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Press briefing notes on Myanmar

Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: Rupert Colville

Location: Geneva

Date: 10 December 2021

We are appalled by the alarming escalation of grave human rights abuses in Myanmar. In the last week alone, security forces have killed and burned to death 11 people – among them five minors – and rammed vehicles into protesters exercising their fundamental right to peaceful assembly.

More than 10 months since Myanmar's military overthrew the democratically elected Government in a February coup, the country's human rights situation is deepening on an unprecedented scale, with serious violations reported daily of the rights to life, liberty and security of person, the prohibition against torture, the right to a fair trial, and freedom of expression.

Today the courageous and resilient people of Myanmar have marked Human Rights Day and their opposition to the coup with a universal silent protest.

On 7 December, a unit of the Myanmar army was allegedly ambushed with a remote-controlled explosive device in Salingyi Township of Sagaing Region by militia forces. Security personnel reportedly responded by raiding the village of Done Taw and arresting six men and five minors - the youngest of whom was 14 years of age.

The 11 males were later found burned by villagers who said they saw fire coming from the area. The villagers indicated that human corpses were contorted into shapes that appeared as though they were trying to shelter one another and escape from burning huts.

In a separate incident on 5 December, security forces in Kyimyindaing Township, Yangon, rammed a vehicle into unarmed protesters and then fired on them with live ammunition, leading to several casualties.

These attacks are heinous, completely unacceptable, and disregard common values of humanity. They are also far from isolated.

In recent weeks, we have received multiple reports of villages being burned, including protected structures such as places of religious worship, and residential buildings.

In Thantlang town in Chin State, credible sources report the military torched 19 civilian and religious buildings and 450 homes in 10 different incidents. A few weeks ago in Kayah State, villagers were reportedly burned alive when the structure they tried to shelter in was allegedly set ablaze by security forces.

Since the coup, General Min Aung Hlaing's forces have repeatedly failed to respect their obligations under international law to protect the country's people. As a result, more than 1,300 people have lost their lives and over 10,600 more have been detained.

These latest grave violations demand a firm, unified and resolute international response that redoubles efforts to pursue accountability for the Myanmar military and the restoration of democracy in Myanmar.

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For more information and media requests, please contact:

Rupert Colville + 41 22 917 9767 / rupert.colville@un.org or

Ravina Shamdasani - + 41 22 917 9169 / ravina.shamdasani@un.org or

Liz Throssell + 41 22 917 9296 / elizabeth.throssell@un.org

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