



Media Release from Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN)

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KPSN: New Briefing Paper Reveals Burmese Military Loss of Control in SE Burma

A new briefing paper published today by the Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN) reveals that the military State Administration Council (SAC) is losing military and administrative control in southeast Burma.

The briefing paper, 'A Shifting Power Balance - Junta Control Shrinks in Southeast Burma', reveals that since the coup SAC has lost 62 military bases to the Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army and its allies.

"Diplomats and UN agencies based in Yangon may have the impression there that the military are all powerful and in control but the reality outside Yangon and other cities is very different," said, Naw Wahkushee, Director of the Karen Peace Support Network. "The shifting power balance in Karen State and other areas should prompt governments and UN agencies to reassess their approach both politically and for the delivery of humanitarian assistance."

There have been striking strategic gains on western and eastern boundaries of northern KNU territory. The KNU's expansion westwards and southwards also poses a significant threat to the regime's main road and rail transport artery from Yangon to Naypyidaw, as well as to the Asia Highway trade corridor from Yangon to Myawaddy on the Thai border.

The expansion of KNU administrative territory means that there has been significant progress towards establishing devolved federal schools with curriculums based on local majority languages, culture and history. Schools operated by the Karen Education and Culture Department have tripled to more than 900. Ministry of Education schools in KNU and mixed administration areas have fallen from 370 to zero.

As the KNU and allies expand territorial control, the SAC has escalated artillery and air attacks against local communities: 1178 artillery attacks and 417 airstrikes from the start of the coup to July 2023. The rate of these attacks has increased in the past 15 months compared to the first 15 months after the coup.

There has been indiscriminate use of both airstrikes and shelling in civilian-populated areas, as well as direct targeting of community infrastructure, such as religious buildings, schools and

clinics. This includes the complete or partial destruction of 19 schools, 15 churches, 10 monasteries and 6 clinics. This has been a key driver of displacement.

There is now an unprecedented 637,414 Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in Kawthoolei (Karen State). This does not include some part of IDPs in Doooplaya and Mergui-Tavoy districts where organisations have not been able to access.

KPSN estimates that \$43 million is needed in the next 12 months to provide food aid to these IDPs. This is to address the food crisis alone, not including shelter, medical needs and education. The only way to provide support to these people is through the local border-based networks such as the Karen Emergency Relief Team.

The only district where the number of IDPs has slightly fallen is Mutraw, where the KNU's tightened control and expansion of neighbouring territory has driven the Burmese military from bases used to fire artillery.

Karen Peace Support Network is deeply concerned that UNOCHA (the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) continues to vastly underestimate the number of IDPs in southeast Burma, reporting only 322,600 IDPs in Kawthoolei areas in July 2023. Yangon based UN agencies operating under the restrictions of SAC do not have access to most parts of Kawthoolei. Their underreporting of the true number of IDPs leads to flawed decision-making in allocation of funds and people not receiving life-saving aid.

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This briefing paper is available on the KPSN website here:

<https://www.karenpeace.org/reports-and-briefings/>