

MONTHLY OVERVIEW

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

AUGUST
2022



SUMMARY OVERVIEW & ANALYSIS

With inflation on the rise, and mounting atrocities being perpetrated by the Myanmar junta, civilians lives are on the line.

AUGUST 2022

Throughout the month of August 2022, the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) documented increasing attacks on civilians and human rights defenders. Many of these assaults amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes. Across target areas of Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi region, the Burma Army has continued to commit widespread human rights violations with impunity.

Civilians have routinely been caught in the crossfire of the junta's offensives, which are expanding and are subsequently fueling the worsening humanitarian crisis on the ground. Children are among those targeted in a series of raids and flyover attacks by the military who are using various tools of terror to isolate and intimidate civilian populations.

HURFOM is devastated by the rise in the numbers of those injured, killed, arbitrarily arrested and detained on a regular basis. In addition to the crimes being committed by the junta, civilians are also facing a multitude of other challenges including inflation. Since early August 2022, the inflation rate has risen dramatically, which has led to higher prices for essential commodities. Rice, cooking oil, chili and onions are three times their average price.

A daily worker earning 5000 Myanmar Kyat (approximately 2 USD) a day is now unable to feed a family of more than three. The income and outcome are imbalanced. People have to struggle just to buy food. "I have to go to work on my bike rather than consider buying gasoline," said a laborer. The fact that the military junta controls the US dollar and import market means most importers are facing huge losses.

Some have to stop their trading, according to the Thai product importers: "We've been selling Thai products for a long time. We've never experienced a situation as bad as this. The Thai currency has a good price while the Myanmar Kyat has no value so we have to pay three times the amount for a product. Then, our customers can't afford it. So the products are left over at our store. It is not possible to make a profit through imports now, without suffering a loss. If the inflation rate continues to rise, we will have to close our store," said a Thai product importer.

There is also another gasoline shortage that has occurred, which is adding additional pain to all sectors. "Not only is the price of gasoline getting higher but there is a shortage of gasoline. If we want to buy some, we have to go to the city. But we can

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only buy it with limitations. We can't buy as much as we want. The situation is really bad in some rural areas," said a local who spoke to HURFOM. As of August 11, 2022, 16.6 grams of gold priced at 2.5 million Kyat while one US dollar is equivalent to 2,750 Kyat.

The rise of junta backed pro militias across Southeastern Myanmar has become an additional area of growing concern for HURFOM. On 3 August, HURFOM released a briefing paper which documented at least 129 victims of militia violence, with 18 killed across target areas of Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi region since 1 February 2021. Throughout this month, there were ongoing attacks launched by these groups including Pyusawhti, Thway Thauk and the Black Kite Brotherhood among others.

