

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	860
Land:	Myanmar
Kilde:	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)
Titel:	Four years after the 2021 coup in Myanmar, violence against civilians is still increasing
Udgivet:	31. januar 2025
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	3. juli 2025

Four years after the 2021 coup in Myanmar, violence against civilians is still increasing

Posted: 31 January 2025 | Region: Asia Pacific | Category: Fact Sheets

Four years since the 1 February 2021 coup in Myanmar, the political impasse that has generated increased conflict across the country is no closer to being resolved. While the armed groups opposing the military have achieved some battlefield successes, [tensions among the resistance that predate the coup continue to impact their ability to unify politically or militarily](#). Amid the evolving dynamics of the post-coup conflict environment, violence targeting civilians continues to grow each year. In the four years since the coup, around 90% of Myanmar's population has been exposed to political violence, as defined by ACLED's [Conflict Exposure](#) metrics, as millions live in active conflict. Civilians also lack access to electricity, communications, healthcare, and education and are vulnerable to crime and human and drug trafficking.¹

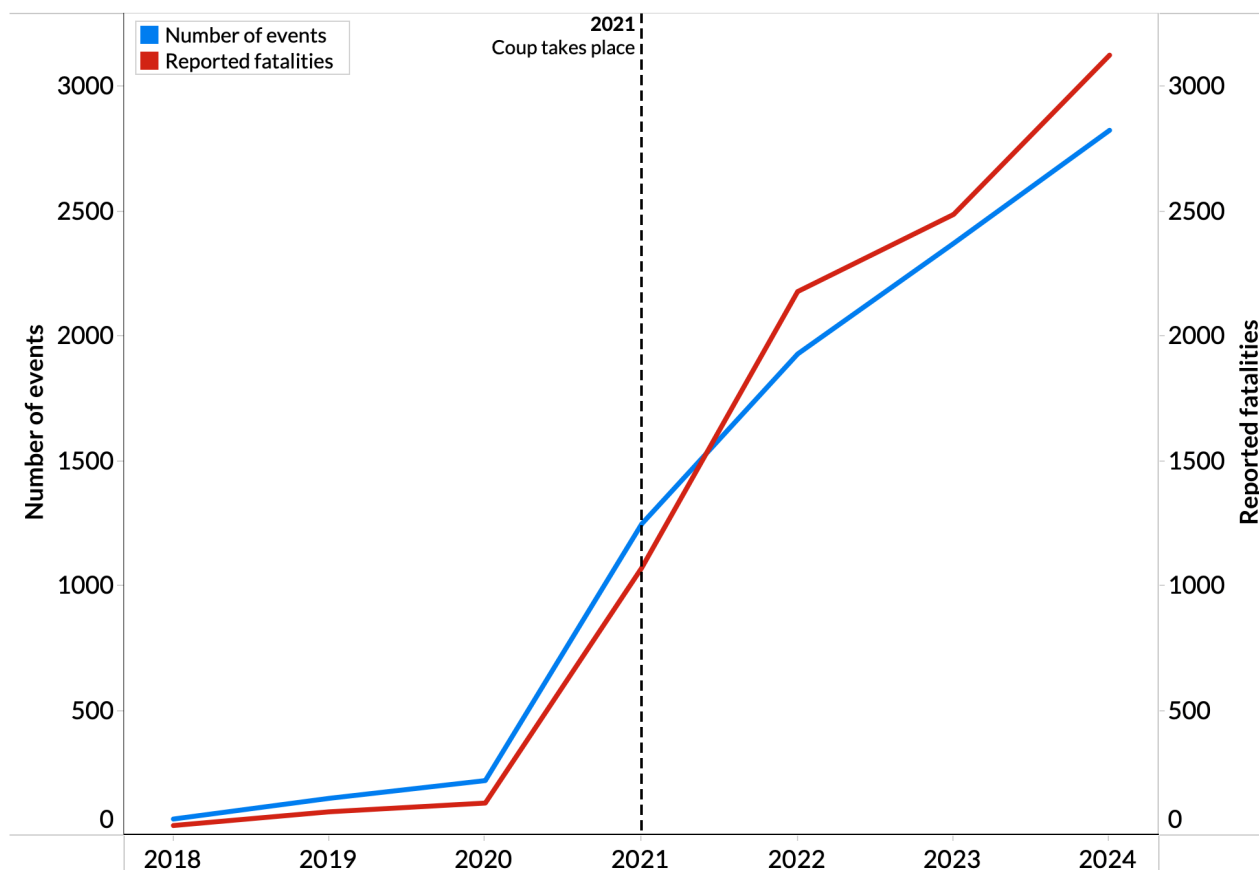
This fact sheet dives into the data on who is behind the violence, and how civilians are being targeted.

Civilians face increasing violence from the military

The military has continued to ramp up its violence targeting civilians throughout the post-coup period. In 2024, the military was responsible for 76% of incidents targeting civilians across the country compared to 68% in 2023. This trend is not isolated to the past year: The military has increasingly targeted civilians, both before the coup and each year since (see [graph below](#)).

