



# Monthly Summary of Key Events in Karen State (January 2026)

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A woman who was killed while herding cattle in western Demoso Township (Photo – PKPF)

## ***Crimes***

### **Robbery**

In western Demoso Township, Karen State, a man was robbed on January 14. The victim told Kantarawaddy Times that he lost 7.8 million kyats in cash, along with his mobile phone and watch.

He stated that the robbery happened on the way to work from Khupara village to Wari village. The robbery was carried out by two men who stopped his motorcycle and threatened him with a gun.

One of the suspects was wearing a mask, with only his eyes visible. The victim was beaten until he nearly lost consciousness and was also slashed on the face with a knife.

The victim has called for the perpetrators to be arrested and brought to justice, and urged travelers to exercise greater caution.

# Murder

A woman who was herding cattle in western Demoso Township was murdered on January 12. The victim was identified as Ma Paing, 45 years old, a resident of Dawrawtkhu village.

The Karen State Police (KSP) reported that they have arrested a suspect who confessed to the killing, and the case has been opened under Section 302 of the Penal Code (murder).

The suspect is a police officer who joined the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), originally from Ngwe Taung village in Demoso Township. He also admitted to being under the influence of drugs at the time of the crime.

## Aftermath of Prison Break

### Thailand Hands Over 68 Escaped Prisoners of War to the Myanmar Military



*Thai military leading the transfer of prisoners of war through the Myawaddy-Mae Sot Friendship Bridge No. 2 (Photo – Facebook social media page)*

### Mese Township

Out of 83 prisoners of war who escaped from Mese Prison No. (2), under the Interim Executive Council (IEC) of Karen State, 68 who crossed into Thailand were handed over by Thai authorities to the Myanmar military junta. The transfer took place on January 26 via the Myawaddy-Mae Sot Friendship Bridge No. (2), according to a border source.

These prisoners escaped from Mese prison around 1:00 a.m. on January 18, with nine weapons. On January 19, Thai authorities arrested and detained some of the escapees, including a major named Paing Soe Thu. Thai media reported that the prisoners surrendered to Thai authorities and requested to be returned to the Myanmar military. About a week after reports emerged that Thailand would repatriate the detainees, whom it recognized as prisoners of war under international law, the transfer was carried out. Photos of the handover later spread on social media and pro-military Telegram channels.

The IEC stated that the escape had been carefully planned over a period of about three months. Based on the reports from the judicial department, statements from prisoners, and notifications from the Thai military, the prisoners had organized in groups, set meeting points, prepared SIM cards in advance, planned armed resistance along escape routes, and carried food supplies.

During pursuit operations, revolutionary joint forces conducted clearance operations, resulting in clashes in which eight prisoners were killed, and two were captured alive. Five small arms and some ammunition were recovered from the escapees.

Two prison staff members accused of assisting in the escape have been charged. Authorities said the remaining prisoners will be detained in accordance with international POW laws and that security will be further strengthened.

The IEC apologized to the people of Karen State and to revolutionary forces, and stated that it will continue to take responsibility and ensure accountability.

# HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BY THE MILITARY JUNTA

## **Two Civilians, Including an Eighth-Grade Student, Seriously Injured by Landmine While Fleeing Military Gunfire in Demoso**

In Demoso town, near Dawngankha ward, an eighth-grade student and another civilian were seriously injured after stepping on a landmine while fleeing gunfire from junta troops. The incident occurred on January 4, when the two had gone fishing and accidentally took the wrong route on their way home, encountering junta soldiers who opened fire.

As they abandoned their motorcycle and fled, they stepped on a landmine. Both victims were internally displaced persons (IDPs) who were displaced from Hpruso Township to western Demoso. Witnesses said one victim suffered severe thigh injuries, while the other sustained serious damage to the leg.

On January 14, junta troops also carried out drone strikes and heavy artillery shelling on a village in Demoso Township, damaging a Christian church. Three drone bombs were dropped in the afternoon, followed by artillery fire in the evening from junta bases in Loikaw.

One artillery shell landed near the church, damaging walls and windows, but no one was injured. Local residents said there were no clashes in the area and only civilians were present, accusing the military of deliberately targeting civilians.

