



# “Trying to Stay Strong”

A Situational Overview of the Civilian Impact of  
Human Rights Violations in Karenni State between  
January and March 2024



KARENNI HUMAN  
RIGHTS GROUP

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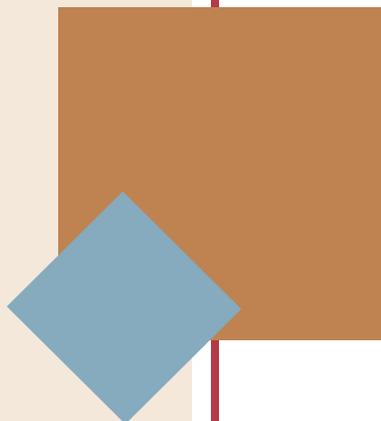
**Coverphoto:** The aftermath of an airstrike perpetrated by the military junta which targeted two schools in Demoso township, Karenni State.

**The Karenni Human Rights Group | December 2024**

## Acknowledgements

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Widespread killing of civilians, including aerial and ground bombardments by the military junta, has affected thousands of people in Karenni State, Burma. The Burma Army continues to carry out systematic human rights violations against innocent civilians, leading to multiple crises throughout the state. The escalating levels of violence have resulted in significant gaps in education, justice, health, and livelihoods.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has estimated that more than 18.6 million people, about one-third of the country's total population, desperately need humanitarian aid.<sup>1</sup> Of this number, approximately six million children are severely impacted by forced displacement, food insecurity, and inaccessible healthcare and education.

This is further compounded by the economic crisis and staggering inflation rates, which have forced nearly half of the country's population to live below the poverty line. It is important to note that local actors report much higher numbers than the United Nations due to the junta-imposed access restrictions that the UN may encounter.

In addition, the ongoing and unabated attacks have led to a worsening humanitarian crisis that has seen more than 3 million people internally displaced across Burma.<sup>2</sup> The Karenni Human Rights Group (KnHRG) has documented at least 210,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Karenni this year. This is an increase from 2023, in which KnHRG documented 180,000 IDPs, which amounted to approximately 40 percent of the population.

In eastern Burma, Karenni State is the smallest of the country's seven states and regions, with just under 300,000 people. The junta's campaign of fear is familiar to ethnic people who have suffered under their brutality for decades. The impacts on civilians have been catastrophic. Across the state, fundamental freedoms and basic human rights are routinely denied. Since the attempted coup, the junta has increasingly targeted civilians with artillery, mortar shelling, and airstrikes.

Last year, Karenni civil society organizations released a report that revealed evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated by the military junta. The report, titled "*How Can We Survive in the Future?*" found that between May 2021 and September 2022, civilians faced widespread human

<sup>1</sup> UNOCHA, '[Overview of the humanitarian response in Myanmar](#)'

<sup>2</sup> '[Bleak milestone': UN says 3 million forced to flee in Myanmar conflict](#)' Al Jazeera, 8 May 2024

rights violations which undermined their access to justice.<sup>3</sup> This report, titled ‘Trying to Stay Strong,’ finds a worrying escalation of those concerns, including challenges regarding education, health, and securing their livelihoods.

Documentation by KnHRG shows that the junta indiscriminately punishes and collectively targets unarmed civilian populations to stoke fear and tensions while also weakening morale. This is part of their long-time strategy, known as the ‘four cuts,’ which seeks to undermine communities and opposition forces by cutting off food, funds, information, and recruits.

This report will outline the challenges faced by Karenni people in the current context. The findings in this report indicate civilians are struggling to survive as their basic food and health needs are not being met. With 325 temporary shelters and 93 internal displacement camps in Karenni State and 11 along the Karenni-Shan border, there is an urgent call to assist those sheltering from the junta’s aggression, including ground and aerial attacks.

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<sup>3</sup>The Karenni Human Rights Group (KnHRG), Kayan Women’s Organization (KyWO), Karenni National Women’s Organization (KNWO), and Kayah State Peace Monitoring Network (KSPMN). [“How Can We Survive in the Future?”](#) February 2023

## A Humanitarian Crisis in Karenni State

**325** Temporary Shelters

**93** Internal Displacement Camps

**11** along the Karenni - Shan border

**210,000** Internally Displaced People



Given the high level of distress in Karenni State, KnHRG fieldworkers conducted interviews using a trauma-informed approach. Researchers documented, organized, and analyzed the data in Burmese before translating it into English and editing it for inclusion in this report.

Over the last three and a half years, KnHRG has expanded its documentation efforts with a focus on how civilians are directly and indirectly impacted by the junta's increasing military operations in urban and rural areas of Karenni State. We have preserved survivor statements to be used as evidence in international accountability mechanisms against the junta for their ongoing airstrikes and ground attacks.

In coordination with our advocacy efforts, KnHRG briefs the media and human rights experts at the regional and international levels, stressing the importance of their support and involvement in maintaining awareness of the situation's urgency in Karenni State. We have enhanced our capacity for documentation efforts as we continue to work on the most pressing protection issues facing innocent civilians living in conflict-affected communities.

The KnHRG team established the research methodology for this project based on consultations in conflict-affected areas of Karenni State and along the Shan-Karenni border with 325 communities, including five townships and villages in Loikaw Township, Demoso Township, Hrpuso Township, Shawdaw Township and Phe Khon Township, between 1 January 2024 and 30 March 2024.

The testimonies shared with KnHRG addressed the main challenges and concerns in local Karenni communities. The research consisted of a questionnaire with five to fifteen questions that changed depending on the individual's community experience. This report presents primarily qualitative field research combined with desk research to support the field team's findings using thorough analysis. The research is intended to amplify calls for action.

Despite the immense risks involved in conducting these interviews, all management measures were taken to ensure the safety of the fieldworkers and beneficiaries. It intentionally excludes specific details that could put

individuals at risk. Many names of people and villages have been changed or removed to safeguard the victims, their families, and communities from potential retaliation by military forces.

Across Burma, the junta's campaign of violence is being perpetrated at a level of unseen under previous regimes. Further, this report will present KnHRG's research findings on how the current humanitarian crisis has impacted the Karenni people. It will describe how their fundamental rights have been violated from the perspectives of health professionals, camp committees, students, educators, and others. The lived experiences of those interviewed for this report will shed light on the injustices perpetrated against a population devastated and traumatized by the junta's ongoing attacks. It will also detail the daily challenges and anxieties conflict-affected communities face in Karenni State.

In addition, the report will call for renewed and strengthened humanitarian assistance in Karenni IDP camps and temporary shelters, as well as the immediate implementation of international accountability mechanisms, including a global arms embargo, targeted aviation sanctions, and a long-overdue referral of the human rights situation in Burma to the International Criminal Court.

Many women and youth bear various burdens as they endure, clinging to the hope that their hardships will soon end. Their resolve to 'try to stay strong' reflects an unmatched resilience and strength against the junta's efforts to manipulate aid, power, and politics. Ultimately, it will be the people of Burma who emerge victorious.

