

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	426
Land:	Myanmar
Kilde:	Insecurity Insight
Titel:	Violence Against or Obstruction of Health Care in Myanmar
Udgivet:	25. maj 2022
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	13. oktober 2022



Violence Against or Obstruction of Health Care in Myanmar

May 2022 update

Total incidents: 01 February 2021-31 March 2022			
 492 Reported Incidents	 564 Health Workers Arrested	 126 Raids On Hospitals	 36 Health Workers Killed

On 1 February 2021 the Myanmar armed forces (known as the Tatmadaw) seized control of the country following a general election that the National League for Democracy (NLD) party won by a landslide. The military junta that the Tatmadaw established to run the country is officially known as the State Administration Council (SAC). Over the period February–November 2021 hundreds of people, including children, were killed and many injured during nationwide Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) protests against the coup and violent SAC crackdowns on those opposing it.

Doctors and nurses were arrested for providing medical care to protesters, health workers were injured while providing care to protesters, ambulances were destroyed, and health facilities were raided. In the first few months of 2022 health care in Myanmar continued to be under attack.

By the end of 2021 what began as an urban-based protest movement had escalated into a wider conflict extending into the countryside. In September the opposition National Unity Government (NUG) declared war on the Tatmadaw. Shortly after, the Tatmadaw began a brutal offensive throughout the country, razing villages, damaging or destroying health infrastructure with artillery or air strikes, and blocking medical aid to opposition-controlled areas.

This update to the one-year report published in **February** has been prepared by **Insecurity Insight**, as part of the **Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition** (SHCC). It highlights reported incidents of violence against health workers, facilities, and transport in Myanmar between 1 January and 31 March 2022 to highlight the impact on the health system as a whole. It does not include information on violence against patients. It is drawn from credible information that is available in local, national, and international news outlets, online databases, and social media reports.

Notable developments between 01 January and 31 March 2022

Most of the violence directed against health care in Myanmar continues to be conflict-related. From January to March, the deaths of seven health workers were documented. Four of whom were killed by SAC airstrikes. Two health workers were shot and killed by SAC forces while engaged in medical duties, while an SAC military doctor was killed by a landmine planted by Peoples Defence Forces (PDF). All deaths occurred in the border regions of Kayah and Kayin (Karenni) state and Sagaing region.

While SAC forces continue to commit the majority of attacks against health (three quarters of all 81 incidents identified from January to March), there are increasing attacks by unidentified actors or opposition parties that target occupied or SAC-run health facilities.

SAC Airstrikes and Artillery Fire Targeting Health Infrastructure

- The first three months of 2022 saw eight attacks on health care involving air strikes – double the number that occurred in the entirety of 2021. In this period SAC air strikes forced the closure of three hospitals, destroyed one rural clinic and damaged two others. These attacks all occurred in the eastern border regions of Shan, Kayah and Kayin states. Artillery attacks against civilian populations continued to impact health infrastructure. In three incidents SAC artillery fire damaged a hospital and two rural clinics.
- SAC air strikes and clashes between SAC and PDF personnel forced the local hospital in Loikaw, Kayah state, to close. Health workers and patients were evacuated to public hospitals in Taunggyi, Shan state.
- SAC air strikes killed three volunteer civilian health care workers in Nan Mae Khon village, Demoso township, Kayah state.
- SAC forces shelled the civilian population of Dawese village, Kayah state, damaging a clinic where displaced civilians were sheltering.

Ambulances Under Attack

In this reporting period ambulances also increasingly came under attack. The period is notable for the number of incidents involving landmines. In five incidents in Sagaing region five ambulances were damaged, a patient's relative and a military doctor were killed, and at least one patient and an ambulance driver were injured. It is unclear whether the landmines were improvised explosives or conventional landmines produced in state-owned factories. Both the Tatmadaw and opposition forces have been accused of planting landmines.

In eight other incidents SAC forces fired on two ambulances with small-arms fire, destroyed two ambulances, and seized one ambulance during a raid on a local NGO. Another ambulance was attacked with small-arms fire by unknown perpetrators, killing the driver and injuring a health worker. One ambulance and two health workers went missing en route to pick up a patient. These incidents occurred in Sagaing region (four), Shan state (three) and Tanintharyi region (one).

- An ambulance hit a landmine transporting a pregnant patient to hospital in Sagaing region, killing the patient's relative, while the patient was also injured.
- On 1 February 2022 an ambulance was attacked with small-arms fire while transporting a patient in Tigyaing township, Sagaing region. The driver was killed and an assistant ambulance staff member was injured, although the patient and a nurse in the ambulance were uninjured. The ambulance was significantly damaged in the attack, rendering it inoperable. The SAC accused the PDF of perpetrating the attack.

Continued Arson Attacks on Health Infrastructure

As conflict has escalated throughout Myanmar, arson has been a characteristic tool that SAC forces have used against civilian populations, and health care infrastructure has not been spared. In five incidents in the first three months of 2022 SAC forces used fire to destroy or damage health care infrastructure. Two rural clinics in Sagaing and Magway regions were burned to the ground in attacks on a village that were part of a broader campaign.

In two incidents in Chin state health care facilities were damaged in arson attacks and essential supplies and equipment destroyed. In Sagaing region an ambulance was set on fire and destroyed. In an incident in Chin state anti-government forces burned down a building in a hospital compound.

- Magway region: SAC forces burned down a clinic providing free medical care during clashes with PDF forces in Shahla village.
- Sagaing region: Approximately ten SAC soldiers set fire to Chaung Ma village, destroying a rural clinic, more than 20 homes and farm equipment.

