

Children killed, religious buildings destroyed

Resurgence of violence in Moe Bye

REPORT BY MYANMAR WITNESS, 18 January 2023

Key Event Details

- **Location of Incident:**
 - Hpar Lai Nang Pei (ဖါလိုင်နန်းပဲ) (also known as Warisu Palai (ဝါရီဆူးပလိုင်)) [19.720360, 97.094048] and Moe Bye town (မိုးဗွဲမြို့) (also spelt Moebye or Moby), Pekon Township (ဖယ်ခုံမြို့နယ်), southern Shan state (ရှမ်းပြည်နယ်တောင်ပိုင်း) [19.744369, 97.093033].
- **Date/Time of Incidents:** Multiple dates
 - Armed clashes: 8-12 September 2022
 - Attack on the Pagoda: 16 September 2022
- **Alleged Perpetrator(s) and/or Involvement:**
 - State Administration Council (SAC)
 - People's Defence Force (PDF)
 - Karenni National Defence Forces (KNDF)
 - Karenni Revolutionary Union (KRU)
 - Urban Revolutionary Front (URF)
 - Karenni Generation Z (KGZ)
- **Myanmar Witness' Conclusions:**
 - Clashes in Moe Bye lasted for five consecutive days and led to the destruction of residential, commercial and public structures and allegedly the death of a child.
 - SAC troops appear to have occupied Mary Mother of God church (ဘုရား၏သန့်ရှင်းသော မယ်တော်ဘုရားကျောင်း).
 - Myanmar Witness has verified the presence of Chinese made K-8 fighter jets, which were spotted above the town on several occasions.
 - At least four people, including two children, were allegedly killed as shells hit the Mwedaw Pagoda (မွေတော်ဘုရား) on 16 September 2022.

Executive Summary

Moe Bye (မိုးဗြဲမြို့) has been a site of frequent clashes since the February 2021 Coup. Following the deaths of up to 20 SAC troops in nearby Warisu Palai village (ဝါရီဆူးပလိုင်), southern Shan state (ရှမ်းပြည်နယ်တောင်ပိုင်း), on the 8 September 2022, the SAC launched an attack on Moe Bye town.

This investigation has looked at clashes between the SAC troops and local defence forces from 8-16 September 2022. Myanmar Witness verified footage showing the widespread destruction of the town, including civilian properties, the library, the market and sites of worship. Additionally, Myanmar Witness has investigated claims of both civilian and military casualties and verified the presence of Chinese made K-8 fighter jets in the area.

Heavy fighting near the Mary Mother of God church and the death of a child were reported on 9 September 2022. Myanmar Witness was unable to verify the time or location of the child's death, however identified multiple pieces of user-generated content (UGC) showing the child at a medical facility operated by the Moby PDF Rescue Team (MPRT). By the time the SAC temporarily withdrew on 12 September 2022, over 100 buildings were reportedly destroyed, up to 60 SAC soldiers killed and 3 local defence fighters killed, alongside several civilian casualties.

SAC troops allegedly stationed themselves in the Mary Mother of God Church (ဘုရား၏သန့်ရှင်းသော မယ်တော်ဘုရားကျောင်း). Myanmar Witness has identified and geolocated multiple pieces of UGC which indicates that it might have been the epicentre of the fighting. Footage shows the destruction to the church's compound, including bullet holes, blood stains, broken windows, barricades and ammunition. Additionally Myanmar Witness has verified footage of local defence forces firing towards the church. Images of deceased SAC soldiers were unable to be fully verified, however, due to a range of UGC Myanmar Witness believes that the images were taken in the church's compound.

On 16 September 2022, the Mwedaw Pagoda (မွေတော်ဘုရား) which was housing people sheltering from the fighting, was allegedly hit with heavy artillery. Four people, including two minors were reportedly killed. Myanmar Witness was able to geolocate imagery showing multiple sites of impact, as well as blood stains. Myanmar Witness also analysed imagery of the deceased children. According to a member of the rescue team quoted by [Myanmar Now](#), the two killed minors were sisters aged 7 and 10.

Myanmar Witness will continue to monitor events such as these in Moe Bye, as clashes between armed groups put civilian lives at risk.

[Warning: Graphic] This report contains graphic information.

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Background and Context

Since the February 2021 coup, the Myanmar military have conducted regular ground and air attacks in civilian areas. Moe Bye town has suffered from multiple previous attacks due to its strategic location. The town is located a few kilometres south of the Moe Bye dam, 15 kilometres to the west of Loikaw and 100 kilometres east of Naypyidaw.

In May 2021, [The Irrawaddy](#) reported that the PDF had captured Moe Bye police station and set it on fire. This led to fighting between PDF and SAC which [allegedly](#) lasted around four hours and resulted in the death of up to 20 SAC soldiers and a member of the Karenni People’s Defense Force (KPDF).

Throughout 2022, there were multiple clashes in Moe Bye. For example, in February 2022, clashes were reported in the town after hundreds of SAC troops entered, according to [Myanmar Now](#). On 18 February, [Myanmar Now](#) reported that at least seven civilians were injured by SAC attacks which used heavy weaponry. Quoting a MBPDF spokesperson, [Myanmar Now](#) reported that the SAC carried out airstrikes against the town.

Similarly, on 18 July 2022, [The Irrawaddy](#) reported that SAC troops allegedly entered the town and occupied multiple buildings, including a church. According to the [MBPDF](#), a civilian was injured and a house burned down before the SAC troops left two days later.