According to the latest report by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) released in September 2024, the military junta perpetrated 158 airstrikes in the southeast in the first four months of the year, with Karenni State being one of the main areas most affected.<sup>4</sup> Even in designated safety zones, the Burma Army has not hesitated to fire upon innocent people and their compounds.

An additional challenge has been the military's humanitarian restrictions, which impede the operations of local relief organizations, which must proceed cautiously to avoid being detained and interrogated by the Burma Army.<sup>5</sup> The regime has a long, troubling history of failing to meet the people's needs in emergencies and natural disasters. The increasing roadblocks and checkpoints have forced service providers working on the ground to conduct their activities more discreetly. However, first responders and local leaders remain trusted and reliable partners in providing localized aid delivery in their communities.

Throughout the reporting period, the junta also attacked two schools and one hospital, which claimed the lives of at least a dozen people, including women and children, including a case on April 11th, at 10:15 PM, when the junta deployed an airstrike in Loi Yin-Pi Kin village, Pekon Township. Three civilians were killed, including two children, a 3-year-old boy and a 12-year-old girl. At least five civilians were also injured.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to being forced to flee violence and attacks on their homes, Karenni people are being arbitrarily arrested, detained, and violently interrogated in military custody or shot on sight. KnHRG documented cases of displaced villagers returning to their areas to forage for food and other materials when they were killed or injured by landmines planted by the junta. For locals, the junta's crimes are impacting them even off the battlefield.

The junta's presence is evident in the destruction surrounding local villages, churches, clinics and schools. The destruction of these important buildings and institutions impacts livelihoods, educational opportunities, and religious freedom and causes further displacement.

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<sup>4</sup> UNOCHA, [Situation of human rights in Myanmar - Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights - Advance unedited version](#), 4 September 2024

<sup>5</sup> [Human Rights Watch World Report: Myanmar 2024](#)

<sup>6</sup> ["Junta's Airstrike Kills Three People Including Child, and Injures Five in Phekhon"](#) Burma News International, 18 April 2024



**Photo:** The bags and backpacks of school children in the aftermath of ten airstrikes by the junta in Demoso Township, Karenni State, on 5 February 2024 at 10:15 AM with three jet fighters, in addition to six rounds of mortar shelling on two schools.

Daw Si Ei school was hit by a series of bombs, including one weighing 500 pounds. Four young boys between the ages of 12 and 14 years were killed. At least fifteen children were injured, including those under the age of three. The second attack on Loi Nan Pa claimed the life of one man, and two teachers and five civilians were injured. Six other buildings and one church were damaged, and five homes belonging to IDPs and locals were also destroyed by the relentless firing.

Civilians are facing significant impediments on the ground in Karenni State. The humanitarian crisis created by the junta has displaced millions and created shortages in food, fuel, and medicine. While armed resistance forces maintain control of over 90 percent of Karenni State, the ongoing fighting between the military junta and the opposition has exacerbated an already devastating human rights situation.

There is a growing need for emergency humanitarian funding as thousands of people in temporary shelters and IDP camps face water shortages and a lack of access to work, education, and justice. These basic needs denied to innocent people are a byproduct of decades of military impunity, which has shielded the regime from accountability. The severity of the humanitarian situation across the country demands immediate action by the international community.

## Deliberate Attacks

The military junta has continued to relentlessly fire artillery, including mortar shells and bombs, into community areas. These attacks have not killed children and affected thousands of displaced families. Throughout the year, innocent civilians have been targeted in airstrikes on schools and IDP camps.

On September 5th, the Burma Army targeted the “Bangkok IDP camp” for the seventh time, located close to La Ei Village in Pekon Township, in Southern Shan State. Two 500-pound bombs were dropped directly onto the displaced people living below, killing at least ten people, including women and children.<sup>7</sup> At least fourteen others were injured in the attack. Several properties were also damaged.

Just a few months before this attack, on February 5th at 10:15 AM, the military junta carried out ten airstrikes with three jet fighters, in addition to six rounds of mortar shelling on two schools in Demoso Township. The attack lasted approximately one hour, in which two schools were targeted, and children were killed and seriously injured.

The military junta continues to intentionally destroy civilian infrastructure and places of refuge. KnHRG estimates that 80 to 85 percent of the Karenni population has become internally displaced. The further escalation of attacks on schools, in particular, is indicative of the military’s disregard for the lives of children. Whenever there is armed conflict, women and children suffer the most.

The level of damage to civilian property is exceptionally high in Demoso and Loikaw townships, but it is a pattern of conduct by the Burmese military in all townships, where there have been frequent armed clashes.

The use of drones by the military junta is also a growing concern. Drones are being used for surveillance against the opposition and civilians, posing a

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<sup>7</sup> Statement: [The Karenni Human Rights Group Condemns the Airstrike on Bangkok IDP Camp in Pekon Township, southern Shan State, 9 September 2024](#)

threat to local livelihoods. During the reporting period, a drone attack by the Burma Army killed one monk in Pin Long, Lwe Kain village monastery while it was under fire by joint armed forces. Earlier this year, the New York Times reported that consumer technologies, such as drones, are changing how war is being fought throughout Burma.<sup>8</sup> Drones are cheaply manufactured and widely mass-produced, increasing their use by the junta.

Additional points of concern are the junta's use of civilians as human shields. Villagers are abducted and forced to guide and porter for the Burma Army, often at gunpoint, around unknown terrain. They are rarely fed or provided water. In May alone, KnHRG documented 58 cases. This comes as the junta continues to issue orders which command civilians to return to their villages, where they are then trapped. Anyone caught trying to leave risks being shot on sight by the Burma Army.

The rights of women and girls have been under attack for decades in Burma, and violence against them has increased since the coup.<sup>9</sup> Their safety and security are compromised due to the lack of available health services, which mainly affects infants, young children, and mothers. The absence of adequate medicine and nutritional food is leading to devastating consequences, with families losing children to preventable illnesses. In temporary shelters and internal displacement camps, the close living conditions and shortages of clean water supply are contributing to the rapid spread of diseases.

Women and children face challenges in accessing healthcare services to meet their needs. Attacks by the military junta prevent them from traveling to clinics safely, and inflation has made many services unaffordable. Local community-based organizations, such as the Karenni Midwives Society, are working to provide health-related services.

***The absence of adequate medicine and nutritional food is leading to devastating consequences, with families losing children to preventable illnesses.***

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<sup>8</sup> [“Drones Changed This Civil War, and Linked Rebels to the World,”](#) New York Times, 4 May 2024

<sup>9</sup> [“KyWO: Domestic Violence Incidence Increased in 2023,”](#) Burma News International, 28 May 2023

Compounding these hardships is the lack of mental health services needed to respond to the widespread trauma. The situation is even more dangerous for communities forced to endure recurring attacks on their homes. It is not safe to work or go to school. Air and ground attacks are happening frequently and without warning. Food shortages and inadequate access to health care services and justice exasperate these stresses.

