

MONTHLY OVERVIEW

Human Rights Situation in Mon State, Karen State & Tanintharyi Region

APRIL
2023



New Year ‘Thingyan’ Activities Are Darkened by Violence, Military Impunity by the Junta

APRIL 2023

For decades, the Burmese New Year has been celebrated in April. Once a celebration inviting festivities and tradition is now profoundly darkened by the cruel actions of the junta. Since the attempted coup on 1 February 2021, the people of Burma have rejected the regime’s pursuits to assert the situation on the ground as ‘normal.’ One of the ways the military has tried to show its legitimacy is by propping up holidays such as Thingyan. In response, civilians have boycotted their events and participated in ‘Silent Strikes’ to demonstrate the ongoing rejection of the military.

In what can be used as further evidence to show the regime’s lack of sincerity and commitment to peace, days before Thingyan took place, the junta deployed an airstrike on a village in the Sagaing region that killed over 100 people. The assault was unprovoked and took place when no armed conflict occurred. According to initial reports, the primary victims were women and children. The junta continues to exhibit a disregard for the protection of human rights. This attack and many others are stark reminders of why the regime must be held accountable. Military impunity extends far before the coup.

A few days before Thingyan, on April 11, 2023, a 17-year-old girl was accused of being

associated with planting a bomb near the water festival pavilion and arbitrarily abducted by the junta forces in Mawlamyine, Mon State, at 9:00 PM.

“The joint forces of junta soldiers, militia, and secret police came and grabbed Ma Thin Yanant Oo. The junta in Mawlamyine announced that a handmade bomb was found at the back of the stage of the water festival in Mawlamyine on April 11,” said a source.

She was arrested and charged by the police for planting the bomb, despite there being no evidence of doing so. One of the detainee’s friends told HURFOM that Ma Thin Yanant Oo posted an objection post on her Facebook wall about the junta’s ‘bloody’ Thingyan festival and then was arrested from her home by military council troops.

“Junta soldiers are blocking the road and searching the areas for bombs. Young people and active online users need to be careful because the junta is creating this problem and making up stories,” said a resident.

In a related case, two young men were confirmed killed after the junta forces abducted and accused them as members of local armed resilience members during Water Festival Celebration holidays in Panga

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village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State. A 35-year-old Social Worker from Panga village said these two young victims were from unknown places, and the junta security troops captured them near Panga village on April 18, 2023. HURFOM reporters confirmed the names of these young victims as Maung Arkar Minn, 16, and Aung Myo Htet, 21. They were tortured before they were killed, forcing local villagers to ask: ***“Where is the rule of law? We are being deprived of our rights.”***

Again, during the traditional festivities, indiscriminate violence was everywhere in Burma. The junta shot at two young people during the Palaw Township, Southern Tanintharyi Region holiday. On April 16, witnesses said that at 9:30 AM, a young man and a woman riding a motorcycle were fired at during their mandatory sentry duty. The young woman was injured by a bullet shaft in her stomach, and the man was hurt in the head. During Thingyan, the junta killed at least five people in Tanintharyi.

In Mon State, at least eight young people were arrested on suspicion after two bombs exploded on April 16 during Burma’s New Year’s Eve. On April 16, a homemade bomb exploded near Taung Gyi and Taung Zun villages. The junta arbitrarily abducted four youths from Taung Gyi Village and another four young villagers from Taung Zun Village.

The families and community leaders cannot visit those detained. At the time of writing, they are still negotiating with the police to see them.

Due to the explosion, the local social response team confirmed that at least four residents, including a 10-year-old boy, were injured. Some buildings were also damaged. With these latest arrested youths, the junta has detained at least twenty people since January 2023.

In target areas of Mon State, Karen State, and the Tanintharyi region, the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) continues to document the attacks against civilians. Throughout April, more violence and targeting of civilians continued to threaten livelihoods. Martial law, in particular, is undermining the safety of local people. After the junta’s martial law imposition in southern Mon State, the number of people killed and wounded by gunshots has increased in the areas between Ye Township Mon State and Yebyu, of Tanintharyi Region. Injuries and death rates are rising.

At the beginning of the month, residents confirmed that the junta troops killed three civilians who had gone missing in Ye Township and Beilin Township, Mon State. The regime accused them of violating the

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curfews declared under martial law. The junta opened fire on two youths aged 17 and 20. They were standing on the highway road between Dout-Yep and Shwe-Yaung-Pya Villages. Two local sources who witnessed the incident confirmed that the junta shot these young men. They were accused of being linked with the local defence forces and breaking the curfew installed by the junta as part of their martial law jurisdiction. Both died of injuries incurred in military custody.

