

SINGLE EVENT INVESTIGATION

Moso Village Christmas Eve Killings

REPORT BY MYANMAR WITNESS, 03 JUNE 2022 (UPDATED ON: 12 JULY 2022)

Key Event Details:

- **Location of Incident:** Near Moso (မိုဆိုရွာ) village, Hpruso township (ဖရူဆိုမြို့နယ်), Kayah State (ကယားပြည်နယ်). [19.425008, 97.100716]
- **Date/Time of Incident:** 24 December 2021
- **Alleged Perpetrator(s) and/or Involvement:** Myanmar Military Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) 531/ LIB 428
- **Myanmar Witness Conclusions:**
 - Using open-source investigation techniques, Myanmar Witness has identified the location where bodies, allegedly civilians, were set on fire within vehicles on 24 December 2021.
 - The incident occurred in close proximity to known military bases in the area. Individuals were seen leaving the area after the fire was lit, heading east toward the military base, though they cannot be positively identified as military members.
 - The coordinates of the location where the bodies are suspected to have been burned [19.425008, 97.100716] were identified through the comparative analysis of user generated content (UGC) alongside satellite imagery, news, and eye-witness testimony.
 - During the investigation, Myanmar Witness also analysed images of deceased individuals with hands tied, alleged to be Border Guard Forces (BGF), in connection with claims that four BGF had been killed by the military in Hpruso township (ဖရူဆိုမြို့နယ်). This claim itself cannot be verified.
 - These deaths reflect a worrying trend in Myanmar. This incident is one of multiple killings reported, where bodies were burned - actions which are attributed to the military on social media and by news outlets.

Executive Summary

Myanmar Witness has documented and verified images relating to the killing of multiple individuals that took place on 24 December 2021. More than 30 bodies were identified and Myanmar Witness verified that the events took place near Moso (မိုဆိုရွာ) village in Hpruso township (ဖရူဆိုမြို့နယ်), Kayah State (ကယားပြည်နယ်).

During the course of this investigation, Myanmar Witness has documented multiple images and pieces of footage which show numerous vehicles containing severely burnt bodies. [Local reports](#) indicate that there were at least 35 bodies found at the scene along with eight vehicles and five motorbikes. Reports by [Myanmar Now](#) indicate that children were amongst the deceased. This report by Myanmar Witness captures the initial findings of an investigation into the alleged killings, including the verification of this event, and analysis of footage verified by Myanmar Witness to be taken at the scene, which shows individuals walking away from the burning vehicles.

Myanmar Witness has verified the event in question through the geolocation of images and footage from the scene. The time of the event was verified using multiple sources. [NASA's Fire Information for Resource Management System \(FIRMS\)](#) data shows fires at 1319 local time (0648 GMT), on 24 December 2021. Shadows from drone footage taken where the fire was geolocated shows the fire was burning at about 1200 local time; however, posts on social media regarding Moso (မိုဆိုရွာ) village don't mention the fires until later in the day.

This investigation concludes that it is likely the fire was set alight between 1130-1200 local time. Additionally, footage which was chronolocated to around 1500 local time on the day in question shows that the fires had been extinguished. Myanmar Witness has been able to discern that these fires do not appear to be accidental or natural, like those which occur in hot weather around dry vegetation.

[Warning: Graphic] has been inserted ahead of links to sources which show graphic and distressing images of injured or dead persons.



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Background and Context	3
Methodology	5
Limitations	6
Gender Analysis	6
Timeline of Events	8
Burning Bodies in Hpruso Township (ဟရူဆိုမြို့)	9
Geolocating imagery	9
Time of Event	11
Analysing the Incident	14
Victims of the Event	16
The Use of Fire to Burn Victims	17
Military Involvement?	18
Border Guard Forces Found	20
Conclusions	22
List of Abbreviations	23

Background and Context

According to multiple news media sources, including [The Irrawaddy](#), [Mizzima](#), [Radio Free Asia](#), and social media posts on 24 December 2021, bodies were found burning in vehicles close to Moso (မိုးဆိုးရွာ) village in Hpruso township (ဖရူဆိုမြို့နယ်). Some of these media outlets, such as [Associated Press](#), reported locals' claims that the victims were civilians who had fled fighting between armed resistance groups and Myanmar's military near Kwaing Ngan (ကျွိုင်ငံ) village [19.47997093, 97.07837677], located close to Moso (မိုးဆိုးရွာ) village.

In a [statement](#) released on 26 December 2021, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Martin Griffiths condemned the incident. He stated that credible sources confirmed at least 35 people, including at least one child, were forced from their vehicles, killed, and burned. While the statement does not officially implicate the military or security forces in the deaths of these individuals, the call for authorities to immediately commence a thorough and transparent investigation into the incident does reflect the government's responsibility to investigate the incident.

The narrative perpetuated by state media appears to provide a fairly rudimentary explanation that excludes key facts, such as the burning of bodies. The state narrative does not always acknowledge claims of death or wrongdoing. When the deaths are acknowledged, they are justified by claims that these individuals were aggressive and dangerous 'terrorists'. According to [Myanmar Now](#)'s comparison of the state media and opposing media coverage of the event, the main differences include the number of vehicles and the number of bodies found during this timeframe. Additionally, the state media excluded claims that the bodies were found burning in the vehicles, or with their hands tied. They also suggest that the incident arose when a group was stopped for a random inspection, whereby individuals instigated violence and attempted to run away. Clashes between forces were mentioned by some pro-military social media accounts, as well as the state-affiliated newspaper [The Mirror Daily](#). The latter frame the individuals killed on this day as 'terrorists' or an 'enemy' and utilise images of uniformed individuals dead on the ground (see section on the *Victims of the Event* for more information). By claiming those involved were enemy combatants, instead of civilians as other media outlets claim, the pro-state media may be attempting to lessen the severity of this mass killing.

