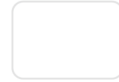


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Document #2095880

RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

Junta captures 17 civilians in Myanmar's Tanintharyi region

By RFA Burmese

Junta troops have detained 17 civilians from a village in Myanmar's southernmost Tanintharyi region, locals told RFA Wednesday.

They said the 12 women, two men and three children were arrested five days ago as they returned to the village in Kyunsu township and accused of supporting a local People's Defense Force (PDF).

RFA has been unable to confirm the names and ages of those detained because phone and internet links are unreliable in the region.

The villagers were in a motor boat, returning from market, when they were stopped by junta troops, locals told RFA on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals.

A Kyunsu resident said the 17 are being held in the township's police station and denied access to their families.

"They were arrested on the way home after buying rice, cooking oil and salt from Bait [Myeik city], and were accused of supporting PDFs near Tha Zin village by the police," the local said.

"It is said they were arrested because they allegedly bought the rice and cooking oil to support the PDFs."

Another local resident told RFA that troops and police have been patrolling in speedboats near the coastal city of Myeik to check passengers in other vessels.

"They are collecting information like names, registration numbers and where people are heading from the jetty," he said.

“Every single boat from Myeik and Kyunsu heading to villages has to report to the junta security forces.”

On July 25, a local People’s Defense Force attacked a police station in Kyunsu township and exchanged fire with the police, according to a Kyunsu township PDF statement.

The military junta has not released any statement about the situation.

RFA called the junta spokesperson for Tanintharyi region, Yin Htwe, but he said he was in a meeting and turned off the phone.

Translated by RFA Burmese. Edited by Mike Firn and Taejun Kang.

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ecoi.net description:

Tanintharyi region: Junta troops arrested 17 civilians, among them 3 children, for allegedly supporting a local People’s Defense Force (PDF)

Country:

Myanmar

Source:

RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

Original link:

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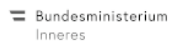
2095880

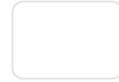
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Document #2095882

RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

Myanmar military arrests Sagaing region villagers, torches homes

By RFA Burmese

Junta troops detained six villagers and burned homes in a township in Myanmar's Sagaing region, locals and anti-regime forces told RFA Thursday.

Residents of Ayadaw township said troops fired heavy artillery and then raided Baw Kone village around dawn on Wednesday.

They took six villagers as human shields when they withdrew, the locals said.

"They entered the village firing heavy artillery and handguns and burned 10 houses," said a resident who didn't want to be named for fear of reprisals.

"Six villagers were taken hostage. They have not been released yet. Their names are still unknown as we were on the run for safety. And no one knows if they are alive or dead We can't expect anything until they get back."

The local added that the hostages were taken in the direction of Naung Gyi Aing village where the troops are temporarily stationed.

A member of Ayadaw township People's Defense Force said his militia fought with troops a few hours before the village raid.

"The clash broke out for only a few minutes. But we had to retreat because they had more weapons," he said.

"We easily outnumbered them but we didn't have the firepower."

Locals said nearly 8,000 residents from nine villages, including Baw Kone,

had fled junta raids.

RFA's calls to the junta's spokesperson for Sagaing region, Saw Naing, went unanswered Thursday.

Translated by RFA Burmese. Edited by Mike Firn and Taejun Kang.

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ecoi.net description:

Sagaing region: Junta troops detained 6 villagers, burned homes and forced 8,000 residents to flee

Country:

Myanmar

Source:

RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

Original link:

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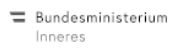
2095882

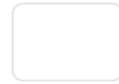
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Document #2095893

RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

More than 16,500 homes and buildings destroyed by Myanmar junta since coup

By RFA Burmese

Myanmar's military junta has evicted families and destroyed more than 16,500 homes and other buildings in large cities and towns across the Southeast Asian country, claiming that the structures "encroached on land owned by the state," according to data compiled by Radio Free Asia.

The data is based on residents' testimonies and notices from local authorities, compiled since the military seized control of the country from the elected civilian-led government in a February 2021 coup. The actual figure may be higher, however.

The junta has removed the buildings under the pretext of "encroachment," claiming the land belongs to the railway department, the irrigation department, or the military, or that it has been zoned for municipal infrastructure.

The junta also has forcibly evicted people living in informal settlements as part of a bid to increase its land holdings, RFA reported in February.

Families who have lost their homes say they are now facing hardship.

The military has leveled nearly 11,700 houses and buildings in Yangon region, home to Myanmar's largest city and former capital, and the area with the greatest concentration of buildings.

Of that figure, the junta has demolished more than 4,100 houses and buildings in Mandalay, the second-largest city by population, while smaller cities and towns, such as Magway, Naypyidaw, Taungoo, Sittwe and Ann have seen between 75 to 200 demolitions each.

