



Special Advisory Council for MYANMAR

Myanmar military waging nationwide offensives to crush ethnic support for anti-coup resistance

09 April 2021: The Myanmar military has launched deadly attacks on civilians in ethnic states in a flagrant attempt to deter ethnic organisations from supporting for the anti-coup resistance, says the Special Advisory Council for Myanmar (SAC-M).

On 27 March 2021, the same day that the Myanmar military, or Tatmadaw, marked its Armed Forces Day by massacring more than 100 peaceful protestors and other civilians, bombs began dropping on villages in southeast Myanmar's northern Karen state.

The terrifying airstrikes – authorised directly by the Tatmadaw's Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing – continued for four consecutive nights, while his ground troops fired machine gun shells and heavy mortars into villages, driving out entire communities. According to SAC-M's sources at least 18 people have been killed, including children. More than 20,000 people have been displaced.

“These major offensives, including the first use of airstrikes against the Karen for 20 years, are a direct response to support from ethnic organisations for the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) and the process being led by the Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) of elected parliamentarians to move forward by consensus towards the formation of a National Unity Government” says Marzuki Darusman, founding member of SAC-M.

Less than three weeks after the Tatmadaw's attempted coup, a group of ten ethnic organisations, including the Karen National Union, Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) and Chin National Front (CNF), issued a joint statement condemning the military's violent crackdown on anti-coup protestors and pledging support for the CDM. Last week they welcomed CRPH announcements abolishing the 2008 Constitution and declaring a Federal Democratic Charter.

“By intensifying Myanmar's long-running civil wars with these attacks, the Tatmadaw is trying to divide the opposition and deter ethnic support for the anti-coup resistance and

CRPH,” says Chris Sidoti, founding member of SAC-M. **“SAC-M is hugely encouraged by the united front between the ethnic organisations and CRPH and commends their refusal to be divided.”**

There are fears of airstrikes and ground attacks in southern Shan state, while in the past week horrific attacks on civilians by the military in Chin state have been reported.

Moreover, since 11 February, two days after the Kachin Independence Organization warned the Tatmadaw not to use force against anti-coup civilian protestors, the military has indiscriminately shelled villages in northern Shan and Kachin states, killing and injuring civilians, and has carried out extrajudicial killing, arbitrary arrest and torture of civilians, who have been used as human shields.

“The Tatmadaw is systematically targeting the entire civilian population,” says Yanghee Lee, founding member of SAC-M. **“This conduct – which we have long come to expect from the Tatmadaw – amounts to nationwide war crimes and crimes against humanity.**

On 1 March, the Tatmadaw declared a month-long unilateral ceasefire with ethnic armed organisations, but the military’s violence has not stopped. Rather than reflecting any genuine will to engage in peace talks, the declared ceasefire more accurately reflects an overestimation, on the part of the Tatmadaw, of its ability to manage multiple conflicts in ethnic areas at once, while also sustaining its violent suppression of the anti-coup protests.

It is therefore critical for the international community to apply as much pressure as possible on the Tatmadaw to support the strides being made by the united anti-coup resistance. SAC-M continues to call for a global three cuts strategy against the military: cut the weapons, cut the cash, cut the impunity.

At the same time, urgently needed humanitarian assistance must reach the ethnic states that are now facing new humanitarian crises as a result of the military’s offensives and members of the anti-coup resistance from urban areas seeking refuge there.

Finally, there must be no recognition whatsoever of the Myanmar military as a legitimate government of Myanmar. The announcement of a true National Unity Government may come within days.

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