Since the Coup, Moe Bye has been a site of frequent clashes. The clashes which took place in September 2022 represent another flashpoint in the ongoing conflict.

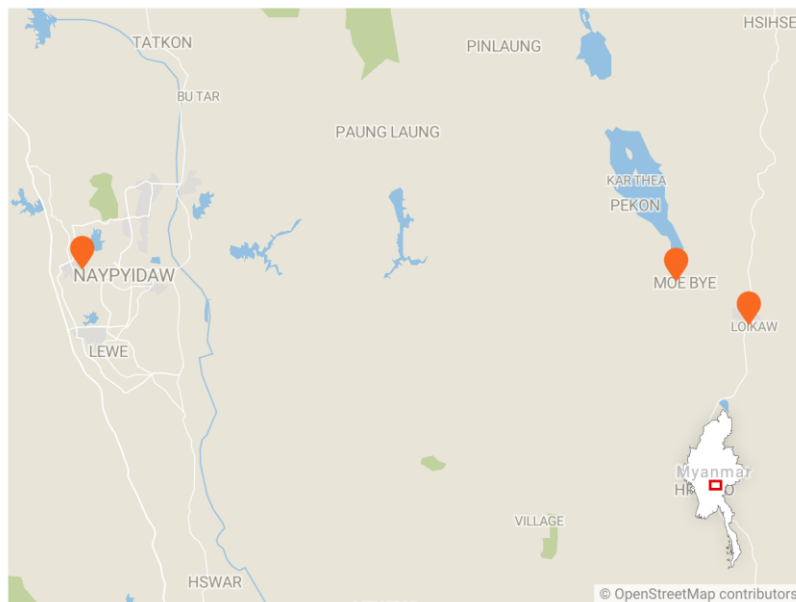
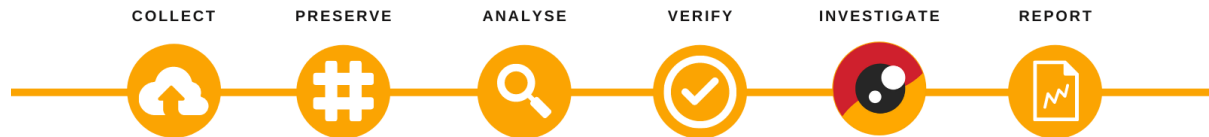


Figure 1: A localised map of Moe Bye (မိုးဖြူမြို့) [19.744369, 97.093033], Loikaw (လွိုင်ကော်) [19.674081, 97.211209] and Naypyidaw (နေပြည်တော်) [19.763289, 96.078507] (map created using Datawrapper).

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.



Myanmar Witness applies a four-tier classification system to describe the extent to which footage has been independently verified by Myanmar Witness. This is as follows:

- **Fully verified:** Footage independently geolocated and chronolocated by Myanmar Witness.
- **Verified:** Footage has been geolocated by Myanmar Witness. Other sources concur on the time and date of the footage, with no evidence following to suggest that the footage was taken earlier or later. However, it has not been possible for Myanmar Witness to independently chrono-locate the footage.
- **Unverified / Under investigation:** Myanmar Witness has not been able to geolocate or chronolocate footage at the present time.
- **Inauthentic:** The geolocation and chronolocation process has shown the location or timing of the footage to be inaccurate.

For the avoidance of doubt, this verification system only refers to Myanmar Witness' ability to independently geolocate or chronolocate footage. Incidents marked as unverified may still be substantiated by multiple eyewitness reports. Sources are cross-referenced in this report to indicate where this is the case.

This report contains images showing how footage has been geolocated. In these images, white lines are used to represent the left and right arcs of vision. Coloured boxes show how landmarks or distinguishing details in each piece of footage or data correspond with each other. 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. Geolocations are cross-checked and peer-reviewed before they are credited as verified.

Chronolocation is typically conducted by analysing UGC timestamps to determine hard end limits for the possible time frame. This is 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. Chronolocation is included as specifically as possible without incorrectly attributing time in order to account for limitations with some of these methods.

If dealing with unverified information, such as witness testimony or of outside reporting, Myanmar Witness has made known that these inclusions are claims and have not been independently verified by Myanmar Witness. Following ethical standards, Myanmar Witness has obscured identifying information about individuals involved, censored private information and images where appropriate, removed links to private individual accounts and archived said information securely. Where appropriate, Myanmar Witness has also blurred or excluded graphic imagery.

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 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 pro and anti-regime news and social media.

Due to a lack of user-generated content (UGC), verification of the exact time, and the number of casualties and injured people cannot be confirmed; thus, a range of reported numbers is used. Limited cell phone use and connectivity issues in the region could have contributed to the limited speed, quality and quantity of content. While there was footage from the clashes, there is no footage of the shelling attack itself, only the aftermath. As information was not always shared immediately during or after the clashes, Myanmar Witness had to monitor social media channels in order to gather relevant information on the attacks in Moe Bye. This also limited chronolocation as UGC was not uploaded during the incidents and geolocated images and videos shared days later provided no timestamps.

The final date for data collection was 6 November 2022. However, Myanmar Witness will continue monitoring the situation in Moe Bye in order to gain more information on these events.