The military removed residential houses in Magway, saying they were too close to an Air Force base, demolished civilian homes and buildings in Mandalay on the grounds that the inhabitants were squatting on regional

government-owned land, private land or land too close to a railway, and tore down homes in Naypyidaw, claiming they were situated too close to the Yan Aung Myin Forest Reserve.

Enter the bulldozers

A resident of Myo Thit Ward No. 4 in Mandalay who had lived in a home there for 17 years, said the junta leveled 200 homes in the ward, including his.

"There was no deadline in the notice that the authorities sent to us," he said. "It just said that we must move out as soon as possible, so we started collecting our property and disassembling our homes."

"But yesterday bulldozers arrived and started bulldozing our houses around noon," said the resident who declined to be identified out of fear of retribution. "Right now, I have rented a house to live in."

A resident who was evicted from Mandalay's Pyigyitagun township told RFA that he could not afford to buy another dwelling because of high commodity prices.

"We had to pinch pennies with a lot of difficulty to save up and buy our house," he said.

Patheingyi township administrators under the control of the military issued notices this June to nearly 10,000 households that their homes would be removed on the grounds that they had been built on farmland without permission.

Similarly, in Yangon region, the junta demolished homes it claimed were built on lands owned by public parks, the regional government or the military.

In November 2022, soldiers knocked down about 100 houses in Yangon's Mayangon township they claimed was on land owned by a stadium, forcing nearly 300 people into homelessness.

A resident who refused to be named for safety reasons told RFA he had to rent a house to stay on the outskirts of the city because he could not afford to buy a new one.

"No one could buy another house again after the evictions," he said. "All of them have to live as tenants now. Some had to go back to their villages."

Human rights violation

Rights activist Zaw Yan of the Yangon People's Welfare Network told RFA that the junta's demolition of civilian homes under the pretext of

encroachment is a violation of human rights.

"From a human rights standpoint, it is a violation of Article 13 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights," he said. "Also, they've violated [Myanmar's] constitution which says that every citizen has the right to live in any region within the country according to the law."

In a statement issued on Dec. 2, 2022, U.N. human rights officials said the junta's act of removing houses by force was a violation of basic human rights and a war crime.

Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Tun, spokesman for Myanmar's State Administration Council, the official name of the regime, told RFA in March 2022 that the junta had to focus on encroachment issues because previous governments did not resolve them.

A Yangon-based attorney who knows about the demolitions told RFA that previously the removal of homes was usually suspended or postponed through negotiations with administrative officials, though that's no longer possible under current military rule.

Translated by Myo Min Aung for RFA Burmese. Edited by Roseanne Gerin and Matt Reed.

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ecoi.net description:

Since the military coup in February 2021, the junta destroyed more than 16,500 homes and other buildings, claiming that the structures "encroached on land owned by the state"

Country:
Myanmar

Source:
RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

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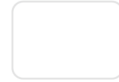
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Document #2096335

RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

Myanmar military steps up fighting in 8 states and regions

By RFA Burmese

Fighting has intensified in eight of Myanmar's states and regions as the military renews attempts to seize control of territory from ethnic armies and People's Defense Force (PDF) paramilitaries, anti-junta groups told RFA.

They reported an upswing in fighting in Shan, Kachin, Kayin and Mon states, and Sagaing, Bago, Magway and Tanintharyi regions.

One political analyst told RFA the military is trying to assert itself after extending a state of emergency for a fourth time, citing ongoing unrest.

But Than Soe Naing said the move will encourage pro-democracy groups to step up efforts to overthrow the junta and civilians will be caught in the crossfire.

"The movement of establishing a federal democratic state and abolishing the military dictatorship has reached its final stage," he said.

"The final stage means fighting decisive battles to overthrow the [junta] forces. Now that we are in this situation, it can be said that the fire of war in the country is burning and the entire population will have to go through a period of many troubles."

In Shan state, around 70 junta troops bombarded a Shan State Progressive Party camp in Laihka township on Friday and Saturday.

On Sunday, the two sides clashed in the township.

Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA) spokesperson Maj. Sai Phone Han told RFA that the fighting lasted until noon on Monday and

the situation remained very tense as the junta had ordered ethnic Shan forces to withdraw from 10 camps but the SSPP/SSA refused.

“We have thousands of troops. There are also [many] junta troops,” he said. “The situation will get worse the longer the battle rages.”

In Sagaing region, a PDF information officer who declined to be named for security reasons told RFA that fighting between junta troops and the armed resistance in Kalewala township had intensified on Saturday.

“We are still in a tense battle right now,” he said, adding that both sides had suffered casualties but the exact figures aren’t yet known.

The information officer said more than 300 residents of villages in Kalewa had fled the fighting.

Karen National Union (KNU) officials say there is currently fierce fighting between its troops and junta forces in Kayin and Mon states and Bago and Tanintharyi regions.

Group spokesperson Padoh Saw Kler Say said thousands of junta troops are attacking seven KNU-controlled areas.

