, including threats of sexual violence, before their trial. Some interrogations last a few days, while others last a month. During this period of interrogation, the junta extort money from the family, claiming they will reduce the sentence. When a family is unable to pay, the junta hide the detained person.

After a nine-month trial, three of the 11 women arrested in September 19, 2021, for their membership to the Southern Shan State CDM Assessment Committee, a humanitarian aid provider, were sentenced in July to 10, 15 and 27 years in prison. During the trial, family members were responsible for their daily meals and medicine. Many family members have been forced to flee because of threats from the junta, and are unable to bring food to their detained family member. Many are forced to pay exorbitant fees for the women at the police station to cook for the detained persons.

Violence against women has always been prolific in Burma/Myanmar, however since the coup women have experienced an increase in violence. During the month of July, there were six cases of rape by the Burmese Army reported in the media. In Oktwin, Eastern Bago Region, the junta killed a mother and raped her **13-year-old daughter**. The junta invaded Gangaw in Magway Region where they **raped and killed** a local woman. The other reported cases occurred in Kachin and Rakhine states. On June 14, a 70-year-old grandmother was robbed in her home in the village of Nyaugpintaw, Welet township in **Shwebo District**, Sagaing region. On the night of June 18, while sleeping, an elderly grandmother was robbed and killed in the village of Minbu.

Impacts of Military Offensives and Human Rights Violations in Ethnic Areas

Armed clashes across Burma/Myanmar continued to cause displacement. As of July 31, more than **1.2 million people** are currently displaced across the country. This includes nearly 866,400 people displaced since the coup. Inflation in commodity prices, including for food, fuel, shelter materials remains a major concern for people across Burma/Myanmar.

The Burmese Army have **laid landmines** on a mass scale around villages and in fields. Six people were killed and at least 11 others injured in nearly **30 landmine explosions** over the past two months in Rakhine and Chin State.

Tanintharyi Region has seen an increase in conflict, with a total of 15 armed clashes between the Burmese Army and PDF during the month of July. Internal displacement increased from 11,800 people in June to 27,415 people in July. On June 27, **a married couple** in their sixties were tied up and shot dead at close range by junta forces and their allies at a village in southwestern Tanintharyi Region.

CHIN STATE

Serious battles have taken place since July 8 along the Falam-Hakka highway. Over **29 homes were torched** in a raid on the village of Taal, which has experienced numerous attacks and looting over the last 12 months. Junta forces operating on the regional border between Sagaing and Chin State engaged in multiple battles with resistance forces during early July. A column of 180 soldiers divided into three units arrived at

Hakha Lay village—between Kalay Township in Sagaing Region and Falam in Chin State on July 11.

Heavy artillery fire by junta troops in the southern Chin State town of Mindat, seriously injured a 40-year-old woman and an 11-year-old child, whose leg had to be **amputated**. Locals report that the junta are always shooting at the villages, deliberately targeting civilians. On July 16, a 60-year old woman and 30-year old woman were **killed** while farming near their village in Mindat township.

Airstrikes in Chin State increased throughout the month of June and July. On July 4, two civilians were killed and several injured when the junta bombed two villages in Mindat township. Resistance sources in the area said that a **school and a church** were targeted in the attacks on the villages of Tsun Taung and Chat, both located 25km north of Mindat.

In Falam township, the junta **murdered a deaf woman** and a paralysed man who were unable to flee the village.

KACHIN STATE

On July 13, over 30 junta soldiers raided SateMu Village, Hpakant Township and **abducted seven women** who had participated in an anti-junta protest. Their whereabouts are still unknown.

Several armed clashes were reported during June, forcing about 3,000 people into temporary displacement in Mogaung Township. Armed clashes between the Burmese Army and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) also intensified in the border area of Kachin, particularly in Hpakant Township.

KIA troops launched multiple raids on a **convoy of 80 junta trucks**, killing over 30 soldiers. Since the coup, fighting between the KIA and the junta has intensified and the Kachin group have recovered territory that was lost after the Burmese broke a 17-year ceasefire in 2011.

KAREN STATE

Fighting between KNU and junta forces continued across every district of **Karen State** during June and July with **365 armed clashes** in June this year alone. After experiencing a high number of casualties in early July, the Junta retaliated with airstrikes, heavy artillery fire, and arson attacks on villages. Many innocent people were injured and forced to flee Hpa-Pun when the junta threw heavy artillery into civilian farmland.

The Myawaddy Township was attacked with **94 airstrikes** over four days from 27 to 30 June, forcing thousands of local residents to flee to the Thai border. In the evening, two civilians were killed and three were seriously injured from bombs that landed in the village of Taybawbo.

