



Press Release

Karen Women's Organisation Condemns Escalating Attacks on Civilians During Thingyan

April 21, 2026

Despite shedding their uniforms and attempting to portray themselves as a legitimate civilian government following deeply flawed elections earlier this year, Burma's military leadership continues to demonstrate a consistent pattern of brutality and disregard for human life.

During Thingyan—the Burmese New Year and most significant national holiday—the military escalated aerial attacks on civilian populations in areas where no active fighting was taking place. In Kawthoolei (Karen State) in eastern Burma, a sustained bombing campaign carried out over the three days of the holiday targeted and destroyed schools, homes, student dormitories, temples, churches, a hospital, and entire villages.

“The military deliberately chose a moment when families should be celebrating together to carry out these attacks,” said Naw K'nyaw Paw, Chairperson of the Karen Women's Organization. “This was not incidental violence—it was a calculated act of terror against civilians.”

The heaviest bombing in Kawthoolei began on April 10, just days before the holiday, and continued for ten days. At least eight civilians were killed and 28 injured. One victim suffered such severe burns from chemical exposure that they were left unrecognizable. Across the region, more than 100 homes were destroyed, devastating entire communities.

In Kheh Pa, repeated airstrikes targeted a village where no fighting had occurred, including a local market that served as a vital hub for small businesses and community life. A junior college in Day Bu Noh and a hospital in U Mi Hta were also destroyed. In total there were more than 370 bombs and 27 drone attacks destroying 22 public buildings, including 5 churches or temples, 4 clinics, 11 school buildings and dormitories along with 2 other public buildings. These are civilian sites—places of learning, healing, and worship—protected under international law.

The Karen Women's Organization condemns these actions in the strongest possible terms. The military's continued access to jet fuel to carry out such attacks underscores a profound

misuse of resources. Across the country, civilians are facing severe fuel shortages, worsened by the ongoing conflict in Iran, leaving many unable to carry out basic daily activities such as transportation, farming, and food production. Yet the military continues to prioritize resources for attacks against its own people.

Since the attempted military takeover in 2021 through an illegal coup d'état, Burma's economy has been devastated. Rather than pursuing peace and recovery, the military has intensified violence and destruction.

The Karen Women's Organization calls on the International Criminal Court, or another court with appropriate jurisdiction, to open a formal investigation into these attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure. Those responsible—regardless of the positions or appearances they adopt—must be held accountable.

The international community must also increase pressure through a fully enforced jet fuel ban and broader arms embargo.

We further urge an increase in urgently needed humanitarian assistance, delivered through cross-border organizations to ensure aid reaches those most in need. This approach is essential to prevent diversion or obstruction by the military junta. In the past two weeks alone, more than 10,000 people have been displaced in Kawthoolei, and current resources do not exist to meet their urgent needs.

The international community has both the capacity and the responsibility to act. Immediate steps must be taken to ensure humanitarian aid reaches those most affected, and that those responsible for these violations are stopped and held accountable.

Contact: kwocentral@gmail.com for more information or to set up an interview.