“There are about 109 battalions. We estimate the manpower to be 10,000 — maybe more,” he said.

Fighting intensifies in Kachin’s jade mining region

In Kachin state, fighting between the junta and the Kachin Independence Army saw an uptick in June.

Locals told RFA fighting was particularly fierce in the jade mining region around Hpakant township, with the junta carrying out airstrikes.

Kachin Independence Army spokesperson Col. Naw Bu, said troops have sent in around 1,000 soldiers in two columns in an attempt to seize control of the area around the KIA headquarters in Lai Zar.

In northern Shan state, there has been fighting in the past few days between junta troops and the Ta’ang National Liberation Army.

Clashes between the junta army and Karenni Army joint forces with Karenni National Defense Force has intensified in Loikaw and Mese in Kayah state and Bawlakhe, Pinlaung and Pekon townships in southern Shan state.

RFA called the junta’s deputy information officer Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Tun to ask about the increase in fighting but nobody answered.

At a meeting of the National Defense and Security Council on July 31 junta leader Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing said Sagaing, Magway, Bago and Tanintharyi regions and Kayin, Kayah, Chin and Mon states have been particularly hard hit by fighting, mine attacks and arson.

The junta extended emergency rule for another six months for “security measures” to address the widespread conflict.

More than 1.6 million civilians have fled their homes due to fighting since the February 2021 coup, according to figures released by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) at the end of last month.

Translated by RFA Burmese. Edited by Mike Firn and Taejun Kang.

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ecoi.net description:

According to anti-junta groups, fighting intensified in 8 states and regions as the military renews attempts to seize control of territory from ethnic armies and People's Defense Force (PDF) paramilitaries

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Myanmar

Source:

RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

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Document #2097603

RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

Military reshuffling aims to keep Myanmar's ruling junta in place for the long term

One observer says it's the 'military's attempt to dominate and control all departments.'

By RFA Burmese

A recent reshuffling of top military personnel by the leader of Myanmar's junta is part of an effort to gain control of the entire governing apparatus and remain in power for years to come, analysts and observers said.

Among the top generals reassigned on Aug. 3 were the heads of the defense and home affairs ministries – the first changes since Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing seized power from the elected civilian-led government in a February 2021 coup. The two ministries are responsible for tackling armed anti-junta resistance fighters across the country.

Former Transport and Communications Minister Gen. Tin Aung San was appointed as defense minister, making him a member of the National Defense and Security Council, and former Defense Minister Gen. Mya Tun Oo was made transport and communications minister. Both will continue serving as deputy prime ministers.

Lt. Gen. Yar Pyae, the former Union Government Office 1 minister, replaced Lt. Gen. Soe Htut as head of the Home Affairs Ministry. Yar Pyae held on to his position on the State Administration Council – the junta's governing body – and his roles of national security adviser to Min Aung Hlaing and leader of the junta's peace negotiation team.

The move came days after Min Aung Hlaing extended emergency rule in Myanmar for another six months on July 31, thereby delaying the date by which elections must be held according to the country's constitution. The junta previously pledged to hold elections in August.

It also occurred as Myanmar, already hit hard by economic sanctions, faces intense international criticism over the military's attacks on civilian communities and execution of detained combatants in areas that are hotbeds of resistance to the regime.

An annual report released publicly on Tuesday by the U.N.'s Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar cited strong evidence that the military and its affiliate militias have committed "increasingly frequent and brazen war crimes."

New assignments at lower levels

A leader of the nonviolent anti-junta civil disobedience movement, or CDM, said Min Aung Hlaing reassigned generals he trusts to important ministries to prepare for what he may face during the next state of emergency period.

"The Defense Ministry is just like a correspondence office under the commander-in-chief," the person said. "That's why he transferred Gen. Mya Tun Oo, who is one of his major players, to the Ministry of Transport and Communications, which he will heavily use in the future to tackle the issues of airplanes and cyber communication."

Min Aung Hlaing appointed capable Yar Pyae as home affairs minister in place of Soe Htut, who is in poor health, to strengthen the operations of the State Administration Council over the next six months, he added.

The CDM leader, who served in the military for 21 years and held the rank of a captain, moved to the civilian administration where he worked for nearly a decade until he was promoted to a director position. Following the 2021 coup, he left his job and joined other professionals who walked off the job to peacefully protest against the regime.

Reassignments have also taken place among lower-ranking military officers.

From January to the end of June, the junta transferred 40 lieutenant colonels, majors and captains to civil ministries to work as chief executive officers, or deputy and assistant directors, according to the junta's weekly national reports.

Among them were one lieutenant colonel, nine majors and 30 captains sent to work at the Myanmar Economic Bank, Election Commission, Union Civil Service Board, ministries of construction, industry and commerce, sports and youth affairs, hotels and tourism, and the Yangon and Naypyidaw City Development Committees.

The largest number of military officers were transferred to the Myanmar Economic Bank with five majors as managers and 16 captains as assistant

managers.

