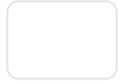


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More than 5,000 people flee villages in Myanmar's Tanintharyi region

By RFA Burmese

More than 5,000 people have fled their homes in Myanmar's southernmost Tanintharyi region, locals told RFA Monday.

The mass exodus follows the capture of 30 residents of villages in Thayetchaung township during junta raids between Thursday and Sunday.

Locals said at least six villages are empty after residents fled in heavy rains.

One woman, who didn't wish to be named for safety reasons, told RFA a convoy of around 100 soldiers entered Ka Net Thi Ri village on Thursday, only to be ambushed by members of a local People's Defense Force.

A junta ship arrived by sea and reinforcements opened fire with heavy artillery.

The local defense force surrounded the village, leading junta troops to seize residents to use as human shields, the woman said.

"The first day the junta column arrived, they arrested about 30 people camped at the monastery at the top of the village," she said.

"The next day, they used the people as human shields and moved them to the safety of Hpa Yar Koe Su mountain. The captured include the elderly and children. Those who can escape have fled."

Another resident of a nearby village, who also requested anonymity, told RFA locals fled to other villagers or left in boats.

"They brought nothing when they fled ... in heavy rain"," she said.

"They need clothes and accommodation urgently. Food is provided by our village.

A member of the Thayetchaung People's Defense Force said junta troops have only one escape route,

which the PDF has blocked.

"The battle may take a long time. It is still very difficult for them to get out by the way we have blocked," said the man, who declined to be named.

"We prepared as much as possible in advance."

The Thayetchaung People's Defense Force was aware of the possibility of junta attacks as early as June 8, warning civilians to travel along the local roads only between 6am and 9pm

The junta has not released a statement on the current fighting and calls to the local junta spokesperson, Yin Htwe, went unanswered Monday.

Translated by RFA Burmese. Edited by Mike Firn.

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Tanintharyi region: Junta raids forced more than 5,000 people to flee their homes; 30 residents captured by junta

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