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## **Civilian Killed by Landmine While Delivering Goods in Loikaw**

On the morning of January 5, a civilian stepped on a landmine and was killed in Loikaw Township while transporting goods to the outskirts of the city. According to people close to the victim, IDPs found him and rushed him to a clinic, but he died from excessive blood loss.

The deceased was identified as U Plyar Reh, who is a 43-year-old, originally from Dawmuklar village, Loikaw Township. He had been living in Loikaw town due to fighting in his home area.

Furthermore, on January 21 in Dawookhu ward, Loikaw, a man named Ko Kyaw Ni San was severely injured after stepping on a landmine while clearing his house compound. He lost one leg and is currently receiving medical treatment.

Local residents said that landmine incidents are occurring frequently among people returning to Loikaw and those cleaning their homes and compounds.

Although the junta has permitted residents to return to wards such as Dawookhu, Narnattaw, and Naungyar, landmines still remain. These incidents highlight the ongoing danger of landmines in Loikaw Township and the continued threat to civilian lives and security.

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## **Woman Injured by Artillery Shelling in Pekhon on the Shan-Karen Border**

On January 8, two artillery shells exploded inside a village in western Pekhon Township, along the Shan-Karen border, injuring a local woman. Residents said the shelling was carried out by a junta unit based in Pekhon Township.

In addition to the injured woman, several houses were hit and damaged. As a result, security concerns among local communities increase.

Moreover, on January 1, during fighting in southern Shan State, the Pa-O National Liberation Army (PNLA) rescued two men who had been used as human shields by the junta troops and the Pa-O National Organization (PNO).

# HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE NEEDS INSIDE KARENNE STATE

## ***Shortage of Drinking and Domestic Water***

In eastern Demoso Township, Karen State, three villages and two IDP camps in Dawphu village tract have already begun facing water shortages during January, according to local residents.

The main drinking-water pond relied upon by these villages and displaced communities is decreasing by about one handspan per day and is close to drying up. Because people have difficulty accessing alternative water sources, they are hoping for support from water donors. In Dawphu village tract and other mountainous areas, Karen IDPs mainly depend on natural water springs. Most displaced families who live far from these springs rely on rainwater by storing it in existing tanks and containers.



*Internally displaced people in western Demoso Township who have begun facing water shortages (Photo – Kantarawaddy Times)*



*Children in Somo Prehsoeleh Township suffering from a skin disease outbreak (Photo – CJ)*

## ***Need for Medical Assistance for Skin Diseases***

At Shwe Nyaung Kone IDP camp in western Hpruso Township, both children and adults are suffering from skin diseases. Symptoms include itching, fluid-filled blisters, and red rashes appearing on the body.

Similarly, in Somo Prehsoeleh Township, skin infections are spreading widely, and medicines for treatment are in short supply, according to healthcare workers.

Health workers said that personal hygiene is essential for both treatment and prevention of skin diseases. However, during the coming dry season, when water becomes scarcer, infections are likely to increase, and the demand for medicines will rise further. Local residents are therefore hoping to receive medical assistance.

## **IDPs Forced to Borrow Food Due to Rice Shortages**

More than 200 IDPs at Shwe Nyaung Kone camp in western Hpruso Township are facing rice shortages and are surviving on thin rice porridge within their families, according to the camp committee. Other IDP camps are experiencing similar problems. As displacement continues over a long period, rice donors have become fewer. As a result, many IDPs were forced to borrow rice from relatives to survive.

Due to ongoing conflict, most displaced people cannot return home to cultivate paddy. Even the small number who are able to farm face difficulties harvesting because of security tensions during harvest seasons, a problem they encounter year after year.

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## **Need for Women's Sanitary Products**

At Nat Taung IDP camp in western Demoso Township, some women can no longer afford menstrual products. Due to lack of income, they have been unable to purchase sanitary pads for around seven months. Instead, they are using multipurpose soap for personal hygiene, according to a camp committee member.

In addition to menstrual products, many women in IDP camps are also unable to afford basic personal hygiene items, according to displaced residents.