Further, the complete breakdown of social services, including access to reliable legal and health providers, has led to a lawless society in which crime rates have soared, and there are no domestic accountability mechanisms to hold perpetrators accountable.

The Karenni State Interim Executive Council (IEC) has offered some pathways for local justice through the Karenni State Interim Judiciary (KSIJ), which is the independent judicial authority of the Interim Government, includes the Supreme Court, the District Courts – local and regional ER-level courts of the EROs – and Township Courts.<sup>10</sup> Their legal system has been designed to provide oversight of local laws, courts and institutions.<sup>11</sup> The Supreme Court is the highest court of Karenni State with between three and five judges.<sup>12</sup>

However, for many, the rule of law in Burma has a long way to go, including long overdue international responses by global actors. The following sections will outline how the ongoing attacks by the military junta have altered various aspects of the people’s lives in Karenni State.

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<sup>10</sup> [“Federalism from the Ground Up: The Karenni Model of Nation-State Building.”](#) Progressive Voice, October 2024

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

## A Health Crisis

Women and children face challenges in accessing healthcare services to meet their needs. Attacks by the military junta prevent them from traveling to clinics safely, and inflation has made many services unaffordable. On top of this, the civilians in the area are at risk of artillery shelling, explosions from bombs and drones, and airstrikes, which could cause them harm.

In conflict-affected areas, women and children are bearing the brunt of the crisis. They are deprived of the fundamental rights to play, learn, and live without fear of attacks by the Burma Army. Expectant and new mothers, in particular, struggle to ensure their newborns receive proper nutrition.

The economic crisis has further exacerbated their struggles, as food and necessary maternal supplies are expensive due to an ongoing inflation crisis. The rising cost of living has made it nearly impossible for pregnant women to afford petrol or rental cars needed to travel to hospitals for medical check-ups.

Consequently, many struggle to get proper nutrition during pregnancy, affecting their health, milk production, and ability to care for their newborns. Some even cannot get vaccinated or access appropriate medical care during pregnancy. Additionally, there are shortages of healthcare workers, medical supplies, and necessary nutritional diets for mothers and children. Such problems deepen their concerns.

Due to limited resources, some families are unable to have surgical deliveries. Those living in IDP camps face even more significant challenges, as the clinics there are unable to perform complicated medical procedures, and transportation to hospitals is both expensive and dangerous.

As such, rises in cases of malaria, dengue, and other preventable illnesses reinforce the need for medical resources, including medicine and awareness raising for those suffering.<sup>13</sup> Young children are especially susceptible; extra care must be taken to uphold their health rights.

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<sup>13</sup> [“Malaria Cases Rise in Some IDP Camps in Pruso Township,” Kantarawaddy Times, 16 July 2024](#)

The potentially life-saving decision to flee at a moment's notice has led to instances of miscarriages and prenatal distress among women, and shortages in medical resources have made childbirth more complicated and riskier. An expectant mother who spoke to KnHRG shared that a week before she was due to give birth, the hospital she had been visiting for daily checkups was targeted in an aerial attack.

Around half of the children in Karenni State suffer from malnutrition due to the lack of access to nutritious food. This is primarily a result of job loss and an absence of job opportunities, making it difficult to afford proper nutrition.

Some children are born prematurely due to expectant mothers facing a low quality of life as they are unable to access healthy food and are living in dangerous conditions. A midwife from Saw Pa Htan Village, Saung Du Lar Tract, Demoso Township, told KnHRG that a woman she was treating miscarried when fleeing an attack due to the stress and anxiety her mind and body were forced to endure.

There are frequent miscarriages among pregnant women living in IDP camps, as well as stillborn births, which cause psychological distress for mothers. Women interviewed by KnHRG also expressed concern that clinics will close for safety reasons during active conflict. As a result, women have additional barriers to accessing medical care.

Before the coup, women used to receive vaccines and had sufficient access to health support. However, due to the conflict, there is no longer enough nutritional food, leading to physical challenges in their bodies, which often results in a miscarriage.

A pregnant woman, Daw Pann Ma Ma, from Rai Kan Camp, Ho Wan Tract, Demoso township, shared a similar account of having to flee upon hearing the junta's planes circling above:

*“When the plane comes, we have to run and hide in a hole, and while running, I’ve fallen a few times. While the plane noise takes over, I would close my ears, and once the plane hovers, the giant artillery also follows, so we’re afraid to go out,”* she said.



**Around half of the children in Karenni State suffer from malnutrition due to the lack of access to nutritious food.**

Photo: Destruction, including much-needed rice, spilled over in an attack by the junta on August 25, 2024 at 12:50 PM which injured a child.

*“We must listen to the sound and can’t even eat even if we’re hungry. We only dare to go out once the noise dies down. In those situations, I do worry about my pregnancy, about possibly having a miscarriage, or if I’ll fall. I still fall often, but nothing happens, so I’ve been lucky. “*

A doctor, Daw Thein May, from La Thei Village, Pekhonn township, who spoke to KnHRG, described a concerning pattern of miscarriages:

*“At least 10% of women in Karenni State will have a miscarriage. There are many reasons for this. Women try to work during their entire pregnancy. With poor roads and infrastructure, they can miscarry traveling on the motorbike. The biggest challenge is the lack of reliable health services available. The hospital is far away, so they cannot attend regular visits.”*

Another doctor, Daw Bwe Htoo, from Nyein Taung Camp, Demoso township, described the severity of the situation for expectant mothers.

*“There are about 20% of miscarriages at our clinic. This happens due to regular displacement. There are not enough hospitals or clinics. Artillery shelling occurs so often, and this causes a lot of distress for expectant mothers.”*

Many women told KnHRG that there are not enough clinics in the camps, so they must travel long distances for medical care. If there are any transportation issues, they might not be able to get the medical care they need. One woman mentioned that she practiced self-care by avoiding carrying heavy objects and drinking alcohol, while others relied on local clinics for advice and help. Despite these efforts, many felt that the medical support they received was not enough. These harsh realities are indicative of the immense challenges that women encounter when carrying out their pregnancies in unpredictable and violent circumstances.

Health practitioners report that infants are born dangerously underweight due to food insecurity. In Karenni State, out of the surveyed population, 420 children were identified as malnourished, indicating a significant public health concern that requires immediate attention and intervention.

For instance, Beso Clinic in Hpruso Township reports at least seven malnourished children. In comparison, LawKuKhu village has approximately twenty children struggling with various nutritional deficiencies due to water contamination and unsanitary living conditions in temporary shelters and IDP camps. Similar situations are found in other locations too.

Most women who spoke to KnHRG shared concerns about their pregnancy in a conflict setting. Many mentioned the difficulty of natural birth and how they ended up having a Cesarean section (C-section), which is particularly problematic, as the clinics in camps are unequipped to handle surgical operations. This often forces women to travel long distances to hospitals, which is both dangerous and expensive.

