

MONTHLY OVERVIEW

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

FEBRUARY
2024



SUMMARY OVERVIEW & ANALYSIS

Arbitrary Arrests and Unlawful Detainment by the Military Junta On the Rise in Southeastern Burma as Women and Children Are Targeted

FEBRUARY 2024

Three years since the attempted coup in Burma was marked on 1 February 2024. Thousands of civilians have been killed and injured by the junta, and many more remain imprisoned on falsified and unjust charges. The economic situation has spiraled due to the junta's failed policies and has consequently led to inflation, with prices soaring far beyond the means of many households. In addition, social services, including health care and education, have been eroded through corruption and attacks in local areas by the terrorist regime.

In a statement released by the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM), calls were made to end these attacks immediately and for the international community, including donors and policymakers, to focus on what is next to support human rights defenders and pro-democracy advocates. These stakeholders must engage with local civil society organizations on what steps they can take to ensure they are on the right side of history.

There is overwhelming evidence that indicates an overall decline in human rights, peace, and security since the failed coup. Amid the ongoing failures by Burma Army soldiers to gain territory in ethnic areas and high casualty rates, the regime

recently announced that they would begin enforcing a conscription law that was first enacted almost two decades ago. The new law mandates that men between 18 and 45 and women aged 18 to 35 must enlist for at least two years. The decision to put this law into effect when the junta is experiencing historic losses is no accident. The long-lasting impacts on young people and future generations are expected to be catastrophic.

Currently, grade promotion or matriculation exams are scheduled in the school system. Still, parents are afraid of the conscription law recently enacted by the military junta and have withdrawn their children from schools.

“The parents can’t wait for the end of the exam period. They fear their children will have to join the military, so they have withdrawn them from school. Schools have lost about 30 to 50 students, and small schools lost about 10 to 20 students,” said a social worker from Mudon Township who helps local matriculated students.

The military junta enacted the forced conscription bill on February 10th, 2024. Following approval of the bill, some young people from different townships and villages in Mon State were arrested by the junta without cause.

SUMMARY OVERVIEW & ANALYSIS

FEBRUARY 2024

Two young men from Ye Township were arrested at Myay Ni Gone Ward, Mawlamyine on February 11th, while a man and a woman from Kyone Ka Dat village, Thanbyuzayat Township, were arrested on February 13th. People are worried that the military junta is openly and recklessly arresting civilians without cause and using them as “porters” under the conscription bill.

The military is continuing to try and control the country through fear and intimidation tactics. However, even in great darkness, the spirit of the people’s revolution continues to inspire. To show solidarity with the pro-democracy movement, ‘silent strikes’ were held across various townships, as were protests in the continued call for the military junta to relinquish their illegal and unjust claim to power.

In target areas of HURFOM, including Mon State, Karen State and the Tanintharyi region, there remain ongoing concerns about the safety, security and overall protection of civilians.

This month, there were repeated cases of arbitrary arrests and abductions of ordinary people and former lawmakers with the National League for Democracy (NLD) accused of supporting the armed resistance effort. There were several cases where women were specifically targeted.

One local who was detained in Thanbyuzayat by the Burma Army was accused of supporting the local resistance forces in Mon State on 10 February 2024. The victim, age 43 years old and a motorcycle repairman was arrested in the evening by junta forces. The regime continues to crack down on fundamental rights and freedoms, including participation in protests.

The soldiers alleged that Mya Than joined peaceful demonstrations and sent weapons and food to the Ye Township local resistance group. He was prosecuted at the police station under Pa 26/2024, Section 50(j)/50(i)/52(a) of the Anti-Terrorism Act.

At least 100 people accused of being related to individuals supporting the National Unity Government (NUG) and the People’s Defense Forces (PDFs) were detained. Most of them were released in Thanbyuzayat, Mon State.