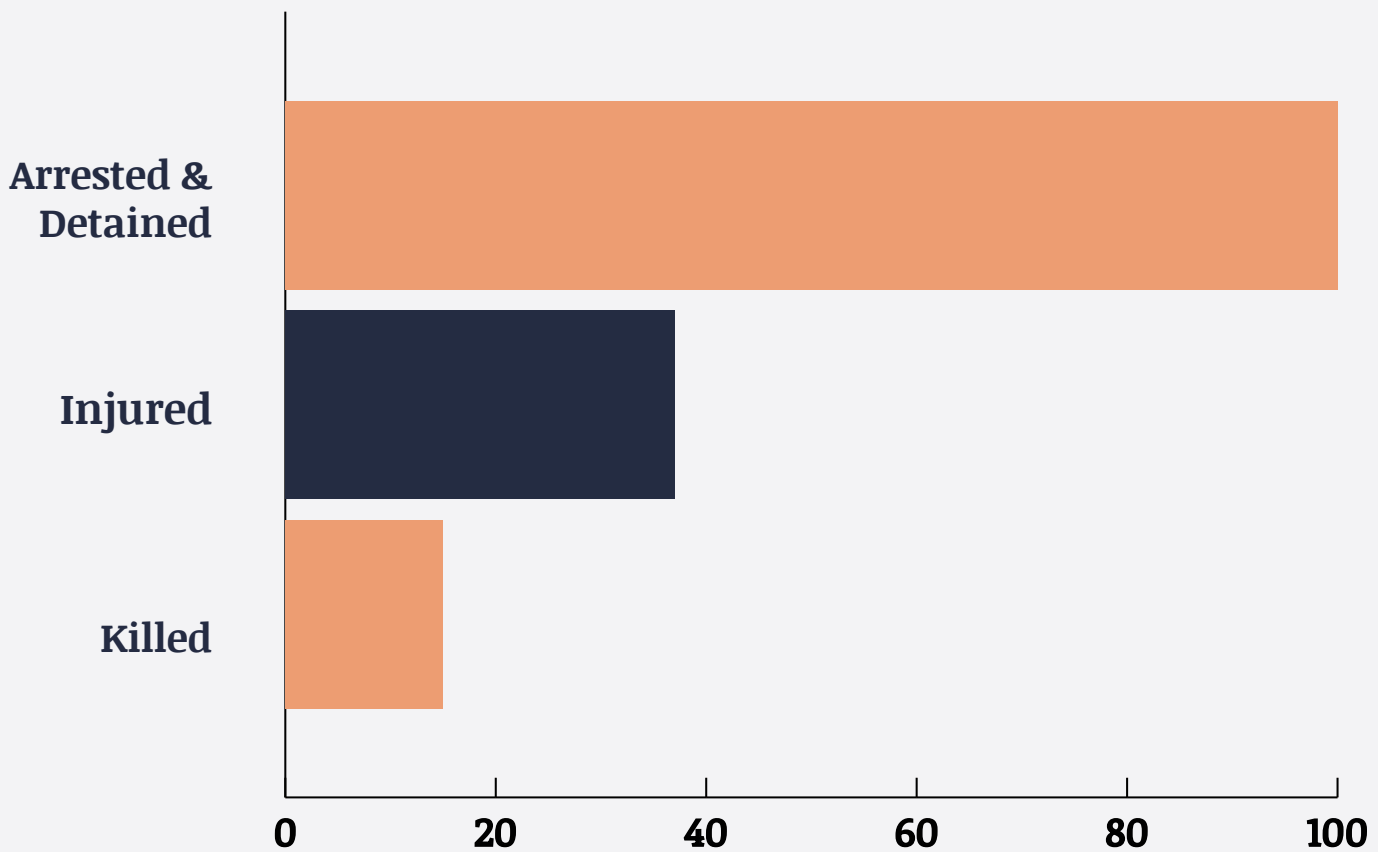
The junta is paving pathways for destruction as the country's prospects for democracy slowly deteriorate. Their desperate quests for power were apparent even before the attempted coup on 1 February 2021, as they sought legitimacy through various diplomatic channels while the very institution of the Tatmadaw was becoming increasingly more unpopular. Their tirade of war crimes, as well as crimes against humanity and genocide, is further evidence of the great lengths that the military junta is willing to go to invoke cruel means of control onto the people of Burma.

And yet, a sentiment of hope, determination and adversity is still prominent throughout the country as rallying forces join together to defeat and dismantle the junta.

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 **August 2022**, HURFOM recorded least **60 arrested, 40 detained, 37 injured and 15 killed**.

Civilians Arrested, Injured & Killed in August 2022 in Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi region



Members of Parliament and their families targeted by the military junta.

12

PROTESTS ACROSS TARGET
AREAS IN AUGUST 2022

7

TANINTHARYI
REGION

3

MON STATE

2

KAREN STATE



7,000+

CIVILIANS DISPLACED ACROSS TARGET AREAS

CIVILIANS TARGETED IN MON, KAREN STATE
& TANINTHARYI REGION

25+

DISMISSED FOR
INVOLVEMENT
IN THE CIVIL
DISOBEDIENCE
MOVEMENT

8+

PROTESTERS/
ACTIVISTS
SENTENCED IN
JUNTA COURTS

12+

ENFORCED
DISAPPEARANCES
BY THE MILITARY



KAREN STATE

1800+ Newly Displaced

15 Injured, 2 Killed



Mon State



Tanintharyi Region

In Karen State, instability across the area has been the result of the Burma Army's expanding presence. Junta forces Infantry Battalion No.97 indiscriminately fired artillery missiles in at least three villages on August 15th. They killed one person and injured seven in Kawkareik township. These indiscriminate shots led a two-year-old child to die and an elder, U Tin Maung, age 77, was seriously injured in his back. Last July, there were 35 houses and four cow stables destroyed in Thayar Gone village from indiscriminate firing by the junta. Local villagers who fled the village due to the artillery attacks said that another five residential houses in Maung Ma Yew Village were also ruined.

Ongoing torture, indiscriminate shots, and arbitrary arrests during midnight raids by junta army troops and police forces is also ongoing in Hpa-an township. The families and friends of the young civilians who were arbitrarily detained and tortured during midnight raids on August 17 told the reporters that the troops seized at least seven young men, including their sons. Burmese Army troops based in Myaing Kalay, Hpa-an, and some local police forces raided three houses in Khayae Rd, Ward No.4, Hpa-an.