Timeline

SEPTEMBER 2022 MOE BYE KEY EVENTS

9 SEPTEMBER 2022

In a status update released by KNDF, it was said that the SAC troops were stationed in a church, later identified as Mary Mother of God church (ဘုရား၏သန္ဓ်ရှင်းသော မယ်တော်ဘုရား ကျောင်း) [19.740249, 97.090073]. A child was reportedly killed as a result of a heavy weaponry impact in ward 3.

11 SEPTEMBER 2022

Continued clashes in the town. Images posted by the KNDF showed deceased SAC troops, likely located by a building near Mother Mary of God church.

15 SEPTEMBER 2022

MBPDF warned the citizens of Moe Bye of a possible movement of SAC troops towards Moe Bye.

8 SEPTEMBER 2022

Members of MBPDF, KA, KNDF and other groups reportedly attacked a column of SAC troops around 0900 in Warisu Palai (ဝါရီဆူးပလိုင်). Up to 20 troops from the 422 Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) were allegedly killed, leading to broad clashes in Moe Bye (မိုးဗြဲမြို့).

10 SEPTEMBER 2022

Continued clashes in the town. Images posted by Moby News presented the destruction of civilian properties in the town.

12 SEPTEMBER 2022

The SAC reportedly retreated from Moe Bye. Up to 100 structures were destroyed during the clashes, according to PKPF via Myanmar Now.

16 SEPTEMBER 2022

Heavy weaponry hit Mwedaw pagoda (မွေတော်ဘုရား)[19.738460, 97.095310], where people were seeking shelter, during the early morning. The pagoda suffered at least three hits, resulting the death of four people, including two sisters and up to 13 others injured.

The lead up to the clashes in Moe Bye

The clashes in Moe Bye started on 8 September 2022, [allegedly](#) around 0900, as members of PDF, KNDF, and other local armed groups - allegedly the Karenni Revolutionary Union (KRU) and the Urban Revolutionary Front (URF) - attacked SAC troops in Warisu Palai village (ဝါရီဆူးပလိုင်), according to [Myanmar Now](#). Warisu Palai village, also known as Hpar Lai Nang Pei (ဖါလိုင်နန်းပဲ), is located in Pekon township, Shan state and is less than three kilometres from Moe Bye. The troops were reportedly members of the 422 Light Infantry Battalion (LIB), a battalion located in Moe Bye's vicinity and operating under the 66 Light Infantry Division (LID). Allegedly, up to 20 SAC personnel were killed in the attack.

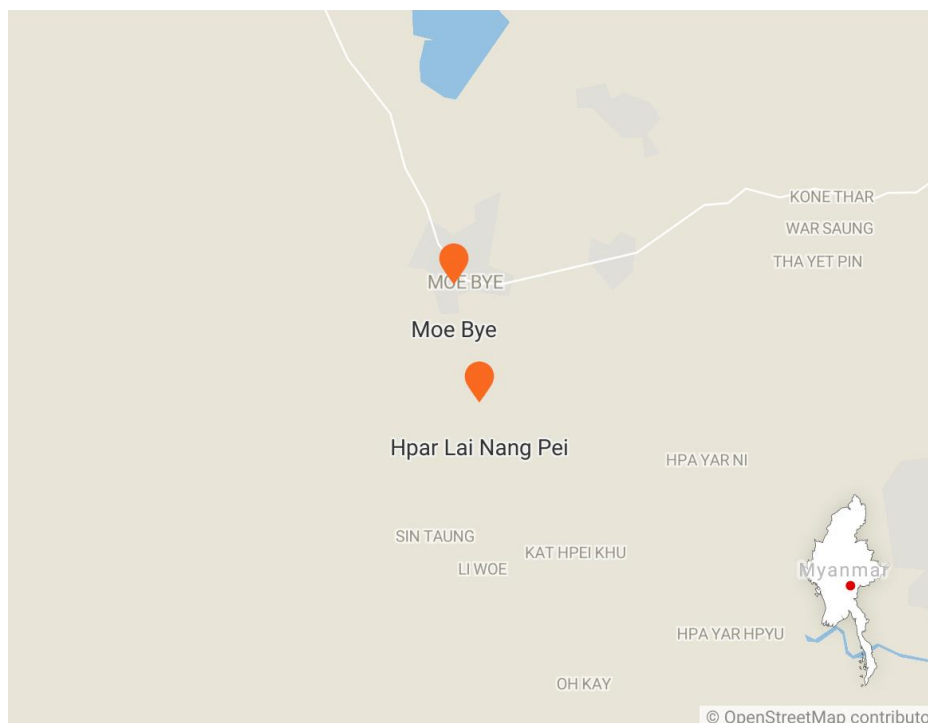


Figure 2: A localised map of Moe Bye (မိုးဗြဲမြို့) [19.744369, 97.093033] and Hpar Lai Nang Pei (ဖါလိုင်နန်းပဲ) (also known as Warisu Palai (ဝါရီဆူးပလိုင်)) [19.720360, 97.094048] in Shan state. (Map created using Datawrapper).

On the same day, [Khit Thit Media](#) released images of SAC casualties and equipment that was seized by the local forces, including the MBPDF and KNDF. Myanmar Witness was not able to geolocate or chronolocate the images; however, the timestamp on one of the included images states it was taken at 1203, 8 September 2022. This aligns with the reported timeline of the events.



Figure 3: The bodies of SAC troops who were allegedly killed during Moe Bye's (မိုးဗွဲဗွဲ) battle on 8 September 2022 (Source: [Khit Thit Media](#)).

