RIGHTS UNDER ATTACK IN NORTHERN BURMA

An Overview of Human Rights Violations Perpetrated Between July and September 2026



Maw Mau Bum IDPs, Nam Kyin, Myitkyina Township 2026

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Introduction

The human rights situation across Burma has continued to deteriorate rapidly amid escalating troop movements in local areas and communities. Armed with weapons, jet fighters have destroyed civilian livelihoods by attacking schools, farms, hospitals and communal areas, including places of temporary refuge such as internal displacement camps and shelters. Compulsory conscription has stolen young men and women from their families, forcing them to fight on the front lines. Thousands of political activists remain imprisoned and face systemic torture, while many others who are detained are dying from preventable causes because they are deliberately denied timely medical care.

The Burma Army's complete disregard for the sanctity of life has consistently proved to be evident in the scale and brutality of its attacks, which have included women, children and infants. Communities, particularly those in ethnic areas, are living in a constant state of survival and anxiety, unsure when the next attack will occur or whether they will be able to flee. The uncertainty has also created a displacement crisis that has left over 4 million people nationwide without reliable access to shelter, water and food, including at least 244,500 internally displaced people (IDPs) in Kachin State. Limited access to safe humanitarian aid has made conditions on the ground increasingly dire, with relief workers and assistance stalled due to the presence of soldiers, who target aid workers and delay the safe delivery of food and materials.

Of growing concern has been that the instability and increasing military presence in Kachin State, particularly in conflict-affected areas, have made it challenging to reach those directly impacted by the violence, especially in the aftermath of airstrikes and drone attacks. Debris and destitution have hardened the lived experiences of those who are constantly being bombarded by attacks.

According to the data documented by KWAT, evidence indicates that the Burma military has systematically dismantled democratic principles and institutions while committing widespread human rights violations against Kachin civilians. These violations have resulted in severe harm, suffering, and displacement among civilian communities. The collapse of the rule of law has further reduced and undermined justice pathways for survivors and victims of the violence. For women and girls, the impacts of the conflict are especially concerning, as they remain vulnerable not only to the brute force and effects of large-scale attacks and surveillance but also to conflict-related sexual violence, including rape as a weapon of war.

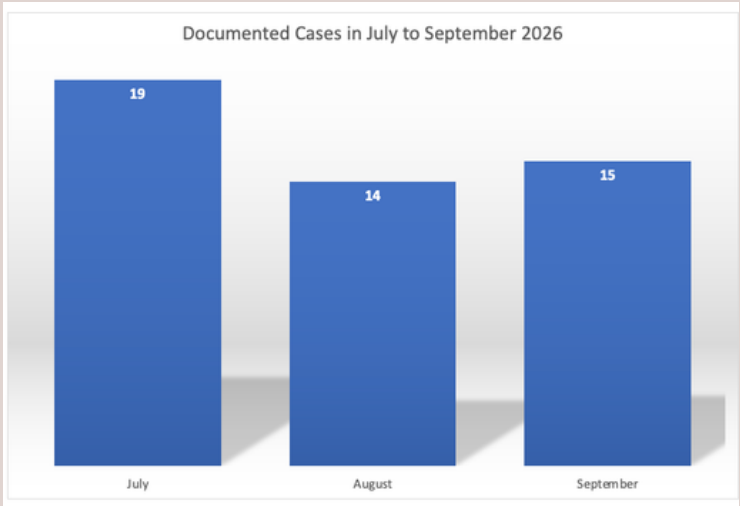
Of additional concern is the impact of natural resource extraction on civilians. The armed conflict and rare-earth element (REE) mining are closely interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Rather than being separate challenges, conflict, resource extraction, and environmental degradation form part of the same political and economic system that shapes power, insecurity, and civilian protection. In Kachin State, rare-earth extraction expanded rapidly from the mid-2010s, especially along the China–Myanmar border in Chipwi Township's Pangwa region. Mining grew amid

fragmented governance, with control over land, labour, and trade routes shifting among militia-linked authorities, ethnic armed groups, and state and transnational actors. As a result, communities face both conflict-related insecurity and environmental harm.

