

## Single Incident Investigation

# The Tabayin School Attack: How children were killed while they learnt

REPORT BY MYANMAR WITNESS, 31 Oct 2022

## Key Event Details

- **Location of Incident:** Let Yet Kone Village (လက်ယက်ကုန်း), Sagaing State, Tabayin Township (also spelt 'Debayin' or 'Depayin') [22.676780, 95.402366]
- **Date/Time of Incident:** 16 September 2022
- **Alleged Perpetrator(s) and/or Involvement:** State Administration Council (SAC) tr
- **Myanmar Witness Conclusions:**
  - At least six children killed and 17 other people injured, including adults, after a SAC airstrike by two Mi-35 helicopters and ground attack led by Mi-17 helicopters. Myanmar Witness has verified S-5 rocket remnants at the scene.
  - Myanmar Witness has geolocated images of the aftermath of the attack to a school in Let Yet Kone Village. Lack of footage has limited the ability to verify the time of the attack or the exact number of casualties.
  - Reports suggest that the SAC took away the deceased for burial and cremation, and detained survivors. Two 15-year-old girls who had been held by the SAC gave statements during a press conference to SAC-affiliated media claiming that SAC were liberating the area from PDF forces.
  - The attack on Tabayin School is part of an emerging trend that shows a pattern of increasing recklessness towards the safety of children, especially around schools.
  - This attack comes at a similar time to the recent politically-motivated mutilation of a teacher. Politically-motivated attacks on schools place children at increasing risk. It is essential that the safety of educational sites is restored and any other attacks are investigated so that those responsible can be held to account.

## Executive Summary

On the afternoon of 16 September 2022 Let Yet Kone village (လက်ယက်ကုန်း), Tabayin Township (ဒီပဲယင်းမြို့နယ်), Sagaing Region (စစ်ကိုင်းတိုင်းဒေသကြီး), was [attacked](#) by two helicopters for approximately one hour. During the attack, a school and monastery were affected. Reports suggest that between [11](#) and [14](#) people were killed, including volunteers<sup>1</sup> at the school and at least [six](#) children. Additional anti-SAC channels reported that seven<sup>2</sup> children were killed. The official number of people either injured or killed has not yet been [confirmed](#).

[Irrawaddy](#) media reported that State Administration Council (SAC) troops arrived at Let Yet Kone village around [1300](#) local time with [four](#) helicopters. It is claimed that two [Mi-35](#) aircrafts [fired](#) at a secondary school in the vicinity of the Maha Dhamaramthi Monastery. Allegedly, around [80 SAC soldiers](#) left the other two helicopters - [Mi-17s](#) - and raided the village, while the other aircrafts attacked. Additional reporting states that between [15](#) and [20 people](#) were taken alive by SAC troops, in addition to the bodies of the child casualties. Their bodies were either [buried or cremated](#) seven miles away in Ye-U township, presumably to destroy evidence of child casualties. Reports state that the injured were [treated](#) at the nearby [Ye-U hospital](#) and some of the injured [reportedly](#) lost limbs.

The SAC [responded](#) to these allegations by accepting the event's occurrence, but alleged that People's Defence Forces (PDF) and members of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) were [stationed](#) in the village, using villagers as [human shields](#). The SAC also [claimed](#) that KIA and PDF forces were moving weapons, and that they discovered and seized mines and explosives from the village during their raid. Two female teenagers also reiterated the SAC's claims in a press conference [report](#) live on a SAC-affiliated media channel before they were returned back to the village. Locals in Let Yet Kone village reportedly [denied](#) the presence of PDF and KIA troops in the area, [stating](#) that the teenagers' statements were forced and full of SAC 'propaganda'.

Sagaing region has experienced intense conflict since the February 2021 coup, with numerous [reports](#) and verified instances of arson and armed [attacks](#) led by the SAC. Myanmar Witness has covered these occurrences in depth in the [Fire Map](#).

Based on open source analysis and the verification of user-generated content (UGC) emanating from this location, Myanmar Witness has determined that it is almost certain the SAC military conducted this attack. This investigation conducted extensive geolocation processes to verify Let Yet Kone village as the location where the incident occurred. Analysis of additional UGC and media reporting was relied upon to ascertain likely casualty figures.

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<sup>1</sup> Source redacted due to privacy concerns.

<sup>2</sup> Source redacted due to privacy concerns.

