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Airstrikes in Myanmar Continue To Spread Fear, Devastate Lives



Four-year-old Ma July Phyo sits in a makeshift shelter in Mandalay with her mother, Ma Khin Phyo Kai, on April 2, 2025, five days after the deadly earthquake that struck Myanmar. Despite a ceasefire announced after the earthquake, the Tatmadaw continued its aerial attacks on local villages in its fight against armed resistance groups across the country, which continues to have deadly consequences for civilians. Credit: Maung Nyan/UNICEF

UNITED NATIONS, Jul 29 2025 (IPS) - In Myanmar, airstrikes occur almost daily. The phenomenon has become common since civil war broke out following the 2021 military coup that replaced the democratically elected National League for Democracy (NLD) with the Tatmadaw, Myanmar's military. Several human rights organizations report that these airstrikes are disproportionately targeting civilians and harming lives.

The Tatmadaw uses airstrikes to fight armed resistance groups, such as the People's Defense Forces (PDF), and regain control of areas from these groups, who [control](#) about 42 percent of the country's territory, according to a BBC investigation published December 19, 2024.

After the March 28 earthquake, the Myanmar military and other groups involved declared a ceasefire, but attacks continued. Myanmar Witness [reported](#) 80 airstrikes occurred between March 28 and April 24, including in emergency-declared areas.

The Karen Human Rights Group reports that airstrikes are part of a broader attack on civilians in the country. Human rights groups and the UN found that the military disproportionately targets civilians with not only bombs but also mass executions of detained people and large-scale burning of homes.

Spokesman for the UN Secretary-General Stéphane Dujarric said these strikes are part of a pattern of attacks across the country.

“There are frequent reports of people being killed, injured or displaced by violence—as well as increasing attacks on civilian infrastructure,” he said at a July 16 press briefing.

Recent airstrikes, such as a July 11 [strike](#) on a monastery in Lin Ta Lu village, which killed 23 and injured 30, have redrawn attention to the country’s ongoing conflict. The Lin Ta Lu attack came weeks after the military began an offensive to reclaim territories controlled by resistance groups.

Public and religious sites have become targets. Myanmar Witness, a Centre for Information Resilience project investigating human rights in Myanmar, [reported](#) a trend of military operations hitting large civilian gatherings, with 109 cases of airstrikes damaging religious sites in 2024. A wedding held in a monastery in Magway Region was bombed on Feb. 25 after an invitation was posted on social media. They estimate that 11 people were killed.

“These trends highlight that religious and cultural sites are becoming increasingly at risk of complete destruction as a result of internal conflict in the country,” Myanmar Witness reported.

Dozens of schools have also been attacked, resulting in deaths and injuries of children. Many children have stopped attending school due to safety concerns. An aerial attack on a school in Oe Htein Kwin village in the Sagaing region on May 12 killed around 20 students and wounded dozens.

A Karen Education and Culture Department (KECD) school principal [told](#) the Karen Human Rights Group that all four of the school’s buildings were destroyed by bombs in a March 23, 2024 airstrike in a village in Doo Tha Htoo District. The cost of rebuilding is expensive, and they did not know whether anyone would be able to help rebuild it.

“I am sad to see the destruction of my school and worry that children will not be able to go to school...” the principal said. “I do not know how to describe my feelings of extreme fear. My whole heart breaks when I see the destroyed school. I cannot do anything now.”

Yadanar Maung, spokesperson for Justice For Myanmar, an activist group, accused international governments and corporations that fund, arm and train the Tatmadaw of empowering the military’s violent actions.

“The Myanmar military’s escalating violence against civilians, including through the intensification of airstrikes that target children, is not happening in a vacuum,” Maung told IPS.

Maung praised Airbus’ recent divestment from AviChina Industry & Technology Company Limited due to its links to the violence in Myanmar.

“Others must follow,” Maung said. “Governments must also act with stronger targeted sanctions on the military, its businesses, cronies and partners.”

The UN’s Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar is investigating whether the Tatmadaw’s actions can be classified as crimes against humanity. The Mechanism called for information on aerial attacks for its investigation. They are prioritizing investigating attacks on children.

“Airstrikes that are indiscriminate or which target civilians may be war crimes or crimes against humanity,” the Mechanism [wrote](#).

The airstrikes make it difficult for the UN to deliver humanitarian assistance to people in need. Currently, one in three people in Myanmar face acute hunger, according to Dujarric.

“We urgently, and once again, call on all parties to respect human rights and international humanitarian law,” he said.

Myanmar receives far less attention than other regions undergoing conflict and distress. Without the same level of attention, the war cannot end and the humanitarian situation will not be alleviated. Myanmar Witness said that it is important to continue reporting on the situation in Myanmar so as to keep other nations updated. They said the situation is complex and can be difficult for foreigners to understand.

“The international community isn’t as aware of this continuing internal conflict due to other important conflicts taking media attention, particularly in Western news outlets,” Myanmar Witness wrote to IPS. “It is important to continuously push to get news about Myanmar out to the international community as much as we can.”

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