The clashes in Moe Bye

9 September 2022

The 8 September 2022 attack initiated clashes the next day between various local armed groups (including PDF and KNDF forces) and SAC troops, which lasted the majority of the day, according to the [KNDF](#). Allegedly, SAC troops were [stationed](#) in the Mary Mother of God church in the 3rd ward and conducted [airstrikes](#) in the area. An image of a jet was posted on [facebook](#) alongside these claims.

Victims

Reports of casualties were not available immediately after the fighting began. By the evening of 9 September 2022, multiple sources reported the death of a minor after he was injured by an alleged SAC fired [heavy weapon](#) the [previous night](#). Myanmar Witness collected and analysed footage associated with this claim, but was not able to determine the location and time of the event. Still, after reviewing several posts shared on this day, Myanmar Witness believes that the event likely occurred in Moe Bye during the days of the fighting.

In a video posted on 9 September 2022 by [MBPDF Branch Eagle](#), the child was carried by men in an unidentifiable uniform, allegedly to a medical facility operated by Moby PDF Rescue Team (MPRT). The child appeared to be lying on a green mat, covered almost completely with a blanket. Another image from the rescue provided more details of the child's injuries; his shirt looked stained with blood and a deep injury was visible on his left hand.



Figure 4: Image of the child who was allegedly injured in Moe Bye (မိုးဗွယ်), on 8 September 2022, but was later claimed to be pronounced dead (Source: [Free Burma Rangers](#)).

Analysis of the imagery of the facility where the child was treated matches a facility seen in multiple images that were uploaded by MPRT. Figure 5 compares footage of the two facilities, verifying their match based on the motorcycle by a side exit (red box) and a black object on the pile of bags (blue box) as well as similar floor and wall colour. In the left image, a casualty is shown appearing to be receiving treatment by a person wearing a vest with the MPRT logo.



Figure 5: The child who was allegedly killed in Moe Bye (မိုးဗွဲမြို့) in a medical facility operated by MPRT, posted on 9 September 2022 (Sources: [Medic Unit - Demoso](#), Additional source redacted for privacy concerns.)

The child was seen undergoing medical examination but eventually he was pronounced dead. The open wound on his left hand was bandaged, as seen in footage showing his mourning [mother](#).



Figure 6: Examination of the child who was allegedly killed in Moe Bye (မိုးဗွဲမြို့) and a relative mourning of his death, posted on 9 September 2022 (Sources: [MPRT](#), [Kayan Generation Youth](#)).

In a report by [Free Burma Rangers](#), the child was identified as Mg Kennedy (Burmese name unknown), aged eight years old. [Shan Human Rights Foundation](#) (SHRF) reported that Mg Kennedy was injured by an SAC-fired mortar shell, which landed in ward three of Moe Bye town. Myanmar Witness observed widespread destruction of properties and indicators of gunfights in the third ward, but was not able to verify the exact location of the impact. For more information on the destruction of ward three, see figures 9 and 10.

10 - 15 September 2022

Destroyed Civilian Property

On 10 September 2022, [Moby News](#) posted images of the destruction. Myanmar Witness investigators geolocated footage showing destruction to civilian property and the town's market. On 12 September 2022, [MBPDF](#) reported that the SAC retreated from Moe Bye. By this time, up to [100 buildings](#) in the town were reportedly destroyed. On 13 September 2022, [Karen's Voice](#) claimed that up to 60 SAC soldiers and 3 members of local armed groups were killed during the clashes. Myanmar Witness geolocated several images from reports of clashes in Moe Bye, which indicate the broad scale of the destruction.



Figure 7: Claimed damage to a civilian building geolocated by Myanmar Witness to Moe Bye (မိုးဗွယ်) [19.746133, 97.090071] (Source: [Moby News](#)).



Figure 8: Damage to stand in Moebye’s market, geolocated by Myanmar Witness to 19.745289, 97.093046 (Source: [Moby News](#)).

A [video](#) from Moe Bye, originally shared on facebook and later shared in lower-resolution on youtube, claimed to be from 9 September 2022, showed the attempted rescue of a wounded, unidentified local fighter. Myanmar Witness geolocated the casualty to 19.740661, 97.088343. At the start of the video, the Pwe Kone library (ward 3) is visible and does not appear to have any significant damage.



Figure 9: The library of Pwe Kone ward 3 in Moe Bye (မိုးဗွဲမြို့) before it was destroyed (Source: screenshot from the original video, source redacted for privacy concerns. Additional, lower-resolution imagery can be found here: [Karenni Land Research](#)).

Footage published after the SAC retreat documents the same building from multiple angles. A massive crater in the ground, less than five metres from the library, signals that the building may have been destroyed by a heavy weapon.



Figure 10: Right: Destruction of a library in Moebye’s Pwe Kone ward 3, geolocated by Myanmar Witness to 19.741003, 97.088132 (Source: [Karenni’s Voice](#)). Left: further imagery of the library (Source: [Karenni’s Voice](#)).

The Mary Mother of God Church

The majority of the geolocations conducted by Myanmar Witness during this investigation were focused at a location near the Mary Mother of God church (ဘုရား၏သန့်ရှင်းသော မယ်တော်ဘုရားကျောင်း), suggesting it could have been the epicenter of the clashes. Karenni's voice released imagery showing Mary Mother of God church and its surroundings, which information suggests had been occupied by SAC troops.