On February 10th, the junta forces raided and abducted the home of a former police officer, Ko Wa Taut, from the Aung Mingalar ward, Thanbyuzayat. Then, on January 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, and 16th, seven residents of Thanbyuzayat town were again captured on allegations that they were involved with the PDF. This includes, Phaung Taw village’s former administrator, U Khin Maung Than, and a Kanbauk village villager, Ko Kyaw Set Lin,

SUMMARY OVERVIEW & ANALYSIS

FEBRUARY 2024

who were arbitrarily arrested by the Mawrawaddy Navy in Yebyu, Dawei. U Khin Maung Than was the administrator of the NLD government in Phaung Taw village for five years and was captured on the night of February 10th at midnight.

Ko Kyaw Set Lin was taken on the morning of February 11th. The junta troops had visited the home of U Khin Maung Than, who retired as administrator after the coup, at least four times. The Navy has been arresting residents of Kanbawk continuously since December last year. At the beginning of this month, they started searching homes and confiscating cell phones if they were suspicious. During the third week of December last year, the regiment captured six residents of Kanbawk, and only four of them have been released.

The arrests of local civilians, conduct of patrols, and inspections in Ohn Pin Kwin village tract, Phaung Taw village tract, Thae Chaung village tract, and Zar Dee village tract in Kanbawk were mainly committed by soldiers of the Mawrawaddy Naval Station.

In January 2024, nearly two hundred people were arrested in the Tanintharyi region, Southern Burma, by the military and unidentified armed forces, including at least 100 civilians in Dawei Township, 20 residents in Pu Law Township, 30

people in Myeik Township, and at least ten villagers in Tha Yet Chaung Township.

These ongoing arrests continue to show the desperation of the military. They have rapidly lost control and legitimacy and are exploiting local people. The international community must take seriously the plight of political prisoners who are not safe in military custody.

The military junta is also carrying out airstrikes and ground attacks against innocent people. During a fierce battle in Pu Law, Tanintharyi region, thousands of residents fled as the regiment fired from the air. There has been active fighting since the morning of 30 January 2024 in the village of Mee Laung Chaung where thousands of people are fleeing. The battle between the two sides escalated quickly and caused at least three road closures in Pu Law Township.

In June of last year, when the junta blocked the entrance and exit of Pu Law for more than two days, many passengers were unable to access food or shelter. On January 24, the junta's military camp based in Dawei Township was attacked and conquered by the joint revolutionary forces. Seven members of the junta were also captured alive during the battle.

Women and children have been caught in the crossfire of violence. A 9-year-old boy

SUMMARY OVERVIEW & ANALYSIS

FEBRUARY 2024

was seriously injured when Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) No. 9 based in Thaton shot two artillery shells into Kaw Hlaing village, causing an explosion. Saw Thet Naing Htwe, age 9, was hit by the blast and suffered a broken leg.

“The army is firing artillery weapons every day. It hit a child living in the house. The injury is severe because of a leg fracture. The whole village is frightened,” said a resident of Kaw Hlaing village.

The daily launching of artillery shells by the military junta into Kaw Hlaing village has made it difficult for the local people to go to work to support their families. They are living in fear. Kaw Hlaing village, where the military troops are firing artillery weapons, is in the administrative area of the Karen National Union (KNU) Brigade 1, Thaton District.

On January 30, two 15-year-old students were hit and injured when the junta troops attacked with artillery weapons in Pha Lan Taung village, Hpa-An Township, KNU Thaton District.

On February 7th, 2024, the junta targeted Kyone Long old village, Ye Township, Mon State, with multiple artillery attacks, injuring seven villagers, including a child and destroying a house. The town is controlled by the New Mon State Party.

The 316th Artillery Regiment, based in Ye Township, was responsible for the attack. There were no ongoing armed clashes in the area, but the regime launched five indiscriminate artillery shells, one of which exploded on the house and injured seven family members – a ten-year-old child, five men and a woman.