Similarly, in Ye Township, Mon State, on March 23, at 8 PM, a man named Nai Win Kyi was driving from the Kyaung Ywa village when the junta troops shot him. Again, he was accused of violating the curfew, and the Light Infantry Battalion 61 based in Kyon-Laung opened fire on him. **“He died from two gunshot wounds,”** said witnesses who spoke to HURFOM.

The indiscriminate firing by the junta also poses a grave threat to civilians. A teenage boy in Wet-Toe Village, Palaw, Southern Tanintharyi Region, was seriously injured when junta-backed soldiers began firing. In addition to at least ten others who were injured, some were in critical condition due to indiscriminate artillery fire by the military forces.

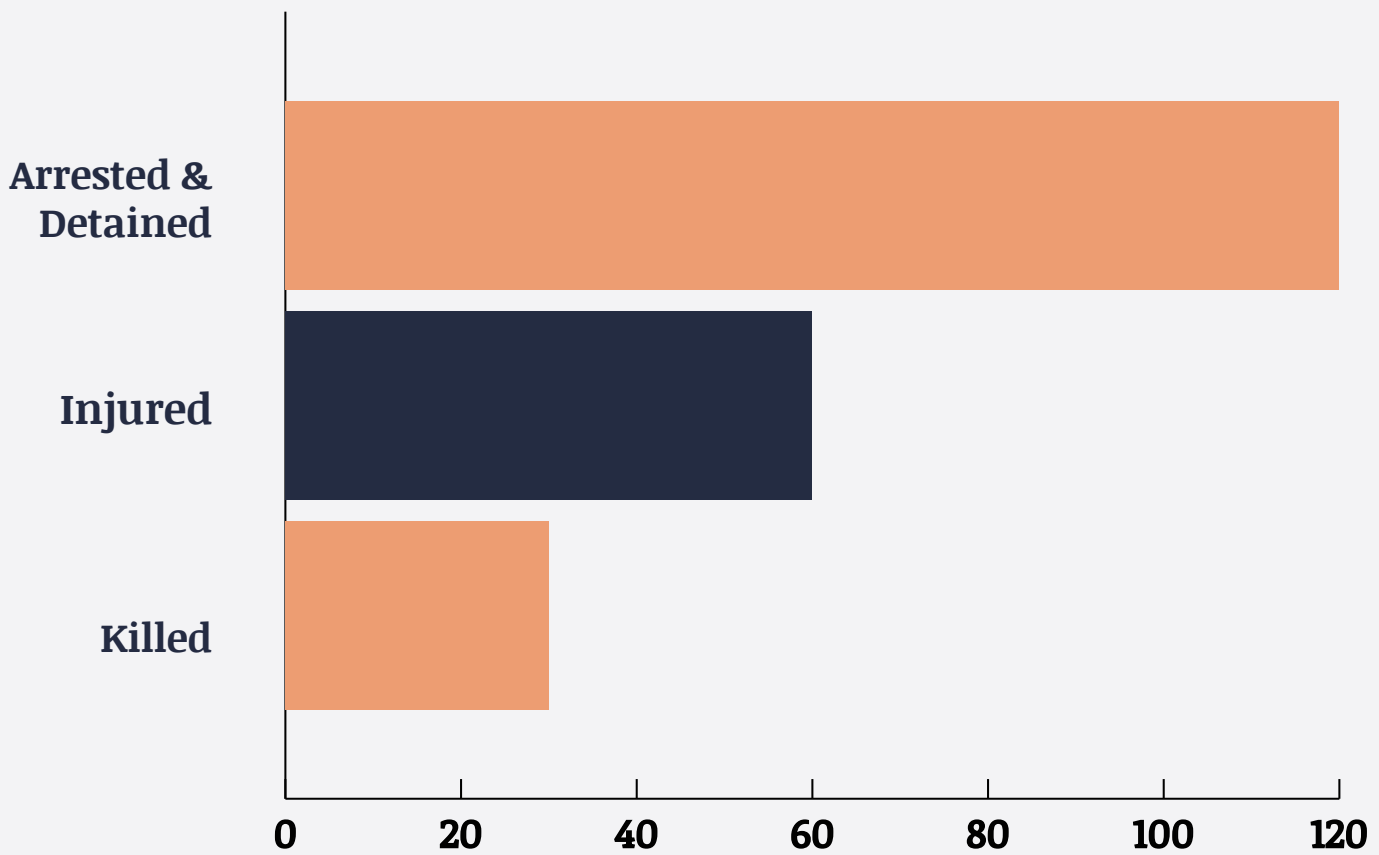
Those who escaped from their homes reported that at 9 AM on April 5, in Palaw Township, Southern Tanintharyi Region, they were hit by a series of mortar shells shot by the junta. All victims were receiving medical treatment. One villager and a teenage boy needed to be referred to the hospital in town due to severe injuries. The injured locals were the villagers of Tamai Taung village, and the perpetrators were based on the hill near the area.