*Voters casting their ballots at a polling station in Demoso Township as part of Election Phase (2)*  
(Photo – Facebook social media page)

## THE 2025 ELECTION AND POSSIBLE CONSTITUENCIES IN KAREN NI STATE

The military-organized 2025 election, held nationwide in three phases, has now concluded. In Karen Ni State, out of seven townships, such as Loikaw, Demoso, Hpruso, Bawlakhe, Hpasawng, Mese, and Shardaw, voting could only be conducted in four townships.

Phase (1) of the election was held nationwide in 102 townships on December 28, 2025, including Loikaw and Bawlakhe in Karen Ni State. Phase (2) was held on January 11, 2026, in 100 townships nationwide, including Demoso and Hpruso. Phase (3) was not held in Karen Ni State.

The Kayah State People's Party (KySPP), Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), and People's Pioneer Party (PPP) contested seats in all four townships for the Pyithu Hluttaw (House of Representatives).

### LIST OF CONTESTING PARTIES AND CONSTITUENCIES

In the four townships of Karen Ni State, 26 candidates each from the USDP and KySPP contested: 4 for 4 Pyithu Hluttaw constituencies, 6 for Amyotha Hluttaw or National Parliament (Proportional Representation – PR), 4 for Amyotha Hluttaw (First-Past-the-Post – FPTP), 7 for State Hluttaw or State Parliament (PR), 4 for State Hluttaw (FPTP), and 1 for the Bamar ethnic constituency (FPTP). Of the 9 candidates from the National Unity Party (NUP), 2 contested in the Pyithu Hluttaw constituencies of Loikaw and Bawlakhe, 3 in Amyotha Hluttaw (FPTP) constituencies (No. 1, 2, 3), 3 for Amyotha Hluttaw (PR), and 1 for the Bamar ethnic constituency (FPTP). The PPP fielded 25 candidates: 4 for 4 Pyithu Hluttaw constituencies, 6 for Amyotha Hluttaw (PR), 4 for Amyotha Hluttaw (FPTP), 7 for State Hluttaw (PR), 3 for State Hluttaw (FPTP), and 1 for the Bamar ethnic constituency (FPTP). In total, including individual candidates, there were 87 candidates across the various constituencies.

### NOTABLE INCIDENTS ON ELECTION DAYS

On December 28, 2025, during Phase (1), an artillery shell exploded inside Loikaw town. Although no civilians were injured, residents reported widespread fear.

On the same day, artillery fired from military bases toward the outskirts of Loikaw landed in civilian villages, injuring two civilians. One later died while receiving medical treatment. Similar shelling also occurred in Demoso Township.

On January 11, 2026, during Phase (2), artillery shelling landed in Demoso Township. In Hpruso Township, drone strikes and artillery fire burned down one house and one rice barn.

### ANNOUNCED RESULTS AFTER THE ELECTION

According to figures released by the military-controlled Union Election Commission (UEC), there are approximately 32,000 voters in Loikaw, 1,750 in Bawlakhe, 2,030 in Demoso, and 1,050 in Hpruso, totaling around 36,820 voters.

In Phase (1), covering Bawlakhe and Loikaw townships in Karen Ni State, elections were held in 44 out of 56 wards and village tracts, with 12 unable to hold elections, meaning about 79 % coverage.

In Phase (2), Demoso and Hpruso townships together have 46 wards and village tracts, but elections were conducted in only 10 of them. Voting in both phases occurred only in urban wards and areas under military control.

Results from Phases (1) and (2) show that the USDP won the vast majority of seats in the Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw, State Hluttaw, and Bamar ethnic constituencies.

For the three townships where elections could not be held, including Mese, Shardaw, and Hpasawng, the UEC announced that registered parties automatically won representation under the proportional representation (PR) system for Kayah State Constituency No. (1).

As a result, under the State Hluttaw PR system, the USDP won four seats, KySPP won two seats, and PPP won one seat. Overall, in the 2025 election, the USDP dominated and won nearly all seats at the Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw (FPTP and PR), State Hluttaw (FPTP and PR), and Bamar ethnic constituency levels.