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## Background and Context

Since the February 2021 coup, the State Administration Council (SAC), led by the Myanmar military, has conducted ground and air attacks in civilian areas. Sagaing region, with its rural towns and villages, has been a main [stage](#) for the post-coup violence. This is well defined in the significant number of arson attacks afflicting villages, many of which have been attributed to the SAC (see Myanmar Witness' report [Civilian Harm: The impact of military operations in North-West Myanmar](#) and [Burning Myanmar](#)). Sagaing has the [highest](#) number of destroyed buildings and homes throughout the country, with large expanses of farmland burned along the way. Of Sagaing's 37 townships, 34 have [reported](#) engaging in the conflict; thousands of civilians have been [displaced](#) due to these attacks.

Tabayin township has a recent history since the February 2021 coup of experiencing violent attacks, likely driven in part by its [alleged](#) position as a resistance stronghold against the SAC. Multiple ethnic armed organisations (EAO) have openly [opposed](#) the February 2021 coup and have conducted their own and collaborative attacks against the SAC military. SAC military troops have used this knowledge as a reason for violent attacks throughout the area, [claiming](#) that the KIA and PDF are terrorists. This has led to reportedly widespread SAC arson attacks and airstrike [campaigns](#) to try to gain a foothold in Sagaing. The SAC has also conducted sporadic internet [blackouts](#) and attempted to [limit](#) humanitarian aid to rural areas. These extra measures are a means of trying to put pressure on resistance forces by harming the local communities where EAO's are located.

On 27 November 2021, [BBC](#) reported that Nyaung Hla village (ညောင်လှ) [22.652769, 95.418113] in Tabayin township was allegedly [set alight](#) and [hit](#) with airstrikes, leaving a [reported](#) five villagers dead and several injured. Claims on [Twitter](#) state that other villages were also hit by airstrikes in Tabayin township around this date in November 2021 by five SAC military Mi-35 helicopters in attacks against PDF forces in the area. More recently, [Radio Free Asia](#) (RFA) reported that Su Tat village (ဆူးတတ်) in Tabayin township was allegedly set on fire by SAC troops between 8-10 August 2022; 500 homes were allegedly [destroyed](#) in this three-day attack and reports suggest that this was the largest [fire](#) to occur in Tabayin township as of August 2022. All of these attacks, specifically the destruction of homes, lead to increased numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs). [AP News](#) has reported the existence of six camps in Tabayin township that accommodate and assist IDPs from the area.

The 16 September 2022 attack on the monastery and school in Let Yet Kone village was not the first attack focused on a school or religious centre in Sagaing region since the February 2021 coup. In March 2022, a monastery in Chaung Yoe (ချောင်းရိုး) [22.88246, 95.40256] Taze township was allegedly [raided](#) and SAC troops interrogated a monk. The monastery and another church were set on fire with claims the attack [resulted](#) in several casualties. On 1 August 2022, around 100 people, including about 60 students, were reportedly [trapped](#) in a school by SAC forces while they attacked by helicopter in Let Pa Kyin village (လက်ပကျင်း) [22.0890007 95.41903687], Myinmu township. Many people were [reportedly](#) shot during this

attack. Locals believe this August attack was due to the school [being](#) a National Unity Government (NUG) and Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) managed school. According to national media, these programmes are [growing](#) in numbers throughout the region due to a lack of SAC control. The SAC [justified](#) all of these attacks by stating that PDF troops were in the area with weapons and supplies, and their aim was to intercept them.

PDF forces have led their own offensive operations against SAC troops with drone attacks. In Khin-U township, Sagaing region on 10 May 2022, [Mandalay Free Press](#) reported that the PDF led a drone attack on SAC troops over a bridge [22.755294, 95.553516], in an attempt to remove the SAC from that area. The [Irrawaddy](#) reported several drone and aerial attacks by PDF and other EAO troops during June 2022, with a large focus in Myaung township, Sagaing region. In Tabayin township, an SAC soldier was allegedly killed and several injured after PDF forces [bombed](#) a SAC checkpoint over a bridge in June 2022. These attacks show that both the SAC and anti-SAC forces are attempting to gain control of the Sagaing region.