The official website for the [Myanmar Government](#) released a response to Martin Griffiths' statement. Their narrative aligns with Myanmar State Media, claiming that the incident commenced when *'[security forces] stopped seven vehicles for security inspection but [those being stopped] did not stop their cars and shot [at security forces] using small firearms, and ran away. Then, about 10 terrorists who were waiting on the hills of the village attacked with RPG, 40mm launcher and other arms. Therefore, security forces inevitably counter-attacked them.'* They go on to say that the individuals referred to by Martin Griffiths were killed while attacking the military.

According to [Radio Free Asia](#) (RFA), Deputy Minister of Information, and Security Administrative Council (SAC) spokesperson, Zaw Min Tun asserted that 25 members of the anti-SAC resistance group the People's Defence Force (PDF) died in the incident. However, Zaw Min Tun offers no explanation for the burned bodies - which is a particularly horrifying aspect of the reports and associated UGC. Additionally, he makes no reference to the claims and images which allegedly show the same bodies with their hands tied, like those reported by [Myanmar Now](#). Nonetheless, the statement asserts that *'terrorist groups colluded with unscrupulous media outlets and journalists that do not want peace and stability in the country and the plot was drawn up based on their whims and fancies to occur such misleading comments'*.

In the lead up to the incident near Moso (မိုဆိုရွာ) village, social media posts offer additional information regarding the military's presence in the area. For example, on 20 December 2021, news and media website [Kantarawaddy Times](#) released a post on their Facebook page at around 1729 local time. They reported on recent fires in Hpruso township (ဖရူဆိုမြို့နယ်), and released pictures of fires allegedly in Naung Lon (နောင်လုံ) and Kun Nar (ကွန်နား) [19.86263084, 97.28655243] villages, east of Loikaw (လွိုင်ကော်). They state that the military intentionally set fire to locals' homes in Loikaw (လွိုင်ကော်), Demoso (ဒီးမော့ဆို), Hpruso (ဖရူဆို) and Pekhön Townships. Similarly, on 23 December 2021, the day before the incident near Moso (မိုဆိုရွာ) village, Myanmar Witness identified footage posted at around 1835 local time, which appears to show damaged homes and local defence force members walking around the area. The footage was reportedly located at Daw Khor Khu village (ဒေါခရော့ခူ) [19.4759903, 96.9773407] in Hpruso (ဖရူဆို), close in geographic proximity to Moso (မိုဆိုရွာ) village; however, this footage could not be geolocated by Myanmar Witness. UGC assessed by Myanmar Witness reveals a pattern of fires in the area in the lead up to the event on the 24 December 2021.

Additionally, on 24 December 2021, images posted on social media at 1112 and 1148 local time appear to show people leaving Hpruso due to ongoing fighting. At this time, there is no mention of fire within the social media posts. News and media site [Kantawaddy Times](#) posted on their Facebook that individuals were seen leaving the township, that gunshots were heard at 0730 local time in the west side of Hpruso township (ဖရူဆိုမြို့နယ်), and they report that soldiers were seen close to Moso (မိုဆိုရွာ) village. The paper reports that the citizens leaving were Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from Moso (မိုဆိုရွာ) village and Daw Khor Khu (ဒေါခရော့ခူ) village. This was posted at 1205 local time and fires were not mentioned. At around 1254 local time images of damage to homes near Hpruso (ဖရူဆို) were posted by news and media website [Karrenni Human Rights Group](#) on Facebook, with

mention that the military had completely taken over Moso (မိုဆိုရွာ) village. At 1318 local time, FIRMS registered a fire in the same location that Myanmar Witness has identified as the site where the vehicles were burned. While FIRMS does not register fires at the exact time a fire begins, it demonstrates the time at which sensors registered the heat signature.

Methodology

Myanmar Witness follows a methodology of digital preservation and rigorous, replicable analysis. Digital evidence is collected and archived in a secure database and preserved with hashing to confirm the authenticity and prevent tampering.



Geolocation is conducted using a varied array of open source online tools such as Google Earth to match satellite imagery with visual features identified in the footage or images. A high burden of proof is required to match imagery and geolocations are required to be cross-checked and peer-reviewed before they are credited as verified and included in Myanmar Witness reporting.

Chronolocation is typically conducted by analysing UGC timestamps to determine hard end limits for the possible time frame. This can then be followed with contextual analysis, for example comparing against known indicators such as events or clocks visible, weather, and shadows. Shadow angle is determined after geolocation and its orientation is used to determine the position of the sun and thus time. This is not always incredibly specific but chronolocation is included as specifically as possible without incorrectly attributing time in order to account for possible issues.

If dealing with unverified information, such as witness testimony or the inclusion of outside reporting, Myanmar Witness has made known that these inclusions are claims and have not been independently verified by Myanmar Witness, but their inclusion may still be relevant to include as context around the investigation. Following ethical standards, Myanmar Witness has obscured identifying information about individuals involved, censored private information and images where appropriate, removed links to private individuals and archived said information securely. Where appropriate, Myanmar Witness has also censored or discluded graphic imagery in our reporting.

Limitations

The information obtained by Myanmar Witness comes from an area of ongoing conflict so it is assumed that there is a selection bias, due to several factors including fear of repercussions for uploading, unavailability of information from official sources and

availability, or lack thereof, the internet - which has also restricted the amount of media available to be verified by Myanmar Witness. Myanmar Witness strives to eliminate as much of this bias as possible by using both focussed and broad search terms in multiple languages across open sources as well as identifying media from multiple sources, such as social media and both pro and anti-regime news media to reduce the effects of this bias and ensure as much information from a range of sources is collected.

There were plentiful allegations that the military were involved in the seemingly deliberate fires and people killed on 24 December 2021. Myanmar Witness was able to identify Light Infantry Battalion bases close to the proximity of the incident. Geolocated and chronolocated drone footage from just after the incident is suspected to have happened shows individuals moving east towards these bases; however, attribution is incredibly difficult to verifiably discern. No evidence was identified depicting what are verifiably military actors at the scene of the incident or involved in creating the fires. As a result, an understanding of the actors responsible can be inferred from the available information and cross-referenced media collected by Myanmar Witness, but not officially confirmed.

