

Myanmar's 10 Peace Signatories [ethnic armed organizations] Back Elected Govt

KNU Calls for Int'l Arms Embargo as Myanmar Regime Targets Civilians in Airstrike

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The 10 ethnic armed organizations' Peace Process Steering Team (PPST) has given its unwavering support to Myanmar's striking civil servants and the ousted government's Federal Democracy Charter and the abolition of the military-drafted 2008 Constitution.

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The group also urged the regime's governing body, the State Administrative Council, to stop arbitrary killings and detentions and release all detained leaders.

By Sunday at least 557 people, including children and bystanders, have been killed by soldiers and police across Myanmar.

General Yawd Serk, head of the PPST and chairman of the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS), said the grouping, "firmly stands with the people from all walks of life who are opposing the military council's seizure of power by staging peaceful demonstrations and demanding the end of the dictatorship, the abolition of the 2008 Constitution, full democracy, the establishment of a federal union and the immediate release of all those who have been detained."

"The regime's council must be held accountable for more than 500 civilians killed by its forces," Gen. Yawd Serk said during the weekend discussions via video conference.



Residents took to the streets in Monywa, Sagaing Region, in April. / Kaung Thar

"To solve this political crisis, we all must work in various ways," said Gen. Yawd Serk, honoring the "fallen heroes during the spring revolution".

The elected lawmakers' Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament), CRPH, announced that it was nullifying the 2008 Constitution and it introduced a charter to build a federal democratic union on March 31.

By supporting the CRPH's move, "the PPST also demanded the military regime stop atrocities against unarmed civilians during our weekend discussions. We continue to support the people who are taking part in the civil disobedience movement, defying the military regime," said Dr. Salai Lian Hmong Sakhong, the PPST's spokesman.

The civil disobedience movement, initiated by striking medics on Feb. 3, has been joined by civil servants from different sectors.

The spokesman said: "We all support the CRPH's announcement abolishing the 2008 Constitution and its Federal Democracy Charter. The charter's principles reflect the long-held demands of ethnic minorities."

Last week, the military launched airstrikes against civilians in Karen State's Papun District, which is under the control of the Karen National Union (KNU), a member of the PPST, displacing more than 12,000 civilians, with many seeking shelter in Thailand.



Ten leaders of ethnic armed groups held discussions via videoconferencing on April 3. / NCA-S-EAO

With the PPST's support, fears have risen that further armed conflict could erupt elsewhere. Myanmar has had more than seven decades of civil war between the military and various ethnic armies.

The PPST said in February that it would not hold political negotiations with the regime while the civilian government is being detained. Its members, including the RCSS and KNU, have been hosting striking civil servants.

Dr. Salai Lian Hmong Sakhong said: "Whether fighting erupts depends on the response of the regime's council. On our side, we don't want war but peace. The council's actions are mocking our peace process."

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KNU Calls for Int'l Arms Embargo as Myanmar Regime Targets Civilians in Airstrike

Myanmar's oldest ethnic armed organization, the Karen National Union (KNU), has condemned

repeated airstrikes by the Myanmar military that have forced thousands of Karen civilians to flee their homes, and urged the international community to impose an arms embargo on military regime.

More than 12,000 ethnic Karen people fled their homes after the military regime carried out airstrikes on villages in Karen State's Papun District and Bago Region's Nyaunglebin District between March 27-31.

The KNU said it strongly condemned the military's air raids targeting civilians.

The inhumane killings of civilians and destruction of schools, homes and villages were in blatant violation of domestic and international law, it said.

Military coup leaders are pushing the country into a full-blown civil war with the potential to destroy the country's stability, unity and independence, the KNU said.

Fourteen civilians including ethnic Karen villagers died and at least 12 others were injured in the military airstrikes in Papun and Nyaunglebin. The air raids followed the seizure by the KNU's military wing, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), of a hilltop outpost previously held by the regime's Light Infantry Division 349 in Thi Mu Hta on March 27.

The KNU earlier rejected an invitation to attend the Myanmar military's Armed Forces Day celebration on March 27, saying the group would meet with coup leader Senior General Min Aung Hlaing only after his troops stop killing civilians and his regime frees all those detained following the coup, including Myanmar State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and President U Win Myint. Tensions have risen between the Myanmar military and the KNU's Brigade 5, Brigade 1 and Brigade 3 in Papun District, Nyaunglebin District and Thaton District.

