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RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

Landmines threaten more than half of Myanmar townships

People in more than half of Myanmar's townships are at risk getting injured or dying from landmines, which are used by both the military and ethnic rebel forces, a landmine monitoring group said.

Nearly 170 of 330 townships are at risk of landmines — a figure that has increased by 68 townships since 2020, according to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, whose monitoring wing tracks progress in eliminating landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war.

The group issued the Burmese version of its latest 34-page [Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor report](#) on Dec. 28. It did not include the total number of landmine incidents or victims for 2023, but recounted individual incidents covered in media reports.

In 2022, there were 384 deaths and 124 injuries caused by landmines in Myanmar, according to the monitoring group.

Myanmar is not a member of the Ottawa Convention, also referred to as the Mine Ban Treaty, which prohibits the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. Neither is the

ecoi.net description:

Inhabitants of more than half of the country's townships are at risk of dying or sustaining injuries from landmines, a report by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines says

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Myanmar

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<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/landmine-dangers-01042024145357.html>

United States, China, Russia, India or Pakistan.

Both the ruling junta's armed forces and non-state armed groups have produced and used antipersonnel mines, including improvised blast and fragmentation mines that are victim-activated, said the report's 28-page [English-language version](#).

"Myanmar's Armed Forces have repeatedly used antipersonnel mines since seizing power in a coup in February 2021," the report said. "This use represents a significant increase in use in previous years, including use around infrastructure such as mobile phone towers, extractive enterprises, and energy pipelines."

From 2018 to 2021, the Myanmar military was the only armed forces in the world to use anti-personnel landmines, though Russia joined the list in 2022, said Yeshua Moser-Puangsuwan, a researcher for the Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, said at a press conference in Chiang Mai, Thailand, on Dec. 28.

"Myanmar is the only country in the world that uses deadly landmines from its military," he said.

Among the mines seized by resistance armed groups were various types produced by the state-owned weapons production facility known as KaPaSa, or Defense Products Industries of Myanmar, the report said.

Some individual cases

The report cited numerous instances where landmine explosions killed or maimed civilian adults and children in 2023.

At the beginning of March, a man was seriously injured after stepping on a landmine in the May mountains, where a Myanmar Army contingent is stationed near Cedipyin village in Rathedaung township of Rakhine state.

On Dec. 26, Lwang Kham, 12, was injured when a landmine exploded near Ma Ding village in Waingmaw township in northern Myanmar's Kachin state, near where the junta's 58th Light Infantry

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Battalion is stationed, a resident who did not want to be named for security reasons, told RFA.

"In the afternoon, while he was looking after the cattle, the cattle stepped on a landmine and [the explosion] hit him near Ka War Hka creek," the villager said, adding that many pieces of shrapnel hit his legs and his left eye.

The injured boy was taken to Myitkyina Hospital for surgery and medical treatment, he said.

In western Myanmar's Chin state, residents are afraid to go to their hillside farms for fear of setting off an explosion, said Salai Vang Sweesan, assistant director of the Institute of Chin Affairs.

"In Chin, every village depends on the hillside farms to make a living. Since landmines are being planted along the roads [to the hillside farms], even if people want to go to the farms, it's risky."

Shan state

Northern Shan state, where fighting between junta troops and an alliance of ethnic armies is intense, has seen an increase in civilian casualties from landmines.

At least five civilians were injured and lost their limbs due to mine explosions in the towns of Kutkai, Lashio and Kyaukme towns amid fighting in December 2023 between junta forces and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army, or TNLA, local residents said.

On Dec. 6, a man from Nam Kyan village in Lashio township lost one of his legs and his other limbs were damaged when he stepped on a mine while looking for honey in the forest, residents said.

Two days later, a 63-year-old man from Nam Hu Twang village in Kyaukme township lost one of his legs when he stepped on a mine while cutting bamboo, according to people living in the community.

Residents used to gather firewood in the forest or work in cornfields before the fighting escalated, but now they have stopped and it has affected their abilities to provide for themselves, she said. Now they often hear blasts when dogs and cattle step on the mines.

“Villagers know that the mines are there,” she said. “That’s why we don’t go to the forest at all.”

