

Burma

10,000 Karen Flee Myanmar Military Airstrikes

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Yangon — More than 10,000 ethnic Karen villagers have been forced from their homes after Myanmar's military regime carried out airstrikes on Karen State's Papun District.

Military tensions are running high between the Karen ethnic armed group, the Karen National Union (KNU), and Myanmar's military in Papun District but the air raids targeted civilians, not the KNU personnel, according to Karen civil society organizations and residents.

Around 3,000 residents have crossed the Thai border while some 80,000 have fled into forests in Papun.

"Day Pu No villagers are going through a nightmare. The military carried out three airstrikes on the village last night and early this morning," said the Karen Women's Organization website.

The airstrikes followed the KNU's blocking of food deliveries to military troops based in Papun. The KNU signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement in 2015, however, the tensions in Papun have risen due to the construction of a road by the military.

Tensions grew after the KNU announced that it would stand by the people against Myanmar's military after the February 1 coup.

At least three civilians were killed and nine injured in airstrikes in Papun since Saturday.

David Eubank, director of the Free Burma Rangers, a multiethnic humanitarian movement, said more people are being displaced by military attacks in Kachin, Karen and northern Shan states.

"The capability of the military is increased with help from Russia and China and other nations. And that is deadly," Eubank said in a video.

Houses in Day Pu No were flattened in air raids, according to villagers' photos. Over 3,000 riverside villagers crossed the Salween River into Thailand on Sunday.

Papun is one of the ancestral lands of the Karen people and is home to Salween Peace Park, a sanctuary of globally endangered wildlife, flora and trees.

The Karen Peace Support Network has released a statement calling for an end to airstrikes in the park and human rights violations against the Karen. The network also called on the military to withdraw its troops.

The network called for a UN Security Council resolution to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court and impose a global arms embargo on Myanmar.

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Three Karen Villagers Killed in Myanmar Military Airstrike

Three ethnic Karen villagers died and at least seven were injured as Myanmar's military launched airstrikes against the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), the military wing of the Karen National Union (KNU), with two fighter jets on Saturday night in Papun District, Karen State.

The airstrikes were between 7pm and 2am near Htee Swal Nee in Deh Bu Noh village tract, according to KNU's information department on Sunday.

A house was destroyed and a resident inside was burned to death.

"Three people died and seven others have been injured from last night's attack on the villages in Deh Bu Noh. One of them, who was believed to be hit, was burned after the bomb fell into their home," according to a Karen relief worker, who asked not to be named.



A burned body from a charred house after military airstrikes in Deh Bu Noh, Papun District, Karen State, on March 27. / Thoolei News

More than 1,000 villagers, who live near military outposts, have fled their homes, he said, adding that some families had crossed the Thai border.

He said: "The villagers, mostly women, children and elders, from villages along the Salween River have left their homes as they are afraid of further military attacks."

The offensive is believed to be in retaliation to the KNLA's seizure of a hilltop outpost previously held by the regime's Light Infantry Division 349 in Thi Mu Hta on March 27. The KNLA killed 10

soldiers, including an officer, and detained eight soldiers as prisoners of war.

Clashes were also reported in Kawkaeik, Karen State and Nyaung Laypin and Taungoo in Bago Region near KNU territory on Saturday.

On March 27, KNU Brigade 5 said in a statement that it will intensify its defensive action against the regime while protecting its territory.

The group said it does not recognize the regime and supports the elected lawmakers' Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament).

KNU, Myanmar's oldest ethnic armed organization, last Monday urged the military to stop killing civilians and free all those detained since the Feb. 1 coup.

Among those detained are President U Win Myint and State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

Regime forces' crackdowns on protesters have left more than 400 dead, including children and bystanders, since February.

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