During the course of this investigation, there were several instances where information was drawn from witness statements reported in the news or on social media. When this is the case, care has been taken to make this clear by reporting that the information is an allegation rather than verifiable fact.

Gender Analysis

While no female victims have been independently verified by Myanmar Witness in this case, there are claims that among the individuals killed during this incident, some were women and children civilians who had been killed by the military while clashes took place in the area.

Mapping of the Event and Location

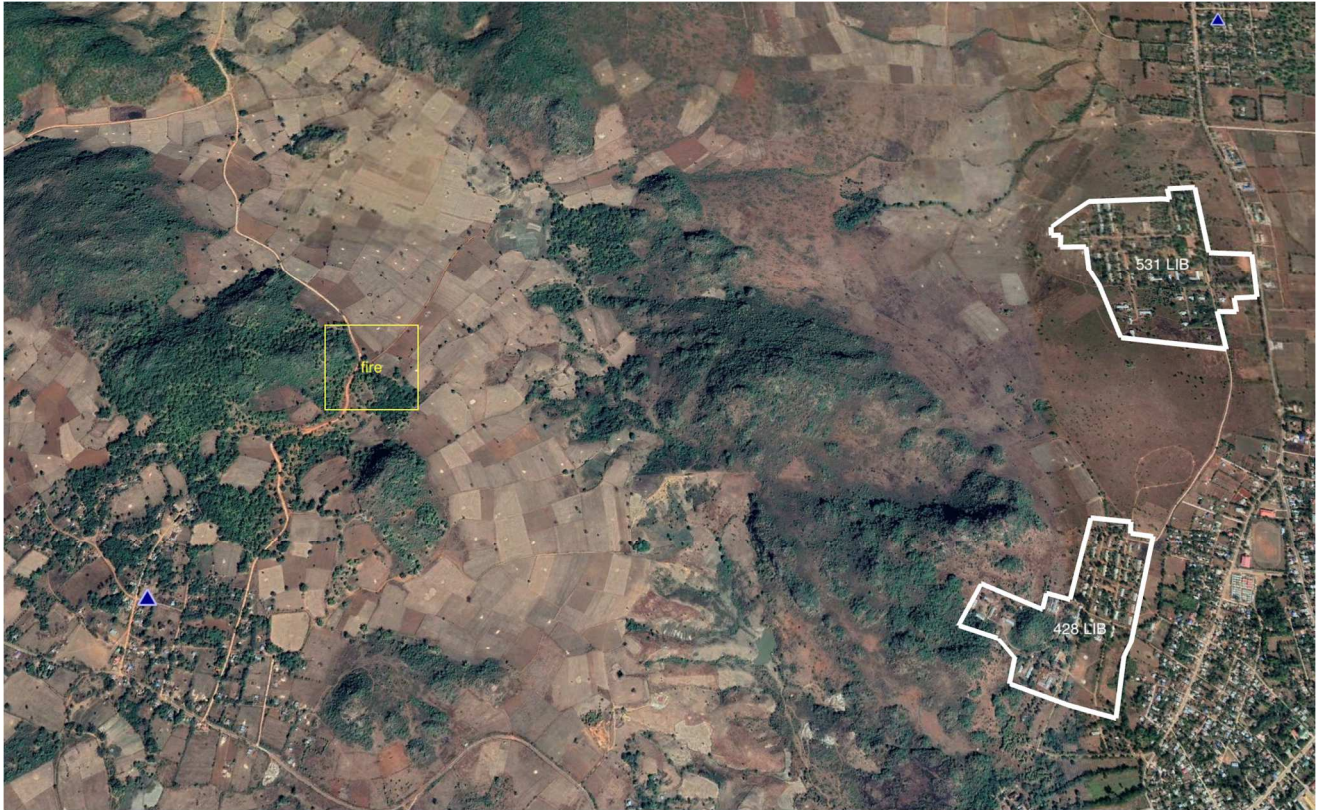
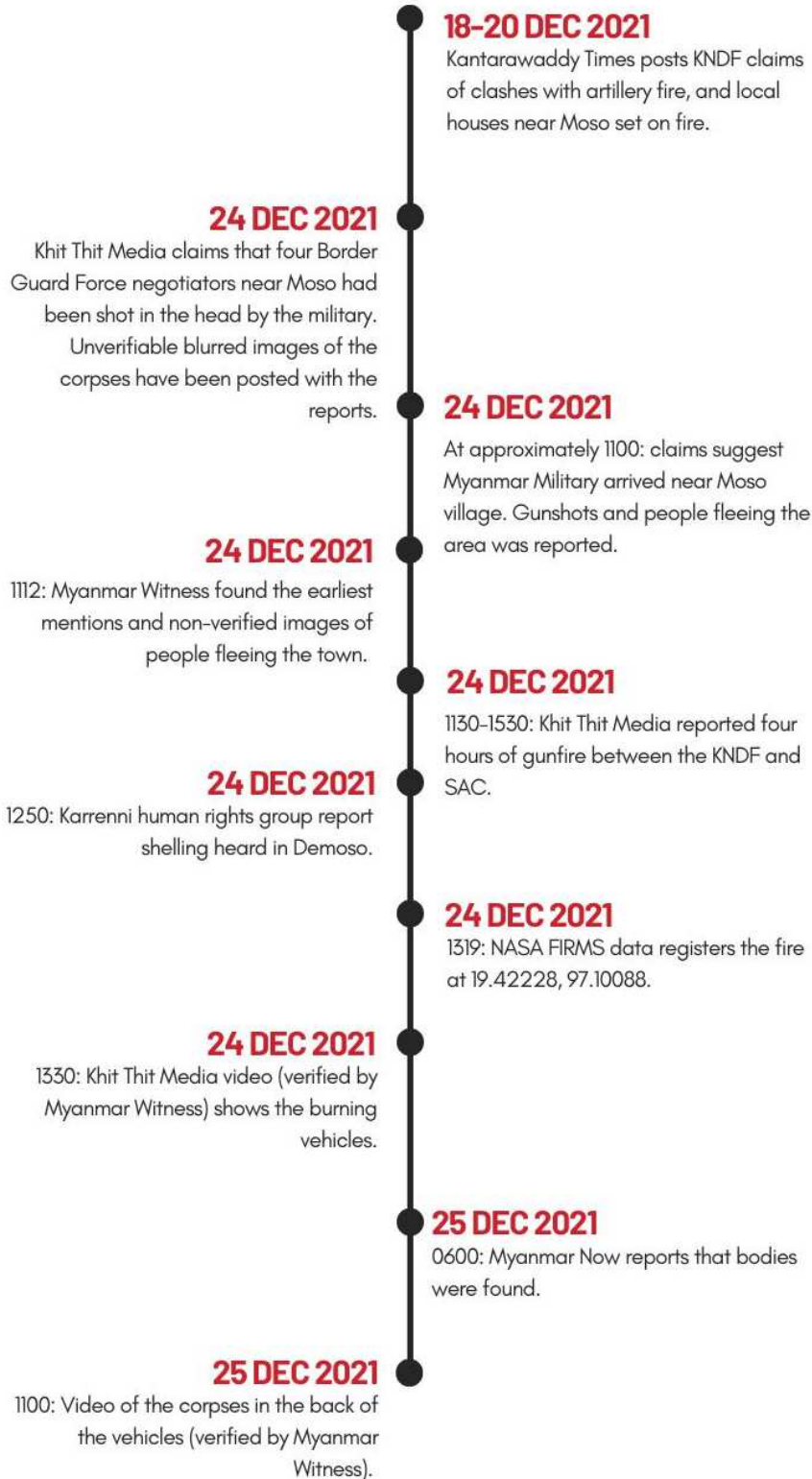


