



15 May 2021

Myanmar Crisis – Siege and bombardment of Mindat Town in Chin State, Myanmar – happening now.

Dear _____

I am sorry to disturb you again so soon after my last correspondence, but another major crisis has emerged that requires urgent attention.

In the last few days, attacks by the military junta in Myanmar have seriously escalated with indiscriminate shelling and bombing of 50,000 civilians in the town of Mindat in Chin State. The town is under siege by 1000 troops and is being bombed by helicopter gunships and heavy artillery, including tanks.

I attach an urgent statement from Dr. Sasa, spokesperson of the National Unity Government.

A few days ago, 20 young men were arrested by the military in the town. Their screams of torture, heard by residents, led to protests that, as elsewhere throughout Myanmar, have been violently suppressed. The military personnel in the first convoy that approached the town, after talking with courageous local inhabitants, abandoned their vehicles and their weapons, presumably because they did not wish to participate in the killing of the civilian population. However, the military subsequently heavily reinforced their presence and are now bombarding the town. The military are arresting anyone who tries to help wounded civilians and those they have arrested, including medical personnel, are being used as human shields by the military. In the last 48 hours, 5 civilians have been killed and 14 injured. Meanwhile, homes are being destroyed by tanks and helicopter gunships.

Mindat is an important town for the Chin people and a gateway to Chin State. It is a centre for Chin culture and its Buddhist and Christian population. This could be one reason why it has been targeted by the military junta, which habitually targets ethnic communities. (Such attacks are also being carried out against the Kachin, Karen and Rohingya people). It is likely that the Junta wish to 'make an example' of Mindat, to spread fear across Chin State and the rest of Myanmar.

I have visited Mindat and have received gracious, generous hospitality from the people and the community leaders there. They are a peace-loving people who do not deserve to be victims of such violence and have few resources to defend themselves. It is poignant that they destroyed rather than kept the weapons abandoned by the soldiers in the first convoy.

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Since the military coup on 1 February, nearly 800 civilians (including 52 children) have been killed and 5000 civilians detained by the military junta.

Today, the elected Minister of International Cooperation and International Spokesperson for the newly-formed National Unity Government (NUG), Dr. Sasa, said: “The international community must support the courageous people of Myanmar to end this reign of terror once and for all. The military forces must be stopped. If delays in the recognition of NUG as the legitimate government of Myanmar continue, the risks of a full blown civil war are very high.”

I call upon the British government and the UN Security Council:

- To call upon the junta to end the siege of Mindat.
- To immediately sanction the military regime in Myanmar with the suspension of all military trade deals; dealings with state-owned companies; and trade in oil and gas.
- To recognise the democratically elected National Unity Government;
- and to urge all other nations to do likewise.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline

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