The transfers indicate that the junta is trying to control the operation of civil departments as well, said former Captain Kaung Thu Win, a member of the CDM.

"The junta aims to replace its people in senior positions in the civil departments such as directors to be able to control the head of the departments so that they will follow its instructions more faithfully," he told RFA. "It transferred junior officers to the civil departments so that they can provide the military with the necessary information inside each department."

RFA could not reach junta spokesman Major Gen. Zaw Min Tun for comment on the personnel changes.

'It's called militarization'

Thein Tun Oo, executive director of the pro-military Thayninga Institute of Strategic Studies, said the new appointments would strengthen the military administration.

"The bureaucratic mechanism makes the administration of a country run smoothly and easily," he said. "In order for that mechanism including national security projects to operate, it is important for all the people involved to be able to work effectively. That's why we need really capable people who can focus on their tasks."

More reliable replacements were made because many of the current government departments have experienced security breaches, he added.

The appointment of military officers to both top and middle-level civilian positions is the junta's attempt to dominate the entire government apparatus, political and military analyst Than Soe Naing said.

"It's called militarization," he said. "It is a military's attempt to dominate and control all departments."

Given the country's current situation with anti-junta People's Defense Forces, led by the shadow National Unity Government, and ethnic armed groups fighting junta forces, it is important for the military regime to have reliable people to back it, Than Soe Naing said.

"They only work with their service members who they can trust, so that they feel safer," he said.

Translated by Myo Min Aung for RFA Burmese. Edited by Roseanne Gerin and Matt Reed.

ecoi.net description:

Leader of junta reshuffles top military personnel in order to gain control of entire governing apparatus and remain in power long-term

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Myanmar

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RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

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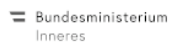
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Document #2097602

RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

Myanmar junta troops and police try to evict villagers near Chinese copper project

Locals have been given a deadline to get out and the village will be fenced off.

By RFA Burmese

Junta troops and police have told the residents of a village near a Chinese-run copper project in Myanmar's Sagaing region they will be forcibly evicted if they don't leave, locals told RFA on Wednesday.

China's state-owned Wanbao Company runs the Letpadaung Copper Project in Salingyi township in a joint venture with a company owned by Myanmar's military.

It fenced off Wet Hmay village on August 6, on the pretext that the village is in the mine's project area, and told all 35 households to move out of the village permanently.

On Tuesday, Wanbao officials summoned six villagers and told them to inform all residents that they needed to leave as soon as possible, according to a local who did not want to be named for security reasons.

"They [village representatives] said that Wanbao asked them to clear out the village, asking villagers to respond to [the company] the following day," he said, adding that company officials told the representatives if they didn't get an immediate response they would take no responsibility for the actions of the troops and police. The village representatives told the company they would inform Wet Hmay residents and discuss their plans.

Residents said junta troops have already occupied many parts of Wet Hmay and have been threatening locals and telling them to leave.

Wanbao has repeatedly attempted to enclose the village with a fence, but villagers have objected, delaying the project. Locals claim that this time is different because soldiers and police have been dispatched to clear out the village and fence it off.

RFA contacted the junta spokesperson for Sagaing region, Saw Naing, seeking comment on the forced evictions, but he did not answer the phone.

RFA also called Wanbao but nobody answered.

Other villages were emptied out when the Letpadaung copper project started in Salingyi township in 2011.

Following the February 2021 coup many people working on the project joined the Civil Disobedience Movement, effectively shutting down operations at Letpadaung.

Locals say the company is now planning to resume operations, prompting an August 7 statement by 17 local anti-regime militias ordering Wanbao and Yangtze Copper, which are both working on projects in Salingyi township, to stop cooperating with the junta or face the consequences.

Translated by RFA Burmese. Edited by Mike Firn and Taejun Kang.

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ecoi.net description:

Sagaing region: Junta troops and police pressure inhabitants of village to leave due to Chinese-run copper project

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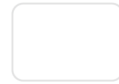
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Document #2096933

RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

Myanmar's Karen National Union says nationwide cease-fire agreement is dead

By RFA Burmese

Myanmar's oldest ethnic armed group said Thursday that a nationwide cease-fire agreement it signed with the national army eight years ago is now null and void because of violations of terms by the ruling military junta.

The Karen National Union, the political wing of the Karen National Liberation Army that represents ethnic Karen people in eastern Myanmar's Kayin state, was one of the eight original ethnic army signatories of the accord in October 2015, aimed at ending the country's long-running armed conflicts.

Two other rebel groups signed the agreement in 2018, bringing the number to 10.

The KNU and other ethnic armed organizations want a national military that cannot participate in politics and the formation of a federal democratic union in Myanmar.

The peace process was killed off when the Myanmar military seized power from the elected civilian-led government in a February 2021 coup, sparking new waves of violence with ethnic armies joining forces with anti-junta resistance fighters and engaging in insurgency and heavy clashes across the country.