Figure 1: Location of the fire, where burned bodies were discovered, in proximity to Light Infantry Battalion bases 428 and 531. The small blue triangle denotes Moso village, while those highlighted in white represent these individuals military bases and the box labelled fire is where the burned bodies were found and a fire could be seen.



Timeline of Events



Burning Bodies in Hpruso Township (ဖရူဆိုမြို့)

Geolocating imagery

[Warning: Graphic Imagery] On 25 December 2021 [Kantarawaddy Times](#) posted images of bodies blackened with fire damage, as well as images of vehicles clearly damaged by fire. One of these images had identifiable features in the background which allowed Myanmar Witness to confirm the location where the vehicles were found. These images, cross-referenced with satellite imagery, indicate the event took place close to Moso (မိုဆိုရွာ) village in Hpruso township (ဖရူဆိုမြို့နယ်), Kayah State (ကယားပြည်နယ်) at around 19.425008, 97.100716 (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Geolocation of an image uploaded by the Kantarawaddy Times to 19.425008, 97.100716.

This location was cross-referenced using [NASA FIRMS](#) fire data, which indicates that there was a heat signature at that exact location (Figure 3). The heat signature was recorded at 1318 local time, 0648 GMT, on 24 December 2021.

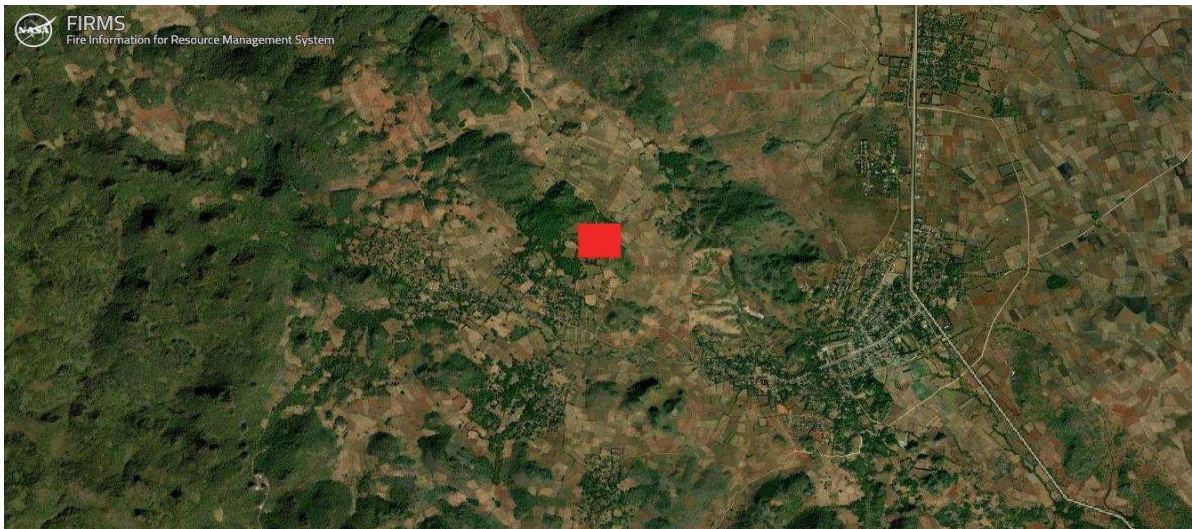


Figure 3: FIRMS records a fire in the geolocated area where Myanmar Witness identified the burned out vehicles to be.

Footage uploaded by [Khit Thit Media](#) - that has since been removed but has been archived by Myanmar Witness - appears to show the vehicles as they were on fire in this area, located at around 19.423605, 97.100517 (Figure 4).

