

Latest junta airstrike on a Myanmar school kills at least 20 children and wounds 40 others

13 May 2025

On 12 May 2025, the Myanmar military junta conducted an airstrike against a school in Ohe Htein Twin village of Depayin Township in Myanmar's Sagaing region. According to reports,¹ 20 children, some aged as young as seven, and two teachers were killed, while as many as 40 other children were wounded. Remains are still being recovered and have complicated efforts to identify victims. The attack took place at around 9:40am while the children were in class. Survivors and residents have confirmed that there was no military activity near the site at the time.

The UN Secretary-General expressed his deep concern at reports of the attack and the killing and maiming of children, particularly given that the military junta had announced a ceasefire through to 31 May 2025 to facilitate emergency relief following the catastrophic earthquakes of 28 March 2025.² Sagaing region was the epicenter.

Yesterday's airstrike is part of a series of repeated and deliberate attacks targeting children and schools. On 16 September 2022, in an attack now known as the Let Yet Kone massacre, the military junta attacked another school in Depayin Township, located inside a monastery compound.³ Over several hours, helicopters fired rockets and machine-guns at the school. This was followed by an infantry attack. At least 12 people were killed, including seven children. Junta troops reportedly removed a number of bodies and wounded children in an attempt to destroy evidence. The Secretary-General condemned the attack, while the UN's Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar identified it as a potential war crime.⁴

The Secretary-General's new report on Children and Armed Conflict in Myanmar⁵ highlights that the Myanmar armed forces and related forces and affiliated militias have been listed for grave violations against children, including recruitment and use, killing and maiming, sexual violence, and attacks on schools and/or hospitals and abduction. Almost three years after the Committee on the Rights of the Child first raised the alarm and urged the international community to take swift action to protect the country's children, these crimes continue unabated.⁶

According to Myanmar's pro-democracy National Unity Government, escalating junta airstrikes since the 28 March earthquakes – despite the reported “ceasefire” – have killed and least 334 civilians including 32 children, and have wounded at least 408 civilians including 53 children.⁷ These figures cover the period of 28 March to 9 May 2025 and therefore exclude the children killed and wounded in yesterday's school attack.

This is a timely moment for the Committee on the Rights of the Child to issue a new statement on children in Myanmar. Most recently, the Committee included a reference to Myanmar in its 2023 World Children's Day statement, expressing its acute concern that children were dying in the armed conflict.⁸

¹ See https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/05/12/myanmar-airstrike-school-saigaing-resistance-military/6388bcfc-2f2f-11f0-8498-1f8214bba2d2_story.html, <https://myanmar-now.org/en/news/dozens-of-children-killed-injured-in-myanmar-juntas-deadliest-attack-in-two-years/>, <https://apnews.com/article/myanmar-airstrike-school-saigaing-resistance-military-00bcff30abb05c1210514b6adc5c6a7f>

² See <https://press.un.org/en/2025/db250512.doc.htm>

³ See <https://apnews.com/article/police-myanmar-aung-san-su-kyi-government-and-politics-892bebcdf1d9966d4a28393e890ed371>

⁴ See <https://iimm.un.org/en/school-attack-let-yet-kone-village-may-be-considered-war-crime-commanders-criminally-liable>

⁵ S/2025/81, 12 March 2025.

⁶ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2022/06/myanmar-crisis-taking-enormous-toll-children-un-committee-warns>.

⁷ See <https://mohr.nugmyanmar.org/reports/airstrike-death-injuries-by-aged-after-earthquake28-march-9-may-2025/>.

⁸ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2023/11/end-killing-children-armed-conflict-un-committee-urges>.