Through fighting, the junta forces have violated terms of the nationwide cease-fire agreement, or NCA, so that it no longer exists, said KNU General Secretary Pado Saw Tado Muh during an online press conference on Thursday to mark the 100th day after the KNU's 17th Congress.

"There is no more reason to follow the NCA because the military has trampled on Chapter 1 of the agreement, which is the heart of the whole

NCA," he said, referring to the part of the pact on basic principles to which the signatories agreed.

Key areas of the accord cover military codes of conduct, the protection of civilians, the provision of humanitarian assistance, a political roadmap, interim arrangements, the establishment of a Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee, and the adoption of a Framework for Political Dialogue for peacefully resolving differences.

The KNU said on July 9 that it had engaged in nearly 2,500 armed clashes with junta troops during the first half of the year in KNU-controlled territory in Kayah and Mon states and in Tanintharyi and Bago regions.

Junta leader Sr. Gen. Min Aung Hlaing said Tuesday that the NCA should not be ignored and that the military is working hard to adhere to its terms.

His comments came days after Min Aung Hlaing extended emergency rule in Myanmar for another six months on July 31, thereby delaying the date by which elections must be held according to the country's constitution. The junta previously pledged to hold elections in August.

Pado Saw Tado Muh said he would not accept any elections based on the 2008 constitution, drafted by a previous military junta that ruled Myanmar.

"We will not accept the junta's election, [and] we should not hold any new election based on the 2008 constitution as it will lead to more harm than good and will make it more difficult to solve the political problems of Myanmar," he said.

"Therefore, we would like to tell you not to support any movement based on the election that will perpetuate the military dictatorship."

After the coup, the KNU and its armed wing — one of Myanmar's largest ethnic armies — took a more aggressive stance to the military and offered sanctuary to lawmakers, protesters, striking workers and others who faced abuse and attacks by the junta.

KNLA forces have conducted deadly ambushes, captured military bases, and trained resistance fighters, including members of the anti-regime People's Defense Forces, as junta forces ramped up attacks on KNU-controlled territory.

KNLA commander Brigadier General Saw Tar Malar Thaw said the junta is now on the defensive.

"Tactically, they cannot open offensive attacks, but instead have to use only heavy artillery and airplanes," he said. "In many cases, such attacks

target civilians."

RFA could not reach Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Tun, the junta's spokesman, for comment on the KNU's statements.

Translated by Myo Min Aung for RFA Burmese. Edited by Roseanne Gerin and Matt Reed.

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ecoi.net description:

According to the Karen National Union, the nationwide cease-fire agreement the group signed with the national army in 2015 is void because of violations of terms by the military junta

Country:

Myanmar

Source:

RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

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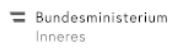
2096933

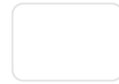
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Document #2095885

RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

Junta airstrike kills 4 civilians in Myanmar's Sagaing region

By RFA Burmese

Four civilians, including an eight-month-old child, were killed and at least 10 injured when a junta jet bombed a township in Myanmar's Sagaing region on Friday morning, residents told RFA.

The jet bombed a monastery in Sagaing township's Ta Laing village, where displaced people were sheltering, according to a local who didn't want to be named for fear of reprisals.

"At around four in the morning, the jet hovered and dropped a bomb as a junta column entered Ta Laing village, hitting the monastery gate and causing casualties," said the local.

"Junta troops raided the village in the early morning and civilians were also arrested but there was no fighting."

The local said around 80 troops entered the village after the airstrike and detained around 20 villagers, who were still being held as of Friday afternoon local time.

A local People's Defense Force member, who requested anonymity, told RFA that troops fired rocket-propelled grenades at the monastery when they withdrew on Friday afternoon.

"On the way out of Ta Laing village, the junta troops opened fire with two shots with shoulder-fired weapons toward the monastery," he said, adding that a battle with his anti-junta militia was almost certain to happen.

Locals said more than 6,000 civilians from villages in Sagaing township fled their homes ahead of the junta raid.

Calls to the junta's spokesperson for Sagaing region, Saw Naing, went unanswered.

Junta leader Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing said on July 31 that the junta is staking out territory and declaring martial law in parts of the country in order to restore peace and stability.

The junta has extended the state of emergency for another six months, further pushing back plans to hold national elections to replace the military regime that has run Myanmar since a February 2021 coup..

Translated by RFA Burmese. Edited by Mike Firn and Taejun Kang.

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ecoi.net description:

Sagaing region: Junta airstrike on a township killed 4 people, including an 8-month-old child, and injured at least 10 others

Country:

Myanmar

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RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

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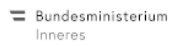
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Document #2096333

RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

Residents say Christian churches attacked by junta in Myanmar's Chin state

Reported by RFA Burmese

Residents in Chin state said that the bombing of two Christian churches in recent days were deliberate attacks by the military junta.

