Republic of the Union of Myanmar
National Unity Government
Ministry of Human Rights
and
Ministry of Women, Youths and Children Affairs

Statement condemning the hostage-taking of up to 80 children by military junta forces in Sagaing Region

28 **February 2022**

1. The Ministry of Human Rights and the Ministry of Women, Youths and Children Affairs of the National Unity Government (NUG) express their outrage at the hostage-taking of up to 80 children by military junta troops in Yinmabin Township of Sagaing Region.

2. On the morning of 26 February 2022, junta forces targeted Chin Pone and adjacent villages in Yinmabin Township with indiscriminate air strikes. Subsequent raids on the villages followed.

3. At the time of the attacks, up to 80 children, all under 12 years of age and many under five, were attending a kindergarten in Chin Pone village. Teachers evacuated the children to the basement of a nearby monastery, where they were later located and have since been held hostage by junta troops.

4. Junta troops in Chin Pone village have reportedly broadcast threats over loudspeaker, claiming that they will burn the village down unless locals that fled the violence return. The children remain hostages in this threat. Given the junta's escalating acts of terror and atrocity crimes against civilians, the NUG holds well-founded fears that returning villagers would be killed, disappeared, tortured or arbitrarily detained. It also holds grave fears for safety of the captive children.

5. The NUG condemns in the strongest possible terms the junta's hostage-taking of the children as well as their teachers and parents. It calls on the international community to join its efforts to secure their immediate and unconditional release.

6. The NUG also restates Myanmar's commitment to its international obligations, including under international humanitarian law and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols. Children have a primary claim to protection under international law, and their abduction and hostage-taking comprises a grave violation.

7. The Ministry of Human Rights and the Ministry of Women, Youths and Children Affairs will continue to provide all available assistance to the people of Yinmabin Township and other affected communities.