

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

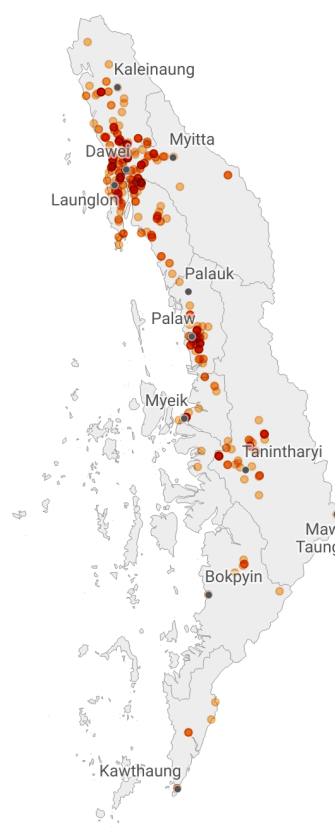
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This regular update, covering non-violent movements, conflict trends, human rights violations, and humanitarian developments up to 30 September is produced by Southern Monitor, a local research group. The next monthly situation update will be issued in October 2022.

HIGHLIGHTS & KEY MESSAGES

- As a part of “Operation Nan Htike Aung”, the number of armed clashes has significantly increased in Tanintharyi Region. The violent incidents spread to Kyunsu, Bokpyin, and Kawthoung townships which were relatively stable in the previous months.
- During this month, a total of 29 armed clashes erupted in Dawei, Tanintharyi and Palaw townships.
- SAC tightened security control and measures in both urban and rural settings of Tanintharyi Region.
- Incidents involving attacks on civilians continued this month resulting in 23 civilian deaths and six injuries.
- The junta forces fortified their search and arrest operations in four villages in Yebyu Township. A total of 17 civilians were arrested on suspicion of supporting the local resistance groups.
- Humanitarian assistance has been largely impeded due to the restrictions on the transport of aid items at the security checkpoints.
- The number of non-violent actions declined this month due to the ongoing armed clashes in the region and intimidation from pro-regime militias.

Incident Map: Violent Incidents in Tanintharyi Region



The incidents include armed clashes, remote violence and attacks targeting to civilians that occurred between February 2021 to September 2022.

Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

KEY FIGURES¹

3540

Nonviolent actions mobilized by activist groups between February 2021 and September 2022

622

Violent incidents occurred in the region between February 2021 and September 2022

267

People killed by conflict actors between February 2021 and September 2022

7K

People currently displaced by clashes and insecurity since February 2021

¹ Displacement figures fluctuate during any given month. These figures represent the number of people currently displaced. Cumulative numbers for returns and displacement are not always available.

WHO WE ARE

Southern Monitor is an independent research group that monitors socio-economic, peace, and human rights issues in Tanintharyi Region of Myanmar. This report is based on primary data collection from the field, and secondary data sources which include news from mainstream and local media. We also monitor social media pages of strike committees, student unions, civil society organizations, humanitarian support groups, and local people's defense forces operating in the region. This report is prepared by a technical team, in consultation with local partners and field monitors.

BACKGROUND

Tanintharyi Region is located in Southeastern Myanmar, bounded by Mon State to the north, Thailand to the east and south, and the Andaman Sea to the west. Tanintharyi Region, formerly known as Tenasserim Division, is a long and narrow strip of land along Myanmar's coastline and has a distinct positioning among the regions in Myanmar due to its proximity to the border with Thailand. The region was previously divided into three districts: Dawei (Tavoy), Myeik, and Kawthoung. Dawei and Myeik are the significant economic, political, and social hubs of the region.

According to government statistics, Tanintharyi Region has a population of 1,426,426, with 76% of the population living in rural areas.² The region is sparsely populated given that the land consists of mountainous terrain. Most rural populations live near the coast, or along one of the rivers and tributaries. The fishery sector is a main livelihood of the region, alongside rubber and palm oil plantations, and tourism. Despite the absence of frequent armed clashes in Tanintharyi Region, local populations have endured several decades of displacement, as a result of military operations, land confiscation, and commercial investment projects. Land confiscation and arbitrary taxation allegedly carried out by both the Myanmar military and the KNU were the major drivers of displacement in Tanintharyi Region. Despite the relative stability compared to other regions in Southeastern Myanmar, the large-scale rubber and oil plantations have prevented segments of the local population from residing in their desired locations.

A vast area of Tanintharyi Region is considered as Mergui-Tavoy (Myeik-Dawei) District, under the administration of KNU Brigade 4, although the map of the area endorsed by the KNU does not correspond directly with official government boundaries³. The KNU's territorial control has been historically scattered along areas bordering Thailand. The New Mon State Party (NMSP)'s operational area is limited to the northern parts of the region in Yebyu Township near the official border with Mon State. The Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and the Karen National Defense Organisation (KNDO) are strategically significant, especially after the military coup on February 1, 2021. KNLA and KNDO territories have provided: refuge for political dissidents, a home for the influx of resistance groups, and safe passage for displaced populations.

² The 2019 Inter-censal Survey: The Union Report.

https://www.dop.gov.mm/sites/dop.gov.mm/files/publication_docs/ics_report_eng_7012021.pdf

³ This refers to the official government boundaries recognized by the NLD government. The administrative divisions of Tanintharyi Region (Tenasserim Region) of the state government are made of Dawei District, Myeik District, and Kawthoung District. The State Administration Council designated Bokpyin to be a district after the coup.

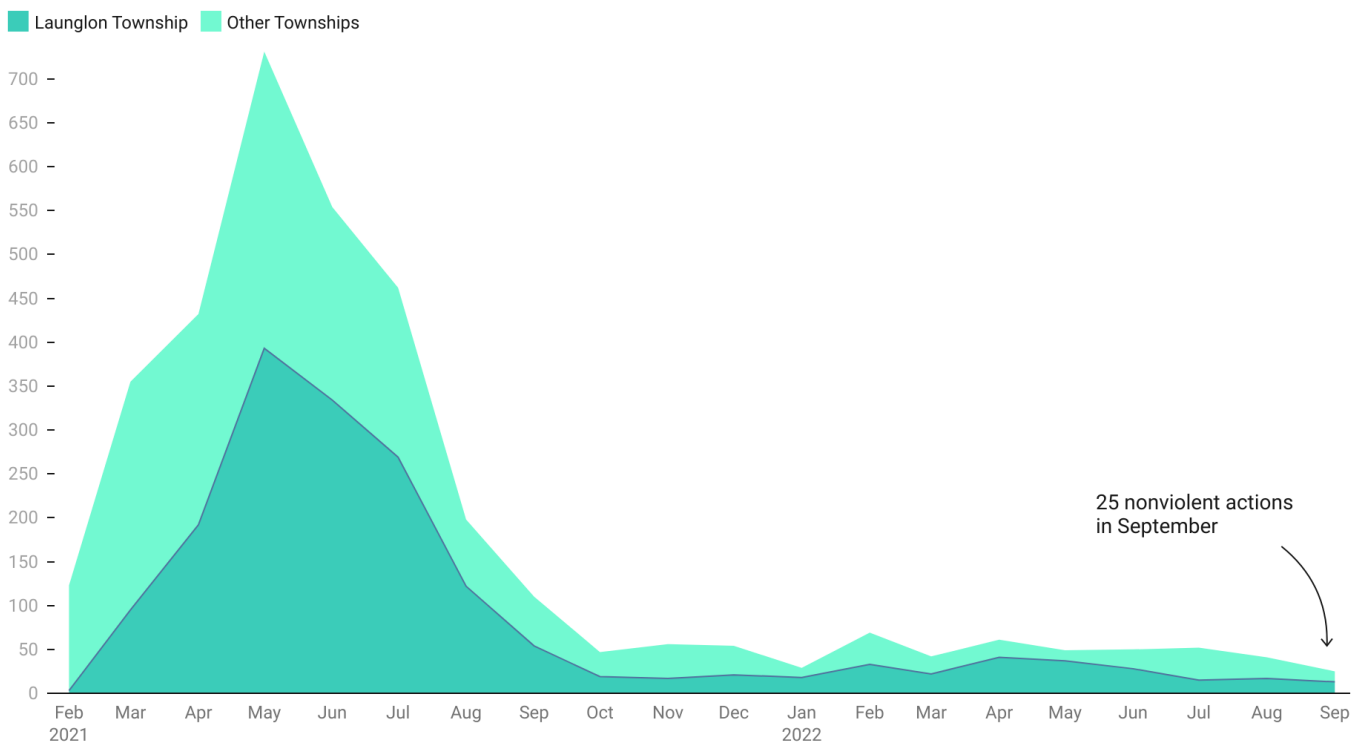
NON-VIOLENT MOVEMENTS IN TANINTHARYI REGION

The mass demonstrations kicked off in major towns in the region: Dawei city, Myeik to Kawthoung since the first week of February 2021, following the coup staged by the Tatmadaw (Myanmar Armed Forces)⁴. Subsequently, non-violent resistance in the forms of street demonstrations took place both in urban and rural settings on a daily basis across Tanintharyi Region. Hundreds of thousands of protesters joined the demonstrations in 2021. Towards the end of February 2021, junta security forces started arresting protesters and using lethal force to force the dispersal of the demonstrations in Myeik, Dawei, and Kawthoung towns, leading to casualties and injuries.

