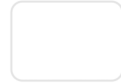


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Junta recruits teen soldiers in Myanmar's delta

By RFA Burmese

The junta is increasing quotas this week for villagers to undergo military training in Ayeyarwaddy division, locals told Radio Free Asia. In some villages in Patheingyi township, six people per village must now enroll.

Since late September, soldiers have been visiting townships across the region, driving up conscriptions however they can. Without local laws guiding recruitment in the country's southern delta region, teenagers are also being forced to join.

"In Ayeyarwady region, there is no age limit for militia training," one Patheingyi resident who requested anonymity for fear of reprisals said on Tuesday. "The [junta] persuaded young people to also learn to be soldiers."

In Mawlamyinegyun township, teenagers told RFA they were selected after soldiers demanded three participants from their village. Once trained, the villagers will have to carry out community security duties under the control of the junta's army.

In addition, some of the trained recruits could serve in the pro-military militia used to attack the anti-regime revolutionary forces like the People's Defense Forces and ethnic armed rebels.

But some locals are concerned about the lack of age limit and speaking out against the recruitment of minors.

"Enlisting minors into [militia training] is creating child soldiers. They shouldn't do it because it's against international law," one person from Mawlamyinegyun township told RFA, asking for anonymity to protect himself.

They added that the people recruited must travel to the Southwestern Regional Military Headquarters in Ayeyarwady division's capital of Patheingyi.

Recruiters gave at least 80 people in Ngwe Saung, Pathein and Ngapudaw townships cash bribes to attend.

Local administrators are also enforcing the regime's orders, leaving many to feel they have no other choice. In some townships, a quota of 30 people must be met and registered for every six villages, said Pathein and Mawlamyinegyun residents.

Instead of attending the two-week training, some villagers went into hiding. To combat this problem, soldiers began providing training within communities.

The military ordered some people who attended the two-week militia training to return as security guards for their villages, said Pathein residents. But others say they haven't seen their family members since they left for the training, and do not know where they are.

This isn't the first time the junta [has turned to Ayeyarwady](#) division to bolster its numbers. In May and June, widespread conscription in the delta forced several people to flee. Families were forced to pay the army if they didn't have a family member able to serve, or a fine of over US\$50 if that person didn't want to join the regime troops.

Calls by RFA to junta council spokesman Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Tun seeking comment on this issue went unanswered, as did calls to Ayeyarwady's junta spokesperson Maung Maung Than.

Translated by RFA Burmese. Edited by Elaine Chan

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ecoi.net description:

Ayeyarwady region: According to locals, the junta increased quotas for villagers to undergo military training; due to a lack of local laws guiding recruitment, teenagers are also being forced to join

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