

## **Written evidence from the UK Shan State Society (MYA0032)**

### **Executive Summary**

- This report, by the UK Shan State Society (UKSSS), highlights the war crimes and violences committed by the Burmese military junta, with the intention of suppressing the ethnic groups, often with devastating consequences.
- Thousands of villagers were tortured and killed by the Burmese armed forces; villagers were used as weapons of war, forced labour and human shields, and women were raped, but their voices and suffering could be hardly heard.
- There are many armed groups including the Burmese military junta operating in the Shan State; while some of these groups have been fighting against the Burmese military junta for freedom of their own lands and people, some are the militias that are controlled by the military junta, intentionally creating conflicts and endless civil wars.
- Since the Burmese Military Coup on 1 February 2021, there have been many cases and casualties from the Shan State that were underreported.
- The junta has strictly controlled the internet connection and use of social media. There are journalists who are prepared to take risks, but they are facing many difficulties to collect more information and evidence.
- In this report, we provide some factual information and evidence gathered from reliable local sources.
- We hope that this report will help the UK Government to explore further options and work with other organisations on the crisis in Myanmar.

### **About the UK Shan State Society**

1. The UK Shan State Society (UKSSS) was formed in February 2021 by a group of people in the UK, a direct response to the crisis in Myanmar, particularly following the Burmese Military Coup on 1 February 2021.

2. The vision of the UKSSS is to promote peace, equality, diversity and inclusion for all communities and ethnic groups of the Union of Myanmar, with our special focus on the Shan State. We support the establishment of a Federal Democratic Government. We also perform charitable works and collect donations through various fundraising activities in order to support and relieve the people who have been affected and suffered by political suppression, conflicts and civil wars.

3. Our main contact is through email ([uksss.contact@gmail.com](mailto:uksss.contact@gmail.com)) and appointments can be made through email for meeting or speaking on phone with our key members.

### **Factual Information from the Shan State: The Burmese Military Junta (Tatmadaw) Committing War Crimes Against Civilians**

4. Since 1962, the armed forces of the Burmese military junta (Tatmadaw) have committed war crimes against civilians in many parts of the Shan State. Members of Shan Royal Families, who ruled the Shan states for generations and centuries, were forced to relinquish their ruling system and many of them were killed or jailed; some of them had to escape and live in other countries including the United Kingdom ([Adams 2000](#), [Simms 2008](#)).

5. Thousands of villagers were tortured and killed by the Burmese armed forces; villagers were also used as weapons of war, forced labour and human shields; and women were raped. Some brutalities of Burmese armed forces and the suffering of their victims have been recorded by the Shan Human Rights Foundation and the Shan Women Actions Network ([SHRF 1998](#), [SWAN 2002](#)), but there are many more war crimes committed against civilians by the Burmese armed forces that have been going on being unpublished and unheard of.

6. The use of villagers by the Burmese armed forces as their weapons of war continue to the present. For instance, during April 2021, Burmese troops and their militia allies used villagers as forced labourers and human shields, and looted property, during a multi-pronged operation against the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA) in Namzarng, southern Shan State ([SHRF](#), May 3 2021). The RCSS/SSA is one of the major armed ethnic groups that have been fighting against the Burmese junta for freedom of the Shan State, and its leader, General Yawd Serk, believes in federal democracy but with self-determination attached.

7. The Burmese military junta also use the tactics of divide and rule policy, intentionally creating conflicts and fighting between armed ethnic groups. The consequence of the conflicts is that the civilians have been the victims and suffered. For instance, in northern Shan State, at least dozens of homes were destroyed during fighting between RCSS and the Northern Alliance in April 2021 and about 2,000 civilians were displaced by the hostilities in Namtu Township ([SHAN](#), April 29, 2021). However, the voices and suffering of these villagers could be hardly heard and they barely received support for their survival.

## **The Burmese Military Coup on 1 February 2021 and Consequences: Many Cases and Casualties from the Shan State Being Remoted and Underreported**

8. After the Military coup in Myanmar began on the morning of 1 February 2021, peaceful pro-democracy street demonstrations, started by some young women in Yangon on 5 February, quickly spread to other towns and cities in the country. From 7 February the demonstrations were held across the whole of the Shan State.

9. In the Shan State, there are Burmese military bases in every town and in some larger villages. And, there are many ethnic armed groups; some of these are known as the militias, which are under the control of the Burmese military junta. Thus, the situations in the Shan State are much worse compared with the situations in the cities in central Myanmar, because the Shan State people do not only face dangers from the Burmese military junta but also often from the armed ethnic groups.

10. Even though they are facing all sorts of danger, people from all regions of the Shan State took part in the pro-democracy demonstrations for the whole month of February. In late February, when general strikes were held across the country and millions of people took to the streets, the junta's armed forces became more violent in their response. In bigger cities such as Taunggyi, Aung Pan, Lashio, Kengtung, Tachileik and Kyaukme where bigger demonstrations took place, several demonstrators were shot dead and many have been injured and unlawfully arrested.