The ongoing violence by the military junta is relentless and continues to threaten the security of the people. HURFOM reiterates that immediate intervention is needed to curb the violence in Burma and bring the Generals and soldiers responsible to account once and for all.

SCALED UP HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

HURFOM fieldworkers continue to take great risks to document the human rights violations being perpetrated in target areas of Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi region. By the end of **April 2023**, HURFOM recorded **least 75 arrested, 45 detained, 60 injured and 30 killed**.

Civilians Arrested, Injured & Killed in April 2023 in Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi region



2+

Pro-Democracy Activists Targeted by the Junta

8

PROTESTS ACROSS TARGET
AREAS IN APRIL 2023

6

TANINTHARYI
REGION

1

MON STATE

1

KAREN STATE



24,500+

CIVILIANS DISPLACED ACROSS TARGET AREAS

CIVILIANS TARGETED IN MON, KAREN STATE
& THE TANINTHARYI REGION

8+

DISMISSED FOR
INVOLVEMENT
IN THE CIVIL
DISOBEDIENCE
MOVEMENT

6+

PROTESTERS/
ACTIVISTS
SENTENCED IN
JUNTA COURTS

7+

ENFORCED
DISAPPEARANCES
BY THE MILITARY



KAREN STATE

9,500+ Newly Displaced

20 Injured, 8 Killed



Mon State



Tanintharyi Region

In Karen State, the military is deploying targeted attacks on innocent villagers. Conflict is taking place unprovoked by armed opposition groups.

On April 11 at 7:35, junta forces indiscriminately fired at least 30 artillery mortars from the Baw-Ka-Htar military camp towards the KNU-controlled Brigade No. 3 Administrative areas of Kyauk Kyi Township, Nyaung Lay Pin District. Junta forces arrested six people and forced ten villagers to serve as human shields. They purposely blasted artillery shells into the villages, destroying several houses and leading at least 600 villagers to flee for their lives.

“At 10:00 AM, the junta arrested six innocent villagers from Kyauk-Maw-Phayagyi village and two villagers from Kaw-Thar-Sae village and accused them of supporting the Karen resistance forces. The villagers from Kyauk-Maw-Phayagyi village, Kyauk-Kyi Township, Nyaung Lay Bin District, were traveling to work in the orchid plantations located outside of their residences.

Even children continue to be victims of senseless violence. On April 13, 2023, at 8 AM, in KNU-controlled areas of Hpa-an District Brigade No. 7, a 12-year-old boy was shot and killed by the junta in Yoe-

Haha Village tract, Manigone Village of Don Yin Township.

According to a Don Yin Township’s KNU Administrative member, the young victim, Saw Thar Way Htun, age 12, who was waiting for his father in front of a mechanic, was shot and killed by LIB No. 546, operated under the Military Division No. 22’s six lorries coming from Thamaya village. The deceased child, Thar Way Htun, was cremated in the evening at the junta’s Military Division No. 22 military camp by force.

“A witness said that because the junta fired indiscriminately, and then they ordered the parents of the children to bury the boy immediately because they wanted to hide the news of the death.”

According to the KNU Administrative (of Hpa-an township) sources, the senior military leaders from Junta’s Military Division No. 22 visited the parents. They bribed them with 15 lakhs MMK for the boy’s life compensation. It is not clear if the family accepted the bribe. Regardless, it is exactly this type of senseless violence which perpetuates fear and encourages a cycle of impunity when soldiers are not held responsible.



MON STATE

3,000+ Newly Displaced

14 Injured, 6 Killed



Karen State



Tanintharyi Region

The junta's armed forces have fatally shot and harmed local inhabitants in southern Mon state. Some have lost their lives, some have been injured, and all cases ended without justice. The junta claimed they punished those who violated the curfew law.