While some women have access to clinics and receive vaccinations and medical pills, many clinics close when the situation in the town worsens due to increased violence. In such cases, women do not have many options to ensure a safe delivery.

Several interviewees detailed facing financial difficulties. Most of the displaced have no income, and they struggle to afford all the fees associated with giving

birth, including hospital fees, transportation fees, and the child's necessities. Many mothers also mention the small amount of food they eat, as food is scarce and not nutritious, leading to malnourished babies. This underscores the urgent need for improved healthcare resources and infrastructure in conflict areas.

Transportation challenges in border areas disrupt medicine delivery, hindering the treatment of patients, especially those in critical condition. The monsoon season, which lasts from July to October, further complicates travel due to flooding and roadblocks. In addition to financial constraints, patients often face difficulties obtaining medicine and referrals to other clinics.

A woman affiliated with the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), Daw Po Po from Kyoin Thaw Su Camp, Loa Bar Kho Tract, Demoso Township, who spoke to KnHRG, shared that among the many challenges, finding a hospital to deliver via C-section is nearly impossible:

*“Even in a place where I was able to be seen, the doctors are afraid of taking responsibility for me since I’ve had a c-section before. At last, I was able to give birth comfortably because of the instructions of others.”*

Pregnant women in Karenni State who cannot afford prenatal medicine and vaccinations further contribute to the stress and uncertainty of their daily lives. A lack of hope for the future discourages sick individuals from receiving proper treatment. Expectant mothers fear the lack of control they have over their delivery dates and worry about what they should do if they go into labor during an attack. These debilitating circumstances take a toll on their mental and physical well-being.

Daw Po Po continued by sharing that these thoughts led her to take medicine for anxiety to cope:

*“If, at that moment, I suddenly have a contraction and want to give birth, where should I go? These are some of the troubling thoughts that bother me. Whether for myself or the baby, I’m worried about many things. If the planes drop a bomb, how do I avoid it?”* she said.

*“I started thinking about where to go that would be safe for myself and the baby. During my pregnancy, there were frequent airstrikes, so my mind was shaky and anxious. I had to take heart-easing medicines during that time.”*

*In Karenni State, out of the surveyed population, 420 children were identified as malnourished, indicating a significant public health concern that requires immediate attention and intervention.*

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A woman from a village in Loikaw Township told KnHRG that her health condition has caused her significant anxiety and stress during her pregnancy due to the lack of affordable care and absence of livelihood opportunities:

*“It’s been difficult financially because I don’t have a job. I also have a heart disease, so I have to go to the clinic often. It costs a lot. The doctor also said that the child may not survive,”* said Daw Ka Lyar Htun from Kayan TarYa Camp.

Furthermore, expectant mothers are worried that the stress and uncertainty will result in their child being born with physical disabilities or that they will have difficulty producing enough breast milk to sustain their babies.

In Karenni State alone, approximately 80 percent of infants are estimated to die, primarily because their mothers cannot provide enough nutrition,<sup>14</sup> in addition to limited healthcare access, poor hygiene, and an ongoing humanitarian crisis. This alarming mortality rate reflects the profound effects of the coup on maternal and infant health, emphasizing the critical need for intervention.

Many interviewees mentioned their fear of planes flying overhead frequently, which constantly reminds them of the potential danger they face. After the husband of a young pregnant woman joined the resistance in Demoso Township, she has been trying to fend for herself and survive but has ongoing fears about how she and her baby will survive:

*“Now, I can hear the sounds of airplanes and heavy weapons all around me. I’m worried that my child will be born prematurely. Also, when I don’t have access to health care, I can’t eat a balanced diet of all three food groups for my child, so I’m concerned.*

*“Will my child be okay? What if the baby is disabled in some way, and even if the baby is fine, there is concern about what their future will be like? These are my worries,”* said Daw Pan MaMa.

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<sup>14</sup> [“Humanitarian Aid: Crisis Report 2021- 2024,”](#) The Women’s League of Burma, October 2024

Survivors of air and ground attacks frequently experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). With a lack of available options for processing their pain and suffering, they rely on their communities to jointly support one another.

While most women say that they received the healthcare they needed while pregnant and had free check-ups, other women that KnHRG spoke to said that prenatal services are not necessarily guaranteed. For the baby's sake, many women say they avoid doing harsh work and lifting heavy things, try to eat nutritious food, and get prenatal care and vaccines if available.

Women who can carry to term face additional fears and challenges after giving birth, including malnourishment and vaccine availability. They also worry that the infant could become sick due to the changing climate and lack of warm clothing.

Others expressed that despite the struggles they face, they sought advice from individuals with knowledge of pregnancy, doing their best to stay safe with limited resources both for themselves and their offspring.



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*Photo: The aftermath of an airstrike on March 22, 2024, on a public hospital in Laei village, Pekon Township. The junta attacked four times with a 500-pound bomb.*

*While most women say that they received the healthcare they needed while pregnant and had free check-ups, other women that KnHRG spoke to said that prenatal services are not necessarily guaranteed.*

A mother from Ye Kau Taung Camp, Sound Du Lar Tract, Demoso Township, who spoke to KnHRG, shared that sometimes military junta soldiers patrol key routes on the way to clinics:

*“I got the vaccine on time from a nearby clinic. We’ve had four vaccines for our child under (2) years old. The doctors made an appointment for the last vaccine in the fifth month. At the time of vaccination for that child, I had to have it done in Loikaw. Soldiers were patrolling then, so I was worried when crossing the gate. When I said I would get the child vaccinated, they released me, and there was not much of an examination. When we go, the mothers who require vaccinations gather and travel together.”*

Women who were unable to get vaccines told KnHRG that either the nearby clinic ran out of vaccines or they couldn’t go to another town because it was too far and a harsh journey. Several women shared that they don’t have enough money to borrow a motorcycle or car or pay for the fuel needed for transportation.

One woman from Boe Lyar Camp, Demoso Township, suggested that health workers should come to conflict-affected communities more regularly to provide services to ensure a more reliable environment for childbirth.

*“I was able to feed my baby with vitamins for six months. I couldn’t afford to give them a balanced meal of the three food groups. I feed them what I have. Since I’m fleeing the war and have no job and no income, so no money, we can’t afford even if we want to feed them.”*

Another woman from Pekon Township said she had many concerns while she was giving birth as a result of the many high-risk factors beyond her control:

*“When I was about to give birth, I was worried that I would miscarry because there were many bombings at the time. When I gave birth, having enough water, fire, and wood was difficult. Since I was also having trouble with money, I didn’t dare to use water too much. It was difficult also since there was no pre-cut firewood.”*

Several others echoed similar fears, primarily rooted in their apprehension surrounding the conditions of giving birth in conflict settings, which have undermined their access to health care services.