A recent report by the UN found that the human rights situation in Burma has 'plummeted to a new low,' and yet, despite the worsening circumstances on the ground, since the junta-controlled election resulted in a manufactured victory for the military Generals, international and regional engagements have increased. Leaders and officials in several Asian countries, including Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Laos, India, Japan and China, have welcomed coup leader Min Aung Hlaing this year. The United States of America has also sharply reversed its post-coup isolation policy toward Burma by initiating direct, discreet talks. These meetings risk legitimizing the military junta and creating a false sense of normalcy.

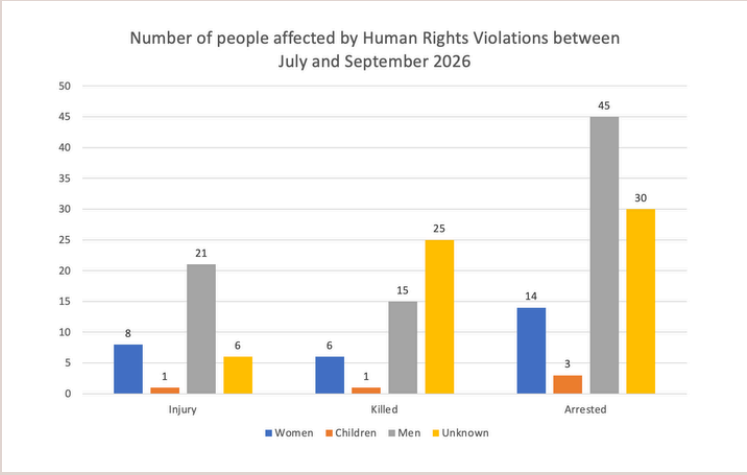
This briefing paper will also present factual evidence showing that the junta's presence in Kachin State continues to erode the human rights landscape. There are rising human rights concerns, including the ongoing deployment of airstrikes, which continue to pose life-threatening concerns. In a previous report, data collected by KWAT on airstrikes on civilian targets indicate that the number of airstrikes from December 2024 to November 2025 almost tripled compared with the number during the fifteen-month period from May 2022 to July 2023. There has been no justice or accountability for the crimes committed.

In this latest briefing, KWAT will highlight that the documented cases are not only deliberate but also occurring at an alarming rate because global stakeholders have not intervened meaningfully. Without immediate action by the international community, these attacks will only continue to take place with total impunity.



Main Findings

Between 1 July and 30 September 2026, the Kachin Women's Association-Thailand (KWAT) documented 48 human rights violations and 64 victims in four districts, Mohnyin, Myitkyina, Bhamo, and Putao, and two districts in northern Shan State: Lashio and Muse.



There were 47 civilians killed, 36 injured, as well as 92 people arrested and 49 properties damaged. Those killed included six women, 1 child, 15 men and 25 unknown. Among those injured were 8 women, 1 child, 21 men and 6 unknown. There were fourteen women arbitrarily arrested, 3 children, 45 men and 30 unknown. Of the 48 cases documented, 19 occurred in July, 14 in August, and 15 in September. There were 45 reported cases in Kachin State and 3 in northern Shan State.

The perpetrator in all of these instances was the military junta, which often dropped bombs weighing up to hundreds of pounds onto unsuspecting civilians below. Those sheltering in temporary camps and displacement shelters were not spared, nor were women, children, the elderly or the disabled. The following charts indicate the types of human rights violations that were perpetrated by Burma Army soldiers and their frequency, as well as the locations.



Townships in Kachin State	Frequency of Attacks between July and September 2026
Hpakant	11
Mohnyin	6
Mogaung	7
Waing Maw	3
Shwegu	15
Tanai	1
Bhamo	2
Hseini	1
Muse	2



Airstrike at Hsin Hkan Bridge Bhamo Township, Kachin State. (6 September 2026)

Case Studies

On July 1, 2026, a local man went to Muse Hospital for medical treatment. However, because he did not have a caregiver, the hospital refused to admit him. While he was resting and taking shelter from the rain in an old car workshop, relying on a walking stick for support, Muse militia “Pyithu Sit” arrived, arrested him, and began beating and kicking him.

The man pleaded, "I am ill and just resting here; I haven't even eaten yet." The militia soldier took him to their outpost at "Muse 45 Kone" and tortured him, despite his many attempts to show his household registration and other documents. The soldiers merely retorted, "Why are you stealing? Why don't you find a proper job?"