On Saturday, a Baptist church and a residential home were destroyed and seven people were injured after junta troops bombarded Ramthlo village in Falam township, a local resident and several pastors said.

And on Monday, four civilian homes – including one used as a Baptist church – were destroyed by the junta's aerial bombardment of Khuafo village in Thantlang township. A pastor's home was also destroyed when two artillery shells were fired into the courtyard of the Baptist church in Hakha city Monday evening, they said.

Salai Dokhar, an observer of Chin issues, told Radio Free Asia that the junta is trying to cause mental anguish with the deliberate attacks on holy places valued by Chin people.

"Churches are some of the things that these people revere most," said Dokhar, who is also the founder of India for Myanmar, an India-based pro-democracy group.

"We assume that the junta choosing to attack such holy churches indicates that they are trying to use their last strategy of causing people direct mental pain in this situation of crisis when they are losing."

'A flagrant war crime'

The churches were targeted without any provocation, according to a Hakha resident, who spoke to RFA on condition of anonymity for security reasons. No one was harmed in the attacks.

"Targeting religious compounds and buildings is definitely against the will of God. It would be a different story if some armed groups were present

but this is just an innocent church,” said a Hakha Baptist Church bishop, who also refused to be named for security reasons.

“It is purely a religious compound. They should have never done damage to such holy places. This should never happen in the future either,” the bishop said.

The military junta hasn’t released any news about the damage to the Christian churches. Junta spokesman and Chin state social minister Thant Zin didn’t respond to RFA’s attempt to reach him for comment.

Separately, a Christian temple in Set Kant village, south of Kale township in Sagaing region, was damaged by junta artillery on Friday, residents said.

A total of 85 religious buildings, including eight Christian churches, have been destroyed by junta airstrikes and arson in Chin state since the February 2021 military coup, according to the Chin Human Rights Organization.

“Deliberately attacking religious buildings, churches, and hospitals is not only a clear neglect but also a flagrant war crime,” the organization’s executive officer, Salai Mang Hre Lian, told RFA.

Translated by Myo Min Aung. Edited by Matt Reed.

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ecoi.net description:

Chin state: According to residents, the junta deliberately bombed 2 Christian churches

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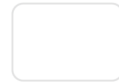
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Document #2095889

RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

More than 50 officers and family members desert Myanmar military

By RFA Burmese

More than 50 officers and their family members deserted Myanmar's military and joined the anti-junta Civil Disobedience Movement in the first two weeks of August, according to an official with the shadow National Unity Government, or NUG.

Among the defectors were two officers holding the rank of major, three captains and 10 servicemen holding various other ranks, said Maung Maung Swe, the spokesman for the NUG's Ministry of Defense.

"Approximately 14 people tried to connect with us through the People's Embrace," he said, referring to a group that works with military deserters. "According to the list we received from all over the country, more than 50 people have joined us in two weeks."

Several of the deserters came from units based in northwestern Myanmar's Chin state and Kayah state in the country's east, Maung Maung Swe said.

"Just yesterday, two junta soldiers involved in attacking Let Khat Taung Hill in Myawaddy joined us and brought their weapons," he said, referring to a township in Kayin state on the border with Thailand.

Sergeant Zey Ya of the People's Goal, a group assisting CDM employees, told RFA that while 50 officers and their families switched sides in the past two weeks, "more deserters left junta bases and are hiding on their own" without connecting with the armed resistance.

Zey Ya said that the deserters may have been prompted to leave ahead of a junta plan to upgrade national registration cards to "smart cards" that would make it harder for them to do so because they will be linked to a computer network.

"The junta is planning to upgrade national registration cards to smart cards nationwide so that those who are planning to desert won't be able to run," he said. "Those familiar with the junta's plan knew it would begin with military service members and started fleeing because once these smart cards are in use, they won't be able to get through the junta's checkpoints."

The desertions come amid increased military offensives that include airstrikes and mortars in Myanmar's Sagaing, Magway and Tanintharyi regions, as well as in Chin, Kachin, Shan, Kayah and Kayin states.

However, reports from armed ethnic groups claim that the junta has lost military camps in Kayah, Kayin and Kachin state, despite the reported spike in offensives. The junta does not typically publish information about the status of its military bases, and RFA was unable to independently verify the claims.

Troops have 'lost heart' and confidence

Officers who joined the Civil Disobedience Movement, or CDM, of government employees who have left their jobs in protest of the military's Feb. 1, 2021, coup d'etat, said that the morale among service members is flagging as soldiers have "lost heart."

A deserter captain from Chin state who joined the CDM told RFA that junta authorities no longer trust soldiers enough to post them on individual guard duty anymore.

"Despite the shortage of personnel, they post two guards on sentry but allow them only one rifle," said the deserter, who gave his name as Captain Block, citing security concerns. "This means that if they choose to desert, the military would lose only one rifle."