*“I am worried about giving birth, where to give birth, whether I can give birth safely, whether I will have to travel to give birth, etc. Transportation and phone networks are difficult to access right now. From medicines to income, there are many difficulties,”* said a woman from Paru Khao Camp, Daw Ka Yaunt Khu Tract, Hpurso township.

*“I am worried and anxious [to give birth]. If there are big weapons and artillery fire near the camp where I live, I worry for my mental and physical health. With my due date approaching, I wonder how or if I can get to the hospital and afford the cost,”* added another woman from Inn Taw Camp, Demoso township.

Women living in displacement camps are also struggling to access monthly essentials and personal hygiene items.<sup>15</sup> Shops carry low supplies, or it is impossible to travel to nearby shops for fear of being stopped and interrogated by the junta. As such, many have had to use cloth instead of sanitary pads.

The supply of women’s hygiene items began to diminish in February 2024. Donors have attempted to fill these gaps by providing one pack to households, but this temporary solution as a one-month supply is not adequate nor sustainable.

The shortage of medicine, challenges in setting up clinics, and fears of healthcare infrastructure being targeted in airstrikes by the junta further exacerbate the healthcare crisis. In addition, the bombing of La-ei Public Hospital in Pekon Township, Southern Shan State, in March this year has added to the challenges faced by people living in conflict zones.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> [“Somo Phay Soe Lay \(Shadaw\) Township Displaced Women Struggle to Access Monthly Essentials and Personal Hygiene Items” Kantarawaddy Times 22 August 2024](#)

<sup>16</sup> [“KnHRG Condemns the Attack on La-ei Hospital in Pekhon Township, Southern Shan State.” Karenni Human Rights Group, 22 March 2024](#)

A woman from Daw Law Bu Camp, Sha Daw township, told KnHRG:

*“Before the coup, in the IDP camps, there were not very many malnourished children. Now, there are much more. It is getting worse because families cannot support themselves. They can only eat what is provided for them. In these cases, children suffer, and the number of underweight children has increased.”*

Those with chronic illnesses or those injured in attacks must overcome additional hurdles to access treatment and care. A doctor who spoke to KnHRG said there is a risk of the junta attacking at any moment:

*“When we provide medical support to patients, sometimes we hear the junta jets above, and patients are afraid and don’t know what to do. The medical staff make a basic income and cannot provide enough for their families,”* said Daw Phy Sein Thant, Saw Pa Htan Village in Demoso Township.

*“The number of diseases like diabetes and high blood pressure, for example, has increased. Patients with these diseases need medicine, but we cannot provide enough,”* she added.

Some women rely on self-education and maintaining a nutritional diet to keep their babies healthy. However, access to medical care varies greatly depending on where the women live. The ongoing transportation and economic crises make it difficult for many to receive adequate care, especially those who must travel to Loikaw for check-ups.

These challenges vary greatly depending on where the women live and their access to resources in their areas. Additionally, traveling can be challenging, as junta troops inspect people at checkpoints. Such crises are particularly difficult for CDM staff, who have to worry about their safety when they travel to other locations to get vaccinations.

In addition to these difficulties, the rainy season, fear of airstrikes, and lack of adequate shelter have made daily survival extremely difficult. Women worry not only about their health but also about how their children are going to cope in such circumstances, with fears of long-term developmental issues. Since there are not enough vaccinations and proper nutrition for their children, such a crisis would lead to further anxiety among mothers.

Overall, the situation is bleak and urgent. Doctors and nurses have been conducting capacity-building training for individuals interested in offering medical assistance. Yet, there continues to be a demand for reliable healthcare services and medicine.

## Dwindling Funds and Desperation in Karenni Displacement Camps

### *Camp Committee Perspective and Challenges*

Among the myriad of challenges facing displaced communities is a lack of sustainable, long-term donor funding. This absence of support has resulted in substantial gaps in services, such as food allocation. Alongside the worsening humanitarian crisis, climate change induced mass flooding has blocked major roads needed for transporting goods.

On top of this, food shortages have resulted in fears over long-term food sustainability. Many people who spoke to KnHRG shared that they do not have enough money to cover basic food costs for themselves or their families. Essential cooking materials, notably rice, oil, and chili, are becoming less available due to worsening inflation and the ongoing conflict. The increase in danger from the fighting has forced many shops to close for safety reasons.

With the number of IDPs rising, donors cannot meet the growing need of food, namely rice, as well as support for shelter and protection. There are also logistical challenges, as the military junta requires human rights organizations operating in the country to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which authorizes these groups to work inside the country. This can complicate relationships with local organizations and communities that have been targeted by the junta for their humanitarian aid delivery and service provision.

Many of the individuals and families that KnHRG spoke to said they have been displaced for at least two years. The situation has begun to wear on families struggling to survive due to a lack of food. Most families that KnHRG interviewed said they were trying to sustain themselves by eating less than two meals daily.

Some people shared with KnHRG that they relied heavily on borrowing supplies from relatives, IDP and relief committees. Rice is the most crucial food staple and it is frequently depended on to be supplied by donors. Others rely on farmlands and other natural sources for food, but they must be cautious about conserving rations, knowing that resources are limited.

Camp committee leaders informed KnHRG that the lack of funding has made it nearly impossible to ensure the regular provision of food, including rice and cooking oil. Another challenge is the increasing cost of rice, as competition among local vendors has rendered it unaffordable.

Access to rations is often complicated by transportation issues, particularly during the rainy season, when roads are destroyed or blocked. The junta's inspections at checkpoints also create delays and difficulties. One individual, who gathered supplies from farms, also struggled with transportation and needed help traveling back and forth. Sometimes, if the roads are jammed, most cannot go far to buy goods, as transportation remains a significant challenge.

An IDP living in a Demoso camp said that the camps do not have separate programs to take care of and manage food expenses:

***“Each household has to cover their needs with the crops they have to plant and harvest. But due to failed harvests, I think we’ll only be able to support ourselves for another 1-2 months,”*** said U So Reh, Daw Phu Camp.

Another IDP from Daw Phu Camp, Demoso Township, shared a similar experience of having to rely on donors independently:

***“We can only plan for ourselves with what donors provide. This year, we are struggling with rice shortages. We get some rice donations. I don’t know how it’ll be able to support all of us, though.”***

Many of those displaced were former farmers who were fearful of returning to their lands due to the relentless attacks by the military junta and landmines, which are frequently planted in civilian areas after the regime abandons their bases.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> [“Farmers in Eastern Part of Dee Maw Hso Township are Limited their Farming Activities in Eastern Demoso Township Due to Displacement Fears.”](#) Kantarawaddy Times, 22 August 2024

Additionally, clean water remains scarce, and as food supplies dwindle, IDPs are now struggling with their mental health. An IDP from Ta Kay Loh Camp, TawKhu Tract, Hpruso Township, told KnHRG:

*“I have many dreams, but none of them have come true. There are many needs in the camp. The number of people fleeing the war is increasing, and we have lost our connections to people and networks. It’s a lot to handle, but you just have to get used to it.”*

Food insecurity causes stress and impacts health, particularly as malnourishment rates rise among young children. According to one IDP from Lyar Camp, Demoso Township, one of the main fears is the dwindling supply of rice.

