

## **Myanmar Air Force Target Civilians, Clinics & Schools.**

**Embargoed till 2 March 2023**

Ottawa: On the 61<sup>st</sup> anniversary of Myanmar's first military coup led by the late General Ne Win on 2 March 1962, the Canadian not-for-profit organization, Associates to Develop Democratic Burma Inc., released its Special Report on unprecedented air strikes and bombings by the Myanmar Air Force against civilians and civilian physical infrastructures such as schools, clinics, places of worships of all faiths, residential homes and villages.

The 44-page report is drawn from the research and documentation by different organizations, such as the Karen National Union, Chin National Front, Kachin Independence Army, Karenni National Progressive Party, the Salween Institute for Public Policy, as well as Karenni human rights organizations, and the Free Burma Rangers, a humanitarian NGO. Additionally, the ADDB report draws on the Myanmar military's leaked document of the 23 December 2022 meeting of military security chiefs.

The report offers the first-ever comprehensive documentation and insight into how the embattled Myanmar regime under Min Aung Hlaing has made an unprecedented break with the Myanmar Air Force's decades-old philosophy of using air strikes specifically against military targets as part of a counter-insurgency operation. The Min Aung Hlaing junta now portrays any civilian, politician and activist who support the nationwide resistance as "terrorists".

Since the coup two years ago, Myanmar military leadership have, with alarming frequency, deployed fighter jets, helicopter gunships and artillery to strike civilian targets including Christian churches, Buddhist monasteries, schools, clinics and hospitals.

Media Monitor Collective (of Myanmar or MMC-M) notes that 88.4% of the country's townships have experienced violent armed conflict. Since the coup, 24,065 civilians have been arrested or detained, 2,750 citizens killed as the direct result of armed conflicts, including air strikes and mortar shelling. The leaked military document also reports 12 out of 14 administrative States/Regions under siege.

Since 1 February 2021, over 11,000 incidents or cases of organized violence against and by the regime were documented. Of these, nearly 760 were air strikes against villages, refugee or IDP areas and armed conflict regions. The heavy troop losses Myanmar army has suffered is definitely a factor in the coup regime ramping up its use of air strikes to nearly 400% in the second year of the unsuccessful coup whose legitimacy has been universally rejected by virtually all international governments and organizations including the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

In his closing remarks delivered on the 21-February 2023 YouTube LIVE public discussions with leaders of Myanmar's democratic resistance organizations, former Minister of Foreign Affairs from Malaysia (2018-22), Dato' Sri Saifuddin bin Abdullah, has characterized Myanmar air strikes against civilians, soft targets, as "an act of state terrorism".

The ADDB Special Report echoes Saifuddin's view and urges the leaders of the regional bloc to consider concrete accountability measures including the prevention of ASEAN-based companies

from supplying Myanmar military with lethal assistance and related support, such as the sale of aviation fuel.

The Associates to Develop Democratic Burma, Inc. (ADDB), better known as the Euro-Burma Office, is a not-for-profit organization established in 1990, incorporated in Canada in 1994 and led by long-time democrats drawn from Myanmar's diverse ethnic and religious communities.

Harn Yawngghwe, the founding executive director of ADDB Inc. whose late father President Sao Shwe Thike was a co-founder of the independent Republic of the Union of Myanmar alongside the martyred General Aung San, makes a broad appeal for the immediate cessation of violence: "my older 17-year old brother was the very first casualty of the military coup 61 years ago. The troops that raided our family home in Yangon and shot dead my un-armed brother, shouted for my mother, a member of parliament, to come out as if she were "an armed rebel". Sixty-years later, the same Myanmar Armed Forces falsely frames all anti-coup democrats and citizens as 'terrorists' while their fighter jets, helicopter gunships and artillery are killing civilians. Violence against civilians must stop."

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