Attempts by RFA to contact junta Deputy Information Minister Major Gen. Zaw Min Tun for comment went unanswered Tuesday. RFA was also unable to contact Thant Zin, the junta spokesman for Chin state.

Maung Maung Swe, of the NUG's Ministry of Defense, said there are two main reasons he sees for the increase in desertions.

"The first one is that service members have come to realize that, as the war escalates, their lives have no guarantee if they continue to stand with the junta," he said. "The second reason is that they've lost trust in their fellow troops."

He noted an increase in reports from the CDM of dismissals and killings within the military's own ranks, including one recent incident that led to the dismissal of more than 60 servicemen.

"One officer was promoted to the rank of general one day and disappeared the next day, and similar incidents like that are increasingly happening within the military," he said. "When the soldiers dismiss and kill each other like that, it shows that the military is disintegrating and its troops no longer have confidence."

Translated by Myo Min Aung. Edited by Joshua Lipes and Malcolm Foster.

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According to an official with the shadow government, more than 50 officers and their family members deserted the military and joined the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) in the first 2 weeks of August 2023

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Myanmar

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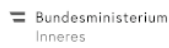
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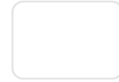
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Document #2096323

RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

Junta offensive in Myanmar's Shan state prompts fear of expanded conflict

By RFA Burmese

Myanmar's junta has launched offensives on ethnic armed rebels in Shan state amid a lack of progress on peace talks, prompting fear among residents of widespread fighting in the region.

Clashes between junta troops and the Shan State Progressive Party/Shan State Army, or SSPP/SSA, in southern Shan's Laihka township, and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army, or TNLA, in northern Shan's Muse, Lashio and Kutkai townships since late last month are the military's first orchestrated attacks against the groups since its 2021 coup d'etat.

Analysts said the offensives suggest the junta is trying to cut off the flow of weapons from the two groups to the armed resistance in lower Sagaing and Magway regions.

Following pressure from the junta on SSPP/SSA troops to withdraw from Laihka, fierce fighting broke out between the two sides on Aug. 6, prompting around 1,000 ethnic Ta'ang and Shan people to flee area villages, according to SSPP/SSA spokesman Major Sai Phone Han.

"There has been news that all anti-junta forces will be driven out from the Laihka area," he told RFA Burmese, noting that the military had called in reinforcements of about 1,000 more soldiers, including members of the pro-junta Pyi Thu Sit militia. "[Anti-junta armed groups] in the south have tried to convince us to come to them, but we intend to stay here [to ensure the security of the area]."

In the meantime, residents of Laihka said they are frightened because of increased junta troop activity in the township.

"One side of the fighting has reinforced and the other side is trying to block them – it's worrying indeed, as the tension between them is high,"

said one resident, who declined to be named citing security concerns. "We saw two military junta helicopters hovering over our town today."

The resident said that the local community is worried that the fighting will reach the seat of Laihka township, noting that those displaced by earlier clashes have yet to return home.

In Muse, Lashio and Kutkai townships, junta troops and TNLA forces fought "nearly everyday" from July 23 to Aug. 12, with the military deploying attack helicopters in Lashio during the last two days, TNLA spokesman Lieutenant Col. My Aik Kyaw told RFA.

"We don't know what they aim to achieve in their offensives," he said, adding that at least a dozen battles took place over the period.

RFA attempts to reach junta Shan state spokesman and economic minister Khun Thein Maung regarding the situation in the region went unanswered Thursday.

RFA contacted junta Shan State Security and Border Affairs Minister Colonel Sein Win by telephone, but he declined to comment, saying he was in a meeting.

Targeting flow of weapons

Than Soe Naing, a researcher of Myanmar affairs, told RFA he believes the junta is putting pressure on ethnic armies in Shan state to stop the flow of weapons to the armed resistance in other parts of the country.

"[The military] assumes that the weapons flowing into Sagaing and Magway are coming from the Ta'ang region, so blocking the Ta'ang region is an important task for them," he said. "No matter how many political discussions they hold with the ... armed groups [in Shan], including the Ta'ang, they cannot help but interfere militarily. That's why they will continue to fight."

He said that the junta wants to remove the SSPP/SSA from Laihka and replace it with a rival group, the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army, or RCSS/SSA, with whom it has a good relationship, and is willing to fight a protracted war to do so.

While the SSPP/SSA is not a signatory to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, signed in 2015 and aimed at ending the country's long-running armed conflicts, it is among the groups that meet frequently in the capital Naypyidaw with the junta's Peace Delegation.

Two other rebel groups signed the agreement in 2018, bringing the number to 10. The signatories want a national military that cannot

participate in politics and the formation of a federal democratic union in Myanmar.

The peace process was killed off when the Myanmar military seized power from the elected civilian-led government in a February 2021 coup, sparking new waves of violence with ethnic armies joining forces with anti-junta resistance fighters and engaging in insurgency and heavy clashes across the country.