As the junta increases its presence, women are being targeted for their pro-democracy activities. Two sisters, Daw Cho Cho and Daw Nyo Nyo, aged 40, were captured by the Mawrawaddy Navy at 11:00 PM on the 17th of February. On February 15th, Min Thar villager Daw Kay Jar Oo, a teacher who is also a member of the Civil Disobedience Movement, was abducted when she was returning from shopping in Kanbauk village.

“There are more and more cases of the Mawrawaddy Navy entering and arresting people at homes at night. Only a few have been able to escape,” said a Kanbauk local.

On the night of February 15th, a young woman from Tha Boot Chaung village, Thae Chaung village tract, Yebyu Township, was also abducted. Four women were arrested in Kanbauk by the regiment in the four days from February 15th to 18th.

“The phones of individuals arrested are being checked with advanced technology.”

SUMMARY OVERVIEW & ANALYSIS

FEBRUARY 2024

Those who have many contacts with the arrests are captured again. Many people are all locked in one room together,” said a recently released person. Since the beginning of this year, the Mawrawaddy Navy has been arresting and interrogating the locals in the Kanbauk area.

On February 20th, 2024, a local woman from Shwe Nat Taung Ward, Mawlamyine, Mon State, was arrested by the junta after being accused of promoting ‘terrorism.’ The junta has accused 28-year-old Daw Thiri Yadana Maung, who is a furniture shop owner, of writing comments on social media that: ‘destroy the stability of the State.’ A large contingent using force arrested her at her home.

The junta issued a statement accusing her of posting information that affected ‘national peace and order’ when she wrote: “[The junta] is running out of bullets,” as well as supportive posts of the Spring Revolution. Thiri Yadanar Mg is being investigated under Section 505-A of the Penal Code. Ordinary people, including those from Thanbyuzayat Township, are worried that they will be accused and arrested on unfounded allegations.

Religious figures are also being targeted. Burma Army soldiers abducted a monk and a civilian in Pu Law during their military operations on 1 February. In the morning at 6 AM, a 40-year-old monk

named Ko Wanna, who was ordinating at Nang Pa Yout village monastery and a young man from a house in front of the monastery were abducted by the junta troops.

“U Wanna is already a monk in a monastery. They asked him to change clothes and arrested him,” said a local man.

According to members of Myeik District No. 1 Battalion, the junta troops that abducted the two people was a column conducting military activities near Nang Pa Yout village. The monk and young man arrested by the regiment were detained at the Pu Law police station and then taken to Light Infantry Battalion LIB No. 285.

Torture is still widely carried out by the junta in truly sinister efforts to exert information at any cost. A young man from Taung Wain ward, Mawlamyine, Mon State, was arrested by the regiment and severely beaten and tortured on 5 February 2024. He is receiving emergency treatment at Mawlamyine Hospital.

The joint forces of the junta and Pyu Saw Htee arrested Mg Aung Ko Ko after the military lobbies informed them that he was a graduate of the People’s Defense Force (PDF). He was then violently interrogated. Mg. Aung Ko Ko has bruises on his face, head, and body and has not

SUMMARY OVERVIEW & ANALYSIS

FEBRUARY 2024

been discharged from the hospital as of 7 February. In addition, the regime has opened a case under Section 505(a) of the Penal Code against Mg Aung Ko Ko.