The general trends of non-violent resistance in many towns across the country suggest that due to the the junta forces' blatant repression of the anti-coup resistance, and its enforcement of COVID-19 related restrictions to weaken public participation in mass demonstrations, the number of non-violent movements has significantly dropped from June 2021 onwards. As non-violent resistance weakened, youth relocated to peripheral borderland areas of the country, commonly termed as "liberated areas" and subsequently joined the people's defense forces (PDFs) to join the armed resistance. With the commencement of fighting between the junta forces and PDFs, a relatively weakened presence of non-violent movements has been reported in many towns across the country after June 2021. However, Tanintharyi Region, especially some townships in Dawei District saw a sustained presence of non-violent resistance with street demonstrations occurring almost daily. The formation of strike committees, as well as the persistence of the anti-coup protesters in the district, maintained the momentum of the non-violent resistance. However, the average number of protesters in the protests has significantly dropped. Junta forces have specifically targeted local populations in townships in Dawei District: Launglon, Thayetchaung and Yebyu, arresting the protest organizers and violently cracking down on protesters.

Number of Nonviolent Actions in Tanintharyi Region

(February 2021 to September 2022)



Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

⁴ Tatmdaw (Myanmar Armed Forces including Myanmar Army, Navy and Air Force) is also referred to as the junta and its forces are referred to as the junta forces in most cases in this update. In several military operations, junta forces may also include members of pro-regime militias such as Pyu Saw Htee group.

Non-violent Movements in September 2022

The non-violent movements were sustained in September 2022, with the majority of protests and demonstrations reported in Launglon, Thayetchaung, and Yebyu Townships. A total of 25 non-violent actions were reported in September 2022 demonstrating a stark decrease from the figures reported in August 2022 (41 non-violent actions). Despite the fact that fewer non-violent movements were staged in September 2022, it is undeniable that the defiance against military rule via non-violent movements persisted throughout September 2022. The ongoing repression of non-violent movement, increased presence of junta forces across the townships in the region as well as the threats and intimidation from pro-regime militias were the major culprits that deterred the anti-coup protesters from staging various forms of non-violent movements in September 2022.

Some of the most active students' unions and strike committees, including township chapters of the Basic Education Students' Union (BESU) kicked off the month with protests against the junta-run education system. Protesters demonstrated their opposition to "Military Slave Education" in a school in Thayetchaung Township on 2 September 2022.⁵ On 2 and 5 September 2022, Basic Education Students' Union (BESU) Launglon chapter organized a flash protest holding a banner that says "We elected the NUG. Not the junta. UN: Accept Myanmar's People Ambassador" to urge the United Nations General Assembly to continue to recognise Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun as the representative of Myanmar to the United Nations.⁶ Similar protests were staged in Launglon, Thayetchaung and Yebyu townships on 17-18 September 2022.⁷ In Taungpyauk area of Thayetchaung Township, local PDFs escorted the protesters demanding the United Nations to recognise Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun.



Protest in Launglon Township on 8 September 2022 (Myanmar Pressphoto Agency)

The inclusivity and women-led protests has continued to be a prominent feature of the non-violent movements in Tanintharyi Region. On 8 September 2022, members of BESU launglon chapters, women, students and members of LGBT staged a march in Launglon Township.⁸ The "Rose Color Movement" in this month upheld a unique stance having the protesters hold the placards that read "People's soldiers/police forces, join people's side" calling for the military soldiers and police officers to

⁵ The Tanintharyi Times. 2 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/108506238223647/posts/186483793759224>

⁶ People's Spring. 2 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/103536671835794/posts/457231326466325>

⁷ The Tanintharyi Times. 18 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100072232759534/posts/198515129232911>

⁸ Myanmar Pressphoto Agency. 8 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/874334009274294/posts/8047537861953837>

defect from their respective forces and stand in solidarity with the people.⁹ The movement involved a series of women-led demonstrations which were first held on 28 August, 2021 in Launglon Township, with the participation of women, members of the LGBTQ community, and students. These demonstrations were organized to promote women's participation in the non-violent resistance and to eliminate gender discrimination. The majority of the women leading the demonstrations were in their 20s and have demonstrated their commitment to non-violent movements for more than one year since the inception of the movement in August 2021. The movement committee has also actively been pursuing coordination and collaboration with other strike committees and students' associations in the region to maintain a certain degree of the momentum of the non-violent movements in the region.

CONFLICT TRENDS

There was a significant increase in the number of intensified armed fighting between local resistance groups (People's Defense Forces)¹⁰ and junta forces, with the majority of clashes reported in Dawei, Launglon, Tanintharyi, Palaw, and Kyunsu townships in Tanintharyi Region. The local PDFs' main tactics targeted at junta soldiers and police forces included the use of remote-detonated explosive devices and assassinations of alleged members of pro-regime militias, Pyu Saw Htee and its sub-groups.¹¹ Also, in this month, as part of "Operation Nan Htike Aung", local PDFs continued to seek greater momentum in armed resistance by launching remote violence attacks against junta convoys, as well as assassinations against alleged members of pro-regime militias. In fact, in this month, the violent incidents as part of "Operation Nan Htike Aung" extended to Kyunsu and Bokpyin townships in Kawthoung District, where a relative stability was observed in the previous months.

Notably, some of the areas in Dawei and Myeik Districts remained the main flashpoints of the conflict, as frequent clashes broke out in those areas. The increased tension between junta forces and local resistance groups has persisted. In Taungpyauk area in Thayetchaung Township, there have been frequent offensives and an increased presence of junta forces since the last quarter of 2021. A relative and temporary stability have been observed in the area in September 2022. However, junta forces' restriction on transportation of rice and other aid items continued to impede humanitarian access for the internally displaced populations in the area.

Another area of conflict is the Dawei-Hteekhee Road, where remote violence by the local PDFs broke out, leading to the junta forces' search and arrest operations and more armed clashes between the local PDFs. The junta forces use the road, which connects to Myitta town and Htee Khee gate, a major border trading point on the Thai-Myanmar border, for transporting supplies and troop reinforcements. Frequent clashes and remote violence between junta forces and local PDFs (or a combined force of local PDFs and the Karen National Defense Organization (KNDO) erupt on the road. Other major roads connecting Dawei town to other townships in the district: Launglon, Thayetchaung, Yebyu have also increasingly become grounds for frequent clashes and remote violence between junta forces and local PDFs. Consequently, villages along the road disproportionately bear the brunt of the junta forces' search and raid operations following the violent incidents in the recent months. In times of intensified armed clashes, artillery shelling by the junta forces and the junta's search and raid operations, local residents fled their homes to seek refuge in plantations and the relatives' homes in other relatively safe

⁹ The Tanintharyi Times. 14 September 2022.