TNLA leaders said that the situation in Shan state “depends on the military,” and that fighting is likely to continue as the junta’s offensive intensifies.

Translated by Myo Min Aung. Edited by Joshua Lipes.

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ecoi.net description:

Shan state: Amid a lack of progress on peace talks, the junta launched offensives on ethnic armed rebels prompting fears among residents of widespread fighting in the region

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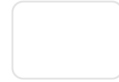
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Document #2097605

RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

Landmine kills inmate and driver during Myanmar prison transfer

More than 20 prisoners were injured in a separate mine blast.

By RFA Burmese

Two people died and five others were injured when the truck taking them from Sagaing region's Monywa prison to prisons in Mandalay region hit a landmine, a member of a pro-democracy group told RFA Thursday.

The 12-wheel truck was the lead vehicle in a convoy with four other military vehicles, taking around 100 political prisoners to Obo and Myingyan prisons on Wednesday afternoon.

Civil Disobedience Movement doctor, 33-year-old Zaw Htwel Aung and the unnamed driver of the truck were both killed when the vehicle hit a mine near Monywa township's Myay Ne village, according to Aung Nay Myo of the Monywa People's Strike Steering Committee.

He said another political prisoner, Arkar Nyein Chan, who was shackled to the doctor was critically injured.

Dr. Zaw Htwel Aung was serving a 10 year prison sentence for alleged terrorism offenses.

Thike Tun Oo, a Political Prisoners Network official, told RFA the doctor died on the way to hospital..

"We know that about five people were critically injured along with him," he said.

"And we heard that another mine was triggered when they drove a bit further and about 20 more people were injured."

It's not known who laid the landmines on the Sagaing-Mandalay road.

The junta has not released a statement on the incident. RFA called the junta's Sagaing region spokesperson, Tin Than Win, but there was no response.

Three months earlier, two women political prisoners were injured when the vehicle they were in hit a landmine as it traveled from Monywa prison along the same road.

Translated by RFA Burmese. Edited by Mike Firn.

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ecoi.net description:

Mandalay region: 2 people dead and 5 injured after landmine hits truck during prison transfer; 20 people injured in further explosion of landmine

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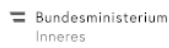
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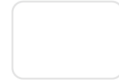
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Document #2096324

RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

Junta troops kill, burn 4 civilians in Myanmar's Sagaing region

By RFA Burmese

Junta troops killed and burned the bodies of a pregnant woman and three men in a gold mining area of Sagaing region's Pinlebu township in Myanmar, the local People's Defense Force told RFA on Friday.

They said the victims were 21-year-old Wine Wine, who was eight months pregnant, her father Set Hlaing who owned a gold mine in the township, 21-year-old Shan Lay and Nyi Nyi whose age wasn't given.

Their burned bodies were found on Monday, according to the defense force information officer, who didn't want to be named for safety reasons.

"It happened next to Nant Ta Hauk creek beside Mu Le village at around 11 a.m. on August 14," he said.

"They killed them, and burned a house and dumped all the bodies in there."

Troops entered Mu Le village in the first week of August, arresting and interrogating locals. They burned more than 30 houses when they left the village, locals told RFA on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals.

The latest killings come after the troops entered the village for a second time this month.

RFA was unable to independently verify the claims of the People's Defense Force because phone and internet connections to Pinlebu township have been cut.

The junta hasn't released a statement on the killings.

RFA contacted the junta spokesperson for Sagaing region, Tin Than Win,

who said he was unaware of the incident.

Artillery in Bago

Meanwhile, junta troops shelled three townships in the Bago region between Sunday and Wednesday, killing four civilians, including two teenage students, according to the Karen National Union, or KNU.

A resident of Kyaukkyi township in Nyaunglebin district told RFA that the teens died after a shell exploded inside a KNU-run school in Pe Thaung village on Sunday.

A barrage of heavy artillery has targeted several villages in Shwegyin township this week, the KNU said in a statement.

A resident of Shwegyin, who refused to be named for security reasons, told RFA that junta troops are firing heavy artillery at all times during the day and night.

"There are more and more times when I had to flee my village fearing that I could be hit by the junta's shelling," he said. "Although we've dug bomb shelters to withstand the shelling, the earth is too wet in this rainy season."

A local defense official in Nyaunglebin district also said that junta troops are targeting civilians and firing upon them with heavy artillery weapons as a defensive strategy.

"They are anxiously preparing their defenses and fire tons of artillery at many places without specific targets," the official said. "Tons of weapons. In doing so, they hit the civilians."

RFA reached out to Tin Oo, the military junta's spokesman for the Bago region, for a response to the allegations, but he could not be contacted.

Translated by RFA Burmese. Edited by Mike Firn and Taejun Kang.

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ecoi.net description:

Sagaing region: According to the local People's Defense Force (PDF), Junta troops killed a pregnant woman and 3 men and burned their bodies

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