They grabbed seven young individuals without arrest warrants, said two sources in the area. The neighbor who witnessed the incident said that the arrested young men were kicked by Army boots and hit on the head with gunstocks. ***“When the junta and police forces departed from ward No.4, they indiscriminately fired several gunshots. We think they brought the young men to the Myaing Kalay, but no information was received after the arrests.”***

The ongoing human rights violations being perpetrated against civilians in Southeastern Burma demand an urgent, coordinated response by the international community which goes beyond words of condemnation. This month, photos were also routinely shared and circulated of children seeking safety in bunkers while military planes flew overhead. This is unacceptable.



MON STATE

600+ Newly Displaced

7 Injured, 2 Killed



Karen State



Tanintharyi Region

Young people in Mon State are frequently targeted by the military junta and accused of being supporters of various opposition armed forces, or pro-democracy movements. This has led to the deaths of many young innocent civilians, particularly men.

Family members said that two young men from Aung Myung Ward, Ye Township, who were unjustly arrested by military council forces on August 6, are still missing. Of these 2, Aung Min Pain is only 20 years old. The two of them were arbitrarily abducted after being accused of being friends with some local People's Defense Forces on Facebook. The families and relatives have been asking the relevant departments of the junta in Ye township, Mon for their information from the troops and said that they still have not received any information.

In a separate case, on August 19, at 4:30 PM, the joint forces of junta and members of the General Administrative Department arbitrarily arrested seven youths and a 50-year-old man at Phat-Tan Ward, Mawlamyine, declaring they had to investigate. **“When they came and raided my home, they aggressively**

questioned my son. They said they had to investigate him as something was linked to him. I learned that another six young civilians and U Kyaw Han, a 50-year-old resident from this ward, were also arrested on August 19th,” said the family member of one of the detainees. A father who had his son abducted said he had not been able to reach them: **“Some family members went to the police station to request information about their sons but the junta did not give any information.”**

The family members are worried because the young people were beaten during their arrest. They are not allowed to communicate with their family members, and they do not know precisely where they were detained.

The junta has stepped up arrests of those suspected of having links with the Spring Revolution, including social workers and businessmen from different parts of Mawlamyine, Mon State. At least ten men from different backgrounds have been abducted since August 22nd to date. The junta has intensified arrests of those they believe are associated with the current movement. However, those arbitrary

arrests are unlawful because they have no evidence. Those released were only freed after paying substantial bribes.

Homes and properties are being destroyed and confiscated, including the farms of civilians which have been under attack by the regime who have scorched farm huts, in yet another blow to civilian land. From August 10 to 14, the junta forces from the South East Command, who are based in Mawlamyine, came and gave orders to forcibly demolish the farm huts built in the fields in the villages of Maekro, Kohpanaw, Kwan Ngan, and others in Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State.

They came and ordered approximately 50 farmers who live on the farm to destroy the farm huts. If not, they'd burn them all down and penalize the owners. "We use these shelters to rest in the fields during our farming times. We have to destroy them out of fear. The reason behind this order was to cut the shelters of the People's Defense Forces and other armed groups. **However, this violates the civilians' rights to living and food security,**" a Civil Disobedience Movement school teacher, originally from Kyaikmayaw, expressed to HURFOM.

The impacts of inflation have also been detrimental for villagers in Mon State. This includes the most basic of goods including oil, rice and gas. The cost of medicine also has increased by more than 50 per cent. Those with serious illnesses are struggling to secure their livelihoods and afford life-saving medicine. The junta's wrath and destruction has also led to a failing economy.

In addition, HURFOM also documented that the junta and the military-backed General Administration Department have arrested at least a dozen and a half youth in Mon State, accusing them of being linked to local armed forces and the ethnic revolution organizations, according to sources close to the detainees. The arrests occurred between the 24th and 28th August 2022,. Their homes were also raided. All of them were sent to Kyaikmayaw Prison, where they are being denied their rights and being tortured.



Tanintharyi region

5000+ Newly Displaced

15 Injured, 11 Killed



Karen State



Mon State

Local villagers reported increasing cases of arbitrary arrest, particularly in Dawei. Civilians have been taken away, tortured and killed by the military junta. On August 2nd, it was reported that five villagers were abducted from their homes, and murdered. The Burma Army buried and concealed the bodies. Witnesses said screams and several gunshots were heard. The villagers unearthed the victims: U Saw Shi, Ko Zaw San, and Ko Thin Win: “I saw multiple wounds on their bodies. They must have been tortured harshly during the interrogation by the Burmese soldiers. They defied the orders of families and cremated them,” said a source who spoke to HURFOM.