<https://www.facebook.com/100072232759534/posts/197755812642176>

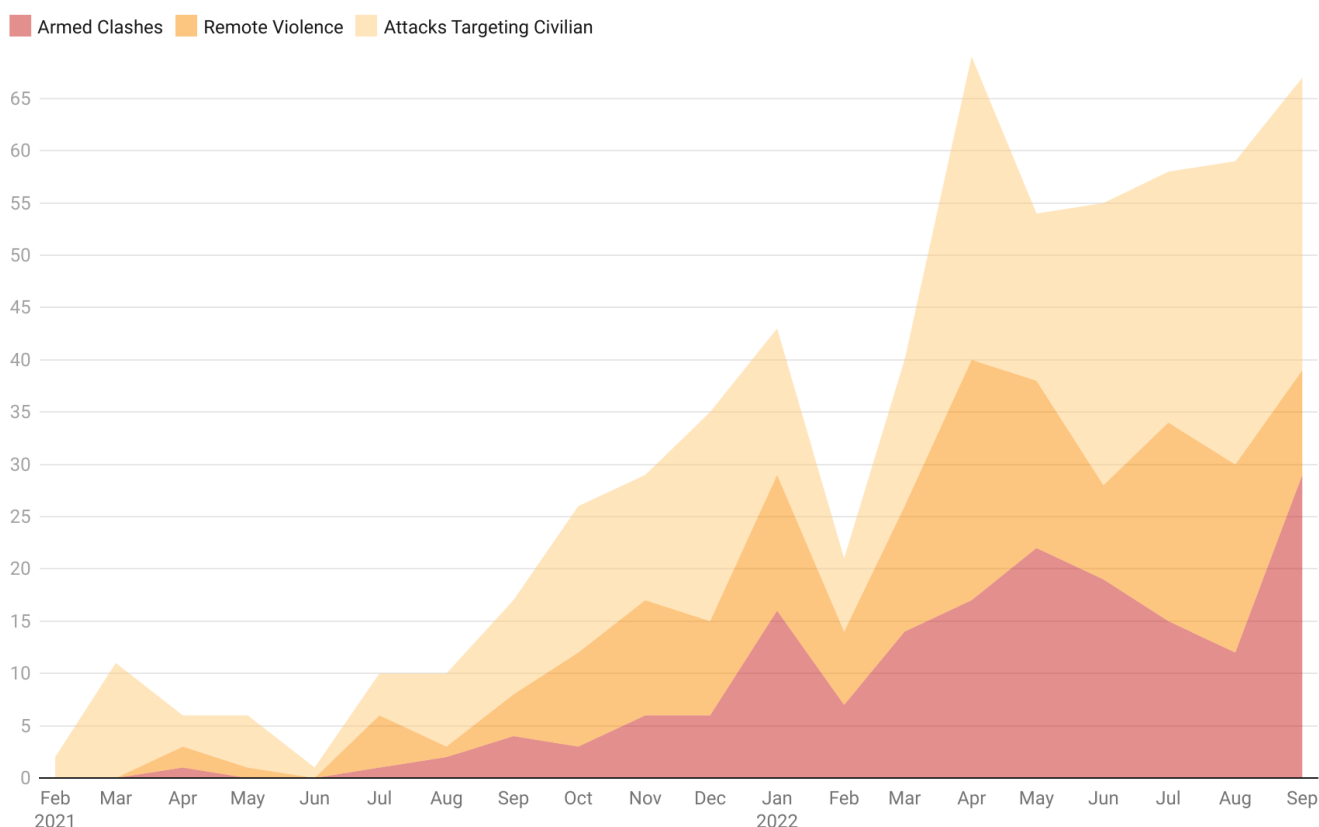
¹⁰ According to data collected by Southern Monitor, there are more than 35 local people's defense groups, and dozens of anti-coup resistance groups that have emerged in the region. Under the guidance of the National Unity Government (NUG), People's Administrations and People's Defense Forces were established in almost all townships of Tanintharyi Region.

¹¹ The pro-regime Pyu Saw Htee collective, made up of military veterans, informants and other pro-regime supporters, to the common knowledge of local populations, have been involved in killings, threats, and intimidation targeted at the perceived opponents of the military regime. This includes (but is not limited to) the following groups: members and alleged supporters of the National League for Democracy (NLD), members of local PDFs and their family members, and protest organizations.

areas in the region. Seeking refuge in the shelters in the “liberated areas” or the areas controlled by locals PDFs and ethnic armed organizations may not be possible due to long distance from those areas.

In response to the local PDFs’ attacks and assassinations as part of “Operation Nan Htike Aung” across every townships in Tanintharyi Region, the junta have increasingly used the proxy militias predominantly involving pro-regime militias, Pyu Saw Htee group in addition to the junta forces’ fortified search and arrest operations.¹² However, the armed resistance of the local PDFs showed no signs of abating as increased number of armed clashes and sustained movements involving remote violence and assassinations of junta-appointed local administrators and alleged members of pro-regime militias were reported in this month of September 2022.

Number of Violent Incidents in Tanintharyi Region



Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

Furthermore, in the month of September 2022, junta forces conducted search and arrest operations in Hnan Kye, Kayin Hta Bi, Yae Pone and Kyay Zuu Taw villages in Yebyu Township, resulting in the arrest and detention of at least 17 civilians on suspicions of having ties or supporting to the local PDFs. Additional military operations that involved the arrests and the use of civilians as human shields were also reported in Ba Wa Pin village in Dawei Township. Additionally, in both urban and rural settings, the junta tightened security by amending and enforcing draconian laws and regulations that made local populations even more vulnerable to being shot, arrested, and fined by junta security forces. The junta imposed new “motorbike restrictions” that ban two men from riding a motorbike together, to limit the movements of civil resistance fighters. That led to several accounts of extortion, civilians getting shot and killed, and tortured, by junta security forces that increased their presence across the region. In September 2022, additional accounts of junta forces firing shots at civilians riding a motorbike were reported. Several accounts of extortion and confiscation of motorbikes were also committed by the

¹² Field Monitor. 22 September.

junta forces across various checkpoints in Myeik, Dawei and Kawthoung towns. However, due to fear of further abuses from the perpetrators, in many cases that involved wrongful use of threatened force, violence or fear, the victims may be reluctant to disclose information to have the abuses adequately documented. Additionally, junta forces have increasingly conducted the checks on “overnight guest registration, leading to arbitrary raids of civilians’s houses, they sought to arrest, based on suspicions of ties to the local PDFs, or involvement in anti-coup movements.

Armed Clashes

From April 2021 to September 2022, there were a total of 175 clashes reported. A total of 29 armed clashes erupted in Tanintharyi Region in September 2022. The clashes were reported in many townships in Dawei and Myeik District: Dawei, Launglon and Tanintharyi, Palaw and Kyunsu townships.

Major Incidents in September 2022

Dawei Township

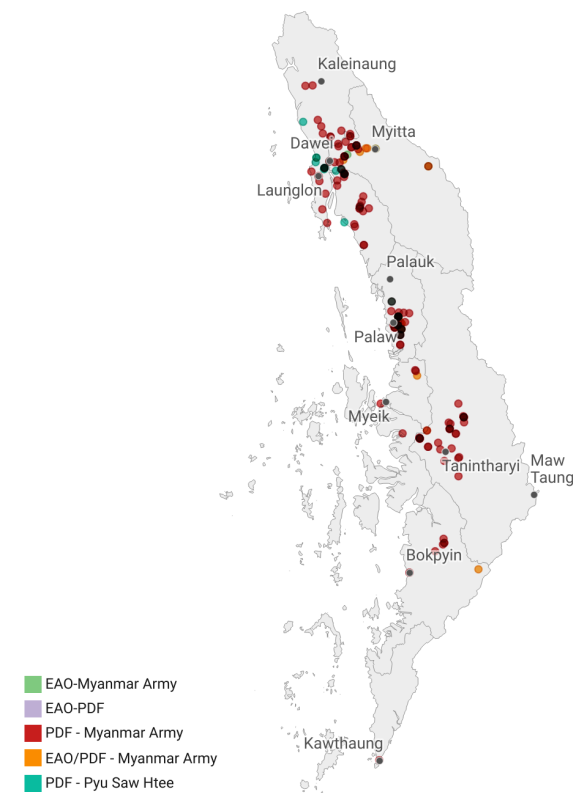
- On the evening of 1 September 2022, a column of 50 military soldiers, with additional troop reinforcements, entered Leik Kyei Pyaung village in Pa Kar Ri village tract in Dawei Township, leading to the displacement of villagers. The junta forces launched heavy artillery in the Ah Shey Taw area, causing further displacement in the area in the morning. The troop reinforcements were reportedly escorting a junta convoy transporting supplies to one of their outposts in Myitta town.¹³

- Following an incident of remote violence in Tha Yet Ngoke village in the same village tract, junta forces and local PDFs exchanged gunfire for about half an hour. Both Tha Yet Ngoke and Leik Kyei Pyaung village are located on the road connecting Dawei town to a major border trading point, Htee Khee.

