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Briefing Notes Summary

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Myanmar – July to December 2022

01 January 2023

11 July 2022

Security situation

Between 24.06.22 and 07.07.22, clashes occurred between the Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw) and armed resistance groups (People's Defence Forces, PDF) or ethnic armies in Chin, Mon, Shan, Karen and Kayah states and Magway, Tanintharyi, Mandalay and Sagaing regions. Furthermore, junta forces raided several villages. At least 17 civilians, including a child, and 45 members of the resistance groups were killed. In addition, around 116 military and police personnel and members of militias loyal to the junta are reported to have been killed in fighting and guerrilla attacks. Fighting and air strikes by the junta in the Bago region forced some 40,000 civilians to flee from 26 villages. During fighting over a strategic military post near the Thai border (Karen State), at least one Myanmar military jet briefly entered Thai airspace on 30.06.22 after bombing positions of the Karen National Union (KNU) armed forces. On 06.07.22, authorities in the Indian state of Manipur temporarily closed the border crossing with Myanmar after two Indian civilians were shot dead by militias loyal to the junta while visiting acquaintances in the Sagaing region and protests erupted on the Indian side of the border. Dozens of arrests have been made in several communities following the disappearance of several junta forces in northern Rakhine State since mid-June 2022.

25 July 2022

Tatmadaw soldiers confess to human rights violations

In interviews with the BBC, six deserted Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw) soldiers admitted to indiscriminately torturing, raping, and killing civilians, including women and children, to quell the armed civilian uprising against the military coup of 01.02.21. Independently, interviewees reported that they were sent to villages in the Sagaing and Magway regions with orders to "shoot at anything [they] see" and to systematically loot and set fire to homes. It happened that people were burnt alive. In addition, an officer would have had girls and women arrested and then made available to be raped. They said that it had been irrelevant, whether or not the victims of military violence were members or supporters of civilian militias (People's Defence Forces, PDF). Since 01.09.21, the NGO Myanmar Witness has verified more than 200 reports of villages burnt down by the military. Together with the soldiers' testimonies, they testify to a scorched-earth policy in central Myanmar, this is where the majority is Bamar and where the Tatmadaw mainly recruited from before the coup and, also, where the largest number of PDFs are now active in the country.

Military junta executes death sentences

As announced on 03.06.22 (cf. BN of 13.06.22), the junta executed four people convicted in January 2022 on 24.07.22. According to state media, former National League of Democracy (NLD) MP Phyo Zeya Thaw and prominent democracy activist Kyaw Min Yu, who had been sentenced to death for treason and terrorism, were

hanged, along with two other men, for allegedly killing a female military informant. UN experts believe that more executions could follow. Since the coup, military courts in Myanmar have sentenced at least 114 people to death.

15 August 2022

Increasing evidence of crimes against humanity

According to a UN report released on 09.08.22, evidence gathered by the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM) indicates that since the military coup on 01.02.21, "crimes have been committed on a scale and in a manner that constitute a generalised and systematic attack on the civilian population". In particular, women and children suffer from the crimes committed by security forces and armed groups, including murder, torture, abduction, rape and other forms of sexual violence, as well as forced conscription, the report says. Furthermore, children are often held on behalf of their parents.

High number of victims in fighting in Kachin

Following the capture of several outposts of the military and the pro-military Shanni Nationalities Army (SIA) by the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) on 08.08.22, fighting broke out in Hpakant Township (Kachin State). According to various sources, by 12.08.22 at least 15 (estimates say up to 50) civilians were killed, including at least two children who died in military air strikes. In the village of Sezin, the location of one of the outposts attacked by the KIA, the military burnt down more than two-thirds of the approximately 600 houses. Most of the 3,000 inhabitants fled.

29 August 2022

Fighting and violence in the north, centre and east

Since 13.08.22, Junta troops, together with pro-military Pyu Saw Htee militia, have burnt down 830 houses in the Magway region of central Myanmar. Over 4,000 people from two villages in Yesagyo township were displaced, most lost all of their possessions and currently have no access to food. Two people died in the flames. In the neighbouring Sagaing region, members of the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) burnt down more than 200 houses between 11. and 24.08.22. 7,000 to 8,000 people from Yinmarbin, Kani and Phaung Byin communities fled. In Kani and Yinmarbin, at least 21 civilians, including a child, died in raids and air strikes by the Tatmadaw, and in Phaung Byin, troops fired heavy artillery shells at a village. The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) recorded an increase in violence in August 2022 in the eastern region of Bago, where fighting broke out between the Tatmadaw and the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) in Kyaukkyi Township on 07.08.22. The military used heavy artillery against civilians and flew air strikes causing the population of seven villages to flee. In the Yangon and Mandalay regions, local resistance groups, including the newly formed Mahar Revolution Force (MRF), carried out several attacks on administrative staff in August 2022, killing two of them.