## SAC and PDF activity before the Tabayin school attack

The month leading up to the 16 September 2022 attack on Let Yet Kone village showed conflict and clashes throughout nearby townships in Sagaing state. For example, in August 2022, Tabayin, Ye-U (ရေဦးမြို့နယ်), and Ayadaw (အရာတော်မြို့နယ်) townships faced alleged SAC military attacks. Kone Thar village (ကုန်းသာ) [22.322002, 95.202044], Ayadaw township, allegedly faced a helicopter [attack](#) in early August 2022; reports suggest that several people were injured by shooting aimed at monasteries and schools. Kaing Kan village (ကိုင်းကံ) [22.520146, 95.375215] in Tabayin township was allegedly set on [fire](#); 145 houses were reportedly destroyed and seven villagers killed. On 17 August 2022 in Mu Kan village (မူးကမ်း), Tabayin township, a three day [raid](#) allegedly set by SAC troops ended but fire continued to burn until 19 August 2022. According to local defence forces, the SAC troops that [attacked](#) Mu Kan village allegedly were Light Infantry Battalion 376, stationed in Kyauk Taw village (ကျောက်တော), Wuntho township, Sagaing region.

On 7 September 2022, the week before the Let Yet Kone village school attack, Mi-35 helicopters were seen [flying](#) around Tabayin township. On 8 September 2022, Mizzima [reported](#) that SAC forces were attacked by local PDFs in Budalin township, Sagaing region, as the SAC soldiers were travelling from Budalin city to Kutaw village (ကုတ်တော်) Police Station, about 40-50 kilometres southwest from Let Yet Kone village. PDF forces [stated](#) that more than 10 soldiers were allegedly killed during the two hour clash, causing the SAC forces to retreat back to Budalin city. The PDF soldiers allegedly [detonated](#) mines and used heavy and light weaponry on the SAC forces.

Throughout September 2022, there were reports of violent attacks led by both SAC troops and PDF forces in Sagaing state. Villagers and children were reportedly killed in several clashes and raids. Heavy weapons, drone attack and mine detonations were used by PDF forces to attack SAC soldiers, while the SAC troops used ground raids and airstrikes to gain a foothold

in the region As this section has sought to show, the methods and weapons used within the Let Yet Kone school attack were not new; however, the targeting of a school and the resultant death of children should not be ignored.

## 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 a number of 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 are used to show how landmarks or distinguishing details in each piece of footage or data correspond with each other. All footage cited in the report is archived within Myanmar Witness' database. We have not included links to footage, when to do so would compromise an individual(s)' privacy or security.

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.

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.

Limited cell phone use and connectivity issues in the region could have contributed to the limited speed, quality and quantity of content. 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. Additionally, there is no footage during the attack and there was a delay in uploading imagery following the attack. This required Myanmar Witness to wait for further imagery and evidence in order to analyse evidence of the attack on the school. Additionally, chronolocation was unable to be conducted due to no UGC uploaded during the incident and no timestamps on images from shared images and videos online days after.

Due to the lack of footage of the incident, witness statements were used to gain information on the events leading up to, during, and after the attack. Witness statements were reported by news sources and social media posts provided information. However, Myanmar Witness has been unable to verify the witness statements.

The final date for data collection was 28 October 2022. However, Myanmar Witness will continue monitoring the situation in Tabayin in order to gain more information on these events.

## Location Mapping



Figure 1: A mapping of Let Yet Kone village (လက်ယက်ကုန်း) and Namakha (နမခ) located in Sagaing Region (စစ်ကိုင်း). (Map created using Datawrapper).