- On 2 September 2022, armed clashes between the junta forces and an alliance of local PDFs erupted between Kyauk Me Taung and Thin Gan Tone village in Ah Shey Taw area.¹⁴ The two sides exchanged gunfire intermittently for the entire day, between Wa Kone and Thin Gan Tone village. The junta forces launched heavy artillery, targeting villages with the heavy shelling. Those junta forces reportedly travelled from Leik Kyei Pyaung village to Thin Gan Tone village, and then fired random shots continuously along the way. Additional troops were sent to the area from Kyauk Me Taung police station, one of the operational footholds of junta forces in the area. The alliance of the local PDF reportedly included the Kawthoolei Army,

Incident Map: Armed Clashes in Tanintharyi Region

(February 2021 to September 2022)



Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

¹³ Dawei Information Center. 1 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/424972163063574>

¹⁴ DVB TV news. 2 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/191574990881009/posts/5832410290130756>

a Karen ethnic armed group recently formed by an ousted leader of the KNU's armed wing, the KNDO.¹⁵

- A combined force of the Kawthoolei Army and a local PDF launched an attack against a junta column and a junta convoy, leading to intensified clashes between the two sides near Pa Ket village in Dawei Township on 3 September 2022. The combined force of the Kawthoolei Army and the local PDF quickly withdrew their forces, given that the junta forces had a comparative advantage and were using heavy weaponry disproportionately. Junta forces also fired shots randomly along the Dawei-Hteekhee Road, which has been a flashpoint of frequent clashes and skirmishes.¹⁶ On 6 September, a local PDF released a statement urging civilians to avoid using and travelling on the Dawei-Hteekhee Road from 6:00pm-6:00am for a month, starting from 6 September to 5 October.¹⁷

Launglon Township

- A skirmish broke out on the Dawei-Launglon Road, in between Inn Zauk and Pan Da Le villages, in Launglon Township on 12 September 2022. This was following a local PDF's attack on a vehicle carrying alleged members of a pro-regime militia, a Pyu Saw Htee group. Two passengers in the vehicle of the pro-regime militia group were killed during the incident. A local PDF, the Dawei Defense Team (DDT), claimed responsibility for the incident and further warned civilians to avoid getting close to the vehicles of junta forces, as well as proxy militias.¹⁸

Tanintharyi Township

- The junta deployed additional soldiers and members of pro-regime militias, *Pyu Saw Htee* group to Lel Thit village in Tanintharyi Township on 3 September 2022. The ground troops (including about 80 personnel) were separated into two columns. One column entered the village via waterways, and the other entered the village on foot. The members of pro-regime militias (about 50 personnel) were reportedly carrying ammunition and were accompanied by military junta soldiers (30 personnel). The troops' reinforcements in the area resulted in further displacement of villagers.¹⁹ Another clash between a combined force of local PDFs and the junta forces broke out in Lel Thit village on 4 September.²⁰ Another clash between local PDFs and junta forces following the local PDFs' attacks against the military soldiers and proxy militia forces temporarily stationed in the western part of Lel Thit village on 5 September 2022.²¹ The increasing insecurity led to the displacement of more than 500 villagers from Lel Thit and nearby three villages.²²

Palaw Township

- As part of "Operation Nan Htike Aung", local PDFs of Myeik District military command under the NUG launched a skirmish against junta forces stationed at Pu Law Kone village in Palaw township on 15 September 2022. That led to an intensified clash between the local PDFs and the junta forces.²³

¹⁵ The Tanintharyi Times. 3 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/191574990881009/posts/5832410290130756>

¹⁶ Dawei Information Center. 3 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/426232129604244>

¹⁷ Dawei Watch. 6 September 2022. <http://www.daweivatch.com/2022/09/06/news/43376/>

¹⁸ Mizzima_News in Burmese. 13 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/5924526587582197>

¹⁹ The Tanintharyi Times. 3 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/108506238223647/posts/186671193740484>

²⁰ People's Spring. 4 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/103536671835794/posts/458616019661189>

²¹ Dawei Information Center. 6 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/428314519396005>

²² Mizzima-News in Burmese. 5 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/5900750229959833>

²³ Dawei Information Center. 16 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/435278528699604>

- An alliance of local PDF launched a skirmish against a checkpoint in Hta Min Ma Sar village in Palaw Township where members of pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee group were stationed on 24 September 2022.²⁴ As noted by local sources, Palaw Township has been home to operational footholds of the pro-regime militias, Pyu Saw Htee forces which were increasingly targeted by the local PDFs.

Kyunsu Township

- Marking the one-year anniversary of the National Unity Government (NUG)'s announcement of the "people's defensive war" against the ruling military junta, a combined force of local PDFs launched attacks against a pro-regime militia Pyu Saw Htee chapter based in Peit Taing village in Kyunsu Township, leading to an exchange of fire.²⁵

Remote Violence

Local people's defense forces (PDFs) employed the tactic of remote violence to attack at the convoys of junta forces, troop columns, office buildings, and the commercial facilities of the military regime and its associates. During April 2021 to June 2022, there were a total of 141 remote violence incidents, with about half of the attacks were targeted at the junta convoys, police forces, and pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee. Despite the fact that local PDFs and some news sources stated that the attacks against the junta security forces and pro-regime militias resulted in varying numbers of casualties, it is difficult to independently verify the exact figures.

The remaining half of the total number of remote violence incidents involved attacks targeted at the office buildings of the military regime, the telecommunication towers and showrooms of military-owned Mytel, and prisons. In addition, there were more than 9 incidents in which the residential houses of policemen, local administrators and alleged informants were attacked. There were some accounts of collateral damage involving young children and women due to explosions.

Yebyu Township

- A remote violence incident in which a junta convoy was attacked with a remote-detonated explosive device took place between Ma Yan Chaung and Kawt Hlaing villages on Ye-Dawei Road in Kaleinaung Town on 31 August 2022.²⁶ Local PDFs claimed responsibility for the remote violence and further mentioned that it was part of "Operation Nan Htike Aung".²⁷ The

Number of Remote Violence by Target

(February 2021 to September 2022)

	Target	Number of Incidents
1	Myanmar Army	82
2	SAC's Offices	14
3	Mytel Tower/Showroom	12
4	Gambling Site	9
5	House of Pro-SAC Groups	9
6	School	9
7	Myanmar Police Force	6
8	Pyu Saw Htee	6
9	MOGE-PTTEP	4
10	Unspecified	4
11	Civilians	3
12	NLD Office	3
13	Pro-military Group	3
14	Crony's Business	2
15	Bridges	1
16	Bus	1
17	Prison	1
18	SAC's Ceremony	1
	Total	170

Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

²⁴ Dawei Information Center. 27 September 2022. <https://fb.watch/fWrLhImSXI/>

²⁵ The Tanintharyi Times. 7 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/108506238223647/posts/187355803672023>

²⁶ Ayeyarwady Times. 1 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/508784185946254/posts/2264628773695111>

²⁷ People's Spring. 2 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/103536671835794/posts/456904699832321>

Ye-Dawei Road was closed for 2-3 days following the incidents, causing a passenger who intended to travel to the Thailand-Myanmar border to be trapped in Ye town.²⁸

- An alliance of local PDFs attacked a junta convoy of four vehicles using remote-detonated explosive devices near 28-miles of Ye-Dawei Road in Yebyu Township on 24 September. Following the remote violence incident, junta forces intensified their search and arrest operations in several villages in Yebyu Township. (See **Arbitrary Arrests and Detention**)

Dawei Township

- On 10 September 2022, a junta convoy of 2 vehicles was attacked with a remote-detonated explosive device near Maung Mei Shaung village on Yangon-Dawei Road.²⁹

Bokpyin Township

- A junta convoy was attacked with a remote-detonated explosive device in Bokpyin township in Kawthoung District on 1 September 2022, as part of "Operation Nan Htike Aung", according to a Bokpyin-based local PDF.³⁰
- An alliance of local PDFs in Bokpyin Township launched an attack on a junta convoy in Bokpyin town in Kawthoung District on 1 September 2022. Local PDFs attacked a junta motorcycle convoy two days later, on 3 September. Both these incidents were part of "Operation Nan Htike Aung" and local PDFs under the military command of the Ministry of Defense under the National Unity Government (NUG) claimed responsibility.³¹

Attacks targeting civilians

Some civilian casualties reported were as a result of the disproportionate use of force by junta troops and columns during raid and arrest operations in many townships across the region. Some were due to gunshots fired by the junta personnel deployed at the security checkpoints within major towns and on the roads connecting different townships. Also, the junta forces often fired shots at civilians who were present at scenes of the remote violence, resulting in civilian casualties. Pro-regime militias, such as Pyu Saw Htee network and its sub-groups such as Thway Thout, Kite Force group also committed extrajudicial killings targeting members and alleged supporters of the National League for Democracy (NLD) and supporters of the people's defense forces. Local PDFs have also increasingly targeted alleged military informants, members of pro-regime Pyu Saw Htee network, military veterans, members of the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), members of the junta's local State Administration Council (SAC). Local PDFs usually claimed responsibility for the incidents.