Figure 11: The interior of the church, identified by Myanmar Witness as Mary Mother of God church (ဘုရား၏သန့်ရှင်းသော မယ်တော်ဘုရားကျောင်း) in Moe Bye (မိုးဖြဲမြို့) [19.740249, 97.090073] (source: [Karenni's Voice](#)).



Figure 12: Destruction in Moe Bye (မိုးဖြဲမြို့) [19.740910, 97.088167]. The tower of Mary Mother of God church (ဘုရား၏သန့်ရှင်းသော မယ်တော်ဘုရားကျောင်း) seen in the back, indicating the short distance from the church. (Source: [MPA](#)).

On 9 September 2022, the second day of the fighting, [KNDF](#) reported that SAC troops were occupying Mary Mother of God church in Moe Bye. This is not the first time that SAC troops occupied this church; in July 2022, [MBPDF](#) announced that SAC troops occupied it for two days. The July announcement provided multiple images from the town, including images of the church and adjacent buildings. This information has allowed investigators to compare the destruction of the church in July, to September. In July, potential bullet holes and broken windows were seen in the image of the church front (figure 13, left). Following the SAC's retreat from the church on 12 September, [images](#) and [additional footage](#) posted to social media, the church front seemed drastically more damaged than in July. The facade has more bullet holes and broken windows (figure 13, right).



Figure 13: Mary Mother of God church (ဘုရား၏သန့်ရှင်းသော မယ်တော်ဘုရားကျောင်း) in Moebye in July 2022 (left) and September 2022 (right) showing potential bullet holes and shrapnel on its exterior. (Sources: [MBPDF](#), [Karenni's Voice](#)).

Footage from inside the Mary Mother of God church provided more details of the events during the clashes. SAC uniforms with 66 Light Infantry Division (LID) patches were visible on benches, along with boxes of bullets and cooking equipment. The presence of cooking equipment lends support to the claim that the SAC used this location as a temporary base. Markings that appeared to be blood stains were also visible inside the church in footage shared by the [Myanmar Pressphoto Agency \(MPA\)](#).



Figure 14: Uniform of SAC 66 LID and blood stains in Mary Mother of God church (ဘုရား၏သန့်ရှင်းသော မယ်တော်ဘုရားကျောင်း) in Moebye (မိုးဗြဲမြို့), posted on 13 September 2022 (Sources: [JFK Page 3](#), [MPA](#)).

An image of a building barricaded with tables and benches was posted by [JFK](#) on 13 September 2022. The building was geolocated to inside the perimeter of the Mary Mother of God church. The barricades, possible bullet holes (identified due to their size and shape) across the building's facade and the case of a 40mm rifle grenade, signal that the building was used during the clashes.



Figure 15: Barricaded building in Moe Bye (မိုးဗြဲမြို့) [19.740617, 97.091802], shared online on 13 September 2022 (Source: [JFK Page 3](#)).

Video footage uploaded to Youtube on 13 September (however date unconfirmed) geolocated by Myanmar Witness, showed local armed groups firing towards Mary Mother of God church and buildings in its vicinity. The videos provide a better understanding of the locations of the different actors during the clashes. [Karenni Generation Z \(KGZ\)](#) and [MBPDF](#) members were filmed inside a civilian building by Mary Mother of God church main gate, firing towards the church, which was believed to be occupied by the SAC.

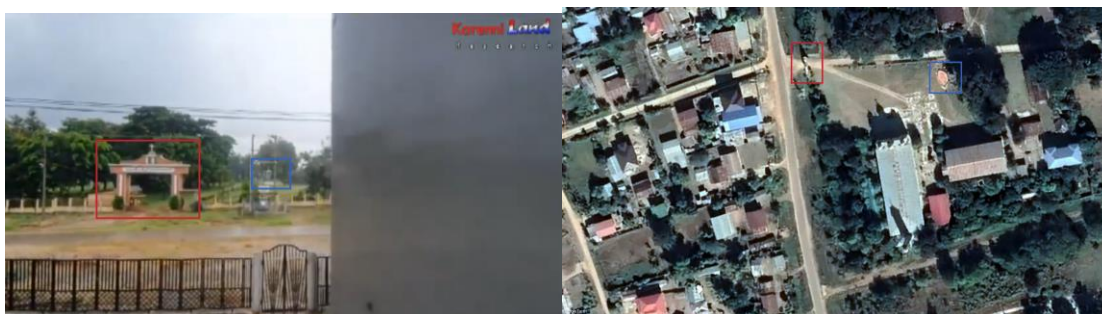


Figure 16: Geolocation of KGZ firing position near Mary Mother of God church (ဘုရား၏သန့်ရှင်းသော မယ်တော်ဘုရားကျောင်း) in Moebye (မိုးဗြဲမြို့) [19.740648, 97.089285] (Source: [Karenni Land Research](#)).

Locating deceased SAC troops

On 11 September 2022, images of deceased SAC troops were posted by the [KNDF-B03](#) (figure 17). Despite the difficulties to precisely geolocate the images, [multiple sources](#) of UGC, uploaded in September 2022, led Myanmar Witness to the conclusion that the images are likely to be from Moe Bye. A possible location of the images is by a building in the Mary Mother of God church perimeter [19.741219, 97.091990] (figure 18).



Figure 17: Corpses of SAC troops, claimed to be in Moe Bye (မိုးဗွယ်), posted on 11 September 2022 (source: [KNDF-B03](#)).

To come to this conclusion, Myanmar Witness has analysed a range of sources. While each piece of information alone cannot confirm the location, by pulling multiple pieces of information together this location appears plausible.