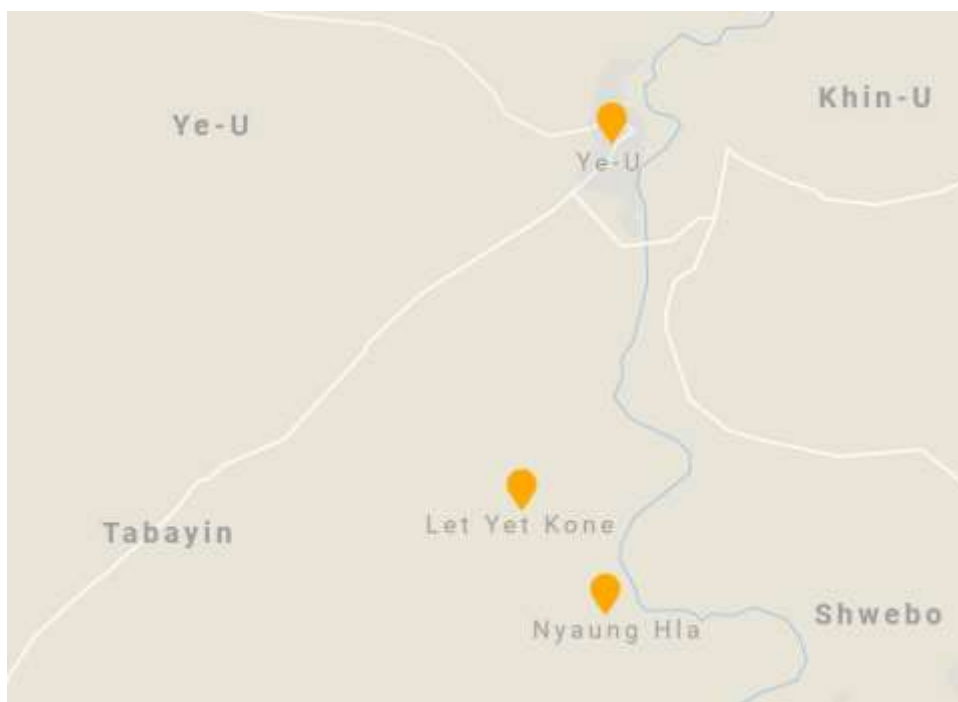


Figure 2: A localised image of Let Yet Kone village (လက်ယက်ကုန်း) in Tabayin Township (ဒီပဲခင်း), bordering Ye-U Township (ရှေ့ဦး). (Map created using Datawrapper).



## Air Attack in Let Yet Kone Village (လက်ယက်ကုန်း)

### Location of the event

Myanmar Witness has geolocated images uploaded to social media by various news agencies which allegedly show a structure that was damaged in the attack, and where children are reported to have, subsequently, died. The image demonstrates damage to the roof of a large structure and was geolocated by Myanmar Witness to Let Yet Kone village (လက်ယက်ကုန်း),

Tabayin Township (ဒီပဲယင်း), at around 22.679376, 95.400381 (Figures 3, 4 and 5).



Figure 3: Image widely shared on social media of a damaged structure at 22.679376, 95.400381, shared online on 17 September 2022 (Source: [Khit Thit Media](#)).



Figure 4: Geolocation of a structure from Figure 3 in Let Yet Kone village (လက်ယက်ကုန်း).



Figure 5: Further Geolocations of structures in Let Yet Kone village.

## Time of the event

As there is no evidence or footage during the actual attack (most footage was taken during the days following the attack, then shared), chronolocation was unable to be conducted for analysis. However, there are multiple social media and news media reports which provide an indication of when this attack took place.

The Sagaing Scout Network (SSN) [announced](#) on their Telegram channel the news of an attack in Let Yet Kone village around 1610 on 16 September 2022, stating that many people had fled the area due to the violence. Prior to this post, there were multiple mentions of Mi-35 and Mi-17 helicopter [sightings](#) in the area of Tabayin and Let Yet Kone, with one post specifying that the Eastern Tabayin region south of Ye-U was under [attack](#) at 1306 on 16 September 2022. This aligned with other online reports, including by [Irrawaddy](#) media and user-generated content from [Facebook](#) and Twitter<sup>3</sup> which claimed that the attack began roughly around 1300 in Tabayin township.

## The victims

Footage from the aftermath of the incident [shows](#) pools of blood and small human remains on the ground, within and outside the buildings. The graphic scene shows the human toll of the event. Reports suggest that at least [six](#) children were killed in the attack. An anti-SAC facebook page claimed that [seven](#) children were killed. In addition to the children, 7 local residents, U Kyaw Tun (49 years old); U Aung Saw Htwe (34 years old), Mayu (37 years old); U Tin Soe Khaing (31 years old), Maung Aung Chit Moe (22 years old), Maung Aung Aung Oo (16 years old) and Maung Saw Min Oo (13 years old) were also [reportedly](#) killed by SAC troops. While the figures [vary](#), other reports suggest that [14](#) people were killed, including [volunteers](#)<sup>4</sup> at the school. The official number of people either injured or killed has not yet been [confirmed](#). Due to the lack of verifiable footage from the attack itself, Myanmar Witness has been unable to verify the number of casualties.

Additional reporting states that between [15](#) and [20 people](#) were taken alive by SAC troops, in addition to the bodies of the child casualties. Reports from the [Irrawaddy](#) and [Frontier Myanmar](#) mention the SAC's use of sacks/bags for allegedly carrying dead bodies and body parts from the incident, transporting them seven miles away to Ye-U township where their bodies were either [buried or cremated](#). This shows a lack of care and the attempt to rid the scene of potential evidence of the crimes. This has prevented families from holding funerals.

Reports by [RFA](#) and [Myanmar Now](#) on other attacks on Burmese children during 2022 have shown a similar pattern of violence and disregard for casualties. For example, attempts to destroy the evidence through dismemberment, burning, and/or discardment have been reported. These atrocities have also been highlighted in Myanmar Witness reports, including:

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<sup>3</sup> As this came from a personal account, for privacy reasons, the link has not been shared.