05 September 2022

New violence in Rhakine and Sagaing

In response to the Arakan Army's (AA) capture of a military camp near the Bangladesh border on 31.08.22, junta troops flew air strikes with fighter jets and helicopters in Maungdaw Township. Meanwhile, further clashes between the AA and the military occurred in Ann and Paletwa townships. In Rathedaung township, fighting had broken out inside a housing estate already on 30.08.22. At least 5,000 people fled. Since the beginning of August 2022, the above-mentioned areas in northern Rakhine and southern Chin State have repeatedly been the scene of sometimes violent clashes between the military and armed ethnic organisations. In the central Myanmar region of Sagaing, junta troops set fire to around 50 villages in Kawlin, Kanbalu and Kyunhla townships since 22.08.22. More than 500 houses have been destroyed and at least 12 civilians killed. More than 20,000 people from 80 villages fled.

Further prison sentence for ex-government leader Suu Kyi

On 02.09.22, a military-controlled court sentenced ousted de facto head of government Aung San Suu Kyi to a further three years' imprisonment with hard labour for electoral fraud. She had previously been sentenced to a total of 17 years in prison for other offences. Also on 02.09.22, a court imposed a one-year prison sentence on former

British ambassador to Myanmar and human rights activist Vicky Bowman and her husband Htein Lin, a critical artist. They were charged with violating or aiding and abetting the violation of immigration laws.

19 September 2022

HRW: Allegations of torture against military junta

In a report published on 13.09.22, the human rights organisation Human Rights Watch (HRW) accused the military junta in Myanmar of torture and responsibility for the deaths of numerous detained activists and critics since the military coup of 01.02.21. HRW documented six cases of men who died between May and July 2022 after being detained by the military junta in Yangon, Mandalay and Sagaing. The report says that five of them died already within 24 hours of arrest or interrogation. The organisation describes these cases as merely the tip of the iceberg and says that no action appears to be being taken to investigate deaths in custody and to hold those responsible to account. Referring to estimates by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), it states that at least 73 people have died in police or military custody since the coup. In total, at least 690 people have died shortly after their arrest, often in connection with military operations in ethnic minority areas. Fear of repression, however, meant that few relatives made the cases public. The few deaths in custody confirmed by the junta were attributed to illness and heart failure. HRW's interviews with relatives and witnesses, reports and sources (including photos, videos, independent medical analyses) suggest that many died as a result of torture, poor detention conditions or lack of access to adequate medical care. Some of the corpses of the documented cases showed signs of torture such as severe bruising, deep wounds, scalded skin and body parts burnt by chemicals, and missing teeth. According to HRW's assessment, the abuses committed by the military since the coup in February 2021 constitute crimes against humanity.

Fighting in several parts of the country, further violence in Rakhine

Armed clashes between junta troops and various armed ethnic organisations as well as People's Defence Forces (PDF) allied with them continue in several parts of the country. Between 06.09. and 12.09.22, fighting involving air strikes and artillery fire was reported in the regions of East Bago, Tanintharyi as well as Kayin State and southern Shan State. Fighting between the military and the Arakan Army (AA) also continued in Rakhine State and southern Chin State. On 15.09.22, the AA succeeded in capturing a military base in Maungdaw Township near the border with Bangladesh after fighting. According to reports, the AA currently controls several military bases in Maungdaw as well as in Paletwa Township (Chin State). On 16.09.22, a young man was killed and several people were injured in Bangladesh by a grenade attack from Myanmar. According to reports, around 4,000 Rohingya people have been living in the Bangladesh-Myanmar border area, which has been described as a no-man's land, since 2017.

26 September 2022

Dead in army attack on school

Junta forces killed at least 13 people, including 11 children who were in a convent school at the time of the attack, in air and ground attacks on Let Yet Kone village in Depayin Municipality (Sagaing Region) on 16.09.22, according to UN reports. Local media reported that a total of 17 people were killed and 17 others, including 14 students, were injured in the village. The military said the action was directed against insurgents who were holed up in the school.