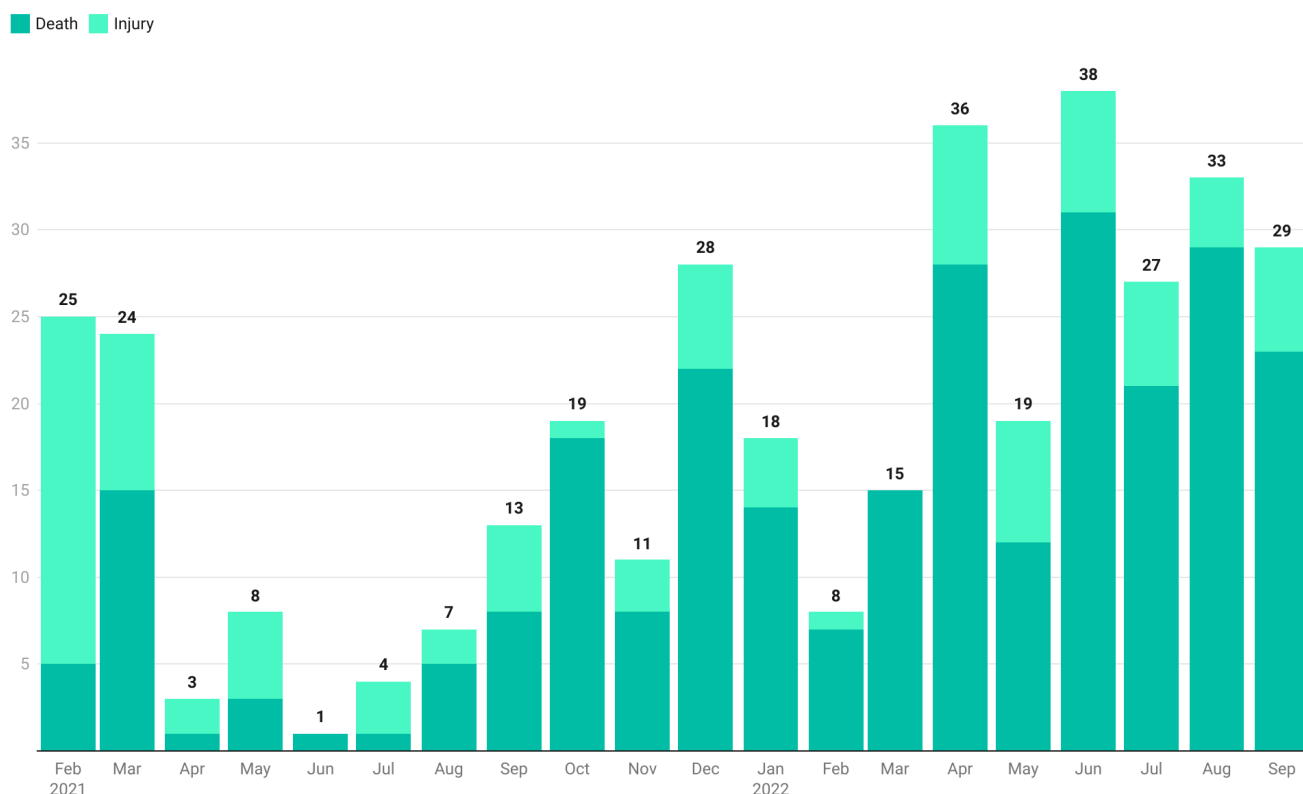
²⁸ DVB TV news. 6 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/191574990881009/posts/5843540569017728>

²⁹ Dawei Information Center. 10 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/431160925778031>

³⁰ The Tanintharyi Times. 3 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/108506238223647/posts/186736943733909>

³¹ Tanintharyi Regional Command-Information Team. 4 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/107736585173414/posts/164063686207370>

Number of Civilian Casualties in Tanintharyi Region



Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

Major Incidents in September 2022

A total of 28 incidents involving attacks targeting civilians were reported in September 2022. In the previous month, junta forces fired shots at civilians for allegedly breaching the motorbike restrictions in Myeik, Dawei and Palaw townships. In this month of September 2022, the junta forces fired shots at civilians riding on motorbikes. Furthermore, in this month, a number of violent incidents in which unidentified gunmen killed civilians and looted properties occurred in Launglon Township. Local PDFs denied responsibilities for the incident and further alleged that those were the junta's attempt to frame the local PDFs of wrongful killings and armed crimes.

In this month, a number of junta-appointed local administrators and alleged members of pro-regime militia Pyu Saw Htee group have been subjected to attacks and killings by the local resistance groups in Yebyu, Launglon, Palaw and Tanintharyi townships; some of the incidents were mentioned to be part of "Operation Nan Htike Aung" of local PDFs under the command of National Unity Government (NUG). There were some incidents in which no organizations claimed responsibility; the perpetrators cannot be identified.

Launglon Township

- A 40 year old woman was shot by four unidentified gunmen and her valuable possessions were also looted from her home in Pyin Gyi village in Launglon township on 1 September 2022. Local PDFs, Launglone People's Defense Force (LLPDF) and Dawei Defense Team (DDT) denied responsibility for the incident. Her late husband, a junta-appointed local administrator, and an alleged member of Pyu Saw Htee was also shot dead about a year ago. Locals alleged that armed members of the local pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee group committed the killing and

looting, although it has not yet been verified.³² A civilian house in Nyaw Pyin village was also targeted by a group of armed men and valuable possessions were taken away on 31 August 2022.³³ Local PDFs issued a statement warning the general public of the risks of armed robbery and killings by the junta and pro-regime militia forces. The statement alleged that the State Administrative Council (SAC) and the pro-regime forces have wrongfully framed the local PDFs of the wrongful killings and violence targeted against civilians in a deliberate attempt to jeopardise the relations between local PDFs and the people. The junta forces reportedly spread their propaganda that involved the claim that the local PDFs are expected to be committing armed robberies.³⁴

- A former local administrator was shot dead by two masked gunmen on 13 September 2022. The slain former local administrator resigned from his position in the wake of the military coup in 2021, and he has reportedly been staying in Ka Htaung Ni village as an ordinary citizen ever since.³⁵ The motive behind the assassination remains unclear. Local PDFs including Launglone People's Defence Force (LLPDF) and Dawei Defense Team (DDT) denied responsibility for the incident.³⁶ According to a local source, the members and alleged supporters of the National League for Democracy including several former local administrators who served under the civilian government left their homes to evade the arrests, threats and intimidation from junta forces and members of pro-regime militias.³⁷ The local source further speculated that the killing of the former local administrator may be another attempt of the junta to instill fear in its opponents as well as to deliberately frame the local PDFs of committing attacks and murders targeting civilians.

Yebyu Township

- Junta forces stationed at a checkpoint near Hein Ze bridge in Hein Ze village, Kyauk Shat village in Yebyu Township fired shots at a married couple on a motorbike. The man sustained gunshot wounds and is currently receiving medical treatment at Kaleinaung hospital.³⁸
- A column of 100 junta soldiers entered Ka Lone Htar village in Yebyu Township on 21 September 2022. The military soldiers arrested a total of 3 internally displaced persons who fled their homes and sought temporary refuge in the village monastery. Subsequently, the military soldiers killed one of the three IDPs and abandoned his dead body in a rubber plantation near the village. The victim was identified as a 50 year old plantation worker from the village.³⁹ Since August 2022, the majority of the villagers fled their homes in Ka Lone Htar village and are currently residing in temporary shelters in plantations and monasteries, due to the increased presence of junta forces in the village.

³² Mizzima-News in Burmese. 1 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/5889527907748732>

³³ Mizzima-News in Burmese. 1 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/5889220154446174>

³⁴ Myanmar Now. 1 September 2022. <https://myanmar-now.org/mmm/news/12487>

³⁵ Mizzima News in Burmese. 14 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/5926961864005336>

³⁶ Launglone People Defense Force (LLPDF). 13 September 2022.

<https://www.facebook.com/100072106963704/posts/192848359795395>; Dawei Defense Team(DDT). 13 September 2022.