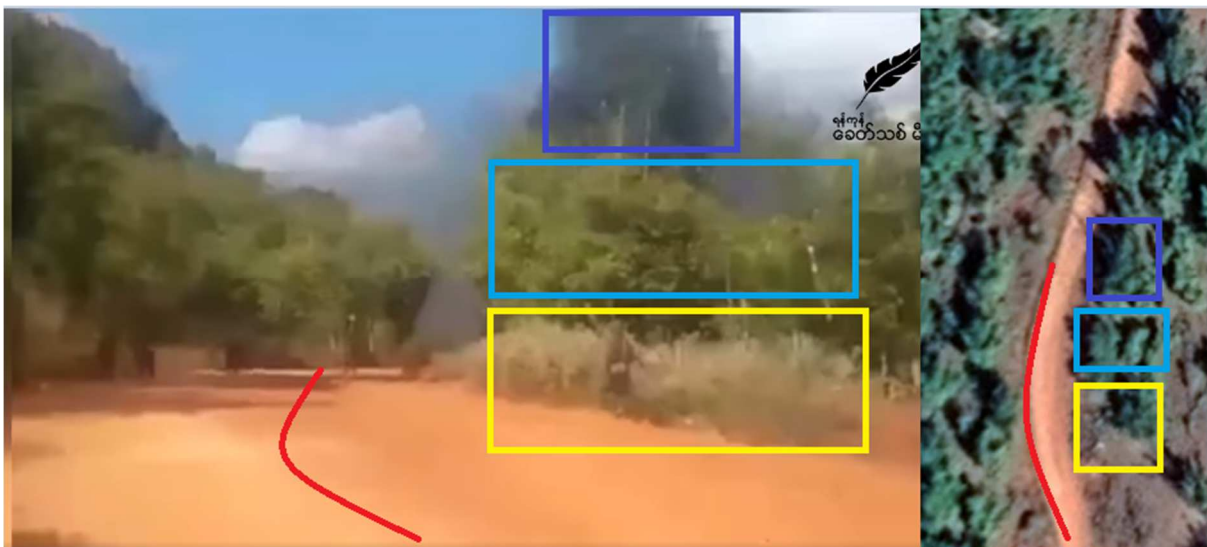


Figure 4: Footage was geolocated to 19.423605, 97.100517.

The geolocation of this footage suggests that the fire is very likely coming from where the vehicles were located in Figure 2. The cameraperson moves towards the location found in Figure 2, where bodies and the vehicles which were fire damaged were identified. Since the incident, Google Earth satellite imagery has been updated and the burn marks are clearly visible in this location (Figure 5).



Figure 5: Satellite imagery update from January 2021 compared to January 2022, the month after the December 2021 incident.

Time of Event

Myanmar Witness has used multiple sources to verify the time that this event occurred. As mentioned, using [NASA FIRMS](#) it is possible to determine that the heat signature was picked up at 1318 local time, 0648 GMT, on 24 December 2021. Myanmar Witness has also relied upon USG to build a more complete picture of the timing of the events. One of the earliest pieces of footage Myanmar Witness collected was a video from 24 December 2021. The footage depicts the fires raging at a large height, intermittently fluctuating in strength while the fire appears to explode from the centre. This footage was recorded somewhere along the hill at 19.421037, 97.102109, with the camera angle pointed towards the site of the burning vehicles. However, there is not enough information available in this footage to verify the time in which it was filmed.

Drone imagery published online shows the fires burning at around 1130-1200 local time on 24 December 2021. This was calculated through [Suncalc](#) using the shadows present in the video. At this time the fire was still burning on all cars. It also shows individuals moving in a direction away from the fires (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Drone footage that appears to show individuals walking from the scene of the fire at around 1130.

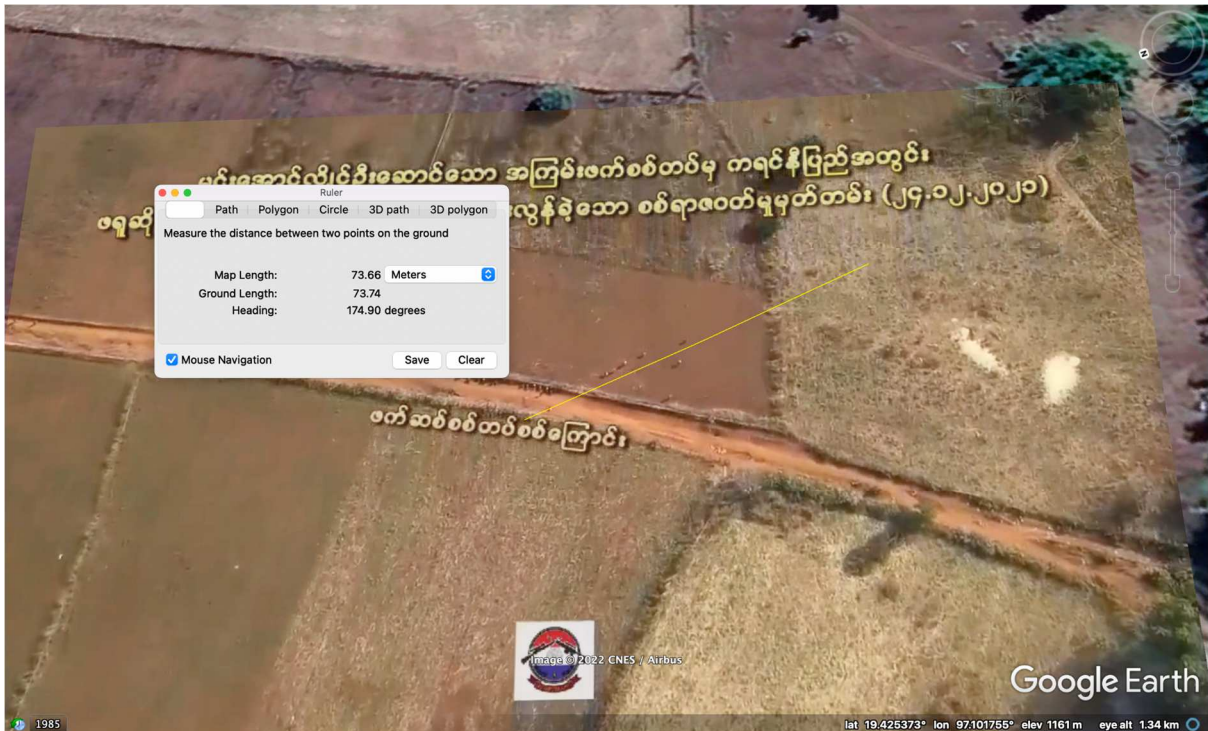


Figure 7: Overlaid image in Google Earth showing shadow azimuth of about 175° corresponding to 11:45 through [SunCalc](#).