Civilian targeting by the military in Myanmar

2018 - 2024



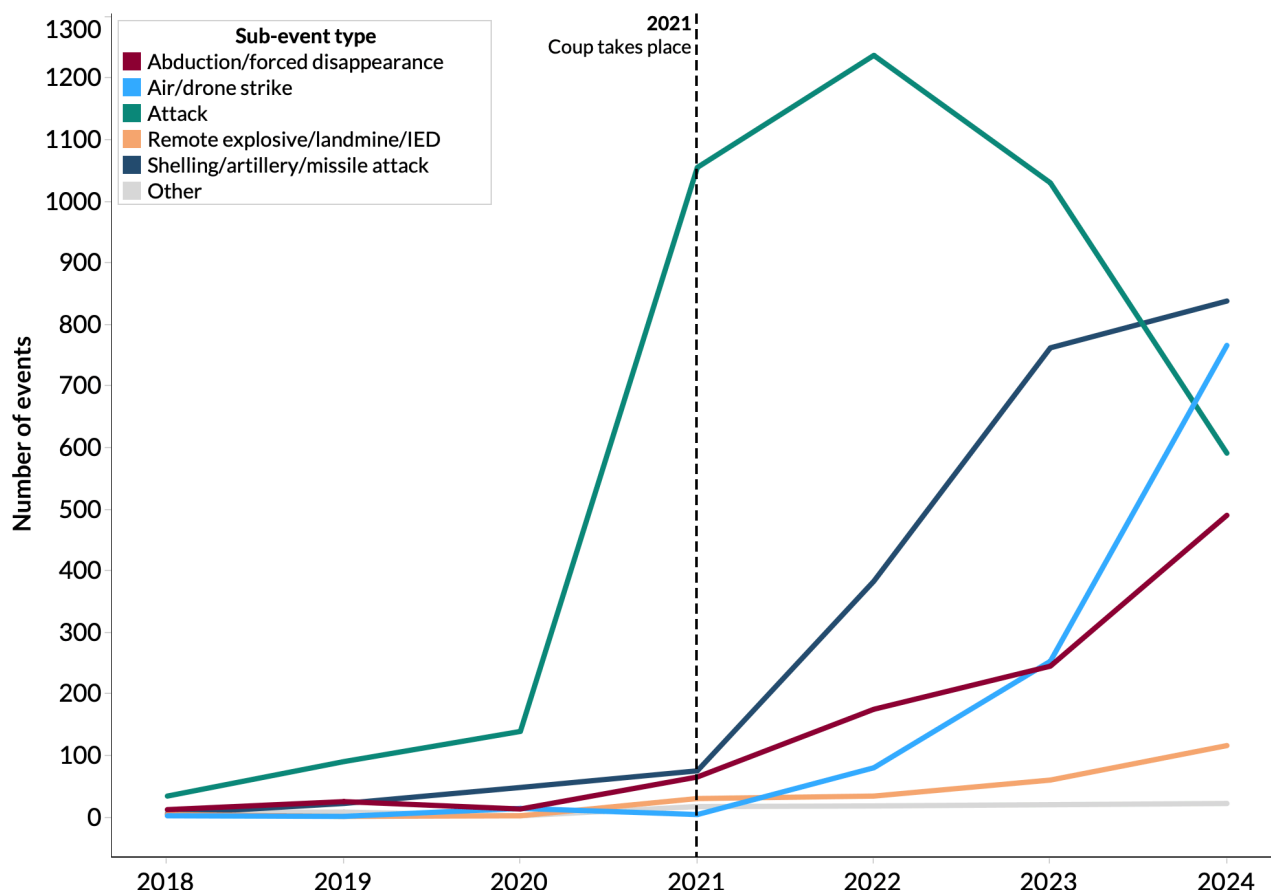
While the growth in the military's targeting of civilians in 2024 has been consistent with previous years, there were notable changes in how the military perpetrated this violence in 2024. As the military faces mounting challenges on the ground, it has changed tactics in order to maximize its ability to cause fear while minimizing military casualties. It has increasingly relied on remote violence, including airstrikes, while at the same time ramping up abductions and forced recruitment.

The military is increasingly attacking civilians from the air

The military has increased its use of remote violence, such as air- and drone strikes and shelling, to target broader populations as [it loses ground to resistance groups](#). In 2023, there were 253 military airstrike events targeting civilians, which more than tripled to 776 strike events in 2024 — the equivalent of more than two per day (*see graph below*).² The military has also been increasingly using shelling against civilians, particularly as it has decreased targeted attacks on the ground. By 2024, both shelling and airstrike events surpassed targeted attacks.