11. Also, because the Burmese military junta has strictly controlled the internet connection and use of social media, it is difficult to collect detailed information and evidence. There are journalists and activists who are prepared to take the risks, but they are facing many difficulties; they need support for better and robotic means in order to collect more information and evidence. For example, in Aung Pan, the military armed forces gunned down at least nine people during its brutal crackdown in March, and in Muse, two people were killed, including a fifteen-year-old ([SHAN](#), April 22, 2021). Further investigations should be made to hold those responsible accountable in the eye of justice.

12. In early April in Taunggyi, Capital of the Shan State, a young man was reportedly tortured and killed; his dead body was returned to his family with many wounds including skull fracture, one ear nearly amputated, genitalia mutilated, and stab wounds in the back. Another youth in Nyaung Shwe, a town in the south of Taunggyi, was shot dead in the head in the same period. The news of these incidents could be hardly heard and have received very little attention, apart from being mentioned in a long list of casualties by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners ([AAPP](#), April 7, 2021).

13. Moreover, a great number of people have been unlawfully detained in eastern Shan State. It was reported that four anti-coup protesters in Kengtung were taken into custody and

charged with incitement under section 505a of the Penal Code ([MyanmarNow](#)); on April 23, Ko Sai Nge, a member of Tai Youth Organisation, was arrested for no reason ([TNA](#), April 23 2021). Our UKSSS members who have contact with people from Kengtung were told that some of those who were arrested have not had direct contact with their families since their arrest.

14. In brief, the Burmese junta's armed forces have continuously committed war crimes against civilians. Despite the recent sanctions imposed on the Burmese military junta and its associates, the junta continue to hold on to the power and crackdown other groups and civilians who go against them, including thousands of people who were participating in the peaceful demonstrations. Therefore, further sanctions and more actions are urgently needed to be undertaken by the international communities starting from the UN and powerful nations.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

15. By way of concluding our report, we would like to provide our recommendations for action by the UK Government's Foreign Affairs Committee to consider for inclusion in its report to the House of Commons.

- 15.1. We request the UK Government to provide generous support for the relief and welfare of the people in Myanmar, who have been affected by the brutal oppression of the Burmese military junta. We would like to recommend that donations go through local non-governmental groups, if possible, so that they can reach the suffering people directly. For the Shan State, the UKSSS are happy to work with donors, if needed, to get in touch with local representatives, making sure that the donations reach the people in need.
- 15.2. Specifically, we request the UK Government to provide healthcare support for the people of Myanmar, including the support for cooperative works on tackling the COVID-19 pandemic, and welfare for children in the war-torn areas.
- 15.3. We request the UK Government to provide support to students from Myanmar currently studying in the UK and support asylum seekers who are on the run for their life and survival.
- 15.4. We request the UK Government to champion and take on a leading role in providing support for journalists to get better access to the Shan State, and collect accurate information and evidence. Essential support needed for journalists includes finance, equipment and training.
- 15.5. We urge the UK Government to recognise the National Unity Government (NUG) as the legitimate national government, existing in parallel with the State Administration Council (SAC) of the military junta; we also urge the UK

- Government to provide recommendations for NUG on diversity and fairness for all ethnic groups that will pave a strong foundation for peace and stability in the country that also has the connection with large borderlands of the Asian regions.
- 15.6. We urge the UK Government to advocate the United Nations Security Council to immediately impose a global arms embargo on Myanmar. The Security Council should act swiftly to pressure the junta to stop violating the human rights of people protesting the February 1, 2021 coup and military rule.
  - 15.7. We urge the UK Government to declare the Burmese military junta as a terrorist organisation.
  - 15.8. We urge the UK Government to freeze further assets of the Military junta, as there are more Generals, officers and associates of the junta, including Senior General Soe Win, SAC's Vice-Chair, remaining unpenalized. We also urge the UK Government to prohibit all UK companies or businesses from engaging in financial or economic activities with the State Administration Council of the junta including the Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC) and its associated corporations.
  - 15.9. We urge the UK Government and other powerful nations to do more actions providing more support for a Federal Democratic Government, with representatives that will be fair for all ethnic groups and regions of the country.
  - 15.10. There are many armed groups including the Burmese military junta. So, until a Federal Government with a Federal Army can be established, we urge the UK Government to support and cooperate with the armed groups that protect the civilians and work with them for the promotion of peace and stability of the country.
  - 15.11. We urge the UK Government to put pressure on the ASEAN to recognise the National Unity Government and cooperate with the international communities for the establishment of peace and stability in Myanmar that will be mutually beneficial to Asian regions and worldwide.

With kind regards,

UK Shan State Society

**18 May 2021**