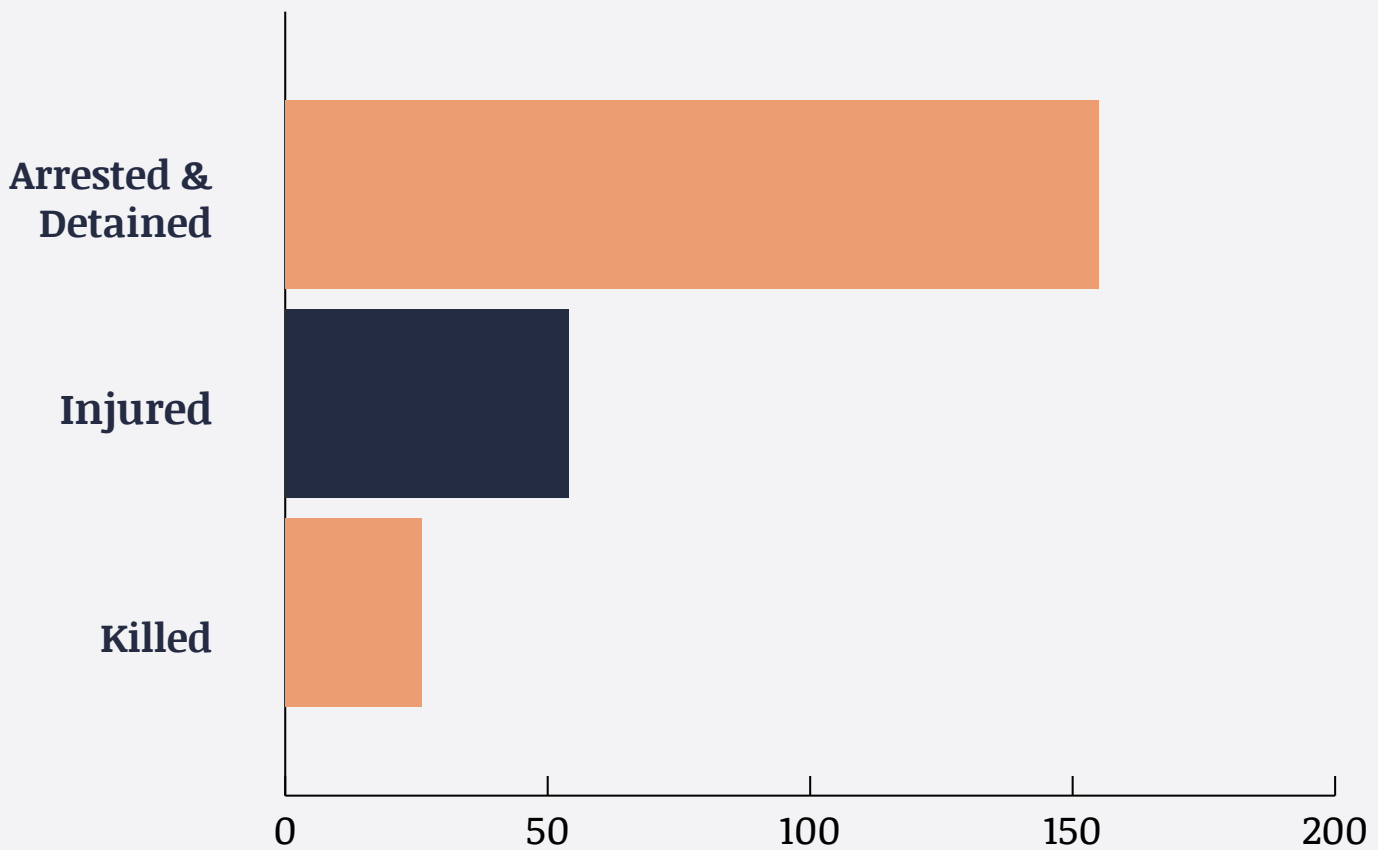
Those affiliated with the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) also continue to face repercussions for supporting and engaging in the pro-democracy movement. A teacher from a private school in Chaung Zone City, Mawlamyine, in Mon State, was prosecuted on 9 February for urging employees to join the CDM on social media. The arrested teacher is U Chit Ko Ko, a 44-year-old man who was arrested and prosecuted. He was charged with Pa 11/2024 and Section 505 of the Penal Code by the police station of Chaung Zone City.