Military targeting of civilians in Myanmar by tactic

2018 - 2024



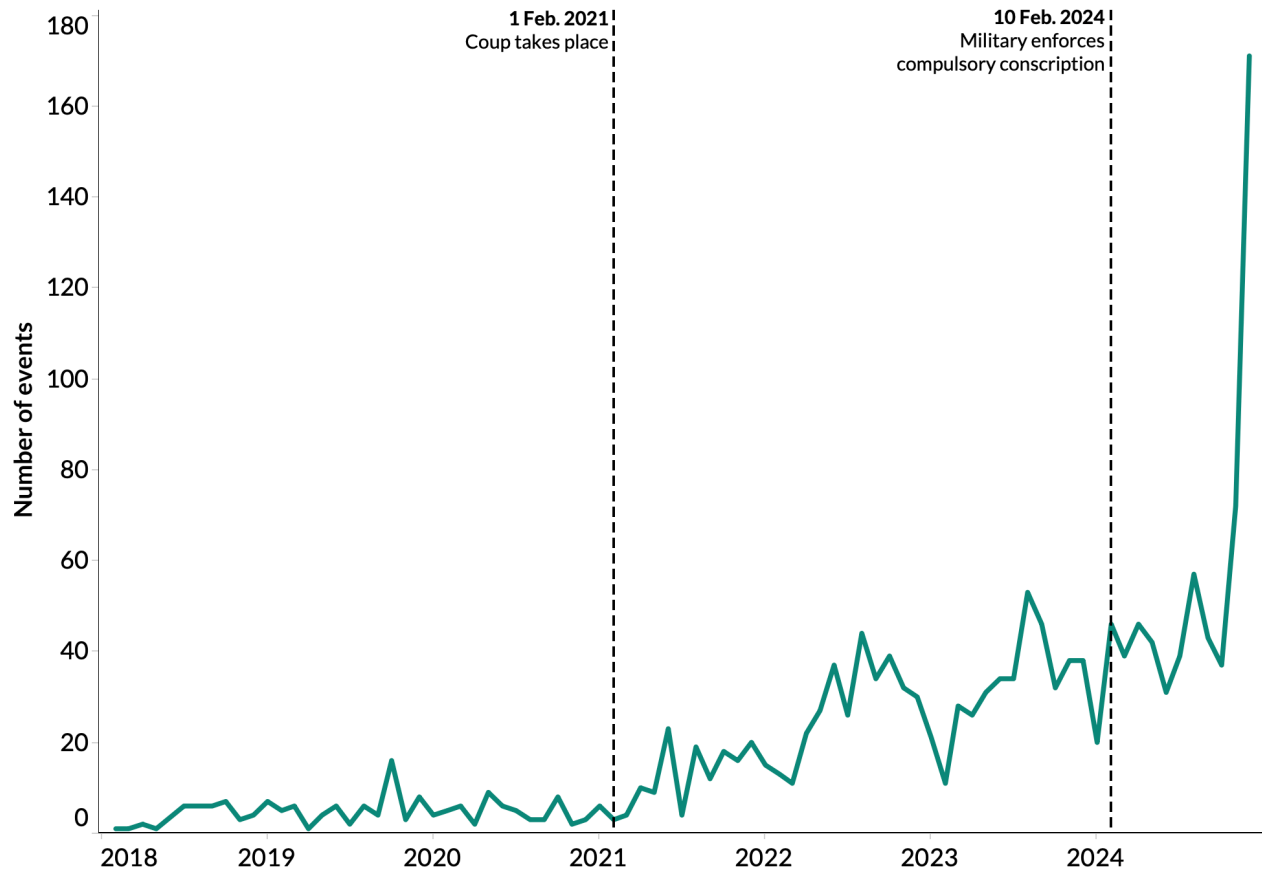
Previously, the military's primary form of civilian targeting was targeted attacks such as shooting, torturing, and killing of anyone it perceived as having participated in the anti-coup movement — including activists, armed resistance members, and those who joined in the civil disobedience movement. Comparatively, these types of attacks have been decreasing since 2022, though they remain at heightened levels (*see graph above*). At the same time, though, the military has been increasing its mass killings: In 2024, ACLED records 118 incidents of mass killings by the military, in which more than five civilians were killed. This is a 44% increase compared to 2023. The shift to aerial attacks and mass killings suggests the violence has become more indiscriminate.

Civilians have increasingly been abducted by various groups — but primarily by the military

In February 2024, to replenish its dwindling troops, [the military started enforcing its conscription law](#) and began abducting young people in greater numbers.³ The number of abduction events, sometimes involving the abduction of hundreds of people at a time, reached a record high in December 2024 (*see graph below*) with 170 incidents. This was the highest number per month in the past four years and occurred in the same month the military suffered significant [losses in Rakhine state](#). To a much smaller degree, other armed actors also abducted civilians in 2024 for forced recruitment or as forced labor.

Abductions in Myanmar

2018 - 2024



Related ACLED publications:

- [Between cooperation and competition: The struggle of resistance groups in Myanmar](#)
- [Conflict Watchlist 2025: Decisive year ahead for resistance groups in Myanmar as they threaten new territories](#)
- [Myanmar: 2024 Conflict Index Infographic](#)
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