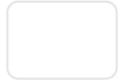


Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	496
Land:	Myanmar
Kilde:	RFA
Titel:	Fighting forces nearly half the residents to flee city in Myanmar's Kayin state
Udgivet:	31. januar 2023
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	20. juni 2023



Document #2086315

RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

Fighting forces nearly half the residents to flee city in Myanmar's Kayin state

Thandaung city in Myanmar's eastern Kayin state has fallen silent after 8,000 civilians fled fighting between Myanmar's military and one of the country's most powerful ethnic armies.

Locals told RFA, troops started shelling residential areas on Jan. 27, as fighting intensified between junta forces and the Karen National Liberation Army.

"Fighting erupted on Friday and carried on for the next three days," said a local who didn't want to be identified.

"All the people in [four wards of] Thandaung had to move out [because] artillery shells fell on houses and a church. There are no shortcuts to escape if the battle breaks out here."

On Saturday, two artillery shells hit St. Marcus Church, as troops retaliated following an attack the previous day by an unknown armed group.

"The army suffered a lot of losses. On Friday, a sniper shot at the camp in the hill, and the troops fired back," said a resident who also requested anonymity.

"Troops fired 40 millimeter shells ... People were not hit, but it forced the locals to flee."

According to the Thandaung General Administration Department, the city has a population of more than 18,000 people.

Last week, more than 10,000 civilians fled their homes in Kayin state's Kyondoe city and nearby villages amid intensified fighting between junta troops and combined Karen National Liberation Army forces.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs nearly 100,000 residents fled their homes in Kayin state between Feb. 1, 2021 – when the military staged a coup – and the end of December last year.

Translated by RFA Burmese. Edited by Mike Firn.

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ecoi.net description:

Kayin state: Fighting forces 8000 residents to flee Thandaung city

Country:

Myanmar

Source:

RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

Original link:

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/thandaung-shelling-01312023045839.html>

Document type:

Media Report

Language:

English

Published:

31 January 2023

Available on ecoi.net since:

3 February 2023

Document ID:

2086315

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Documentation (ACCORD)

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ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