Figure 18: Annotated Google Earth Map showing the possible location of the deceased SAC troops, as well as other locations of interest, geolocated by Myanmar Witness.

For example, a [video](#) posted originally on 12 September 2022 (original high-resolution video redacted for privacy concerns, lower-resolution video uploaded on 14 September 2022 included), shows the inside of the building that Myanmar Witness believes the SAC bodies were found outside (building number 1 in figure 18). It shows Christian figures inside the building, suggesting it could be a place of worship. The video also shows the scale of destruction, possible blood stains and military equipment inside the building. Due to the presence of military equipment inside and the scale of the damage, it is likely that this building was occupied by SAC prior to their retreat. Additionally, a view from outside the window reveals an unexploded mortar in the ground, the same mortar was later retrieved by an allegedly KNDF member in a [video](#) posted on 15 September 2022 (location identified in figure 18).



Figure 19: Unexploded mortar geolocated by Myanmar Witness to 19.741445, 97.091913 (Source redacted for privacy concerns. Additional, lower-resolution imagery can be found here: [Karenni Land Research](#)).

The KNDF-B03 published a [video](#) on 12 September 2022, showing an alleged grenade thrown at 'building 1' by a KNDF member. Additionally, the location where the video was filmed was geolocated by Myanmar Witness to a structure north of 'building 1' identified above as 'building 2' (see figure 18). Additional [video](#) released by KNDF-B03, posted on 23 September 2022, showed KNDF members stationed in the same structure firing towards the building where the Myanmar Witness believes the bodies were found (firing position labelled in figure 18). The mortar that is seen in figure 19 is also visible on the right of a still frame from this video, as shown in figure 20 (location also identified in figure 18).



Figure 20: Building 1 in Moe Bye (မိုးဗွဲ) that was allegedly occupied by SAC [19.741318, 97.091943]. Panorama of a video posted on 12 September 2022 (Source: [KNDF-B03](#)).



Figure 21: Geolocation of allegedly KNDF members firing towards the building in Moe Bye (မိုးဗွဲ) [19.741318, 97.091943] (Source: Left: [KNDF-B03](#), right: redacted for privacy concerns. Additional, lower-resolution imagery can be found here: [Karen Land Research](#)).

The videos provided visualisation of the building’s exterior. The images of the deceased SAC troops were taken near a building with similar characteristics to building 1 as identified above. Although Myanmar Witness cannot fully verify that this was the location of the bodies, there are a number of factors which could indicate that this was the location:

- Two parallel brick walls are visible in the back of one of the images, which look similar to the brick walls seen at the east side of ‘building 1’ that was allegedly occupied by the SAC (see figure 22).
- The images may have been taken from the south side of the building as the windowsill seems to be faded red, in comparison to other walls of the building, possibly due to prolonged exposure to the sun.

- A concrete surface with a draining canal surrounding the building is seen in the footage of the deceased troops, a similarly looking surface is seen in the front of building 1 (see figure 22).
- The design of a chair that was found by the corpses is identical to the design of chairs inside 'building 1' as well (see figure 23).



Figure 22: Similar brick walls and concrete surface seen at the location of SAC troops corpses and by building 1 that was allegedly occupied by them in Moe Bye (မိုးဗွဲဗွဲ) [19.741318, 97.091943] (Source: Left: [KNDF-B03](#), right: redacted for privacy concerns. Additional, lower-resolution imagery can be found here: [Karenni Land Research](#)).



Figure 23: Identical chairs by the corpses and inside 'building 1' that was allegedly occupied by SAC in Moe Bye (မိုးဗွဲဗွဲ) [19.741318, 97.091943] (Source: Left: [KNDF-B03](#), right: redacted for privacy concerns. Additional, lower-resolution imagery can be found here: [Karenni Land Research](#)).

Mwedaw Pagoda attack (မွေတော်ဘုန်းကြီးကျောင်း)

16 September 2022

There were no reports of clashes in the days following the SAC's retreat. However, on the afternoon of 15 September 2022, [MBPDF](#) claimed that SAC troops were making their way back towards Moe Bye. On the morning of 16 September 2022, reportedly around [0600](#), the SAC

allegedly fired heavy weapons at the Moe Bye Mwedaw Pagoda (မွေတော်ဘုန်းကြီးကျောင်း) [19.738460, 97.095310]. The pagoda was [reportedly](#) hosting people seeking shelter from the fighting.



Figure 24: Location map of Mary Mother of God church (ဘုရား၏သန့်ရှင်းသော မယ်တော်ဘုရားကျောင်း) [19.740249, 97.090073] and Mwedaw Pagoda (မွေတော်ဘုန်းကြီးကျောင်း) [19.738460, 97.095310] in Moe Bye (မိုးဖြူမြို့). (Map created using Datawrapper).



Figure 25: Damage to a building, geolocated by Myanmar Witness to Mwedaw Pagoda (မေတ္တော်ဘုရား) 19.738330, 97.095503 (Source: [Khit Thit Media](#)).

Myanmar Witness investigators analysed UGC and identified three impact areas in the Mwedaw pagoda (see figure 26). Footage collected by Myanmar Witness showed that the building in the centre of the Mwedaw pagoda appeared to have suffered two hits, penetrating the ceiling by the pagoda's entrance. The hits were geolocated by Myanmar Witness to the southern section of the east side of the building. The shells have pierced the roof, causing destruction inside the building. The southern and western external walls of the building were bearing signs of potential bullet holes, indicating the direction of the hit.