17 October 2022

Fighting and violence in various parts of the country

Junta forces and members of the pro-military group Thway Thauk Aphwe, which hunts down members of the National League of Democracy (NLD), abducted, killed and mutilated five men in the town of Natogyi (Mandalay region) on 03.10.22. Six NLD members are also reported to have been killed in the towns of Nyaung-U and Kyaukse (also Mandalay region) on 02.10.22. Clashes occurred in Kachin State, northern Shan State and the Sagaing region between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), supported by local People's Defence Forces (PDF), and the Myanmar military in the period between 04.10. and 08.10.22. In the course of the fighting, the military destroyed a monastery and numerous homes in artillery attacks on the town of Manton (Shan). Over 4,000 people fled from seven villages in the Mingin district (Sagaing) on 08.10.22, after junta forces had burned almost three dozen houses

down to the ground. Junta forces have killed 16 PDF members in fighting in the Sagaing towns of Wetlet and Taze. The victims died as a result of air raids and torture.

Additional prison sentence for Aung San Suu Kyi

On 12.10.22 a military court sentenced the overthrown de facto head of government, Aung San Suu Kyi, to an additional prison term of three years, in this case for corruption. Suu Kyi had previously been sentenced to a total of 23 years in prison for alleged offences.

31 October 2022

Conference in Dhaka on the situation in Myanmar; Rohingya crisis

The leading English-language newspaper, Dhaka Tribune, and the Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS) organised a conference in the capital, Dhaka, last week to discuss the political instability in Myanmar. There was a view among those attending the event was that the overall political picture in Myanmar should first of all be analysed and an appropriate strategy should be sounded out to address the complex challenges in Myanmar, rather than focusing solely on the Rohingya crisis. The country formerly known as Burma has been declining into chaos and violence since a military coup in February 2021. On 26.10.22 the Chinese ambassador stated in Bangladesh that Myanmar had assured China that it would approve as soon as possible the repatriation of the Rohingya who are currently accommodated in the camps in Cox's Bazar. The ambassador said that China was actively involved in brokering the repatriation of the Rohingya from Bangladesh to Rakhine State in Myanmar. There were no reports in the media of any major damage or flooding at the Rohingya camps in Bhasan Char and Cox's Bazar after Cyclone Sitrang hit Bangladesh on 24.10.22 at wind speeds of up to 90 km/h. In response to an increase in the number of offences committed at the refugee camps, on 29./30.10.22 the police units responsible for the security of Rohingya in Cox's Bazar carried out a special operation, in the course of which they arrested at least 41 Rohingya, including six people suspected of murder. At a meeting of the Bangladeshi and Myanmar border police on 30.10.22, Bangladesh complained about shelling from the Myanmar side and military helicopter movements along the border. Myanmar regretted the incidents and held out the prospect of an intensification of friendly relations with Bangladesh.

06 December 2022

Fighting and attacks on civilian targets in various parts of the country

Fighting between the Myanmar military and local resistance groups or ethnic armies occurred in various parts of the country in November 2022. The fighting took place in the district of Nyaung Laypin (Bago region) and the townships of Hpakant, Momauk (Kachin State), Ann, Buthidaung, Maungdaw, Minbya, Ponnagyun, Sittwe (Rakhine State), Paletwa (Chin State), Monywa and Tamu (Sagaing region). The military additionally carried out attacks from the air and on the ground against civilian targets in the federal states of Rakhine, Kayin, Kayah, Chin and Shan, and in the Sagaing, Tanintharyi and Bago regions. In the course of these attacks, 36 civilians were killed and 72 injured in the townships of Ponnagyun, Maungdaw and Kyauktaw (Rakhine) between 01.11. and 16.11.22. Three civilians died in the district of Seik Gyi (Kayin) on 16.11.22 and a child died when a kindergarten was shelled in Demoso township (Kayah) on 15.11.22. Local residents found burned human remains in a village of Mindat township (Chin) following a military raid on 07.11.22. Nine people are missing from the village. Junta forces abducted 15 civilians in Monywa on 06.11.22 and killed at least twelve of the victims. A further seven people, including a child, were killed and two people were injured as a result of the artillery shelling of villages in the townships of Kanbalu, Monywa and Wetlet (Sagaing) between 03.11. and 06.11.22. Four children were injured when a bible school was shelled in Kutkai township (Shan). On 26.11.22 the military and the Rakhine-based Arakan Army (AA) agreed a ceasefire which is intended to end the armed conflict which has been ongoing between the two sides since August 2022.