Additional footage collected by Myanmar Witness from social media shows individuals walking towards a burned out car, while the other vehicles were still on fire (Figure 8). Although one of the cars in the drone footage was no longer burning, this demonstrates that active fires continued for some hours. From the shadows present in this footage Myanmar Witness has chronolocated the time the footage was filmed as being at about 1330 on 24 December 2021.

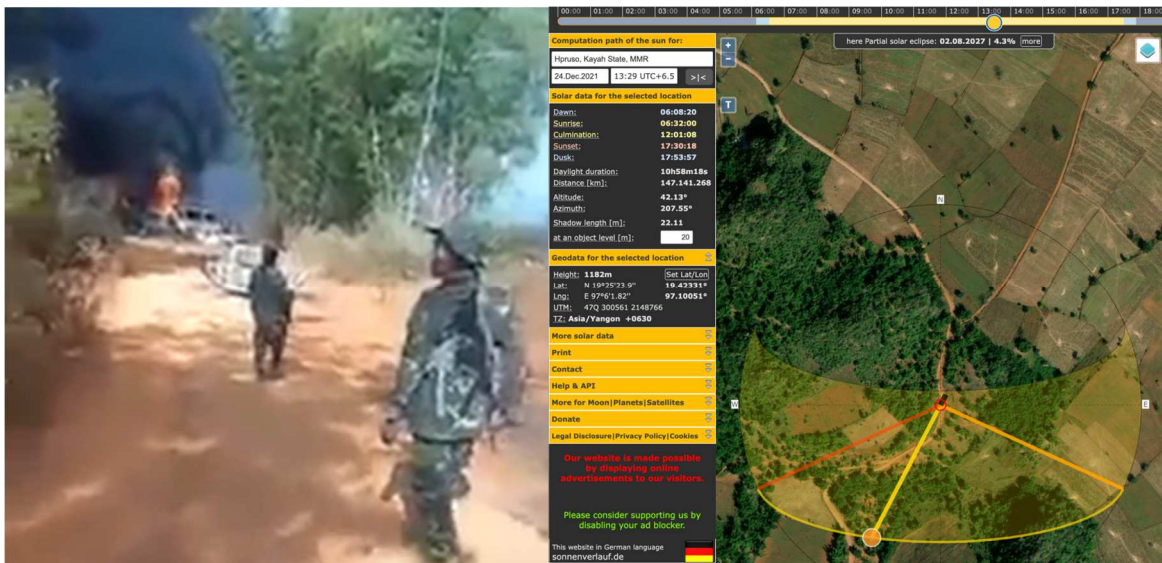


Figure 8: Shadow calculation of individuals investigating fires in this area using [SunCalc](#).

Additional video footage from this area demonstrates that the northernmost vehicles were still burning later that day (Figure 9). This can be determined due to the different shadows seen within the footage.



Figure 9: Comparison of shadows in the previous footage and this later footage, demonstrating the continuing fire here.

Through a comparison of the footage collected by Myanmar Witness, it can be inferred that the fires were likely started at around 1130-1200. It is probable that the fires were set a couple of hours or so before the footage shown in Figure 8, where individuals can be seen walking towards the fire site at 1330. This can be concluded not only from chronolocation of the footage, but also the fact that in the earlier footage one of the cars was still alight.

Myanmar Witness has been able to identify additional footage which indicates that by 1500 the fires have ceased, leaving vehicles severely damaged (Figure 10). This timeframe was determined using shadow indication.



Figure 10: Drone images of cars having been burned after the fire had taken place.

Analysing the Incident

An analysis of multiple images of the scene indicates that the fires within the vehicles were likely separate, targeted fires, rather than one continuous or accidental fire. This is evident through the lack of damage to the ground soil and areas of vegetation surrounding the vehicles. This analysis is consistent with reports that the vehicles were deliberately burned, and the individuals contained within the vehicles had been targeted. For example, in the image below from the [Kantarawaddy Times](#) it can be observed that the ground lacks significant 'scorching', and the vegetation is largely undamaged (Figure 11).



Figure 11: An image demonstrating a lack of physical evidence to claim accidental fire damage in the aforementioned Kantarawaddy Times picture.

Additionally, images uploaded by [Khit Thit Media](#) also reveal a separation of fire points and vehicles which indicate that the fire damage was targeted. This suggests that the fire did not start at one specific point and spread naturally. This provides further evidence to suggest that the fires were set alight separately (Figure 12). Drone footage of these vehicles demonstrates that during a period of time, all of these vehicles were on fire at the same time (Figure 13). The drone footage also shows the separation of fire points, as seen by the lack of vegetation and ground fire damage.



Figure 12: The ground between these vehicles appears unaffected by fire damage.



Figure 13: Drone images of separate fire points on the road, each emanating smoke.

The question remains how these vehicles were set on fire. Video footage shows multiple explosions at the scene. This could be the result of the heat from one burning vehicle provoking the explosion of the others. Alternatively, it could be that each vehicle was set on fire separately within a similar time frame - perhaps suggesting the involvement of multiple people. Myanmar Witness has not identified conclusive evidence of how these vehicles were set on fire; however, through analysis of the images available, Myanmar Witness has been able to discern that these fires do not appear to be accidental or natural, like those which occur in hot weather around dry vegetation.