Attacks on Health Care by the People's Democratic Forces

While only seven of the 81 reported incidents were attributed to the PDF, such incidents have been more frequent in recent months. Six of the seven incidents attributed to the PDF involved the use of explosive munitions. In two incidents improvised explosives were used to target soldiers or political figures occupying hospitals, and in another incident PDF forces shelled a traditional hospital occupied by SAC forces. Three incidents involved the use of landmines, and one incident involved an arson attack on a hospital compound.

Arrests of Health Workers

Twenty-nine health workers were arrested in this period throughout the country. Most arrests were conflict-related, with health workers accused of supporting or treating PDF fighters. Political arrests also continued, with health workers arrested for posting anti-government material on social media or accused of supporting the CDM.

- SAC forces arrested a nurse and her husband in Yangon city for reportedly treating two injured PDF fighters.
- A doctor was among 20 people arrested in Sagaing region and charged for posting information about a proposed anti-government strike on social media. The victim was also a former NLD member of parliament.

Blockade of Medical Aid for Vulnerable and Displaced Populations

Since the coup over 400,000 people have been displaced by the escalation of the conflict. Many have fled to informal jungle camps with limited access to medication and food. By blockading opposition-controlled areas SAC forces have deprived displaced civilians of medical and humanitarian aid.

Areas with persistent blockades of medical aid include Shan state, Kayah state, Sagaing region, Chin state and Mon state.

- SAC forces erected a checkpoint to block the transport of medication, food, winter clothing and other household consumables into Loikaw town, Kayah state.
- SAC forces continued to confiscate medication intended for displaced civilians at checkpoints into Mindat township in Chin state. These checkpoints were first documented in July 2021.
- Generally, HIV patients have difficulty travelling to obtain anti-retroviral therapy due to SAC checkpoints, and HIV outreach programmes have had to limit their activities.

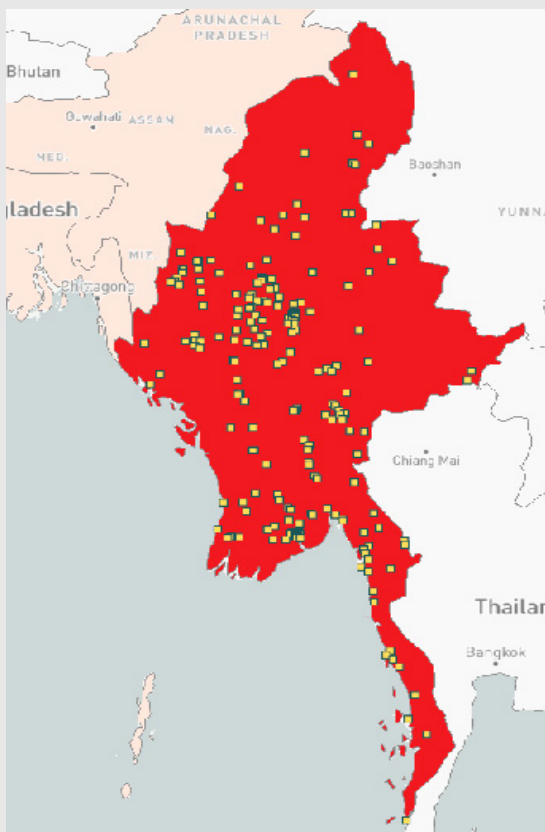
Sentencing of High-Profile Health Workers

As of 10 May 2022 the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners reported that 100 health workers and health students were still detained in Myanmar prisons in poor conditions with limited access to medical care. Very few had been formally sentenced.

In April 2022 two of the most high-profile imprisoned health workers, Dr Maw Maw Oo and Dr Htar Htar Lin, were each sentenced to three years' imprisonment.

- Dr Maw Maw Oo was arrested on 12 April 2021 and was the head of the Emergency Medicine Department at the University of Medicine in Yangon. He led Myanmar's COVID-19 clinical response.
- Dr Htar Htar Lin was arrested on 10 June 2021 along with her husband and child. She led Myanmar's COVID-19 vaccine rollout. Her sentence included hard labor.

Attacked and Threatened: Health Care at Risk interactive global map



- Explore the **Attacked and Threatened**: Health Care at Risk interactive global map for reported incidents.
- Select Myanmar by clicking on it on the map and select the timeframe 01 February 2021-31 March 2022 for reported incidents.
- Use the filters on the left to show different contexts.
- The incidents cited in this report and included in the global map are based on the dataset 01 February 2021-31 March 2022 Violence Against Health Care in Myanmar Data, which is freely available on the **Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX)**.

Data Collection

- This document was prepared from information compiled by Insecurity Insight. It is drawn from credible information that is available in local, national, and international news outlets, online databases, and social media reports.
- The incidents reported are neither a complete nor a representative list of all incidents. Most incidents have not been independently verified and have not undergone verification by Insecurity Insight.
- All decisions made on the basis of or in light of such information remain the responsibility of the organizations making such decisions. Data collection is ongoing and data may change as more information is made available.
- To share further incidents or report additional information or corrections, please contact info@insecurityinsight.org.

This document is funded and supported by the UK government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office through the Reporting the Impact of Attacks on Healthcare project at the University of Manchester's Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute; by the European Commission through the Ending Violence against Healthcare in Conflict project; and by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

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Insecurity Insight. 2022. 'Violence Against or Obstruction of Health Care in Myanmar v. May 2022.' Geneva, Switzerland: Insecurity Insight. shcc.pub/MMRHealthMay2022



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