RFA could not reach junta spokesman Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Tun for comment on the landmines.

Last August, the Cluster Munition Coalition condemned the new use of cluster munitions by the junta’s armed forces and demanded an immediate end to the use of this prohibited weapon.

At the time, a report by the organization’s monitoring wing indicated that junta forces had used what appeared to be domestically produced cluster bombs in attacks in several parts of the country since 2021.

“Myanmar’s production and use of cluster bombs is gravely concerning as these indiscriminate weapons primarily kill and injure civilians, Moser-Puangsuwan said in a statement. “There can be no justification for using them. All governments should condemn this use of an internationally-banned weapon.”

Translated by Htin Aung Kyaw for RFA Burmese. Edited by Roseanne Gerin and Malcolm Foster.

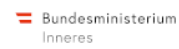
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19 civilians massacred by junta forces in Sagaing region

Military junta soldiers massacred 19 civilians in two townships in northwest Myanmar's Sagaing region after detaining them, residents said, in the latest slaughter of civilians in the country's nearly three-year civil war.

Piles of corpses of all 19 people were discovered on Sunday near the Five Mile bus terminal located at the convergence of Kawlin, Wuntho and Pinlebu townships, local residents told Radio Free Asia.

The dead had lived in Wuntho township and Kawlin township, both of which had been seized by anti-regime People's Defense Forces, or PDFs, made up of ordinary people who have taken up arms against the junta, which took control of the country in a February 2021 coup d'état.

Junta soldiers, already pushed back by recent advances by rebel groups, have resorted to brutality to stop residents from providing support to the PDF, residents said.

The military column that killed the civilians was headed from Paungbyin township to Kawlin and Wuntho townships, resistance forces and residents said.

ecoi.net description:

Sagaing region: Military junta soldiers have killed 19 civilians from Kawlin and Wuntho townships after detaining them

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They were found dead on the night of Jan. 5, the same day of their arrest, residents said, though Radio Free Asia has not yet been able to confirm the deaths with the ruling military council.

The shadow National Unity Government has been operating Kawlin township's administrative, legislative and commercial sectors since resistance forces captured the township on Dec. 3, 2023.

In coordination with Operation 1027, a series of defensive attacks by an alliance of three ethnic armies in northern Shan state launched on Oct. 27, joint forces comprising the Kachin Independence Army and local PDFs have captured Kawlin, Mawlu, Khampat and Shwepyiaye towns in Sagaing region.

Signs of atrocities

The bodies of five residents from Kawlin, whose hands and feet were tied, were collected and buried on Sunday, according to an official from the local PDF.

The bodies were those of a father and two sons, female rice merchant Khin Sein, and driver Tun Phaw Hlaing, he said. The adults were between the ages of 30 and 50.

"One of the five bodies we took away yesterday had been shot many times in the abdomen very closely," said the official who declined to be named to ensure his safety. "Another body was found with serious injury to the head."

Some 5.56-millimeter cartridges made by Myanmar's military defense industry were found near the bodies, he said.

RFA could not reach junta spokesman Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Tun or Sai Nai Nai Kyaw, the spokesperson for Sagaing's ethnic affairs minister, for the comment on the massacre.

Junta forces attacked civilians in Kawlin and Wuntho townships to try to recapture Kawlin township from the local PDF, said a Wuntho resident on condition of anonymity.

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“They have threatened the locals with killing possible informants of the resistance forces when they advanced on Kawlin,” the person said.

Kyaw Win, the UK-based executive director of the Burma Human Rights Network, said the mass killings of civilians is a war crime and a crime against humanity.

“Military troops have also committed similar crimes across the country,” he said.

Women and children

Deadly attacks by junta soldiers have taken their toll on civilian women and children in Myanmar.

In December alone, nearly 40 women and children lost their lives, with most killed by airstrikes, artillery shells and gunshots, according to the Burmese Women’s Union.

Of the 33 women killed, 22 had been arrested by the military junta, the women’s rights umbrella organization said. The women who died in the attacks included six in Sagaing region, six in Rakhine state, four in Mandalay region, two in Mon state, three in Magway, four in Bago region, four in Shan state, three in Kayin state and one in Chin state.