*“Most importantly, I’m worried about rice. Then it’ll have to be money. Since we’ve been displaced, there hasn’t been much income. We’re concerned about getting sick, looking for clinics or hospitals, and the cost of all those things. Even with storing rice, we’re worried about it going bad.”*

Another IDP, Daw Stella, from Cherry Khon Camp, Demoso township said:

*“The most important food for us is rice. In this camp, there are a lot of us who borrow food. Most of us don’t have any money either. We can’t even help each other out anymore.”*

Ongoing concerns are that food shortages will cause additional nutritional problems, especially for young children. Living quarters in the temporary shelters are cramped, with little privacy. Children in the camps are deprived of joy because they are denied a childhood that allows them to play without

**Food insecurity causes stress and impacts health, particularly as malnourishment rates rise among young children.**

fear. This is further evidenced by the warplanes deployed by the junta, which can often be heard circling in the evenings, creating anxiety and fear. The trauma they have faced in their short lives has led them to lose interest in education. They are restless and share the uncertainty of their families.

Leaders of the various camp committees across Karenni State struggle to obtain consistent, long-term, sustainable financial support. An IDP from Ta Phu Dee Ku Camp, Hpruso township, told KnHRG that despite their best efforts to plan to ensure there is enough food and resources for everyone, funding is not guaranteed.

*“The IDP camp doesn’t have a separate program to take care of our food expenses. Each household has to cover their needs with the crops they have to plant and harvest. But due to failed harvests, I think we’ll only be able to support ourselves for another 1-2 months.”*

Again, one of the primary needs on the ground at this moment is an increase in funds and resources. An IDP living in Pekon township from Sa Laung Village, Khang Ei Tract, shared that despite donor appeals, options are desperately limited. And as donor funds diminish, the demand exceeds the current supply.

*“We share these problems with the donors, who try to help us as best they can. But these days, there are not a lot of donors who will help like this. I have no other businesses or work. I just have to keep trying to find money for my living expenses. I don’t know when I’ll finally be able to support myself again, but if things get worse, I will struggle more.”*

As food shortages continue, many villagers are forced to forage for food outside the camps. But this comes at the risk of encountering landmines or being shot on sight by the junta.

It is important to note that the regime also frequently plants landmines in civilian areas, including farms and surrounding villages. People who are physically handicapped or unable to forage must wait for donations and other aid to eat.



*Photo: Additional damage and destruction as a result of fighting in Loikaw, Karenni State.*

***“All of us IDP households just have to search for what we can find and support our livelihoods with that,”*** said U Myar Reh from Phe Lyar Camp, Demoso Township.

***“The financial circumstances of each household are different. Village locals still have access to farming, so they’re better off. IDPs that arrived from different villages usually struggle more due to lack of opportunity for livelihood support.”***

In terms of planning and distribution, the camp committees consult with the community to assess who are the most vulnerable in the camps. These people include children, the elderly, and those who are chronically ill. After this determination is made, the committees decide on how the food will be divided.

***“All of the aid is distributed immediately. Since there are a lot of households, if we distributed everything evenly, each household would barely get anything,”*** said Roselin in Sein Camp, Loikaw Township.

***“Instead, we prioritize the household[s] struggling the most and do not have enough to support themselves.”***

The rice set aside for emergencies still needs to be proportionate to the number of people needing a reliable food source. Therefore, more is required to meet the increasing demand. Families living in the camps do not have any income to buy rice, so they heavily rely on donations. With very little money available, they face difficult choices between spending it on food or urgent healthcare needs, which causes further anxiety.

***“Sometimes, we have to ask for loans from friends and relatives. We then repay these debts once we receive help from donors,”*** said Daw Veronika from Taunggy Kon Camp, Demoso Township.

Another IDP from Lazarus Camp, Demoso Township, shared that there is a storage room for the rice and supplies, but it is only used to store water pipes. This has forced a sense of self-reliance as no reliable, long-term option exists.

Thousands of displaced people have been forced to leave their homes, leaving behind everything they own. In many cases they were forced to abandon their land, livelihoods, and other resources they had built for years. Before the coup, they were self-sufficient. They had healthy crops, gardens, and local trade. But while the junta has taken their homes and possessions, they have not taken their hopes for the future.

***“We have to eat what is donated. I think we will have enough expenses for food until the end of the year,”*** said Daw Hello Kha, from Landon Camp, Demoso Township.

***“Some people are farming upland again. But those without land and money are unable to do any work. Some are also scared to farm again since their land is near the armed conflict and landmines are planted on [their farms] now.”***

IDPs and conflict-affected communities have experienced many hardships. They have repeatedly called on the international community to stand with them and to amplify their calls for an end to the conflict.

***“Of course, we have our dreams,”*** said U Sar Gy Doe. ***“But only God can fulfill our big dreams. So we also dream of God because only God can bring peace and soften people’s hearts. We are trying to stay strong.”***

# Education Delayed and Denied

## Impact on Students and Education

The junta's attacks have significantly impacted the country's youth by depriving them of access to education and safe learning spaces. These conditions have put an entire group of people, coined the 'Lost Generation,' by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights for Myanmar, Tom Andrews, which includes youth who are at risk of falling behind in their education and severely undermining their career prospects.<sup>18</sup>

## Families are struggling to find education for their children

Due to the lack of income and job opportunities, along with the real presence of conflict, many families are at a loss of options. Although they strongly desire their children to receive a better education, the challenging circumstances make it nearly impossible to achieve.

They struggle daily to fund their children's education, food supplies, livelihood, stipends, and other school materials. The ongoing crisis, potential attacks, and financial constraints have also drained their resources and motivation, further complicating the issue.

In addition, the military junta's forced conscription drive, which went into effect in February 2024, has also sought to rob young people of their futures.<sup>19</sup> This requires all men aged 18-35 and women aged 18-27 to serve at least two years under military command.<sup>20</sup> Though women were initially exempt, the regime began enlisting them in June, including young mothers and those who were pregnant.<sup>21</sup>

Due to the intensity of the conflict, nearly 14,000 schools nationwide have closed. The Karenni Interim Executive Council (IEC) has responded to these education gaps by opening more than 400 schools to promote and prioritize state-wide education.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> ["Youth in the spotlight as analysts ponder fate of Myanmar's lost generation,"](#) Burma News International, 2 August 2022

<sup>19</sup> ["Myanmar: Young people attempt to flee ahead of conscription order,"](#) BBC, 27 February 2024

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> ["Myanmar's Women Face Significant Risks From Junta Conscription Drive"](#) The Diplomat, 7 July 2024

<sup>22</sup> ["Some 13,700 schools in Myanmar are closed due to civil war,"](#) Radio Free Asia, 8 July 2024

In addition, a report by Myanmar Witness spotlighted the concern of growing education limits due to the targeting of schools by the junta across Burma.<sup>23</sup> Children are being denied the right to learn safely due to ongoing attacks by the military. According to their data, Karenni State had the second-highest incidents impacting school infrastructure, with 11 cases documented since the coup on 1 February 2021.<sup>24</sup>

Educators and students in Karenni State rely on bomb shelters for air defence due to the increasing targeting of schools, hospitals, and civilian areas by the military junta's airstrikes and heavy artillery attacks.<sup>25</sup> Many reported that schools are closed when there are airstrikes, artillery shelling, conflicts, or extreme weather conditions, with some closures lasting for days or weeks.