On the evening of June 25, the junta raided Kaw Kyat Ther village, forcing civilians to flee. 10 villagers were killed, including a **12-year-old girl**.

10,000 people were forced to flee their homes in Nyaunglebin District after daily clashes between junta forces, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and the KNU. Fighting has been ongoing almost every day in KNU controlled area, Nyaunglebin District, Kyaukkyi. Almost every villager has been forced to flee to the safe zone. The junta targets those that stay behind and use them as human shields.

KARENNI/KAYAH STATE

The junta are committing war crimes by intentionally laying landmines on a mass scale in Karenni/ Kayah State. Landmines, including the M-14 and MM-2 used by the junta, are inherently indiscriminate and their use is banned under customary international humanitarian law. On July 17 in Demoso township, the junta laid **landmines** around people's homes in Daw Ngay Khu village and all around the outside of a Catholic church, including in the main entrance way. The troops then **set fire** to the church.

On July 31, the junta intentionally fired into an IDP camp, **killing a 13-year-old girl** and her father in Demoso township. There are **74,500** internally displaced people in Karenni/ Kayah State since the coup.

Since June 10, intense battles have been taking place between the military and allied Karenni resistance forces around Daw Ngay Khu. On June 16, the junta fired heavy weapons into a village, killing a **60-year-old woman** from Moebye. Fighting reemerged in some places in Karenni/Kayah State during the month of July.

SAGAING REGION

In the predominately Chin populated Kalay Township, 500 people have been **abducted and detained**, and 100 people have been shot dead by junta forces since the coup. During June and July the internet and phone lines have been cut, and there has been an increase in heavy security checks.

WLB member reported a woman was shot to death in Kalay City by unknown forces on suspicion of giving information to the junta. On July 9, two bodies were found near Segyi village, Kalay Township. One of the victims was a woman in her 50s. On the evening of July 29, a 29-year-old woman, U Mong Sunt Khaing was shot and killed by junta soldiers while driving a motorcycle near Sake Kan Thar market. On July 11, Sein Lin and his wife was shot to death by the urban guerilla group at the café shop, accused of being junta informers.

Over 100 civilian homes in the **Catholic village** of Chan Thar were burned down in June. It was the second attack on the village in one month.

10,000 civilians fled Chaung-U township after a three-day raid by junta troops and allied militia. On June 20, **five charred bodies** were found in the village, four were civilians and one was a local militia. On July 22 in Kantbalu township, the junta raided Kyisu Village and murdered over 70 people, **20 burnt bodies** were found. In Khin-U township, a **88-year old woman** lost her life when junta soldiers raided her home. They torched several houses, and burned down store crops and the medical clinic. All three townships are Burman ethnic concentrated areas.

SHAN STATE

Over **58,700 people** are internally displaced in southern Shan State since the coup. On June 21, **three women** were killed by a junta artillery strike in an internal displacement camp near Kutkai in northern Shan State.

Drug trafficking and sexual exploitation is not a new phenomenon in Burma/ Myanmar, however since the coup the country has spiraled into economic crisis, resulting in significant financial hardship and instability. Conflict, lawlessness and economic hardship exacerbate existing problems of sexual exploitation, drug production and trafficking.

WLB members report an increase in **drug production** and trafficking in Shan State, which in turn has led to an increase in gender-based violence and addiction, particularly among younger people. In Panglong, a man with a drug addiction killed his mother, and in Taung Twe Bwar Village, a man with a drug addiction killed his wife. The man was not adequately punished for his crime, only receiving a six-month prison sentence.

WLB members also report an increase in the number of women fleeing their home to neighbouring countries because of the economic and political insecurity since the coup. Young women and girls are at a heightened risk of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Two women from Pan Khar Village, Hsipaw Township in northern Shan State went **missing** on their way to work in Muse, and a woman from Taung Ma Village, Nansang Township in northern Shan State, Ta'ang area, went missing on her way to **work in Thailand**.

WLB AND MEMBERS' SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES

WLB continues raise global awareness of systemic discrimination and violence that women in Burma/Myanmar continue to experience on a daily basis. Throughout June and July, WLB and its members continued to collect data and report on human rights abuses taking place across all ethnic regions in Burma/Myanmar. Their valuable work and insights into the local context informs the content of this report.