The ongoing assault on Burma's people is in stark violation of international law, treaties and basic human rights principles. The failure to hold the junta accountable speaks to flawed systems in the global system and a lack of political will. The attacks will only end once the perpetrators are brought to justice. HURFOM reiterates our calls for a global arms embargo, targeted sanctions and an immediate referral of the human rights situation in Burma to the International Criminal Court.

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 **February 2024**, HURFOM recorded at least **90 people arrested, 65 detained, 54 injured, and 26 killed across all target areas.**

Civilians Arrested, Injured & Killed in February 2024 in Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi region



7+

Pro-Democracy Protesters & Activists
Targeted by the Junta

9

PROTESTS ACROSS TARGET
AREAS IN FEBRUARY 2024

7

TANINTHARYI
REGION

2

MON STATE

0

KAREN STATE



26,650+

CIVILIANS DISPLACED ACROSS TARGET AREAS

CIVILIANS TARGETED IN MON, KAREN STATE
& THE TANINTHARYI REGION

9+

ARRESTED AND
DETAINED FOR
INVOLVEMENT
IN THE CIVIL
DISOBEDIENCE
MOVEMENT

6+

PROTESTERS/
POLITICIANS
SENTENCED IN
JUNTA COURTS

6+

ENFORCED
DISAPPEARANCES
BY THE MILITARY

55+

VILLAGERS WERE CAPTURED AND USED AS
HUMAN SHIELDS IN ALL TARGET AREAS.

130+

DAMAGED HOMES



105+

HOMES RAIDED

86+

CASES OF
MOTORCYCLE
CONFISCATION

6+

CIVILIANS CHARGED
ON ALLEGATIONS OF
HAVING TIES TO PRO-
DEMOCRACY GROUPS

34+

VEHICLES
CONFISCATED BY
THE JUNTA

100+

Political Prisoners were relocated from Myeik Prison to
Kaw Thaug Prison.



Junta forces in all targeted areas cut **35+**
communities off the communication and
Internet **as of February 26, 2024.**



KAREN STATE

11,350+ Newly Displaced

18 Injured, 7 Killed



Mon State



Tanintharyi Region

In Karen State, the military junta is rapidly losing bases as the offensive continues to secure key posts and camps.

According to the Karen National Union (KNU) spokesman, Padoh Saw Taw Nee, the KNU has captured more territory in the Mon and Karen states and the Bago Region, where the ethnic armed group's three brigades are based. The KNU now controls the Asian Highway from Myawaddy to Kyonedoe town.

The Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN), a local civil society organization, reported more than 700,000 internally displaced people in Karen State as of 1 February 2024.

In response to the junta's widespread losses, innocent civilians are being targeted by the regime. On February 16th, 2024, the military junta dropped a bomb using a drone on Lut Shan village, Kyarinnseikyi Township, Karen State and killed a local woman. Sources reported there was no armed clash at the time.

The 325th Artillery Regiment based in Wel Ka Li, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State, was responsible for the attack. The 53-year-old woman was hit by bomb debris on her head and died.

"The junta is targeting residential villages with both reckless and indiscriminate artillery attacks and air assaults," said a Lut Shan resident

A similar attack took place on 16 February, as reported by KPSN. The LIB #20, based in Nyaung Lay Bin township, launched 120mm of mortar shells into Bay Kay(Chon Inn) village, Hsaw Hti township, Kler Lwee Htu district at 1 PM. A 46-year-old woman was hit and is now in critical condition.

Civilians trapped in the crossfire of the junta's violence are entitled to justice and yet are denied it due to illegitimate and unaccessible referral justice pathways.



MON STATE

6,800+ Newly Displaced

12 Injured, 6 Killed



Karen State



Tanintharyi Region

Perhaps most concerning in Mon State is the steady increase in civilians being arbitrarily arrested by the Burma Army. HURFOM has continued to observe and document a widespread rise in the number of innocent people unlawfully detained. According to the New Ramanya Federal Force (NRFF), 105 civilians have been killed, and more than 900 were unjustly arrested in Mon State since the attempted coup.