In one case, schools had to close for one month, primarily due to fears of an airstrike. One person who spoke to KnHRG shared that they haven't been able to sleep due to concerns over their security and well-being. These reflections highlight the anxiety over potential attacks that have left residents constantly worried about their lives.

Due to the ongoing conflict, some schools have had to close temporarily, causing delays in students' learning: *"If fighting occurs in the area, the schools close. They can be closed for 3 to 4 days or even longer,"* said Maw Elice in Inn Thaw Camp, Demoso Township.

When schools close, students can quickly fall behind in their studies and miss out on lessons, which creates a learning gap. Temporary closures can also result in students losing interest in education and not prioritizing it due to a lack of trust in the system. As a result, children and youth may join their families in searching for work when they cannot study. This keeps them far from school, making it difficult to continue their education. Additionally, parents need to be able to send their children to school.

*"Parents who struggle to provide nutritional food for their children do not want them to go to school hungry. They always face income challenges, so children stop attending school to help their families work,"* said Kyaw Zin Htwe, from Htee Khu So tract, Hpruso township.

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<sup>23</sup> ["Myanmar schools caught in the crossfire: Myanmar Witness."](#) Burma News International, 22 July 2024

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> ["Schools in Karenni State Rely Solely on Bomb Shelter as a Mean of Air Defense."](#) Kantarawaddy Times, 8 August 2024

Families face several challenges in funding their education and providing school materials, clothing, and food staples. Such cases are particularly prevalent among families with no stable income, which is also one of the outcomes of the country's economic crisis. A young mother, Daw Mea, from Lyar Shwe Nyang Khon Camp, Demoso, mentioned that she has to pay monthly fees of about 3,000 Myanmar Kyats (approximately 1.50 USD) for each child.

*“Since I have no income, I have faced many struggles to fund their education,”* Daw Mea said.

Others mentioned that some of their children dropped out of school to help with agriculture or to mitigate financial struggles. In contrast, others are reluctant to attend school due to the constant fear of aerial attacks. Most schools lack sufficient materials in their classrooms and are vulnerable to attacks by the military junta. On February 5th at 10:15 AM, the junta carried out ten airstrikes using three jet fighters and fired six rounds of mortars at two schools in Demoso Township.

The attack lasted for approximately one hour. Daw Si Ei school was hit by a series of bombs, including one weighing 500 pounds, resulting in the deaths of four boys aged 12 to 14. At least fifteen children, including those under three years old, were injured. In another attack on Loi Nan Pa, one man lost his life, and two teachers and five civilians were wounded.

Additionally, six other buildings and a church were damaged, and five homes belonging to internally displaced people and locals were destroyed by the firing.



*Photo: Damaged buildings after the terrorist regime targeted two schools. Daw Si Ei school was hit by a series of bombs, including one weighing 500 pounds. Four young boys between the ages of 12 and 14 years were killed. At least fifteen children were injured, including those under the age of three.*

A woman who reflected on how the airstrikes and ongoing conflict are affecting children shared that children's rights are constantly being violated.

*“Schools must close if jets are flying overhead. There is no safety for children growing up in these contexts,”* said Daw Nu Nu Aye, from Khon Bar(1) Camp, Demoso Township.

*“These all are the results of the military coup. The most common type of human rights violations are the airstrikes and the artillery attacks,”* she added.

One woman expressed that about five people in her family attended the school, though one or more have dropped out due to financial struggles and prolonged school closures. The temporary closures and relocations have severely impacted children's education, as many have lost interest in school due to the disruptions. The crisis has also caused emotional stress, leading some children to lose motivation. In one case, a child joined the resistance armed forces. Sometimes, exams must be cancelled because of potential attacks, schools are closed, and students cannot catch up with the lessons.

Such a crisis has also exacerbated the growing gap between age and education levels, with students getting older, but needing more education for their standard age. There is also an ever-increasing reduction in children's education and learning skills, further creating uncertainty for their children's education.

Schools that remain open in Karenni State are struggling. A teacher from Maw Lay Mayr, Boe Lyar Village, Demoso Township, told KnHRG that her school is struggling to provide the most basic educational necessities.

*“The school is not running well because of insufficient support, so we are trying to run it ourselves. Many things are needed, such as school supplies and chairs,”* Maw Lay Mayr.

She added:

*“We rely on a small group of donors. Students' parents cannot provide support. However, some parents have been coming to help with the school's needs, such as helping manage and organize the activities. In the past, there was a high turnover of schoolteachers because of the insecurity.”*

Teachers told KnHRG that primary school children are more interested in education, while older students have become aware of the situation of IDPs fleeing the war. They are worried about what the political situation will be like in the future, so they have little interest in the lessons.

The ongoing attacks have also affected the mental well-being of students. When they attend classes, they are traumatized and require coaxing and emotional support from their teachers.

*“We tell the children, if they can’t talk, that’s okay, they can take their time. They come to school regularly, and their desire to go to school is strong. The difficulty is that there is insufficient teaching support, and there are not enough textbooks. Currently, the teacher writes geography and other things on the blackboard, and they copy and memorize them again. We can see their enthusiasm by watching this. As a schoolteacher, I’m so depressed that sometimes we are also discouraged,”* shared Daw Ayezel, a teacher from Lae Taw Camp, Demoso Township.

Some students have reported that as a result of the ongoing threats to their safety, as schools are regularly targeted by the junta in aerial and ground bombardments, schools often close entirely:

*“There are some school closures. Heavy weapons fall when the armies are in formation, and when the drone comes, the school has to be closed for 1-2 weeks,”* said Maw Tay Moe from So Thel Camp in Hpruso Township.

During this reporting period, KnHRG interviewed educators and youth who are still eager to continue learning despite their fears and uncertainties. Many students wanted to become doctors, nurses, clinicians, and other medical professionals to address the growing gaps in conflict-affected communities. They have firsthand experience of the challenges faced by women, children, and the elderly and the unfair consequences of inadequate healthcare in addressing preventable diseases.

*“After I finish school, I hope to be a doctor. I will attend any medical school that is available to me,”* a student, Naw Phaw Mu, from Daw Tha Le Camp, Hpruso Township, told KnHRG.