<https://www.facebook.com/100076170570174/posts/177295798152772>

³⁷ Members, supporters of NLD and their family members fled homes following violent murders committed by pro-regime militia, (Son Ye- Kite Force) and other groups in May-June 2022

³⁸ Dawei Information Center. 16 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/435154188712038>

³⁹ Mizzima-News in Burmese. 22 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/5950070831694439>

Thayetchaung Township

- The junta forces shot and killed a man riding a motorbike near a bridge in Oke Tu village, Thayetchaung Township, Tanintharyi Region on 11 September 2022.⁴⁰

Palaw Township

- A civilian was shot dead by junta forces in Ma Kyi Kone village in Palaw Township on 13 September 2022.⁴¹

Attacks targeting alleged members of pro-regime militias and military informants

Yebyu Township

- A junta-appointed local administrator was shot dead in Taung Yin Inn village in Kanbauk area in Yebyu Township on 7 September 2022.⁴²
- An alleged member of pro-regime militia Pyu Saw Htee group chapter in Tha Pyay Zun village was shot and killed in Kya Khat Ta Pin village in Yebyu Township on 12 September 2022. No organizations have claimed responsibility for the incident.⁴³

Launglon Township

- Two alleged members of Pyu Saw Htee group were shot by unidentified gunmen in Pan Da Le village in Launglon Township on 12 September 2022. The two alleged members of the group were reportedly on their way back from a meeting with the fellow members of the pro-regime militia. Pan Da Le village is infamous among local populations for hosting more than 15 alleged members of the Pyu Saw Htee group. Consequently, tensions between local anti-coup resistance groups and members of pro-regime militias arose in the village, following an incident in which an alleged leader of the Pyu Saw Htee group was killed on 28 March 2022.⁴⁴ Many local residents from the village fled their homes to seek shelter in nearby villages and towns given the increasing insecurity in the village.
- A 54 year old man was shot dead by a group of gunmen in Auk Kyauk Wut village in Launglon village on 22 September 2022. Launglon People's Defense Force (LLPDF) claimed responsibility for the incident and alleged that the man was a supporter of local pro-regime militia Pyu Saw Htee group, and that he had transported military soldiers and pro-regime forces on several occasions. The local PDF further warned that the group would eliminate the members of Pyu Saw Htee group who continue to associate with the military regime.⁴⁵ Furthermore, another local resistance group, Dawei Defense Team (DDT) claimed responsibility for the incident in which a 56 year old man, who is a member of the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) and also an alleged member of pro-regime force, was shot dead in his house in Pyin Gyi village on 24 January 2022.⁴⁶ DDT also claimed

⁴⁰ Dawei Information Center. 11 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/431888269038630>

⁴¹ Dawei Information Center. 13 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/433063235587800>

⁴² Dawei Information Center. 7 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/428966429330814>

⁴³ Dawei Information Center. 13 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/433010482259742>

⁴⁴ Dawei Watch. 12 September 2022. <http://www.daweivatch.com/2022/09/12/news/43885/>

⁴⁵ Launglone People Defence Force. 23 September 2022.

<https://www.facebook.com/100072106963704/posts/pfbid0DHWUj9tSfkm6hkj3MB5xA24W4oKAGqs6KR9mMVxnCYazPMexcJBbR2auMWC9tEL9l/?d=n>

⁴⁶ Dawei Defense Team. 24 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100076170570174/posts/178045968077755>

responsibility for the killing of an alleged member of pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee group in Pan Da Le village in Launglon Township on 25 September 2022.⁴⁷ In August 2022, the local PDFs issued statements to warn the members of pro-regime forces to stop cooperating with the junta.

Palaw Township

- The assassinations of military informants and junta-appointed local administrators as part of “Operation Nan Htike Aung” continued in Palaw Township. A military veteran (a suspected informant) was shot during a shootout between him and members of a local PDF alliance, including Palaw Regional Defence Force (PRDF) on 12 September 2022. The veteran was alleged to be involved in providing tip-offs to junta forces, pressuring the striking civil servants to return to the workforce, and threatening the local populations. The local PDF stated that hand grenades and drugs were among the items seized from the veteran during the incident.⁴⁸
- A junta-appointed local administrator of Kye village in Palaw Township was shot by members of a local resistance group on 23 September 2022. Village residents considered the administrator to be a hardcore supporter of the junta’s State Administration Council (SAC) and had been actively involved in providing tip-offs to the junta forces and extorting money from the locals.

Tanintharyi Township

- Two alleged military informants were shot dead in Lel Thit village in Tanintharyi Township on 7 September 2022.⁴⁹

Arbitrary Arrests and Detention

The junta forces have fortified its arrest operations to further curtail the support to the local PDFs and the local PDFs’ access to supplies. Earlier in this month, on 9 September 2022, a driver transporting rice bags to Kyay Zuu Taw and Hnan Kye village was arrested and the rice bags were confiscated at the checkpoint. The three villagers from the two villages went to a local station of the junta forces to certify that those bags were planned to be distributed to the village populations and were not intended for transporting to other parties such as local PDFs in order to have the driver released and those rice bags returned to the rightful owners. However, the attempt went no avail as the three villagers were also arrested by the junta forces. Additional arrests were reported in the days following a remote violence incident on 24 September 2022 in Yebyu township.

“

In the afternoon on 25 September, soldiers searched and raided several homes in the village. A total of 3 villagers, two men and a woman were arrested. I know that one of them is a former village administrator and the woman runs a grocery shop. The soldiers took the 3 villagers and left the village. We do not know where they have been taken to.

”

A LOCAL SOURCE FROM HNAN KYE VILLAGE

A local source from Hnan Kye village stated that “ In the afternoon on 25 September, soldiers searched and raided several homes in the village. A total of 3 villagers, two men and a woman were arrested. I know that one of them is a former village administrator and the woman runs a grocery shop. The

⁴⁷ Dawei Information Center. 25 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/441774024716721>

⁴⁸ Dawei Information Center. 13 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/432850038942453>

⁴⁹ The Tanintharyi Times. 12 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100072232759534/posts/197350599349364>

soldiers took the 3 villagers and left the village. We do not know where they have been taken to.” The junta forces arrested a total of 16 young men and 1 woman (the majority of them aged between 18-22) from Hnan Kye, Kayin Shin Ta Bi, Ka Lone Htar and Yae Pone villages⁵⁰ in Yebyu Township as of 27 September 2022. The whereabouts of the civilians taken by the junta forces remained unknown.⁵¹ A local source expressed concerns over potential tensions developing into armed fighting between an ethnic armed organization and the armed wings of KNU since the affected villages fall within the bounds of the area controlled by KNU’s Brigade 4.

The junta forces have also arrested civilians to be used as “human shields” during their military operations in Dawei Township. About 100 civilians were arbitrarily arrested by junta forces to be used as “human shields” in Ba Wa Pin village near Wa Kone village on 6 September 2022.⁵² As of 8 September 2022, there was a presence of 100 junta troops in Ba Wa Pin village. It has also been reported that the junta forces burned down a residential house in the village.⁵³

Furthermore, increasing accounts of arrests during junta forces’ security checks on passengers traveling on motor vehicles, especially motorbikes, have been reported in Myeik and Dawei towns. In Dawei town on 2 September 2022, two men, who were believed to be travelers from other regions were arrested for allegedly breaking the motorbike restriction.⁵⁴ Also, on 3 September 2022, three young men traveling in a motor vehicle were arbitrarily arrested by the junta forces who were patrolling around the downtown area of Dawei town and the grounds of the arrest remained unknown.⁵⁵ Some civilians were arrested at security checkpoints, and during random security checks by junta forces in the town. Many civilians’ motorbikes were confiscated by junta forces and later returned to their rightful owners, upon receiving a sum of money (starting from 50,000 MMK and above) or traded by the members of the junta forces. A total of 6 civilians (including a pregnant woman) were arrested between 1-8 September 2022. According to a local source, the detained pregnant woman from Wae Kyun Myo Thit ward runs a small pharmacy and was reportedly arrested for selling malarial medicines in bulk. The junta forces suspected those people selling and transporting bulks of certain medical items to be directly supporting local PDFs, or having ties to the individuals who regularly provide support to the local PDFs.⁵⁶

Additional arrests and detention during the junta forces’ arbitrary “household inspections” were also reported in Dawei town during the first week of September 2022. Four young men, who are nursing students living in a male dormitory in Pein Hne Taung ward in Dawei town, were arrested during a household inspection on the night of 31 August 2022. The young men were reportedly taken to the local interrogation center and tortured, despite their teachers’ and parents’ efforts to secure their release.⁵⁷ A former political prisoner was also arrested by junta forces on 12 September 2022.⁵⁸ In addition, a total of 6 civilians including a 12 year old child were arrested in Myeik town.⁵⁹

The actual figures of arrests and detentions may be higher, since several similar cases may occur without being known to the media or local sources. According to Southern Monitor’s field monitors, many of the local civilians who have been arrested and detained (and their family members) do not often disclose information about the junta forces’ abuses, due to fear of possible retaliation.⁶⁰

⁵⁰ 9 men from Hnan Kye village; 2 men from Kayin Shin Ta Bi village, 1 man from Ka Lone Htar village, 2 men and 1 woman from Kyay Zuu Taw village

⁵¹ Field Monitor. 30 September 2022.