They forced him to lie face down so they could beat him with a black rubber hose. As they were striking him, their captain intervened, saying, "Don't beat him too hard; he might die."

About five people were doing the beating. After being tortured, he was released and met someone who helped him reach the Kachin Baptist Church in Muse. When he arrived at the church, his younger brother and wife picked him up and took him to the hospital for X-rays and medical examinations.

On the evening of July 8, 2026, the SNA (Shanni Nationalities Army) and military forces entered the Kachin Baptist Church and the Catholic Church in Sa Maw village. Over 40 individuals were detained. They tied the hands of everyone, including children who had been playing at the church, members of women’s groups, and elderly grandmothers. They blindfolded them, dragged them away, and took them to Battalion 383 in Kayin Myaing, Sa Maw.

The group that carried out the arrests consisted of approximately 20 personnel. Some wore full uniform, while others wore casual clothes. They arrived in one large vehicle and one smaller passenger car. That same night, the women and children, a total of seven minors, were released. Everyone else was held for about two nights in a cramped room measuring roughly 10 feet. Testimony from those detained noted that while they were not subjected to physical beatings or torture, they had to comply with orders such as keeping their heads bowed or kneeling down. They were also subjected to verbal threats.

The incident occurred after the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) detained four individuals. It was suspected that those in KIA custody were SNA soldiers, and the subsequent abduction was in retaliation; however, KWAT has been unable to confirm.

Gendered Analysis

Women and girls in Burma are facing an ongoing backsliding of their rights. As the conflict worsens and soldiers' presence grows, the risks they face also increase. There are concerns over human trafficking and the drug trade in Burma. Drug use is on the rise as it is not regulated, and abusers face many challenges with their addictions and recovery. Suppliers of harmful drugs do not face any accountability or action. For women who have been lured into human trafficking, they are unable to seek justice or report their cases. Even if those in the community are aware of the violence taking place, women are hesitant to report because they fear reprisals and threats to themselves and their families. This is also widespread in areas under the military junta's control.

Earlier this year, KWAT warned of the threat human trafficking poses inside Burma and the border regions of Kachin State, where women are sold as brides. Traffickers are luring young women and girls with promises of economic stability and employment, where they are instead sold into forced marriage in China, or resold several times. In 2024, KWAT reported that more than half of the trafficking survivors documented between 2019 and 2023 came from regions that do not border China, including Yangon, highlighting the expanding reach of trafficking networks.

Gendered violence takes many forms, including psychological and physical. In the context of war, women are also at risk of conflict-related sexual violence. In KHRW's most recent report on human rights violations in Kachin State, it was stated that the 'terrorization of civilians has subjected the most vulnerable to deeply inhumane suffering.' Military impunity has repeatedly protected perpetrators and isolated survivors of the violence, who are denied access to reparations and justice. The UN and various rights bodies have concluded for years that the military junta continues to use rape and sexual acts without consent as a tactic to isolate ethnic people. Since the coup, women-led organizations have reported a worrying rise in the violence being committed.

Since February 2021, the Women's League of Burma (WLB) and its member groups, including KWAT, have documented 963 cases of CRSV over four years, including 40 in Kachin State and 102 in Shan State. Among the findings were the security concerns women and girls face due to land confiscation and the increased presence of sliders in areas where there are ongoing large-scale development projects. KWAT has highlighted safety concerns about the Myitsone Dam, which has drawn pushback from local communities over the environmental threat it poses, including the risks women and girls face. Aside from military abuses, displaced and local women face high rates of domestic violence, substance abuse-related harms, and social stigma that discourage formal reporting.

Since the mandatory conscription law by the junta went into effect, most of the young people, especially women, have been forced to be sex workers or marry young - even women under 18. The parents force young women and girls into marriage for security reasons. They are made to leave the country illegally, which has resulted in a rise in human trafficking, and are promised opportunities under false pretenses, only to find themselves trapped in a corrupt, manipulative system they cannot escape. Amid the ongoing forced conscription bid, many people fear for the future. The junta is compiling lists of young women for military training, including pregnant women and mothers. This is separate from the junta's conscription of men. Men are being forced to join and do training at a quicker pace as the junta is losing on the battlefield.

