

‘A War Crime’: Myanmar Airstrikes on Junta Opponents Kill at Least 30 Children

"Supplies of aviation fuel reaching the military enable these war crimes," warned one human rights campaigner. "These shipments must stop now."

By [Brett Wilkins](#)

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More than 100 people including at least 30 children were [reportedly killed](#) Tuesday in airstrikes by Myanmar's military dictatorship targeting opponents of the coup regime.

Witnesses and members of the opposition National Unity Government told reporters that a military jet and Mi-35 helicopter gunship bombed and strafed a gathering marking the opening of a new office of the People's Defense Force (PDF), a militant resistance group, in the village of Pa Zi Gyi, Kanbalu Township in the country's northwestern Sagaing region.

"This was a war crime," Byar Kyi, a resistance fighter who helped recover victims' bodies, [told](#) *The New York Times*. "The place they attacked was not a military target."

Tom Andrews, the United Nations' special rapporteur for human rights in Myanmar, [tweeted](#):

"The Myanmar military's attacks against innocent people, including today's airstrike in Sagaing, [are] enabled by world indifference and those supplying them with weapons. How many Myanmar children need to die before world leaders take strong, coordinated action to stop this carnage?"

ATTENTION: 100 killed & 50 injured.

RFA Burmese reports that the Myanmar junta carried out an airstrike during the inauguration of a Public Admin: Office led by NUG in Pazigy village in Sagaing's Kantbalu. The airstrike killed nearly 100 residents and left more than 50 injured. pic.twitter.com/xD60WST8eP

— Ro Nay San Lwin (@nslwin) [April 11, 2023](#)

One villager [told](#) the *BBC* that the jet bombed Pa Zi Gyi at about 7:00 am local time, followed by a sustained 20-minute attack by the helicopter.

Local residents and journalists uploaded [gruesome photos and videos](#) showing dead and dismembered children, many of their bodies [burned or blasted beyond recognition](#), lying strewn about the bombed-out village in the wake of the attack.

“The corpses cannot be identified since they are all scattered in body parts—legs and heads,” one rescue worker [told](#) *The Irrawaddy*, an anti-junta news site. “After gathering them all, we burned them.”

A resident of a neighboring village told the same publication that “at the moment it’s hard to say exactly how many casualties there were.”

“We haven’t been able to retrieve bodies and body parts, as the area where the air strike occurred is still burning,” they added.

Regional media also [reported](#) at least 11 deaths in a Monday airstrike on a high school run by the Chin National Defense Force in Falam Township, Chin state.

□ While the world forgets Myanmar, the junta intensifies airstrikes against civilian. On April 10, 11 civilians, including a pastor & a headmaster, were killed in targeted airstrikes in Phalam, Chin State. On April 11, 100 more civilian are killed due to shelling in Kant Balu, Sagaing. pic.twitter.com/IL9VvIWihh

— Wai Wai Nu (@waiwainu) [April 11, 2023](#)

Myanmar’s military—which [seized power](#) in a February 2021 coup—frequently targets anti-regime strongholds including Sagaing and Chin state. According to a [BBC analysis](#) published at the end of January, there have been over 600 aerial attacks by the junta’s forces since the coup.

Last September, a pair of military helicopters attacked a school in Sagaing, killing at least 11 children, [according to](#) the United Nations children’s agency. The following month, regime warplanes bombed an outdoor concert in Kachin state, [killing](#) at least 80 people.

“The military continues its mindless war on our country’s own people. Their sole aim is to consolidate power through death and destruction. They will not succeed,” **National Unity Government Acting President Duwa Lashi La** said in a Tuesday [Facebook post](#).

“We will continue our fight for a new Myanmar,” he added. “Our goal is a Myanmar in which such atrocities cannot occur and where power derives from the will of the people, not force of arms.”

Human rights groups amplified calls to suspend aviation fuel shipments to Myanmar’s military in the wake of the latest airstrikes.

“The relentless air attacks across Myanmar highlight the urgent need to suspend the import of aviation fuel,” Montse Ferrer, Amnesty International’s business and human rights researcher, said in a [statement](#).

“Amnesty reiterates its calls on all states and businesses to stop shipments that may end up in the hands of the Myanmar Air Force,” Ferrer continued. “This supply chain fuels violations of international humanitarian law, including war crimes, and it must be disrupted in order to save lives.”

Initial reports on deadly air strikes in Sagaing Region are horrifying. The relentless air attacks across Myanmar highlight the urgent need to suspend the import of aviation fuel.

<https://t.co/MmzU9hd3jD>

— Amnesty International (@amnesty) [April 11, 2023](#)

Referring to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Ferrer added:

“Instead of taking a back seat, ASEAN must step up and play a leading role in resolving the human rights catastrophe in Myanmar. The United Nations Security Council must find ways to push through effective actions to hold the Myanmar military accountable, including by referring the situation in the country to the International Criminal Court.”

The European Union and countries including Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States have moved to block the sale, supply, and shipment of aviation fuel to the Myanmar regime and associated companies and businesspeople.

However, a March [report](#) from Amnesty International, Global Witness, and Burma Campaign U.K. showed Asian and European companies continued to be involved in supplying Myanmar’s military with aviation fuel.

“Since the military’s coup in 2021, it has brutally suppressed its critics and attacked civilians from the ground and the air. Supplies of aviation fuel reaching the military enable these war crimes,” Ferrer [said](#) last month. “These shipments must stop now.”

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Brett Wilkins is a staff writer for Common Dreams.

Featured image: This photograph shows the aftermath of an April 11, 2023 Myanmar airstrike on the village of Pa Zi Gyi, an attack that reportedly killed more than 100 people. (Photo: Kyun Hla Kanbalu Activists Group/Twitter)

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