⁵² Dawei Information Center. 7 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/429015819325875>

⁵³ Dawei Information Center. 8 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/429457485948375>

⁵⁴ Mizzima-News in Burmese. 2 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/5893002430734613>

⁵⁵ Dawei Information Center. 3 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/426287789598678>

⁵⁶ Additional reporting by field monitor. 9 September 2022.

⁵⁷ Dawei Information Center. 2 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/425660786328045>

⁵⁸ The Tanintharyi Times. 12 September 2022. <https://www.tntynews.com/2022/09/13/5812/>

⁵⁹ Mizzima-News in Burmese. 4 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/5898467056854817>

⁶⁰ Field Monitor. 22 September 2022.

Burning civilian houses

From September 2021 to September 2022, a total of 105 civilian houses were burned by the military and its affiliated groups. The incidents occurred when the security forces entered the villages and when they launched search and raid operations in the targeted villages. In September 2022, a total of seven civilian houses were burned in the villages of Palaw, Thayetchaung, and Bokpyin Townships.

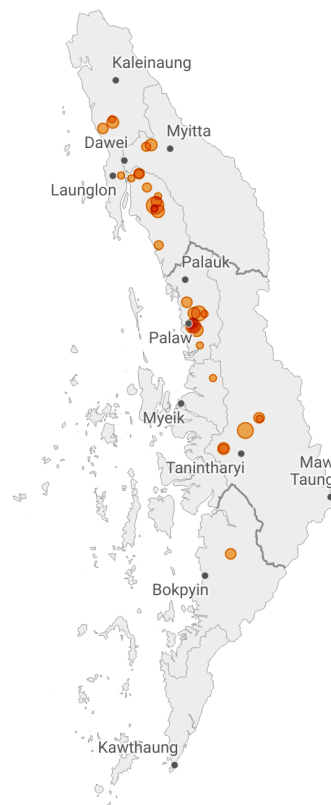
IMPACTS OF VIOLENT CONFLICT

Current Situation of Internally Displaced People (IDPs)

By the end of September 2022, the figures of displacement were estimated to be more than 7,000 people in Tanintharyi Region. IDP figures fluctuate over time, depending on the changing conflict dynamics on the ground.

- As of 5 September 2022, there were more than 5,000 internally displaced people in Tanintharyi Region. A local aid group, Dawna Tanintharyi, stated that a total of 1,150 people in Dawei District and 3,350 people in Myeik District remained displaced in the region.⁶¹
- On 24 September, the local aid group, Dawna Tanintharyi, stated that there is an estimated figure of displacement of 5,000 internally displaced persons from Yebyu Township. That figures included the number of IDPs from Ae Ka Ni, Kha Maung Chaung, Watchaung, Ya Nge, Pu Gaw Zun and Wa Zun Taw villages in Yebyu Township who fled their homes amidst junta forces's increased operation starting in July 2022. A total of 857 people from the villages are currently residing in temporary camp setting in which the local aid group had access to provide aid items.⁶²
- The latest figures of internal displacement provided by Dawna Tanintharyi group showed that a total of 3,315 people from Palaw Township remained displaced. Also, about 2000 people from Kawt Ma Pyin and Lel Thit villages in Tanintharyi Township are currently displaced, with the majority of them residing in the plantation near Tanintharyi town. Additionally, the figures of displacement in Yebyu Township was noted to be 1,040 in total. Also, a total of 694 people from Pa Ket, Leit Kyel Pyaung, Yam Ma Zu villages in Dawei Township, where armed fighting between the local PDFs and junta forces erupted in this month, were displaced. Despite the relative stability due to absence of

Number of Houses Burned by Myanmar Military



Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

⁶¹ Mizzima-News in Burmese. 5 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/5901006743267515>

⁶² Dawna Tanintharyi. 24 September 2022.

[https://www.facebook.com/DawnaTenasserim.IDPsSupplyForce/posts/pfbid02HWoCX1Eu5A9AFW6Qw7rtv1Xq9qSxc16J62kD7WnwfrKv25kmyag179mwHwtWqQryl?__cft__\[0\]=AZVMNWDBvSIBg2FcoG2Or9IGEgZidp6K1OaQkV7pQ58F5lbM0qCfIKzdzd1q3KJIH6lyK9p1jdTgJOBMWtZjqcG7M16X37YyIBINH0o6nDI1ZLE-2y-E39YctGbHyLImSVHA9-DNQuHaeNoaF456os2Lef5qaN58hPIDVHFsZpBIVCx4ID6eEfVJIUkVSCOT3IG43ftfSA2FJAj8u178O07M&__tn__=%2CO%2CP-R](https://www.facebook.com/DawnaTenasserim.IDPsSupplyForce/posts/pfbid02HWoCX1Eu5A9AFW6Qw7rtv1Xq9qSxc16J62kD7WnwfrKv25kmyag179mwHwtWqQryl?__cft__[0]=AZVMNWDBvSIBg2FcoG2Or9IGEgZidp6K1OaQkV7pQ58F5lbM0qCfIKzdzd1q3KJIH6lyK9p1jdTgJOBMWtZjqcG7M16X37YyIBINH0o6nDI1ZLE-2y-E39YctGbHyLImSVHA9-DNQuHaeNoaF456os2Lef5qaN58hPIDVHFsZpBIVCx4ID6eEfVJIUkVSCOT3IG43ftfSA2FJAj8u178O07M&__tn__=%2CO%2CP-R)

armed fighting in Thayetchaung Township in this month, 35 civilians, whose houses were burned down by junta forces in the previous months remained displaced in the plantation and their relatives' houses in other safe areas.⁶³

Palaw and Yebyu Townships had the highest number of civilians displaced by junta's search and raid operations and active fighting between the local PDFs and junta forces. The displaced populations from Yebyu Township fled their homes to seek refuge in temporary camp settings, plantations and houses of their relatives in other relatively safe villages and areas in Dawei towns. Two displaced persons died due to lack of adequate health services in the emergency situations. Junta forces arrested a total of 3 internally displaced persons and one of the victims was found dead in a plantation.

Despite the relative stability, displaced populations in Taungpyauk area of Thayetchaung Township continued to bear the brunt of impeded humanitarian assistance as the junta's restrictions on the transport of food and medical items were tightened to a larger degree from August-September 2022. An aid worker stated that due to increasing accounts of security checks on the checkpoints along Dawei-Thayetchaung Road, the local aid groups do not dare to transport large bulks of relief items.⁶⁴ Also, there were accounts of junta forces extorting money from the local businessmen and aid groups for carrying several bags of rice. Those who were transporting the items to Taungpyauk areas of Thayetchaung and other areas in Palaw, Dawei and Tanintharyi Township severely affected by armed conflict often were either aggressively interrogated or arrested on the suspicions of supporting the local resistance groups in those areas.⁶⁵ The internally displaced populations are heavily reliant on the assistance provided by the local aid groups and individuals. Draconian restrictions on transport of the aid items, as well as threat and intimidation to the local aid groups and individuals, has deprived the displaced populations of adequate access to humanitarian assistance.

Common needs of the internally displaced populations across different camp settings in Tanintharyi Region are food rations and medical items. In some camps, the displaced populations are lacking adequate access to health services, as they face severe shortages of medicine and medical professionals, leading to preventable deaths.⁶⁶ In addition, women need (at minimum) items for menstrual hygiene such as sanitary pads, underwear, and soap. The prices of the sanitary pads have surged almost two-fold, causing the aid groups to face difficulty in securing enough money to buy them. The majority of the donations from local groups and individuals often barely cover other basic needs: dry rations, shelter, and medicines. Private spaces to wash and dry reusable sanitary pads and cloth napkins are scarce. Women and girls are forced to use communal bathing and washing areas.⁶⁷

Socio-economic impacts of the 2021 coup in Tanintharyi Region

The majority of children in rural areas across Tanintharyi Region had continued to be denied their rights to access basic education due to increased junta forces' offensives and overall heightened sense of insecurity. The majority basic Education public schools in urban settings in Myeik and Dawei towns have been running their classrooms as usual while the children in rural areas have been deprived of access to the local public schools and any other alternatives to formal schooling. Frequent speculations of the junta's operation to crackdown on the civil disobedience movement (CDM), largely composed of former government teachers, the teachers often evade arrests and are unable to resume their teaching

⁶³ The Tanintharyi Times. 3 October 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100072232759534/posts/pfbid08W7qtFyhL3HjZHHicoKurb2ddiUP4HUnH6iFcvAydu2sHfPUVnndxrKNdTn5GZJDI/?d=n>

⁶⁴ Karen Information Center (KIC).