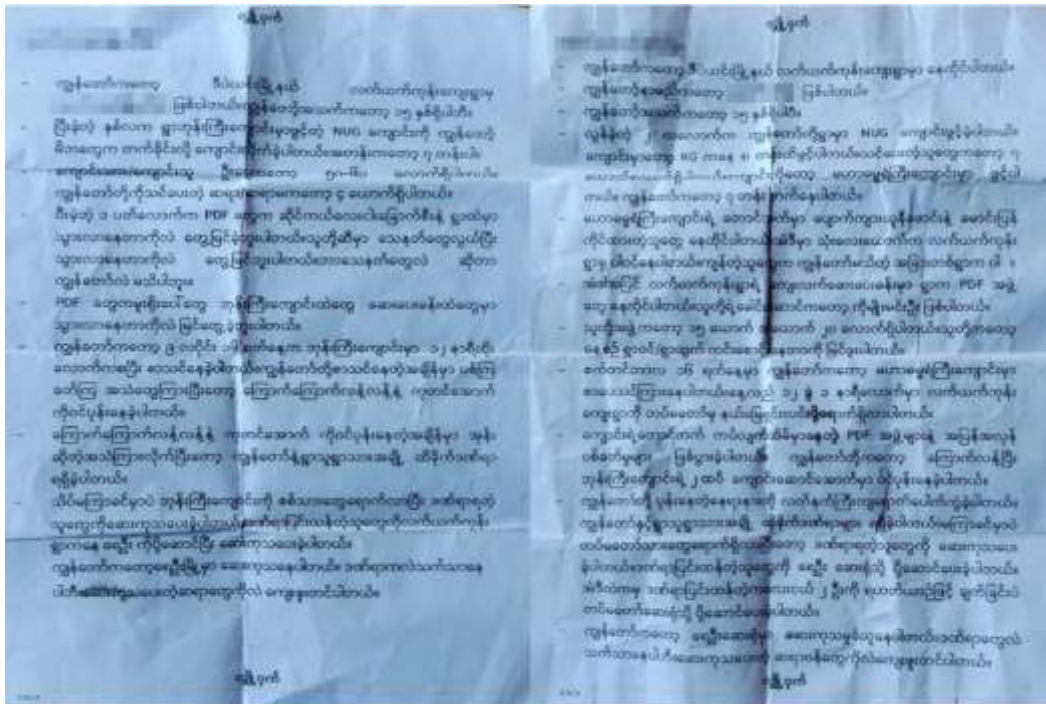
<sup>4</sup> Source redacted due to privacy concerns.

[Mass killings in NW Myanmar](#), [Moso Christmas Eve killings](#), and [Verification of burned bodies in Sagaing](#).

On 20 September 2022, a [video](#) surfaced on SAC-affiliated media of two 15-year-old girls from Let Yet Kone village, speaking at a press conference (see timestamp: 41:25). The girls were among a group of civilians who were taken by the SAC during the attack. In the video, the girls read a statement to the camera about the attack on 16 September 2022. These statements claimed that they were present at the school when the attack began and that the SAC troops, while fighting PDF troops, had assisted the wounded and taken them for urgent medical care after they were caught in the crossfire. It remains unclear why the teenage girls were taken by the SAC during the attack and why the SAC chose the girls to give these statements. The statements, which were shared by [Myanmar Now](#) on 28 October 2022, are featured in figure 6. The two statements provide a similar account of the events which took place. For example, they both mention the presence of the PDF closeby and the medical assistance they received following help from the SAC.

The statements cast doubt on who is to blame for the attack and contradict witness testimony given to news media. For example, a Let Yet Kone villager told Myanmar Now that the written testimonies were full of lies, [saying](#) “There were no PDF members in the village. We had set up a school in the monastery with the permission of the abbot, and we had no intention of fighting, nor did we have any weapons”. Although these statements differ from witness accounts of the events, they do confirm the presence of the SAC in the area and the occurrence of an attack. Through this press conference, the SAC appear to be trying to vindicate their role within the school attack live on television, and thus, provide a justification for the casualties and the injured.

Myanmar Now reported that the girls, and five other villagers and children, were [released](#) from detention on 23 October 2022 - over a month after the event took place. It is believed that those released were part of the group of people taken away from the village by the SAC directly after the attack. The [Myanmar Now](#) article states that two people are still yet to be released from custody by the SAC, who claim that they are still receiving medical attention.