Highlights of WLB's advocacy work throughout June and July, include:

- Publishing an article in the first volume of the Panel Discussion Journal, titled 'Federalism Beyond Revolution'.
- Hosting various panel discussions, including, 'International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict'; 'International Day in Support of Victims of Torture'; and, 'Federalism Can Be Conceived in the State Constitution'.
- Participating in panel discussions, including, 'The Unity of Revolutionary Groups and Fragile Evil Military'; 'The Only Way to End the Cycle of Sexual Violence'; 'The 46th Commemoration of Salai Tin Maung Oo Day'; and, 'Does necessary to Have Constitution on Transitional Period?'.

Women's leadership and movement building is central to WLB's work. Throughout June and July, WLB held:

- A training workshop for 100 participants to learn about the foundation of federalism and the principles of constitution, taking a gender analysis approach.
- Hosted a Women's Exchange for more than 100 participants to exchange ideas and find solutions to gender-based violence.
- Held a Global Justice Workshop for more than 50 participants from different backgrounds to discuss justice and accountability.
- Held training for more than 50 participants to strengthen the capacity of Information and Documentation and Research.

Burmese Women's Union reported on women's participation during the Nway Oo Revolution and shared information via Honest Information Facebook page and collected information on women for a monthly briefing paper. BWU organized a discussion with teenage women in Loikaw on mindfulness, held a webinar on women's political participation, and provided awareness of sexual violence online.

Kachin Women's Association Thailand provided Mental Health Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) to villagers and, human rights and GBV survivors. KWAT distributed hygiene Kits, nutrition, and basic food support to IDP and young women. KWAT also provided livelihood support to trafficking survivors, emergency health care support to vulnerable migrants, GBV, and rape case survivors. KWAT also ran awareness training and supported young IDP women with vocational training and a safe house for survivors.

Karenni National Women's Organization provided food for refugees and items to meet women's needs, ran awareness training for women and teenagers, as well as livelihood training, and provided services for women and children who are suffering from violence.

Karen Women's Organization carried out advocacy in IDP camps, ran a safe house project, a school project for disabled children and pre-school children, and supported a total of 14,527 IDPs, 8,516 were women.

Kayan Women's Organization collected information on the number of IDPs and IDP camps and provided support for emergencies. In cooperation with refugees and 10 village tracts, KyWO supported with school supplies, and provided capacity building to 20 volunteer teachers.

Kuki Women's Human Rights Organization shared a collection of women's voices on social media and interviewed women leaders on the challenges they face. KWHRO delivered five days of training to women.

Lahu Women's Organization attended alliance discussions and held an online discussion regarding the organization's programs.

Pa-O Women's Union collected data on human rights violations in Southern Shan State. PWU held online human rights training, political training, federalism, and training on how to access information online. The training was targeted at young people and people from the villages in the Southern Shan State. PWU also collected data on violence against women.

Shan Women's Action Network continued to implement its regular programs including human rights documentation. Besides regularly supporting members of the CDM including field health workers, SWAN provided emergency assistance to IDPs in Taunggyi, Hopong, and Kali in southern Shan State.

Ta'ang Women's Organisation attended workshops and training and participated in alliance activities. TWO is preparing for the opening of the Ta'ang Women Leadership School.

Tavoyan Women's Union provided rice to IDP camps and undertook research in cooperation with other alliances.

Women for Justice collected data on IDPs in Sagaing Division and Chin State, provided essentials to people in IDP camps, helped villages in Southern Kalay Township and some IDPs camps from townships in Sagaing Region, worked with alliance organisations and held awareness raising discussions on gender issues, including the types of violence and domestic violence in Sagaing Region, Magway Region and Chin State.

CONCLUSION

The junta continues to deploy troops and heavy artillery into ethnic regions, escalating violence and surveillance of civilians and ethnic military groups. Throughout June and July, the junta committed many acts in contravention of international law, including torching of villages, indiscriminately laying landmines, rape as a weapon of war, murder, torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, enforced disappearance, unlawful arrest and detention, and **arbitrary deprivation of life**.

The violence will continue to escalate as the junta strives to silence and control the population prior to their planned election.

The judicial execution of the **four political activists** is a clear message of the junta that they will never listen to calls from the international community. It's only objective is to hold onto power, and it will do so at any cost. Calls by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to **release all political prisoners** will have no impact.

To save the growing number of people on **death row**, and to bring an end to the junta's brutal violence, the international community must **collectively cripple the junta** economically by cutting off access to resources. In fact, Russia, China and India continue to supply arms to the junta, which is paid for with revenue generated from **Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE)**.

WLB reiterates our calls on the United Nations Security Council to urgently impose a global arms embargo and on the world leaders to implement targeted sanctions against the junta, including junta owned businesses. Starving the junta of weapons, fighter jets and surveillance systems will not only save thousands of lives, it is essential for the security of the region.

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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