Ko Than Win Aung of Yay Twin Kone village, age 40, was awoken by soldiers at his home at nearly midnight on February 14. He was sleeping when the junta raided and arrested him. He tried to resist and run away and was shot and wounded in the left abdomen. After that, the junta took the injured Ko Than Win Aung away. His family was informed that he had died on the evening of February 15.

In another case, 46-year-old Ko Nan Myint Oo, a construction worker and materials trader from Bo Nay Win Street, Aung Zay Ya Ward, Thanbyuzayat, Mon State, was arrested and interrogated by the junta. The junta accused him of supporting the People's Defense Forces (PDFs) by donating funds to them in 2022 and 2023. The junta alleges he also provided them with weapons.

Both of these claims have no evidence, as the regime continues to scapegoat innocent civilians. A case has been opened against him for 'carrying illegal weapons' under Section 50(j)/50(i)/52(a) of the Anti-Terrorism Act.

At least 15 people were sentenced to life imprisonment under Section 52(a) and 50(j) of the Anti-Terrorism Act by the junta. Burma Army soldiers are surveilling civilians regularly in Thanbyuzayat town. Homes are inspected, phones are confiscated, and innocent people are arrested. In addition to hunting and arresting residents for supporting the National Unity Government (NUG) and the armed resistance, the military junta also sealed off at least 20 residential properties.

Human rights violations, including forced portering, are also on the rise. Soldiers of the junta's No. 409 Light Infantry Battalion (LIB), which entered Hton Bo Gyi village from Wee Yaw camp, took three residents in the town to be used as human shields. Those arrested are 40-year-old Saw Phoe Thet, 50-year-old Saw Maung Bay, and 63-year-old U Aung San.

The junta column released three villagers who were captured on February 12, but they are currently stationed around the

area: *“Ever since the army marched in, the locals have been fleeing. The three people abducted were housekeepers,”* said a Hton Bo Gyi villager.

On February 12, there were three clashes between the military junta. As a result of the battle, most of the residents of four villages, including Hton Bo Gyi and Hton Bo Lay, fled and did not return for fear of more violence.

On February 16, at 7 AM, a clash occurred between the revolutionary forces and the junta on Three Pagoda-Sat Kaw Road at 8 AM. During this time, a man living in Los Shan village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mawlamyine District, Mon State, was shot at and killed by the Burmese military.

According to a local witness who was cutting rubber, junta soldiers shot the victim. This young man had bought medicine from Thanbyuzayat town and returned to the village on a motorcycle. He was buried in the cemetery of Pan Kone Turn.

A rubber farm owner reported that at the time of the fighting, at least ten artillery mortar weapons were fired and exploded in the rubber plantations near San Pya village and Ye Tha Khon village.

“More than ten rubber trees were hit and damaged. A weapon dropped four rounds more than 200 feet from me and exploded. I couldn’t walk because I was so frightened,” said the farm owner.

Meanwhile, airstrikes continue to threaten civilian lives. In the second week of February 2024, the military junta launched two air assaults on Win Tar Ban village, Bilin Township, Mon State, that destroyed 17 houses, reported the Thaton District Karen National Union. The air assaults took place on February 10th and the 14th.

“Now, no one is in the village. There are also daily artillery attacks, so no one dares to stay. Some villagers returned to the village to check their homes and have left again,” said a Win Tar Ban resident.



Tanintharyi region

8,500+ Newly Displaced

16 Injured, 7 Killed



Karen State



Mon State

Arbitrary arrests are also ongoing in the Tanintharyi region, where the regime abducts women, children and couples. On February 3rd, in the evening, Ko Kyaw Zin, a resident of Yebyu Township, his wife, and U Tun Paing, from Phaung Taw village, were arrested and taken away from their house in a rubber farm in Ohn Pin Kwin village.