Victims of the Event

[Warning: Graphic] Images identified on social media and through [news media](#) indicate that most of the bodies from the scene were located in the back of trucks. Images can also be seen here on the [Karenni Nationalities Defense Force \(KNDF\)](#) page. Questions regarding whether the victims were murdered before their bodies were burned in the trucks are still under investigation. [Sky News](#), whom Myanmar Witness has collaborated with on this investigation, reported that they had made contact with a doctor who helped with the post-mortem examinations: *"The skulls were completely smashed. Maybe shot with a gun or beaten with something. And, in the chest and back, there are some injuries from being stabbed with a sharp object."* The Doctor also said that these bodies were mostly tied up, which would match with the images uploaded by Khit Thit Media.

A variety of sources claim that at least 37 people died, and that there were children amongst the deceased. Social media posts also indicate vehicle [licences](#) were found belonging to victims to be used in identification of some of the victims through their vehicles. Follow up reports indicated that two of the victims were Save the Children's staff. An official communique from Save the Children [stated](#) on 25 December 2021 *"Two of our staff, who were on their way back to base office after conducting humanitarian response work in a nearby community, were caught up in the incident and remain missing. We have confirmation that their private vehicle was attacked and burned out. The military reportedly forced people from their cars, arrested some, killed others and burned their bodies."* A few days later, [Save the Children](#) announced their deaths on their official website, citing the military as responsible for their deaths.

As well as those bodies found burnt within the vehicles, there were reports of bodies found close-by. These individuals were reported to have been shot. [Sky News](#) was able to identify and talk to the families of some of the alleged victims of the Moso killings. One such individual, Li Reh, was reported missing in the area. In a state-affiliated newspaper, The Mirror Daily, two photos of 'enemies' were published in relation to the Moso (မိုးဆုံရွာ) village attacks (Figure 14), these were also posted by pro-military accounts claiming these were members of the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) and PDF. Sky reported that they were provided with photos taken during the post-mortems which showed that under the uniforms the men were dressed in civilian clothes and that both had been shot, despite a lack of bullet holes or blood on the men's uniforms - which can also be seen in Figure 14. Sky News reports that the image showing the individual with a blurred hand could be adjusted to show a missing hand. Li Reh - who remains currently missing at the time of

writing - was born without his left hand. Li Reh's sister also [reported](#) that her brother's motorcycle appeared to be among those that had been set on fire.



Figure 14: The Mirror Daily's upload of one 'enemy' dressed in combat clothing. One with a blurred hand and the other with an unusually placed gun.

The Use of Fire to Burn Victims

[Warning: Graphic] Following the events, Khit Thit Media posted graphic images supposedly of the autopsy of the bodies which had been burned. The images show individuals arms crossed behind their backs and what looks to be material that could have bound the hands (Myanmar Witness has not included these in this report due to the graphic nature of the footage, these are available on request). The images do not confirm whether the bodies were subjected to either post or pre-mortem burning. Individuals could have been tied up, killed and their bodies subsequently burned, or tied up and burned while alive. Thus, Myanmar Witness cannot confirm whether or not these individuals were killed by the fires themselves or beforehand.

The deputy township police chief of the Karenni State Police Force - an anti-SAC law enforcement network made up of police officers taking part in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) - told [Myanmar Now](#) that the doctors responsible for the post-mortem examinations had managed to carry out autopsies on most of the bodies. Unfortunately the remaining bodies were completely destroyed in the fire, crumbling when touched, and thus they were unable to retain all of the physical evidence. A doctor involved in the post-mortem examinations suggested to [Sky News](#) that these individuals had been injured in graphic ways conducive to death and indicated that this could have happened before their bodies were burned. [Myanmar Now](#) also reports that laboratory analysis could not determine if the victims were burned alive, or burned after death. However, the laboratory analysis did confirm that perforated wounds were present on some of the bodies. Due to the state of the bodies it cannot be determined if these wounds were caused by bullets or sharp objects. The use of fire could have been intentional to obscure the alleged graphic nature of the deaths of these individuals, the individuals' identities, or information linking the culprits with the victims.

Identifying victims has been a difficult task as many of the bodies were burned beyond recognition. Twenty-six of the victims were identified as male, while six were determined to be female, including a female child - who would have been between the ages of 10 and 15,

according to [Myanmar Now](#). Within a week of the massacre, 42 people were reported to have gone missing around the time of the incident; however it has not been possible to identify these individuals amongst the bodies. Families have had to match individuals with vehicles found at the scene. One such victim alleged by [Myanmar Now](#) was Bu Reh, whose wife confirmed that a tractor found destroyed in the fire was the one that her husband had been driving when he left their home at around 0700 that morning; he never returned. Additionally, Ko Peter, whose name had been changed for anonymity reasons, [reportedly](#) left his home in a rented white Honda CR-V. When he did not return, and photos were uploaded of the vehicles, the owner confirmed that the licence plate matched that of the white Honda CR-V he had rented to Ko Peter.

Regardless of why fire was used in this case, it reflects a pattern of behaviour in different areas in Myanmar, where individuals are subjected to cremation during or after their deaths. Since the coup in 2021, multiple cases of burnt bodies have been collected and analysed by Myanmar Witness. Some of these have their own individual reports (see: [Verification of burned bodies in Sagaing](#)) while other reports cover particular regions (see: *North-West Report, forthcoming*) Additional reports are still yet to be, or unable to be, fully verified by Myanmar Witness.

Military Involvement?

Myanmar Witness has identified two different drone-filmed videos that give an overview of the scene, provide specific details about what happened, and also indicate who could be implicated.

The first piece of drone footage was filmed as all the vehicles in this area were still on fire. This video of the fires, observed from the sky, appears to capture individuals moving away from fires (Figure 15). This was some of the earliest footage of the fires that Myanmar Witness was able to chronolocate, occurring at around 1130-1200 local time.¹ This could support the theory that these individuals were responsible for the fires, or were in close proximity to the fires when they were set alight.