On April 2, at 2 PM, locals discovered that a man's dead body was found with bullet wounds near Ye-Thanyuzayat highway road near Aung Thayar village of Ye Township, Southern Mon State. The body was found close to the hidden security gate of the junta based there. The deceased was Nai Myint Naing, 47, a Maw Kanin villager. **"There were about 12 bullet wounds,"** said a local witness.

The deaths and injuries of innocent people due to indiscriminate firing by the junta are instilling widespread fear in Kyaik Hto Township, Mon State. On the evening of March 27, two residents were killed, and a villager was seriously injured when artillery mortars exploded in Mae-Yone Lay Village, according to the report of the network reporters from the area.

Ko Hlan Htet Aung, age 23, a villager of Hnin-Kwin-Kalay village, Kyaik Hto, and Saw Naung Oo, age 24, a Bike-Kar villager, were hit by the artillery shells at around 7:00 PM. Ko Hlan died on the

spot, and Saw Naung Oo was later killed at the Kyaik Hto Hospital on the late evening of March 27. It was confirmed that artillery shells were fired by the military council troops based near the village of Mae Yone Lay. Another villager of Biker-Kar village U Maung Win Htay, age 45, was in critical condition in the clinic.

Only a few days later, five civilians were wounded, including children and seniors, in an attack on 29 March. Homes were also damaged. Three witnesses told HURFOM reporters that those injured were two 4-year-old children and an 80-year-old woman who were struck when artillery shells landed near them.

"One of the two children was in critical condition as the shell hit his right eye and head while a large mortar shell exploded on the house he lives. Mortars also hit an 80-year-old grandmother, another 13-year-old child, and a woman. Children and the elderly are not able to escape quickly. They are always affected." Some villagers fled by taking shelter in bomb shelters under their homes when they heard the sound of gunfire.

Residents of Bilin Township reported that at least eight residents were wounded due to intentional artillery fire by the

junta military in Aloo-Lay village, Bilin Township, Thaton District, Mon State, on 12 April at 8: 30 AM. Twelve shells landed in the town. At least eight people, including Daw Khin Lay, Phwar Shan Ma, and Ko Htein Lin Oo, were injured. One resident was in critical condition after being struck by a mortar shell that exploded near his home. During the fighting, an estimated ten houses were damaged, and three homes were burned down by the junta soldiers when they left the village.

Due to the conflict between the two sides, more than 900 residents of Aloo-Lay village had to flee to nearby relatives' homes and the jungle for safety. By the evening of 14 April, the IDPs were still reporting that the junta was still firing mortars near where they were sheltering. Helicopters were also flying around, causing panic and fear among the villagers.

Even expressing sympathies for the victims of the junta's horrors has become a criminal offence. On April 21, A Thanbyuzarat township, Mon resident, Ma Noe Noe, posted her condolences to the victims of the airstrikes deployed by the junta in Pazi Gyi village. She was then arbitrarily abducted by a group of Junta secret police and military intelligence from her home in a raid. On April 11, a military jet fighter dropped bombs as around 200 civilians gathered for a housewarming ceremony. Ten minutes after the bombs fell, a Mi-35

combat helicopter sprayed the area with gunfire.

In the evening, a military jet fighter conducted another air strike while locals collected the bodies from the morning attack. Regarding these brutal attacks, many social media users have shown their sympathy and posted their condolences to the victims and families. Noe Noe is one of them. She changed her profile picture to black, and because of that, she was arrested. This is the second time she has been taken away and charged with 505. At the beginning of the Spring Revolution, she was arrested and then released in a 2022 amnesty.

The regime is known for releasing and re-arresting political prisoners. The military-backed Correctional Department in Mon State began releasing over 220 prisoners to mark the Burmese traditional New Year festival on April 17 and 18. However, HURFOM confirmed that no political prisoners were released from the prisons located in Mon State.

“As usual, the junta always prioritizes releasing those with drug-related offenses and petty crimes,” according to a young volunteer lawyer based in Mawlamyine.

“Hundreds of young political prisoners involved in the revolution have been detained in Kyaikmayaw Prison. All must be freed,” said the mother of a young prisoner.



Tanintharyi region

9000+ Newly Displaced

26 Injured, 16 Killed



Karen State



Mon State

Local eyewitnesses reported that two young men riding a motorcycle were shot; one was killed, and another was injured and arrested at about 11:00 AM on April 7 in Tanintharyi Town, Myeink District, Southern Tanintharyi Region. Junta forces shot at two young men riding a motorcycle on the Myeik - Dawei Highway near Panat-Nge village, killing Maung Kyaw Htwe, 20, and arresting the victim's cousin riding the bike with him.