“A total of 15 women died during bombardments in December, 17 women were killed by artillery shelling, and one died from a gunshot,” said Wai Wai Myint, an official from the Burmese Women’s Union.

Six children between the ages of 1 and 7 years old died in airstrikes by junta forces, including three in Sagaing’s Paungbyin town, one in the region’s Pale township, and two in Nyaunglebin township in Bago region.

Aye Myint Aung Aung, a leading member of the Women Alliance Burma, a group that emerged from protests following the 2021 coup, said women and children are not safe in conflict-torn areas of Myanmar.

“The military council will show no mercy to any civilians, and has targeted them,” she told RFA. “Along routes [traveled by] military columns, they raped and killed women. These soldiers did not even have compassion for the children.”

RFA could not reach a spokesman for the junta for comment on women and children casualties.

In all of 2023, nearly 400 women were killed and over 540 were arrested by the military council, according to the Burmese Women’s Unions.

Translated by Aung Naing for RFA Burmese. Edited by Roseanne Gerin and Malcolm Foster.

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Civilians bear brunt of attacks in northern Sagaing region

More than 400 civilians clustered in four townships in northwestern Myanmar's Sagaing region have been killed over the past two years by airstrikes, artillery fire, landmines and murder by junta troops, according to data compiled by Radio Free Asia.

Sagaing emerged early on as a hotbed of armed resistance following the military's takeover in a February 2021 coup d'état and has remained so nearly three years later with armed conflicts occurring almost every day between rebels groups and junta troops.

Breaking down the four townships, some 265 people were killed in Kanbalu, 51 in Katha, 44 in Tigyaing and 33 in Indaw, information from witnesses, locals, and media releases by rights groups and resistance groups indicated.

The largest death toll came during an April 2023 aerial attack on Kanbalu's Pa Zi Gyi village.

In the past three months, fierce fighting between local People's Defense Forces and junta soldiers has erupted in Tigyaing.

ecoi.net description:

Sagaing region: More than 400 civilians in 4 townships killed over the past 2 years by airstrikes, artillery fire, landmines and killings by junta troops

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Source:

[RFA – Radio Free Asia](#) (Author)

Original link:

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/sagaing-attacks-01102024152704.html>

The Tigyaing Revolution Force, an armed resistance group, announced on Dec. 22 that the junta had conducted at least 150 airstrikes in the area.

Three people were killed by airstrikes on Jan. 3, said a member of the Tigyaing People's Defense Force who did not want to be named.

"They attacked the civilians' homes, [and] three homes were destroyed," he told RFA. "Three civilians were killed, and four were injured. From the very beginning, almost 30 people have been killed by airstrikes."

Intensifying violence

In Kanbalu township, before the Pa Zi Gyi village incident, junta soldiers abducted and killed 14 civilians in 2022, and torched about 500 houses in Kyi Su village, killing 10 local residents last July 18 and 19, said a resident, who did not want to be named for fear of his safety.

"People lost their lives in various ways," he said. "The worst situation was in November 2022 when there was a mass killing of 14 people in Koe Taung Boet village tract. It was the worst incident apart from the air attack."

An official from the Katha township People's Defense Force, or PDF, who declined to be named for the same reason, said clashes with junta troops intensified in the second half of 2023, as the number of resistance forces in the area increased.

"So, they [the junta troops] burned more houses and killed more people," he said. "In 2023, people could be killed on sight."

Seven residents were killed, and more than 30 were wounded when two junta fighter jets dropped bombs on Katha's Moe Dar Gyi village after a Buddhist novitiation ceremony — a coming-of-age rite for boys under 20 who are joining a monastery — on Jan. 18, 2023.

Then on Sept. 17 of last year, seven civilians from Toke Gyi village in Katha township were arrested and killed by junta soldiers.

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Junta troops also captured and shot dead villagers in Indaw township, whom they accused of having ties to PDFs, said an official from the Indaw PDF.

"In Kyaung Kone [village], they saw something on their phones while they were checking and beat them to death," he said. "A group of eight people were also killed because they were relatives of PDF members."