Women's families, mothers, and grandmothers are deeply concerned about losing their sons and daughters to the military. They are suffering from high blood pressure and other health issues. When their children are sent away, they are devastated. This has led to further concerns. Children have filled labour shortages, which has contributed to more exploitation under the military junta.

Women human rights defenders (WHRDs) also face systematic human rights violations by the military junta. They face a myriad of counselling and mental health issues and are targeted and followed, with increased surveillance by the junta. This also includes women who deliver humanitarian assistance. WHRDs who raise awareness of gender-based violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, and who help support humanitarian assistance are also being targeted. Their families are pressured and threatened into providing information about where they are. This restricts their work and adds significant stress. The situation for women, WHRDs, and all women in the resistance is that they have been more targeted, especially if they are working on humanitarian assistance. They are followed constantly, and administrations under the junta face more restrictions.

Yet, there remain challenges in holding perpetrators accountable and in challenging the many stigmas that survivors face in the aftermath of the attacks. There is an urgent need for greater access to psychological support, livelihood assistance, and vocational training. Local women-led organizations and community-based groups possess the trust, access, and contextual knowledge necessary to monitor environmental harm, document human-rights violations, support survivors, and advocate for accountability. However, they face significant security risks and have very limited resources.

Therefore, international partners must prioritize flexible, long-term funding that lets local organizations continue their work safely and independently. This support should include protection for women human-rights defenders, environmental defenders, community leaders, and journalists who face intimidation for speaking out.

Conclusion

The findings presented in this briefing paper make clear that the military junta continues to commit systematic human rights violations with impunity. As a result, communities across the country, including Kachin State, are having their fundamental freedoms and protections dismissed and denied. Children are being deprived of the ability to safely attend school, and families cannot access basic healthcare infrastructure due to poor roads and military checkpoints. Local villages are not spared the destruction of the conflict, as their homes are deliberately set alight and artillery and mortar shells detonate in communal areas.

International actors should also amplify the voices of affected communities, particularly women, in global policy discussions on critical minerals and responsible supply chains. Communities bearing the social and environmental costs of rare-earth extraction must be included in decisions that affect their lands, livelihoods, and futures. Finally, support should be coupled with stronger international pressure for transparency, corporate responsibility, environmental safeguards, and accountability for human-rights abuses linked to mining operations. Without accountability, environmental harm and rights violations will continue with impunity.

As the scale of the violence and ongoing threats to civilian life escalates, the need for accountability for the crimes committed by the Burma Army demands credible and coordinated action. The suffering of the most vulnerable, including women, children and the elderly, has reinforced the need for support to civil society organizations that fill these protection gaps with reliable services, including emergency relief and humanitarian assistance. However, limited resources have exacerbated these needs, especially amid a global funding crisis for human rights organizations. Yet, there remains an increased urgency surrounding the long-delayed response to the worsening human rights crisis in Burma.

Therefore, KWAT calls on international, UN and donor agencies as follows:

Recommendations

To the United Nations Security Council

- Impose a global arms embargo on Burma to immediately cease the supply of weapons to the country.
- Refer the situation of human rights in Burma to the International Criminal Court, as well as an end to the military junta's human rights violations.
- The Council must continue to call for the immediate release of all arbitrarily detained prisoners, including President Win Myint and State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi.

To Foreign Governments, including ASEAN

- Withhold diplomatic recognition of the coup regime and engage with the NUG and ethnic political bodies.
- Impose economic sanctions on the military regime’s business interests, particularly the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise, and companies supplying aviation fuel to the regime.
- Provide safe refuge for those fleeing conflict and persecution, and ensure they can access humanitarian aid. Suspend or cancel any international investment until the military regime is removed and elections are held under a new federal democratic constitution.
- Support the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2669 (2022) and promote accountability for atrocities and human rights violations.
- Provide cross-border humanitarian aid that reaches all those in need, including vulnerable groups such as women and children, while promoting women's economic livelihoods.
- Enhance humanitarian aid for current and new IDPs in Northern Burma, focusing on cross-border channels to prevent the regime from blocking or interfering with aid delivery. The aid directly supports community-based organizations and existing ethnic humanitarian bodies.


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