"We call on the international community to ban the sale of weapons of mass destruction, artillery, fighter jets and any advanced technology used for the propagation of war to the military, which is committing acts of violence against unarmed civilians," the KNU said.

It also urged all ethnic peoples and the international community to take strong action and impose effective sanctions against the regime, saying the junta is destroying civilized society.

Since the coup, human rights groups have been demanding the UN Security Council (UNSC) urgently impose a global arms embargo on Myanmar. As of Saturday morning, at least 550 civilians had been killed by the military during its security forces' crackdowns on peaceful anti-coup protesters across the country.

On Friday, the UNSC issued a statement condemning the military for the use of violence against anti-government protesters in Myanmar, following a closed-door meeting. The meeting was called in an attempt to impose sanctions on the military regime to stop the bloodshed in Myanmar.

However, China again ruled out "sanctions or other coercive measures" against the regime at the UNSC meeting. At China's insistence, the UN also softened the language of the statement, removing words such as "killing" and "deplore" to describe the use of violence against peaceful protesters.

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<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/knu-calls-intl-arms-embargo-myanmar-regime-targets-civilians-airstrike.htm>

Kachin Armed Group Attacks Factory Owned by Crony Close to Former Myanmar Junta

The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) carried out an arson attack on a plant of the Yuzana Co in Kachin State's Hpakant Township early on Thursday, according to local residents. The company has been embroiled in disputes with local people over the confiscation of land in the Hukawng Valley.

"The arson attack took place between 1 am and 2 am. I didn't hear gunshots. The employees inside the factory put out the fire. I could still hear the sound of burning in the morning," a resident who lives near the factory said on Thursday.

The plant which was attacked is located near Ledo in Hpakant and produces tapioca starch and sugar.

Some residents said the factory caught fire while KIA soldiers attacked the junta's security forces. But others said that they did not hear gunshots and that it was purely an arson attack. The KIA's Brigade 2 is active in Hpakant.

The Irrawaddy was unable to reach the KIA for comment. There were clashes between the Tatmadaw (Myanmar's military) and the KIA in rural areas of Hpakant and Namti along the Ledo Road on Thursday.

The Yuzana Co was founded by Htay Myint, a businessman linked to the former junta that ruled Myanmar from 1992-2011.

Yuzana has confiscated over 300,000 acres of land in the Hukawng Valley in Hpakant and Tanai townships for cassava cultivation since 2006. The Hukawng Valley is known as the world's largest tiger reserve.

Kachin residents of Wara Zup village lost their ancestral lands to the Yuzana Co. Their efforts to claim back the land have been met with threats and beatings by Yuzana Co employees in collusion with the local authorities.

Land confiscation has also affected hundreds of Kachin residents along the Ledo Road in Hpakant and Tanai townships. Many have lost their livelihoods along with their land.

"The village administrators told me that the fire started around 1 am and that oil tanks were still burning in the morning. They said the oil tanks were bursting open," said Bauk Ja on Thursday. Bauk Ja is the vice chairwoman of a Kachin-based group which was formed to negotiate between the military council and anti-regime protesters in Kachin State,

She is also an activist who has acted for Wara Zup villagers in demanding farmland rights and compensation for confiscated land.

"They still mistreat the local people. People are still suffering. The higher-level authorities may not know about it. But things haven't changed on the ground. Yuzana Co employees have bullied the local villagers and they are arrogant and still threaten the people," Bauk Ja said.

The Irrawaddy was unable to contact Yuzana Co for comment. Local residents said they could hear oil barrels bursting in the factory until 2.30 pm on Thursday afternoon.

There have been only a few clashes in Kachin since 2018 and the Tatmadaw and the KIA were in the process of negotiating a ceasefire before the military's Feb. 1 coup. But tensions were reignited after security forces shot dead three anti-regime protesters in the Kachin State capital Myitkyina during the second week of March.

As of March 11, the KIA has attacked military outposts and police stations in Hpakant, Bhamo, Injangyang, Waingmaw, Shwegu and Putao townships. On Monday, the Tatmadaw carried out airstrikes on battalions 11 and 14 of KIA.

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