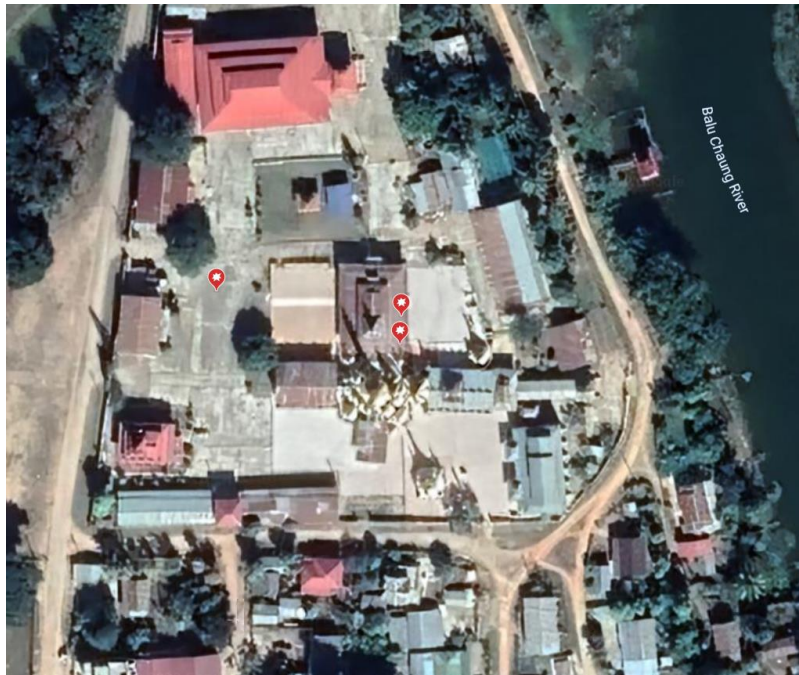


Figure 26: Mapped impact locations in Mwedaw Pagoda (မေတ္တော်ဘုရားကြီးကျောင်း). Created with Google Earth



Figure 27: Destruction of a building in Mwedaw Pagoda (မေတ္တော်ဘုန်းကြီးကျောင်း) compared to a previous image of the building interior (Sources: Left: [People's Spring](#), right: [Linn Hlaing via Google Maps](#)).



Figure 28: Signs of damage on the exterior wall of a building in Mwedaw Pagoda (မေတ္တော်ဘုန်းကြီးကျောင်း) (Source redacted for privacy concerns).

The third hit was recorded as fifty metres to the west of the other impacts, within the pagoda courtyard. UGC showed what are almost certainly multiple large blood puddles, footwear and clothing in the pagoda courtyard. What appears to be large blood stains were seen right by it, clothes soaked and pairs of footwear were inside the puddles. The surrounding surface appeared wet, potentially from a recent rain. However, the dust spread by the impact was dry, indicating the hit marks were caused very recently.



Figure 29: Likely blood stains in Moe Bye Mwedaw Pagoda (မွေတော်ဘုရား) geolocated by Myanmar Witness to 19.738431, 97.095072 (Source: [The Voice of Karenni](#)).



Figure 30: Likely impact marks in Mwedaw Pagoda (မွေတော်ဘုန်းကြီးကျောင်း) courtyard, identified by Myanmar Witness to be located at 19.738431, 97.095072 (Source redacted for privacy concerns).



Figure 32: Geolocation of blood stains in Mwedaw Pagoda (မေတ္တော်ဘုန်းကြီးကျောင်း) (Sources: Top left: [The Voice of Karenni](#); bottom left: [Kayan Generation Youth](#); top right, middle and bottom right images sources redacted for privacy concerns).

A report posted by [SHRF](#) claimed that Moebye town was shelled from both the north and the east during September. Analysis of the footage, conducted by Myanmar Witness, ruled out the possibility that the shelling was carried out from the north due to a lack of evidence showing damage to the north side of the pagoda and strengthened the assessment that the shells were fired from the east due to the appearance of damage to the eastern walls. The SAC's 362 artillery battalion is based 14 kilometres east from the pagoda and could be responsible for the shelling.



Figure 33: Location of 362 artillery battalion and impacts in Mwedaw Pagoda (မွေတော်ဘုန်းကြီးကျောင်း). Created with Google Earth.

The Victims

Four civilians, including two children, were killed and 13 others were injured, according to [Khit Thit Media](#). A number of casualties were seen by the main entrance to the pagoda. The image shows a child being carried by an adult, who was later identified as her father by [Myanmar Now](#). Two additional minors are seen sitting on the ground, one of them appears to be bleeding and the other is supported by a woman, later identified as her mother.



Figure 34: Casualties in Mwedaw Pagoda (မွေတော်ဘုရား) identified by Myanmar Witness to be located at 19.738180, 97.094883 (Source: [Kayan Generation Youth](#)).

Footage of the casualties in the medical facility showed the three girls first seen in figure 33. Despite the presence of medical personnel, two of the girls did not appear to have received medical treatment - their injuries did not show signs of being attended to, while the other young girl seen sitting up in the front of figure 33, received medical treatment. Myanmar Witness concluded that the two girls likely suffered from severe injuries and were pronounced dead upon their arrival to the medical facility, as reported by the [MRT official](#). [Myanmar Now](#) interviewed individuals who claimed to be the two deceased childrens' parents. The sisters had been [sheltering](#) in the pagoda when it was hit.