As of February 17th, four residents have not been released. Local villagers reported that unconfirmed military sources cited that the Mawrawaddy Navy severely beat Ko Kyaw Zin during interrogation. He is recovering from injuries that he nearly died from.

On the night of February 15th, a young woman aged 18 from Tha Boot Chaung village, Thae Chaung village tract, Yebyu Township, was arrested. The details of the young woman and the reason for her arrest are unclear. In another case, HURFOM reported that on February 10, at 11 PM, U Htoo Shein and U Kyaw Htoo, who lived in Phaung Taw village, escaped when the junta raided their houses.

Up to seven women were arrested in the fourth week of February in Kanbauk village and Min Thar village in Yebyu Township. None of them have been released yet.

At midnight on February 19, Daw Yin Aye, around 50 years old, from Magin Ward, 30-year-old Ma Thet Thet Mon from Mee Kyaung Ai Ward, Ma Nilar San, aged around 38 years old, and Daw Zarchi Myoe of Thiri Mingalar Ward were captured at their respective homes by the junta.

Daw Cho Cho and Daw Nyo Nyo, two sisters from Hlae Gone Ward, Kanbauk village, were arrested by the Junta on February 17. On February 15th, CDM teacher Daw Kay Jar Oo of Min Thar village, who was on the way back from shopping in Kanbauk village, was detained by the Junta on the hill of Sin Gu village, which is the road between Kanbauk and Min Thar village, according to people close to her. On the

night of February 15th, a young woman aged around 18 from Tha Boot Chaung village, Thae Chaung village tract, was arrested.

On February 3rd, in the evening, 37-year-old Ko Kyaw Zin, who lives on the road leading to the Mawrawaddy Naval Station, Ohm Pin Kwin village, and his wife, Daw Lae Lae Cho, who is about 38 years old and a resident of Phaung Taw village, were also taken captive.

It is known that those women were detained at the Mawrawaddy Naval Station. The junta troops regularly patrol Ohm Pin Kwin Village, Kanbauk Village, Thae Chaung Village, and Phaung Taw Village daily with military vehicles. The houses in that group of villages were searched day and night, and the residents were also experiencing cases of confiscating phones if they were suspected.

In addition to an ongoing battle in the East Forest area of Dawei Township, Tanintharyi region, thousands of residents in more than ten villages have fled due to a military junta's airstrikes. From the 17th of February to the 23rd, the military junta and the People's Defense Joint Forces have been fighting fiercely in the Dawei East Forest area.

Frightened by air attack from the two-sided battle and artillery weapons launch, nearly 4,000 residents of more than ten villages in Pa Khat, Rama Zu, Leik Kyal Pyaung, Tha Yet Nyout, Thingan Tone, Wa Kone, Kyauk Mae Taung, Hein Dar, and Metta village tracts have fled: "I can still hear the gunshots. I'm escaping the war in Metta village," a woman who fled the war said.

Displaced people are fleeing to gardens and forests, so they need help with accommodation, including food. In the villages where the fighting is taking place, the entire village has fled, and the residents of the rest of the town have also been displaced. During the battle a week later, at least three civilians were injured, and two residents of Wa Kone village were arrested. Houses have been damaged, but the number has not yet been confirmed.

In the two-sided shooting attack, artillery mortar shells, as well as small arms, were fired. On the afternoon of February 21st and 22nd, the junta forces bombarded the area between Wa Kone and Kyauk Mea Taung village with Mi-2 helicopters.

Twelve junta vehicles were damaged in the attack, and many weapons and ammunition were seized from seven military vehicles by armed opposition forces.

The military junta camp and Metta area police station in Hein Dar village, where the junta troops had retreated, were burned down by the KNLA and PDF joint forces on February 22 and 23, and the military situation is still tense. According to a report by FE5 Tanintharyi, a research group, there are more than 44,000 local people who fled their homes in Tanintharyi since 1 February 2021.

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.

MONTHLY OVERVIEW

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FEBRUARY 2024