Worst violence

Kyaw Zaw, spokesman for the President's Office of the shadow National Unity Government, confirmed that the most civilian killings occurred in Sagaing region.

"Mass killings occurred all over Myanmar, and the most incidents took place in Sagaing," he said.

"After the start of Operation 1027, the terrorist junta increased attacks on civilians," he added, referring to a series of simultaneous attacks by an alliance of three ethnic armies that began last Oct. 27 in multiple towns in northern Shan state.

Sai Naing Naing Kyaw, Sagaing region's ethnic affairs minister and junta spokesman, told RFA that he could not comment on the situation because he was traveling.

The junta is oppressing civilians more and more to maintain power, said a spokesman for Kachin Human Rights Watch, who asked to be identified only by his first name Jacob for fear of being arrested by junta soldiers.

"Currently, civilians are being killed unjustly in Sagaing region," he told RFA. "This is a violation of human rights."

Translated by Htin Aung Kyaw for RFA Burmese. Edited by Roseanne Gerin and Malcom Foster.

Document #2103250

RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

Fighting across western Myanmar kills 4 and displaces 45,000

At least three battles raged between Myanmar's junta and the Arakan Army across three western townships on Wednesday, locals told Radio Free Asia.

One civilian died during attacks on Wednesday and three others were injured across Rakhine state's Minbya and Kyauktaw townships, with 25,000 people forced to flee, residents said. The injuries and death occurred when heavy artillery from the junta landed in Kyauktaw township's Ah Pauk Wa village.

Dak Maung, a man from Ah Pauk Wa, died instantly, while three others, including Ah Tun Che, Aung Tun Mya and Aung Mya Thar, were injured, locals said. On Wednesday, a Kyauktaw-based junta artillery battalion shelled the village with heavy weapons at random, a resident who wished to remain anonymous for security reasons told RFA.

"They started shooting around 4:30 a.m. More than 10 heavy shells were fired by Battalion 377," he said. "They shot at the village although there was no fight."

ecoi.net description:

Rakhine State: One civilian killed and 3 others injured in fighting between junta and Arakan Army in Minbya and Kyauktaw townships; junta soldiers have killed 3 captured civilians in Mrauk-U

Country:

Myanmar

Source:

[RFA – Radio Free Asia](#) (Author)

Original link:

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/western->

Almost all 5,000 people from Ah Pauk Wa have fled to safety, he added.

Fighting in Minbya township's capital, Minbya town, also continued into Wednesday after raging through the night, residents said. Villagers said they learned that the Arakan Army initiated the attack by firing at military camps in Minbya on Tuesday evening. The army retaliated on the ground and by air using fighter jets.

"We have been hearing the sounds of heavy artillery being fired since Tuesday evening. This morning we heard the sound of small arms being exchanged," said one resident on Wednesday, declining to be named for fear of reprisals.

"We came to know that the Arakan Army has attacked military battalions 379, 380 and 541 at a junta camp in Minbya's Kyein Taung. Two jet fighters are shooting now."

More than 20,000 residents from Minbya and nearby villages have fled to safety due to the battles, locals said. Some local residents were injured by the junta's shelling, but details regarding injuries and casualties have not been released about this attack yet.

However, to Minbya's north, at least 15 junta soldiers were killed in a battle between the Arakan Army and regime soldiers, according to a statement released by the Arakan Army Tuesday night.

In Rakhine's Mrauk-U, fighting erupted on Tuesday and junta soldiers from infantry battalion 540 captured three civilians. While walking into the city of Mrauk-U, soldiers shot the civilians and killed them, the statement added.

RFA contacted Arakan Army spokesperson Khaing Thukha for further details on the battles in Kyauktaw, Mrauk-U, and Minbya townships, but did receive a response by the time of publication. Calls to Rakhine state's junta spokesperson Hla Thein by RFA also went unanswered.

Fighting in Rakhine during the last two months has intensified, resulting in more civilian deaths each day, residents told RFA.

myanmar-battles-01102024055526.html

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According to data compiled by RFA, 55 civilians have been killed and more than 140 have been injured when fighting resumed after a year-long ceasefire from Nov. 13, 2023 to Wednesday.

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