*“The challenge is that I am afraid my parents will not be able to support me. I also worry that I will not be able to attend school if the political situation worsens.”*

Parents also shared a strong desire for their children to continue their education and become successful. One of these parents mentioned that she was worried that the junta would not approve or legalize the education their children pursue.

The current political crisis is a major so many students don't know whether they should continue their education. Fears center around the political situation, which prevents the recognition or legalization of the education their children receive.

Additionally, the struggles with livelihood and financial circumstances have further exacerbated the uncertainty of their children's education. The other also expressed that they would continue supporting their children's education in every possible way.

Despite the challenges, Karenni parents remain determined to support their children's education. However, the crisis has also produced uncertainty about how much they can achieve, or how far they can given the current instability.

The military junta has repeatedly violated international laws. In the previous report, “*How can we survive in the future?*” the central points of the analysis outlined how the targeted attacks throughout the state fell well within the war crimes and crimes against humanity categories.<sup>26</sup> Within this report, the analysis examined how civilians are impacted by the human rights violations committed by the Burma Army in three specific areas: health, education, and camp perspectives/hardships.

Karenni civilians have been forced to endure severe hardships due to the violent actions perpetrated by the Burma Army. The military regime’s deliberate obstruction of humanitarian aid access for conflict-affected groups exacerbates the deteriorating quality of life in Karenni State.

Moreover, displaced communities struggle to obtain essential supplies as donor support dwindles. Internally displaced persons require consistent monthly assistance to ensure a reliable flow of humanitarian aid, particularly those unable to farm and who depend solely on donations. While some camps receive emergency supplies, there is a critical need for more resources to support IDPs with long-term and sustainable resources.

The unstable ground conditions in Karenni State hinder civilians, particularly women and children, from obtaining essential healthcare and education. Targeted attacks by the Burma Army, notably airstrikes, generate fear among civilians, fostering an unstable atmosphere. The enduring risk of violence obstructs the Karenni people from peacefully reconstructing their lives.

KnHRG calls on the international community to acknowledge the crisis as an emergency and to provide essential assistance to alleviate the dire humanitarian situation in Karenni State and across the nation. The people of Karenni face uncertainty about their future as they fight for survival.

To guarantee that resources and aid reach the affected communities, the international community must collaborate with local organizations to manage and distribute cross-border assistance. Local actors possess a deeper understanding of the needs of vulnerable populations, making them crucial in addressing the requirements of those hit hardest by the crisis.

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<sup>26</sup> “[How can we survive in the future?](#)” *Atrocity Crimes in Karenni State*, Karenni Human Rights Group, 7 February 2023

The international community needs to work together to take decisive action for justice and accountability, thereby ending the junta's impunity. Achieving peace will be challenging without these measures. A global arms embargo should be implemented, and the regime's access to aviation fuel must be restricted.

Further, the UN, ASEAN, and various global entities must address the human rights crisis in Burma. They need to immediately sever their business and personal ties to the junta and sanction weapons. A complete halt of all arms sales and sanctions on aviation fuel is essential.

Humanitarian aid is critically needed to relieve the suffering of thousands in Karenni State and across Burma. The most effective aid is delivered through cross-border humanitarian channels with meaningful and transparent collaborations with local organizations. This would ensure the safe and dignified distribution of goods and resources to those in greatest need.

Additionally, all limitations on information and resources should be removed, ensuring that access to information and diverse channels remains open. Any violations against journalists, civilians, and human rights advocates must be rigorously examined by an independent judicial system that transparently respects the dignity of victims.

### *To the International Community and International Donors*

1. Direct coordinated emergency and humanitarian aid through cross-border channels to ensure the secure delivery of assistance to conflict-affected communities in Karenni State living along the Thailand-Burma border or in temporary shelters.
2. Impose targeted sanctions against the Burma Army leaders, their entities, and their cronies, while supporting a coordinated global arms embargo to halt the junta's access to weapons that are routinely used to kill innocent people, including women and children.
3. Advocate for international accountability mechanisms that would seek justice for the thousands of people impacted by the brutality of the Burma Army. This includes recommending that the International Criminal Court accept the declaration the National Unity Government lodged under Article 12(3) of the Court's jurisdiction concerning international crimes committed in Burma territory since 1 July 2002.
4. Refuse to recognize the military junta as a partner in peace or politics. Deny any legitimacy to the Burma Army and fully acknowledge the National Unity Government as the democratically elected governing body.
5. Call for the release of all political prisoners in Burma who have been unjustly detained and arrested by the junta under their corrupt and broken legal system.
6. Collaborate with grassroots leaders, including women's human rights defenders and community-based organizations, civil society organizations, environmental defenders, ethnic revolution organizations, while supporting and amplifying their documentation efforts to ensure greater visibility of the regime's crimes and promoting meaningful democratic engagement in Burma

## ***To the National Unity Government and the National Unity Consultative Council***

1. Engage and collaborate with Karenni civil society organizations in gathering the most current information on the region's humanitarian crisis and human rights conditions, while supporting conflict-affected communities and advocate for UN-managed safe zones for internally displaced persons.
2. In accordance with UNSCR 1325, ensure all armed groups fully adhere to international law and implement specific measures to protect women and children from sexual and gender-based violence, while guaranteeing women's meaningful participation with a minimum 30 percent representation at all decision-making levels across sectors.
3. Establish a federal democracy that includes all stakeholders and ethnic nationalities throughout Burma.
4. Ensure the advocacy for the unconditional release of all political prisoners;
5. Revise the national justice system to conform with international human rights standards and uphold the rule of law, focusing mainly on justice for women who have experienced sexual and gender-based violence and their rights under CEDAW.

## ***To ASEAN and its Member States***

1. Ignore the unsuccessful Five-Point Consensus and create a new strategy in collaboration with civil society organizations, community-based organizations, ethnic resistance groups, and the National Unity Government (NUG).
2. Implement coordinated, actionable measures through international bodies, such as the UNSC, UNGA, and UNHRC, to hold the military regime accountable for its crimes, while facilitating the nation's shift towards an inclusive federal democratic state and ending military violence against civilians.

3. Bar all representatives from the Burmese military junta from all ASEAN summits and meetings. Suspend Burma's membership in ASEAN until the military regime acknowledges the NUG as the legitimate authority, while engaging with an official NUG representative and supporting their participation at ASEAN summits or special meetings in Burma's place.
4. Thailand must restrict its airspace to prevent the Burmese junta forces from launching air strikes, aiming to safeguard internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in border regions. Thailand must also adhere to the principle of non-refoulement and provide protection and support for refugees from Karenni areas and other parts of Burma seeking refuge within the borders of ASEAN Member States.
5. Establish secure humanitarian aid corridors managed by local civil society organizations, community-based organizations, ethnic resistance groups, and the NUG.



# *“Trying to Stay Strong”*

*A Situational Overview of the Civilian Impact of  
Human Rights Violations in Karenni State between  
January and March 2024*

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A report by the Karenni Human Rights Group | December 2024