¹ It should be noted that the ground not being completely flat in this location can make the shadow chronolocation methods slightly less accurate.



Figure 15: Drone footage that appears to show individuals walking from the scene of the fire at around 1130.

The individuals in the drone footage were walking along a footpath that leads in the direction of the LIB military bases identified by Myanmar Witness, this could provide additional credence to claims made in the National Unity Government (NUG) and Karenni State Consultative Council (KSCC) press conference, which stated that the LIB 531 were involved in this incident. These military facilities are around 2.7km (531 LIB) and 2.5km (428 LIB) away from the incident respectively (Figure 16).



Figure 16: Demonstrating the direction individuals moved away from the fire site on 24 December 2021 in relation to the location of LIB 531 and LIB 428 military bases. Individuals were following a footpath which leads in the direction of the military bases. It's claimed the LIB 531 were involved in these killings by local outlets.

On 21 February 2022, the European Union [sanctioned](#) two individuals in connection with the murder of civilians in Moso on 24 December 2021. The first is Brigadier General Ni Lin Aung, In his position as Commander of the Eastern Command of the Myanmar Armed Force, Brigadier General Ni Lin Aung directly commanded the units in the State of Kayah, including those responsible for the incident on 24 December 2021.

The second individual sanctioned by the EU in 2022 in connection with the 24 December 2022 incident is Lieutenant General Aung Zaw Aye. As Commander of the Bureau of Special Operations 2, Lt. Gen. Aung Zaw Aye also had command responsibilities of the aforementioned Eastern Command. Both units suspected in this case, LIB531 and LIB 428, are under the eastern command.

Border Guard Forces Found

[Khit Thit Media](#) reported that four Border Guard Force (BGF) members, who were acting as negotiators between the military and captured civilians, were shot in the head in Hpruso (ဖရူဆို) on the same day as the individuals were burned in the vehicles. According to the

[Myanmar Peace Monitor](#) the BGF is a regular military force and has a military structure like the Myanmar Army. The Myanmar army is in total control over the activities of the BGF and they work together during military operations. BGF battalion commanders are allowed to use heavy weapons like mortars but can only patrol in their active area, whereas a Myanmar

army battalion can be deployed freely. Khit Thit Media claims these individuals were negotiating for the release of the individuals who were later killed, before they themselves were killed by the Myanmar military.

UGC collected by Myanmar Witness appears to show individuals, alleged to be the BGF members, found in a dipped area of earth. Their bodies were lifted out by [Demoso Township PDFs](#). The [KNDF](#) uploaded images of this scene which show that these individuals bear badges of the Myanmar flag on their uniforms and appear to have their hands tied with rope. Most of the images appear to show injuries to the head and face consistent with claims that members of the BGF were shot. The bodies also appear to be next to a bottle of brake fluid, and children's clothes are allegedly pictured close to the scene (Figure 17).



Figure 17: Uninformed individuals alleged to be the BGF members who were shot lie with what looks like rope tied behind their backs, close to a bottle of brake fluid.

Myanmar government authorities have also answered claims about these BGF members. They claim that “...some PDFs sought help from the BGF camp. Four BGF in civilian suits followed them. Then, they were killed [with] hands tied behind their back. When they left the camp, they wore civilian suits. When their dead bodies were found, they wore BGF uniforms.” This assertion is quite vague, however the Myanmar government appears to imply that the PDF were involved in their deaths. Additionally, it is unclear if these claims suggest that they were dressed up and hands tied behind their backs at some point before or after they were killed. In line with the Government's statement, the [Global New Light of Myanmar](#) (GNLM) reported that the BGF deaths were caused by the PDF members who had last been seen requesting their assistance. The GNLM suggest that their deaths represent an attempt to instigate tensions between BGF and the military by framing the military for the incidents in

question. They do not appear to deny that those found were BGF members and both sides dispute who perpetrated the act.

Conclusions

Open-source analysis conducted by Myanmar Witness has identified the location in which bodies were set on fire within trucks on 24 December 2021. These coordinates were identified through a comparative analysis of the UGC associated with the incident, alongside satellite imagery and social media posts from the location. The death of these individuals, in particular the burning of their bodies, reflects a worrying trend that Myanmar Witness has identified within Myanmar. This is one incident of many where multiple killings occurred and bodies were burned which has been attributed to the military on social media and through news outlets.

Myanmar Witness was able to verify the location of two military bases, LIB 531 and 428, in close proximity to the identified location of the burned bodies. Furthermore, UGC drone footage showed individuals leaving the area after the fire was set, heading north-east of the location, in a similar direction to the eastern location of LIB 531. Despite this, Myanmar Witness cannot verify that these individuals are members of the military, nor place responsibility for the fires on these individuals. However, their presence in the area is of note considering the time attributed to the footage, 1130-1200 local time, which is earlier than any of the other footage identified. This suggests the footage was taken within a close timeframe of the incident occurring.

During the investigation, Myanmar Witness also analysed images of deceased individuals with hands tied, alleged to be BGF, in connection with claims that four BGF had been killed by the military in Hpruso (ဟပြုဆို). This claim itself cannot be verified as the UGC contains non-descript surroundings; thus, the images cannot be tied to a particular time or location. However, the images do appear to show deceased individuals with their hands tied.

For more information on the burning of bodies within Myanmar, see the following reports:

- [Verification of burned bodies in Sagaing](#)
- North-West Report (*forthcoming*)

List of Abbreviations

- Border Guard Forces - BGF
- Fire Information and Resource Management System - FIRMS
- Global New Light of Myanmar - GNLM
- Internally Displaced Peoples - IDPs
- Karenni National Defence Forces - KNDF
- Karenni National Progressive Party - KNPP
- Karenni State Consultative Council - KSCC
- Light Infantry Battalion - LIB
- People's Defence Force - PDF
- Radio Free Asia - RFA
- Security Administrative Council - SAC
- National Unity Government - NUG
- User Generated Content - UGC