Statement (1)

Secret/Confidential

- I am " - - - " from Lat Yat Kone village of Depayin Township, I am 15 years old.
- About 2 months ago, I attended the NUG school which opened in the village monastery because my parents wanted me to. I was in the 7th grade.
- The number of students is about 50-60. There are 4 teachers who teach us.
- About a week ago, I saw the PDFs traveling in the village with 4,5, or 6 motorcycles. I saw them carrying guns. I don't know what kind of weapons.
- I have seen PDFs walking around on Mu Yoe, monasteries, and clinics.
- On the 16th of September, I was studying at the monastery around 12 o'clock. While we were studying, I heard the sound of shots being fired, and I hid under the bed in fear.
- When I was hiding under the bed in fear, I heard the loud "BOOM!", and then I and some villagers were injured.
- Not long after, the soldiers arrived at the monastery and treated the wounded. Those who were seriously injured were transported from Lat Yat Kone village to Ye-U township for medical treatment. I am receiving medical treatment in Ye-U township. My injury is healing, thanks to the doctors who treated me.

Secret/Confidential

Statement (2)

Secret/Confidential

- I live in Lat Yat Kone village, Depayin Township.
- My name is " - - - ".
- My age is 15 years old.
- About 2 months ago, a NUG school was opened in our village. The school is open from KG to 8th grade. There are about 7 people teaching. I am in the 7th grade.
- To the south of the Maha Dhamahrangyi monastery, there are people in guerilla uniforms holding rifles, 3 or 4 of them are from Lat Yat Kone village. The rest are from another village that I don't know.
- In addition, the village's PDF group lives in the rural dispensary of Lat Yat Kone village. Their leader is Ko Myo Min Oo.
- There are about 15 or 20 people in their group. I have seen them patrolling the village every day.
- On September 16th, I was studying at Maha Dhamahrangyi monastery (school). At around 12:30/1:00 in the afternoon, the Tatmadaw (army) arrived in Lat Yat Kone village to clear the area.
- There was an exchange of fire with PDF groups living in an adjacent house to the south of the school. We were afraid and hid in the 2-story school building in the monastery.
- A heavy weapon dropped and exploded near where we were hiding. Some villagers and I were injured. The Tatmadaw (army) arrived soon after it and treated the injured. Those who were seriously injured were transported to Ye-U township. Among them, 2 seriously injured children were immediately transported to the military hospital by helicopter.
- I am receiving medical treatment in Ye-U township. My injury is healing, thanks to the doctors who treated me.

Secret/Confidential

Figure 6: Copies of the statements allegedly read by the two 15 year old girls who were SAC custody after the Let Yet Kone village attack. Burmese translation conducted by Myanmar Witness (Source: Myanmar Now).

## The infrastructure damage

Footage [appears](#) to show heavy damage to the infrastructure, with what looks like bullet holes through the walls and furniture allegedly done by the SAC's Mi-35 helicopters. Video footage uploaded to Youtube of the outside of the school [shows](#) significant damage: caved in roofs and large gaps within walls, as seen in figures 7 and 8.



Figure 7: Several different angles of destruction of one building identified by Myanmar Witness to be located at 22.679200, 95.400131 (Source: [Khit Thit Media](#)).



Figure 8: Outside building damage in Let Yet Kone village, showing large gaps allegedly from airstrikes on 16 September 2022 (Source omitted to maintain the safety of the social media user).



Figure 9: The entrance to the school and monastery with notable buildings in the background that were hit with the airstrikes on 16 September 2022, located at 22.679161, 95.400366 (Source: [Burma VJ Media](#)).

## The perpetrators

A 'local watch' page on Facebook posted a claim that helicopters entered from the east side of Let Yet Kone village from the direction of Naung Hla village, and could have possibly flown from Namakha (နမခ) in Monywa (မုံရွာမြို့), Monywa township, Sagaing state, where the Northwestern Military Command for the SAC is [located](#). The nearby village of Nyaung Hla village (ညောင်လှ) [22.656211, 95.418075] in Tabayin township was also allegedly warned of

possible attacks and helicopters and SAC military vehicles were seen in the area. For safety concerns, the links to the 'local watch' sources have been omitted from this report.

It is plausible that the high level of damage seen in the area was caused by a Mi-35 air attack. The attack reportedly lasted nearly one hour. Locals' [depiction](#) of events tell of a stark and bloody aftermath, with many people reported injured, some severely, with limbs lost. Debris from shelling and the airstrike left casings, including the verified [remnants](#) of claimed S-5 rockets reportedly from the scene, shown in Figure 10. The S-5 rocket can only be fired by compatible fighter helicopters and jets which are used mainly for ground area targets. The SAC's MAF are the only known entity in Myanmar that have aircraft suitable for S-5 rocket use.



