



Republic of the Union of Myanmar
National Unity Government
Ministry of Human Rights



Junta aerial attack on Pazigy village of Kantbalu Township, Sagaing Region
(Kantbalu Massacre)
(14th April 2023)

On 11 April 2023, the illegal military junta launched an aerial attack on civilian targets in Pazigy village of Kantbalu Township, Sagaing Region. This incident as documented below now constitutes the junta's worst massacre since its failed coup over two years ago.

According to witnesses, around 300 people gathered in Pazigy village on the morning of 11 April for the opening ceremony of a People's Administration Office. These offices provide local services and are civilian operated. The opening was marked by performances, including by children, and coincided with early Thingyan (New Year) celebrations.

At approximately 07:30HRS, a junta jet entered the airspace above Pazigy village and dropped two bombs on the gathering. At least 168 villagers (118 males and 46 females, unknown sex 4) were murdered, with 40 children under 18 among the fatalities, the youngest just six months old. A further 30 persons were wounded, including a pregnant woman and an eight-year-old child. Other persons are missing, with the bodies of some victims so badly destroyed or charred that visual identification has not been possible.

Soon after the bombing, a junta Mi-35 attack helicopter conducted a secondary attack, strafing machine gun fire at survivors, first responders and rescuers. Junta jets then returned to Pazigy village at around 17:30HRS and conducted a further attack. While no additional casualties were recorded, the afternoon attack prevented the treatment and evacuation of survivors and the recovery of human remains.

The appalling casualty count is expected to rise. The National Unity Government is providing villagers with medical assistance (including field surgery), financial support, counselling services and help with funeral arrangements. An estimated 300 people have been displaced by the attack.

The junta claimed responsibility for the massacre, confirming that the air strikes had targeted the administration office while dismissing the presence of civilians including children.¹

The Kantbalu massacre follows an established junta pattern of deliberate and systematic aerial attacks against civilians that is intended to inflict maximum harm, deliver collective punishment and to spread terror. On 10 April, the day before the massacre, junta jets bombed Va and Waibula villages of Falam Township in Chin State, killing nine civilians and destroying homes and school buildings.

The Kantbalu massacre also bears a striking resemblance to the junta's 23 October 2022 air strikes on an outdoor concert in A Nang Pa village of Hpakant Township in Kachin State, which murdered at least 80 people including singers, musicians and artists on or near the main stage.

The Kantbalu massacre, along with other junta aerial attacks intentionally targeting civilians, likely comprises the crime against humanity of murder. The UN Human Rights Council in a consensus resolution adopted only a week before the massacre confirmed that the junta's air strikes are a 'deliberate, widespread, indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force against civilians'.²

Senior United Nations (UN) officials have expressed outrage at the Kantbalu massacre. UN Secretary-General António Guterres issued a strong condemnation and called for those responsible to be held accountable.³

UN Human Rights Chief Volker Türk expressed horror, stating that it "appears schoolchildren performing dances, as well as other civilians, attending an opening ceremony at the hall in Pazi Gyi village, Kantbalu Township were among the victims."⁴ High Commissioner Türk added that there are "reasonable grounds to believe that the military and its affiliated militias are responsible for an extremely broad range of human rights violations and abuses since 1 February 2021, some of which may constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes."

¹ Myawaddy TV channel interview with junta spokesperson Zaw Min Tun.

² Human Rights Council resolution 52/32 (4 April 2023) on the Situation of human rights in Myanmar at operative paragraph 5.

³ See <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sgsm21759.doc.htm>.

⁴ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2023/04/un-human-rights-chief-volker-turk-condemns-myanmar-attacks>.

UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar Tom Andrews said that the massacre was “enabled by world indifference” and those supplying the junta with weapons.⁵

The ASEAN Chair has also issued a statement strongly condemning the junta’s Kantbalu attack, acknowledging that it ‘claimed the lives of at least dozens of civilians’ and pressing that ‘[a]ll forms of violence must end immediately, particularly the use of force against civilians.’⁶

To date however, repeated UN and ASEAN demands to the junta have had no impact. ASEAN’s Five-Point Consensus (5PC), adopted two years ago, called for an immediate cessation of violence in Myanmar.⁷ The UN Security Council’s historic resolution on Myanmar⁸ adopted last December similarly demanded ‘an immediate end to all forms of violence throughout the country’.

The junta has not only rejected these demands, it has answered them with escalating acts of terror that have reached a new peak in the Kantbalu massacre.

ASEAN and the UN Security Council must therefore take urgent coordinated action against the junta as a threat to regional and international peace and security.

The National Unity Government welcomes the United Kingdom’s request for an urgent Security Council meeting on the massacre on 13 April. Punitive measures under Chapter VII of the UN Charter must follow, including a global ban on the sale and transfer of arms, munitions, dual-use items and aviation fuel to the junta, the targeting of junta financial interests, and a referral of the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court. The UN Secretary-General, acting under Article 99 of the Charter, must give full support to this effort.⁹

ASEAN Leaders must use their upcoming Summit in May 2023 to initiate complementary punitive action. In their ‘Review and Decision on the Implementation of the Five-Point Consensus’¹⁰ agreed last November, ASEAN Leaders tasked their Foreign Ministers with

⁵ See <https://twitter.com/RapporteurUn/status/1645815985172103168>.

⁶ See <https://asean.org/asean-chairs-statement-on-the-recent-air-strikes-in-pa-zi-gyi-village-kaubalu-township-sagaing-region-of-myanmar>.

⁷ See <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/Chairmans-Statement-on-ALM-Five-Point-Consensus-24-April-2021-FINAL-a-1.pdf>.

⁸ Security Council resolution 2669 of 21 December 2022 at operative paragraph 1.

⁹ Article 99 provides that ‘[t]he Secretary-General may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security.’

¹⁰ See https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/06-ASEAN-Leaders-Review-and-Decision-on-the-Implementation-of-the-Five-Point-Consensus_fin.pdf at paragraph 7.

developing a SPC 'implementation plan that outlines concrete, practical and measurable indicators with specific timeline.' Half a year has passed without progress on this plan. ASEAN Leaders must therefore cut straight to action by adopting their own arms embargoes and financial measures against the junta, by banning junta representatives from all ASEAN meetings and forums, and by dealing directly with the National Unity Government as the legitimate representative of the Myanmar people.

Finally, to expedite accountability the International Criminal Court should accept the Article 12(3) declaration submitted by the National Unity Government on 21 July 2021. This declaration accepted the Court's jurisdiction with respect to international crimes committed in Myanmar going back to 1 July 2002.

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