Another person described the bodies inflicted with knife wounds, gunshot wounds and many bruises sustained from beatings. “We know they are innocent because they are not associated with any armed forces or political groups.” Bagaw Zun villagers who talked to a HURFOM reporter also confirmed that the remaining two are missing, and the families are still worried about their vitalities.

Attacks against civilians are often random, and indiscriminate in nature.

On 8 August at around 7:30 PM, military soldiers shot and arrested two young men riding a motorcycle in Aye Ayew Nyein Ward, Kawthaung Village, Dawei District. Due to the shooting, Ko Lwin Zaw Soe, age 24, fell off his motorcycle and died. The deceased was a resident of Kanethiri Village, Thayet Chaung Township, Dawei District, and worked in the fishing industry in Kawthaung Town. “The men were not aware of the order to not allow two males to ride the same motorcycles,” said a co-worker of the victim.

“He bled to death because he did not receive medical treatment in time. Of course, we want justice for him now, but I don’t think it can be achieved. Even those who demand justice are at risk of being targeted,” another co-worker of the victim expressed. Another young man, just 19 years of age, was shot and killed by the junta while passing near the temporary base of the junta in Kalone Htar village, Yebyu, northern Dawei.

Again on the evening of August 17th and 18th, at least four innocent civilians were abducted without any arrest warrants or clarifications after the junta soldiers and police forces raided two houses in

Pakarri village, Dawei. No one was confirmed as harmed in the shooting. However, there were three arrests and the junta troops took them to unknown places. The shooting destroyed an estimated 50 million Kyat worth of properties and housing, according to locals.

Children have also been caught in the midst of the junta's merciless attacks which include fleeing conflict in their homes and villages and being denied life-saving support. . These military incursions have led over 1000 people from five different villages to flee, and can be linked to the deaths of at least two internally displaced persons.

In the first week of August 2022, two internally displaced people (IDPs) could not access medical treatment. The two victims were a 40-year-old man from A Ka Neat village and an 11-year-old child from Wa Zen Taw village. "The child frequently suffered from epilepsy but had been able to access regular medical treatments in a nearby home at a clinic. Since the family had to flee, it was impossible to maintain regular treatments," said a villager close to the family. On August 4, 2022, a 40 year old man who fled took shelter in a plantation. The individual had been seriously ill for two days. The child and the man died at Yebyu IDP camp. Since July 30, 2022, the Burma Army has conducted military operations and established bases in villages in Yebyu Township.

Further, relentless attacks in the Tanintharyi region have continued unabated. Since August 13th, junta forces operating under Light Infantry Battalion No. 285 have detonated heavy weapons into the village of Kyaung-Neint village, Palaw Township. The village committee confirmed that there were no casualties or damages due to the attacks. However, these indiscriminate attacks of artillery shells led approximately 600 local villagers to flee their homes, livelihoods, and properties between 13 and 15 August 2022.

The attacks in the Tanintharyi region are becoming more violent and more frequent. HURFOM has been documenting the rise in hostilities which threaten civilian safety and livelihoods.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

1. Inflation across all target areas has had a devastating toll on civilians who are unable to have their most basic needs met.
2. Clashes have led to forced internal displacement in Burma as instability and tensions force people from their homes.
3. Concerns have spread as the military junta begins to make decisions which would bar competing, democratic parties from the next election in Burma. The military junta has been trying to change/ manipulate the numbers of constituencies.
4. Motorcycles, mobile devices, and money are regularly confiscated and extorted from civilians at checkpoints stationed by the junta deliberately along key-routes. Civilians were forced to pay excessive bribes to retrieve their possessions. However, very few were able to afford the high costs.
5. Torture remains rampant in Burma, and across target areas where innocent civilians are subjected to grueling, horrifying acts by the junta to extract information.
6. The international community including UN bodies and ASEAN are not responding swiftly enough to the situation on the ground in Burma, which demands urgent attention and consequences for the junta.
7. Military impunity remains deeply ingrained into the institutions representing the Tatmadaw, which only emboldens the junta to continue perpetrating human rights violations.
8. Children have been targeted by the military junta, and deprived of their basic needs including medical attention, food, education and the right to live safely.
9. The arbitrary arrests and unlawful detention by the junta are ongoing, as are warrant-less raids and indiscriminate firing into civilian areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A referral of the situation on the ground in Burma 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, as well as their families, which puts holds on their financial assets and possessions and undercuts their ability to do corrupt business dealings abroad.
5. Strengthened and renewed protection mechanisms which grant civilians who are vulnerable and at risk of assault in a position where they are able to 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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