⁶⁵ Field Monitor. 7 September 2022.

⁶⁶ Field Monitor. 24 September 2022.

⁶⁷ Field Monitor. 22 September 2022.

or actively get involved in any alternatives to providing lessons for out-of-school children. A local source stated that teachers from some basic education public schools in Thayetchaung Township received warnings forcing them to resign from their positions. Some of those schools were reportedly closed after receiving the warning statements which the issuers of the statements are not yet known.

Tanintharyi Region continued to see a deteriorating access to and quality of healthcare services due to inadequate human resources and shortages of medical supplies. Mostly, the locals have no other choices apart from resorting to pay a high rate to receive medical treatment at the private hospitals in Myeik and Dawei towns. Due to the junta forces' restriction on transport of bulks of certain medical items, the public access to medicines have been strained; especially the internally displaced people have been severely deprived of the access to the medicines they need (eg. anti-malarial medicines). Also, the people carrying or transporting the medicines have also been interrogated by junta forces and suspected of supporting the local PDFs with the medical supplies.

Consumers and local businesses are also grappling with record high fuel prices. Local sources stated that consumers are not able to purchase fuel for the amount they desire as there was a limit set on the maximum amount of fuel that can be purchased by a person.⁶⁸ In addition, due to rapid surge of fuel and arbitrary taxation, the majority of the ferry services from Kawthoung to Ranong have been suspended since the first week of September 2022. Local passengers on the Thailand-Myanmar border had mainly commuted with the ferries. The prices of the ferry services for one-way trip reported a five-fold increase making it impossible for day labourers to afford the transportation. The ferry service providers also have to make arbitrary cash payments to security officers both at Myanmar and Thailand side of the border. With fewer people commuting by ferry boats, many ferry services had come to a temporary halt which negatively impacted on the ferry drivers and the local commuters.⁶⁹

The increased insecurity, rising living costs and soaring unemployment rates have pushed many Myanmar nationals to migrate to neighboring Thailand and seek employment opportunities. Due to cumbersome application processes and high costs associated with migrating with "documented worker" status, many people have resorted to illegal routes. The illegal alternatives, however, are not necessarily cheap since many reported that they paid an average of 15,000-20,000 Baht (THB) to the brokers for recruitment fees and related costs.⁷⁰ As a consequence of illegally crossing the border, they become more vulnerable to trafficking, arrest and extortion by police. In fact, the Thai police force stated that a total of 13 Myanmar nationals including 4 young children were arrested on 3 September for entering Thailand illegally. Also, on 8 September, a total of 18 Myanmar migrant workers were arrested in Prachut Khirikhan District for their undocumented status. Those were not isolated incidents that were unique to the situation in this month of September 2022 alone. Multiple incidents in which Myanmar nationals were arrested in Thailand, especially in the districts in close proximity to Thailand-Myanmar border such as Ranong and Prachuap Khiri Khan Provinces for illegally crossing the border this year.

ANALYSIS

Armed resistance occurred throughout the length and breadth of Tanintharyi Region during September 2022. Currently, the armed resistance is not only confined to swathes of terrain controlled by ethnic armed organizations and local resistance groups. It now occurs regularly in urban settings, especially in Dawei, Myeik, and Kawthoung town. In the previous months, there were barely any violent incidents such as skirmishes, armed clashes, or remote violence incidents in Kawthoung District (including Kawthoung, Kyunsu and Bokpyin Townships). However, in September 2022, an increasing number of

⁶⁸ Field Monitor. 7 September 2022

⁶⁹ Mizzima-News in Burmese. 4 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/5898099106891612>

⁷⁰ Local source from Kawthoung town. 20 September 2022.

violent incidents, with the majority of the incidents of assassination of junta-appointed local administrators and remote violence conducted by the local PDFs, under the military command of the National Unity Government's Ministry of Defence as part of "Operation Nan Htike Aung" took place in Kawthoung District. In fact, the armed resistance of the local PDFs showed no signs of abating despite the junta's use of countertactics involving intensified search and arrest operations, deployment of troop enforcements and increased use of proxy militias. Further escalation of violence may be predicted given that the local PDFs and the junta forces will continue competing for the control of the territory of the region ahead of the junta-controlled elections next year. The current conflict's trajectory is unfavorable for the upcoming general elections, which the junta has blatantly stated to plan to hold in August 2023.

Meanwhile, the junta's operations that manifest military power and fortify security control through violence have continued to take a toll on civilians' lives, safety, properties, and access to public services. In response to the local PDFs' series of assassinations and attacks under "Operation Nan Htike Aung", the junta undertook widespread measures including increased presence of troops, arbitrary arrests, and violent household inspections in both urban and rural settings. In addition, the enforcement of draconian laws and regulations, and subsequent operations such as the motorbike ban and frequent nightly household inspections, has led to a heightened climate of fear for local communities. On the other hand, the number of attacks by the local resistance groups against the perceived opponents, including junta-appointed local administrators, alleged members of pro-regime militias, and other military informants have continued to noticeably increase in September 2022. Following several statements issued by the local PDFs calling for the perceived opponents to join the "people's side", assassinations were reported in Palaw, Launglon, Yebyu and Tanintharyi Townships. As the armed resistance by the local PDFs gains greater momentum, the junta may become even more desperate to rely on the local proxy militias increasing the prevalences of tit-for-tat retaliatory violence to deter any forms of anti-coup movements. Against the backdrop of the region-wide instability, it is highly unlikely that the junta will gain territorial control in less than a year and an election in which the majority of the population are willing and able to participate will come into fruition.

The acute humanitarian crisis caused by the junta has worsened in Tanintharyi Region, as junta forces continue to commit atrocities to crush varying forms of anti-coup resistance. In addition, the junta's widespread ban on the transport of relief items to the displaced populations to several townships has compounded civilians' suffering. Furthermore, several accounts of arbitrary arrests and detention targeted at the individuals and groups suspected of supporting local PDFs have impaired the mobilization and delivery of scant resources bravely made available by the local aid groups and local individual donors to the displaced populations. Aid workers consistently face the challenge of severely restricted access to civilian populations requiring urgent humanitarian assistance. This is due to junta-imposed access constraints, as well as imminent threats and violent attacks on aid workers.

Although there has been a decrease in the number of non-violent actions in Tanintharyi Region in September 2022, the non-violent resistance has been sustained to a certain extent thanks to the established strike committees, women activists and other anti-coup protesters. Some of the protests and demonstrations have been fueled by the local populations' desire for the UN's retainment of Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun as the Myanmar's permanent representative to the UN. The protests led by women and students have continued to be a prominent feature of non-violence resistance in Tanintharyi Region and the anti-coup alliances demonstrated coordination and collaboration among themselves to sustain the non-violent resistance in the region. Increased number of armed clashes and junta forces' increased presence in townships in Dawei District may have been one of the factors that caused a decline in the number of non-violent actions in this month.

RECOMMENDATIONS

State Administrative Council

- The State Administrative Council(SAC) must cease attacks on civilians and must also allow unfettered humanitarian access to displaced populations.

National Unity Government

- The NUG should ensure that local resistance groups are following its military Code of Conduct.
- PDFs and local resistance groups should refrain from committing human rights abuses, including killing of detainees, and attacks on civilians and civilian property. They must also refrain from targeting schools and medical facilities.

International Community

- The international community should advocate for the removal of the military's restrictions on the flow of trade and freedom of movement. These restrictions affect not only areas where armed clashes occur, but also surrounding areas. As a result, local communities suffer from significantly increased prices of food and essential medicines.

United Nations and Non-governmental Organization

- In collaboration with local organizations, humanitarian partners should provide critical life-saving assistance to the most vulnerable people in conflict affected villages, despite challenges accessing these areas, and limited funding.
- Humanitarian partners should implement programs facilitating the delivery of cross-border aid to reach displaced populations in the region.
- Humanitarian partners should coordinate with ethnic armed organizations' respective departments to ensure the swift and effective provision of humanitarian assistance.
- International organizations should strengthen the capacity of local community-based organizations and civil society organizations in aid delivery, including data collection and monitoring.
- Local non-governmental organizations and international organizations should support the implementation of activities regarding mine risk reduction education, as well as first-aid training, and supplies to local communities.
- Local non-governmental organizations and international organizations should support implementation of activities regarding safe migration knowledge and practices to local communities, especially targeting young people.

Local Media

- Local media should be aware of the local context and minimize the impact of rumors and misinformation as triggers of violence in the region.

For further information, please contact: southernmonitor@proton.me

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