The junta security forces taking the sentry duty nearby shot the young men. The family of the deceased asked for the body. The body has not been returned," said a resident.

On April 6, 2023, Zar-Dee villagers reported that the junta forces operating under the Coastal Regional Military Command shot a local villager riding a motorcycle in Zar-Dee Village, Yebyu Dawei, around 4:00 PM. The deceased is Ko Aung Ko, 30, a Zar-Dee Villager.

"Junta soldiers shot him from the lorry and carried the body to Kanbawk Town. The victim had not died after being shot. The next day, on April 7, the soldiers brought the body to the village cemetery in the morning and asked them to bury him quickly," said a Zadi villager.

Those who worked near the incident site reported that while Ko Aung Ko was returning from the rubber plantation, he met three Military Lorries between the Khaung Pyan Zar-Dee road. The soldiers shot him, and he fell on the cement road. His body was brought to Kanbawk and returned on the morning of April 7.

According to HURFOM records, in March 2022, six villagers from Zar-Dee villager were arrested. Two were released on April 4, 2023, and the former health chief, U Aung Minn, remains in custody.

On April 11, 2023, at 8:30 AM, in Yebyu Township, Dawei, villagers from Kalein Aung town reported to the network field team that one of the

two local men arrested at the police station in Kalein Aung had died. The victim, U Phyu, age 50, passed on April 11. On April 8, he was arrested by the secret junta police with another 55-year-old villager, U Ko Lay Myint. U Ko Lay Myint has yet to obtain any information.

“One possibility is that the Junta detention center was subjected to so much illegal torture that he succumbed to his injuries. According to a source from the police, the junta arrested U Phyu. When they searched his phone, they also found some revolutionary photos. The police informed the family that they would return the body on 13 April,” said a resident.

Deaths of detainees in prisons have occurred in Dawei District in large numbers since the coup, and each case has ended with no justice or accountability.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

1. Inflation across all target areas has devastatingly affected civilians who cannot meet their basic needs.
2. Clashes have led to forced internal displacement in Burma as instability and tensions move people from their homes.
3. Police and junta-backed militias continue to initiate door-to-door checks and arrest those on their wanted lists.
4. Concerns have spread as the military junta begins to make decisions that would bar competing democratic parties from the next election in Burma. The military junta has been trying to change/manipulate the numbers of constituencies.
5. Motorcycles, mobile devices, and money are confiscated and extorted from civilians at checkpoints stationed by the junta deliberately along critical routes. Civilians are forced to pay excessive bribes to retrieve their possessions. However, very few were able to afford the high costs.
6. Torture remains rampant in Burma and across target areas where innocent civilians are subjected to horrifying acts by the junta to extract information.
7. The international community, including UN bodies and ASEAN, is not responding swiftly enough to the situation in Burma, which demands urgent attention and consequences for the junta.
8. Military impunity remains deeply ingrained in the institutions representing the Tatmadaw, which only encourages the junta to continue perpetrating human rights violations.
9. Children are targeted by the military junta and deprived of basic needs, including medical attention, food, education, and the right to live safely.
10. The junta's arbitrary arrests and unlawful detention are ongoing, as are warrantless raids and indiscriminate firing into civilian areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A referral of the situation on the ground in Burma is to be made immediately by the United Nations Security Council to the International Criminal Court.
2. Concerted and coordinated action by global actors for an urgently mandated global arms embargo which would prevent the free flow of weapons into the hands of the murderous junta.
3. Aviation fuel sanctions to put an effective end to the airstrikes in Burma, which have contributed to significant loss of life, particularly among innocent civilians.
4. Targeted sanctions on military junta officials and their families and holds on their financial assets and possessions undercut their ability to conduct corrupt business dealings abroad.
5. Strengthened and renewed protection mechanisms grant civilians who are vulnerable and at risk of assault a position where they can access justice referral and accountability pathways.
6. Renewed and continued funding support for local organizations responding to the needs of their communities on the ground. Cross-border aid pathways must be accessed, and all humanitarian aid in the hands of local actors.
7. Foreign investors in Burma must immediately cease their operations and withdraw their involvement from all development projects in the country, including but not limited to airports, seaports, and cement businesses.
8. An abrupt and immediate halt to the use of torture by the military junta, and further, we call for investigations to probe the unlawful deaths of civilians in Burma who have been tortured to death, as well as those who have been forced to endure trauma and long-term injuries as a result.

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