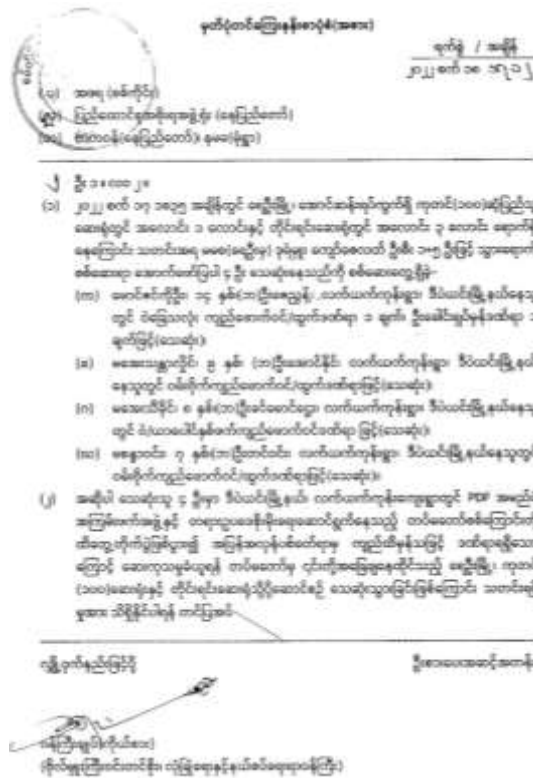
*Figure 10: Aftermath of airstrike debris allegedly gathered from the 16 September 2022 airstrike attack in Let Yet Kone village, Sagaing State. Confirmed S-5 rocket remnants are shown. (Source omitted to maintain the safety of the social media user).*

According to [AP news](#), the SAC stated that they were liberating the village from PDF forces, and that they saved the villagers once PDF forces had fled the area. As such, the SAC did not deny that an attack occurred on the school. The forced [statements](#) read by the two teenagers shown in figure 6 confirms that the SAC were not only present in Let Yet Kone village, but also that they were involved in armed combat, before they got the wounded medical care. Whether PDF soldiers were present remains unverified.

The SAC also released a statement which implies that the children killed during the attack were actually killed by crossfire between SAC forces and the 'terrorist PDF' (Figure 11). The statement also only listed four child casualties, all of whom the SAC claimed to have taken to a local hospital. This mortality figure is much lower than other reports on the incident. The SAC's claims were [rejected](#) by local residents, who stated that there were no armed troops in



the village. Figure 11 also mentions Na Ma Kha (Monywa), supporting claims and theories that the helicopters could have originated from Namakha.



Registered Telegram Form (Instead/Replace)

(Pa <1>) Ah Pha Ya<Government Office> (Sagaing) Date / Time
(Du <2>) Union Government Office (Nay Pyi Daw) 2022, Sep 18 / 1712
(Ta <3>) Ta.Ka.Wun (Nay Pyi Daw), Na.Ma.Kha (Monywa)

- Oo 1. La.Wa 2.
(1) 2022 Sep 17, at 1635 hour. In Ye-U Township, Aung San Ward, according to reports, 1 body was found in the 100-bed public hospital and 3 bodies were found in the traditional hospital. After hearing the reports Ma.Ma.Sa (Ye-U) Deputy Chief of Police Kyaw Zay Latt led 1+5 people and inspected the area and found 4 dead bodies and the inspection are as below -
(a) Maung Zin Ko Oo, 14 years old, (Ba<father>) U Zay Nyunt, Lat Yat Kone village, a resident of Depayin Township, found 1 bullet penetration/exit wound in the left leg. 1 head injury (death)
(b) Ma Aye Thandar Hlaing, 9 years old, (Ba<father>) U Aung Naing, Lat Yat Kone village, a resident of Depayin Township, found abdominal bullet penetration/exit wound (death)
(c) Ma Aye Thiri, 8 years old, (Ba<father>) U Khin Maung Htay, Lat Yat Kone village, a resident of Depayin Township, found bullet wounds on both left and right thighs (death)
(d) Ma Sanda Win, 7 years old, (Ba<father>) U Tin Win, Lat Yat Kone village, a resident of Depayin Township, found abdominal bullet penetration/exit wound (death)
(2) The 4 deceased are from Depayin Township, Lat Yat Kone village. And they were injured because the battle broke out between the terrorist PDF and the law enforcer Tatmadaw column. Reported that they were hit from crossfire and got injured and died on the way while Tatmadaw transported them to a 100-bed hospital and traditional hospital at Ye-U Township

Send confidentiality Priority status
(On behalf of the) Prime Minister
(Colonel Win Tin Soe, Minister of Security and Border Affairs)

Figure 11: Authenticated document from the SAC stating their response to the Let Yet Kone village airstrike and ground attack on 16 September 2022. Translation work done by Myanmar Witness.