Figure 35: The casualties from the attack on Mwedaw Pagoda (မွေတော်ဘုန်းကြီးကျောင်း) in a medical facility (Source: [Kayan Generation Youth](#)).

An image of the deceased girls, timestamped at 0742, shows their bodies bandaged at the funeral location (figure 36). Their bodies were still on stretchers which could potentially indicate their recent arrival. The body of another person covered by a blanket is seen on the left side of the image. An additional image, timestamped at 0827, shows the deceased girls inside body bags. Two deceased adults are shown covered by body bags, likely to be the [two adults](#) that were also killed in the shelling of the pagoda.



Figure 36: Timestamped images of the corpses from Mwedaw Pagoda (မွေတော်ဘုန်းကြီးကျောင်း) in the unknown funeral location, posted on 16 September 2022 (Source: [MRT](#)).

Use of jets

During the clashes, multiple sources, including MBPDF and KNDF, claimed that the SAC was using fighter jets to conduct airstrikes in Moe Bye. Myanmar Witness collected and analysed multiple videos of jets that were posted on social media on 9, 10, and 11 of September 2022. A significant number of unique videos were posted online on these days, reportedly related to the events in Moe Bye during the timeframe discussed in this investigation. These videos did not come up in a reverse search, indicating that they had not been posted online previously. While this does not conclusively prove that the videos were taken during the dates of the Moe Bye clashes, it increases the likelihood.

The videos showed jets flying overhead; however, Myanmar Witness could not identify any footage showing the jets employing any ordnance on the town. As a result, it has not been possible to verify whether the jets caused the destruction shown earlier in this report, or merely performed a flyby over the town. Analysis of the UGC by Myanmar Witness revealed the jets were Chinese made K-8 fighter jets, which are only known to be operated in Myanmar by the SAC's Air Force.



Figure 37: SAC K-8 fighter jet in Moebye (source: [JFK Page 3](#)).

Myanmar Witness was able to geolocate several of the videos to Moe Bye using distinctive features visible in the surrounding area, including roofs, advertisements and power lines. For the safety of those creating and sharing this content online, these have been omitted from the report as they revealed the individuals filming the videos, or were taken within property boundaries.

Conclusion

Moe Bye (မိုးဖြူမြို့) has been a site of frequent clashes since the February 2021 Coup. Following the deaths of up to 20 SAC troops in nearby Warisu Palai village (ဝါရီဆူးပင်လိုင်), southern Shan state (ရှမ်းပြည်နယ်တောင်ပိုင်း) on the 8 September 2022, the SAC launched an attack on Moe Bye town.

This investigation has looked at clashes between the SAC troops and local defence forces from 8-16 September 2022. Myanmar Witness verified footage showing the widespread destruction of the town, including civilian properties, the library, the market and sites of worship. Additionally, Myanmar Witness has investigated claims of both civilian and military casualties and verified the presence of Chinese made K-8 fighter jets in the area.

Heavy fighting near the Mary Mother of God church and the death of a child were reported on 9 September 2022. Myanmar Witness was unable to verify the time or location of the child's death, however identified multiple pieces of user-generated content (UGC) showing the child at a

medical facility operated by the Moby PDF Rescue Team (MPRT). By the time the SAC temporarily withdrew on 12 September 2022, over 100 buildings were reportedly destroyed, up to 60 SAC soldiers killed and 3 local defence fighters killed, alongside several civilian casualties.

SAC troops allegedly stationed themselves in the Mary Mother of God Church (ဘုရား၏သန့်ရှင်းသော မယ်တော်ဘုရားကျောင်း). Myanmar Witness has identified and geolocated multiple pieces of UGC which indicates that it might have been the epicentre of the fighting. Footage shows the destruction to the church’s compound, including bullet holes, blood stains, broken windows, barricades and ammunition. Additionally Myanmar Witness has verified footage of local defence forces firing towards the church. Images of deceased SAC soldiers were unable to be fully verified, however, due to a range of UGC Myanmar Witness believes that the images were taken in the church’s compound.

On 16 September 2022, the Mwedaw Pagoda (မွေတော်ဘုရား) which was housing people sheltering from the fighting, was allegedly hit with heavy artillery. Four people, including two minors were reportedly killed. Myanmar Witness was able to geolocate imagery showing multiple sites of impact, as well as blood stains. Myanmar Witness also analysed imagery of the deceased children. According to a member of the rescue team quoted by [Myanmar Now](#), the two killed minors were sisters aged seven and ten.

Myanmar Witness will continue to monitor events such as these in Moe Bye. Clashes between armed groups put civilian lives at risk.

List of Abbreviations

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| ● Internally Displaced Persons | IDPs |
| ● Karenni Generation Z | KGZ |
| ● Karenni National Defence Force | KNDF |
| ● Karenni People’s Defense Force | KPDF |
| ● Karenni Revolutionary Union | KRU |
| ● Light Infantry Battalion | LIB |
| ● Light Infantry Division | LID |
| ● Moebye People’s Defense Force | MBPDF |
| ● Moebye PDF Rescue Team | MPRT |
| ● Myanmar Pressphoto Agency | MPA |
| ● People’s Defence Force | PDF |
| ● Radio Free Asia | RFA |
| ● Shan Human Rights Foundation | SHRF |
| ● State Administration Council | SAC |

- Urban Revolutionary Front
- User-Generated Content

URF
UGC