## The school

Myanmar Witness has been monitoring threats and attacks on schools, specifically in areas where education initiatives have been led, or supported, by the NUG and CDM. The Let Yet Kone school is in an area which has seen a [rise](#) in CDM and NUG supported schools, given educational resource shortages at other schools. Within the [statements](#) read by the 15 year old girls on 20 September 2022 featured in figure 6, the girls mentioned that Let Yet Kone was a NUG funded school. While Myanmar Witness has been unable to verify with absolute certainty that this was the direct cause of the attack, it reflects a wider pattern of targeting of pro-NUG and CDM schools. The Let Yet Kone school attack is not the only time an alleged NUG or CDM supported school has been targeted. Other schools, specifically in Sagaing, have been targeted by the military in the past, all of which were NUG and CDM supported.

Since the February 2021 Coup, CDM and NUG-funded [schools](#) in Myanmar started emerging in rural areas under resistance control. In May 2021, [Myanmar Now](#) reported that areas with little access to support were facing education holes. By June 2022, structured school communities had [emerged](#) which were assisting regions in need for education programmes. Recently, news of schools affiliated with these civilian-led, NUG school programmes have seen threats and [attacks](#), with a very recent violent [attack](#) that occurred on 16 October 2022 in Taung Myint village (တောင်မြင့်ရွာ) in Magway state. This incident was investigated by Myanmar Witness in the spot report [School teacher killed and body mutilated](#).

These supported schools are [common](#) in the Sagaing region where the SAC control has been limited. There are [allegedly](#) 27 community schools, 4,000 students, and 380 CDM teachers. The Let Yet Kone school system [hosted](#) over 240 pupils and 20 volunteers in a public teaching space within the monastery. The NUG programme [supports](#) schools by providing teaching guidelines, separate from SAC guidelines, and a free learning environment. School books, supplies, and teaching materials are [contributed](#) by local communities. These self-sustaining educational platforms could be seen as a threat to the SAC where propaganda and influence can't be controlled.

## Conclusion

On 16 September 2022, a school was targeted in a violent air attack and ground raid by SAC troops. Reports suggest between 11 and 14 people died, while 17 more were injured, many of whom were children. A number of people - both dead or injured - were taken away by the SAC troops, leaving the local community worried for those in the SAC's custody, missing or dead.

Myanmar Witness was able to geolocate footage and images which showed extensive damage to the school. Footage, images and reports from villagers illustrate a bloody attack on the school and monastery. Due to a lack of additional evidence, Myanmar Witness was unable to verify the number of casualties or the time the event occurred.

Multiple sightings of SAC helicopters were reported in the vicinity of the attack on 16 September 2022. Additionally, the SAC acknowledged that a battle took place in this location. The admission of the presence of troops and helicopters in this location on the day of the attack increases the likelihood that the SAC were the perpetrators of this attack. Although the SAC claimed that they were fighting the PDF, villagers told local news media that there were no PDFs in this location.

The attack on Tabayin School is part of an emerging trend that shows a pattern of increasing recklessness towards the safety of children, especially around schools. Education should be safe and accessible throughout Myanmar, regardless of ongoing conflict.

As this incident demonstrates, heavy fighting in and around educational facilities, including both aerial and ground attacks, place children's lives at risk. This attack comes at a similar time to the recent politically-motivated mutilation of a teacher, [reported](#) on by Myanmar Witness. Politically-motivated attacks on schools are of great concern. It is essential that the safety of educational sites is restored and any other attacks are investigated so that those responsible can be held to account.

## List of Abbreviations

- |                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| ● Civil Disobedience Movement  | CDM |
| ● Ethnic Armed Organisation    | EAO |
| ● Internally Displaced Person  | IDP |
| ● Kachin Independence Army     | KIA |
| ● National Unity Government    | NUG |
| ● People's Defence Force       | PDF |
| ● Radio Free Asia              | RFA |
| ● State Administration Council | SAC |
| ● User Generated Content       | UGC |