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RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

Series of junta attacks leave 6 dead in Myanmar

Multiple junta attacks killed six civilians and injured 16 others over a two-day period, residents who experienced the ambush told Radio Free Asia on Wednesday.

Junta troops conducted aerial assaults and shelled villages across three townships in Myanmar's western state of Rakhine. The area has experienced several months of indiscriminate violence toward civilians following the end of a year-long ceasefire between the anti junta Arakan Army and the military in November 2023.

Since then, the Arakan Army has seized eight townships across Rakhine state and recently set eyes on a ninth.

In Minbya township, under Arakan Army control since Feb. 6, airstrikes by the junta's air force killed three women and injured seven more people on Wednesday, said a resident from Myit Nar village who declined to be named for security reasons.

"Two bombs were dropped into the village around 4:00 a.m.," they said. "One of the injured is a healthcare worker. [The junta] dropped bombs when we were all sleeping."

In Myebon township, which is not under Arakan Army control, airstrikes in Kan Htaunt Gyi village killed three residents and injured three more on Tuesday. Later that day, junta forces also shelled Pauktaw township's Maw Htoke Gyi village, injuring six. The Arakan Army seized Pauktaw township on Jan. 24.

RFA attempted to contact Rakhine state's junta spokesperson Hla Thein for a response to allegations that junta air strikes have targeted civilians, but he did not respond by the time of publication.

According to data compiled by RFA, fighting between the Arakan Army and junta forces has killed nearly 200 civilians and injured more than 500 since fighting began again on Nov. 13.

Translated by RFA Burmese. Edited by Kiana Duncan and Mike Firn.

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ecoi.net description:

Rakhine state: 6 civilians killed and 16 others injured in aerial and artillery attacks by junta forces across 3 townships

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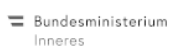
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RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

Junta shelling, airstrikes kill 25 Rohingyas in Myanmar's Rakhine state

At least 25 ethnic Rohingya civilians were killed and thousands forced to flee their homes amid junta airstrikes and heavy artillery over the weekend in western Myanmar's Rakhine state, according to residents.

Fighting between the ethnic Rakhine Arakan Army, or AA, and the Arakan Resistance Solidarity Army, or ARSA, of junta-supported Rohingya fighters began April 12 in Rakhine's Buthidaung township, residents told RFA Burmese on Monday, speaking on condition of anonymity due to security concerns.

The ARSA is an insurgent group that has claimed to support the Muslim Rohingya cause against Myanmar's military and ethnic Buddhist Rakhines – the main minority group in Rakhine state. The military has reportedly provided training to the ARSA in recent weeks and enlisted it to help repel the ethnic Rakhine army, which now controls eight of 16 townships in the state.

The 25 Rohingya civilians killed were among nearly 3,000 who fled from Buthidaung's U Hla Hpay,

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Rakhine state: At least 25 ethnic Rohingya civilians were killed and thousands of residents forced to flee their homes amid junta airstrikes and heavy artillery

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Ywet Nyo Taung and Kun Taing villages after the clashes began.

A Rohingya resident of Buthidaung said that ARSA units based in the three villages had been coordinating with junta troops to fight back against the advancing AA, which ended a ceasefire agreement with the military regime in November and has driven the military out of most of the northern part of the state.

"Two members of the AA were injured, while six ARSA troops were reportedly killed," said the resident. "The military carried out an artillery attack on a boat of fleeing Rohingya, killing 25 as the vessel sank."

There have been a number of reports that the military is reaching out to the ARSA, whose raids on border posts and police stations in 2017 were the *casus belli* for a military ethnic cleansing campaign that drove 1 million Rohingya into Bangladesh, and kept many others in concentration camps.

Since being driven into Bangladesh, ARSA's primary activities have been to secure control over the refugee camps and eliminate rivals within the Rohingya community. They had not participated in the conflict involving the military, which seized power in Myanmar in a February 2021 coup.

The ARSA has been designated as a terrorist group by Myanmar and Malaysia.

RFA was not immediately able to confirm the number of victims, whose identities remained unknown amid ongoing clashes and severed communications lines in Buthidaung on Monday.

'Attacked while fleeing'

But a Rohingya resident of nearby Maungdaw township told RFA that Rohingya civilians "were attacked [by the military] while they were fleeing" the fighting.

"It is difficult to get and verify news due to communication problems," he added.

Another resident of Buthidaung confirmed that the military carried out airstrikes in the area.

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“A jet fighter dropped two bombs on U Hla Hpay village yesterday [Sunday], where fighting occurred between the AA and the ARSA,” the resident said. “There has been little time to enter the villages [to get personal belongings]. The military bombarded the area for about two-and-a-half hours.”

Attempts by RFA to contact junta spokesperson Major General Zaw Min Tun and Khaing Thu Kha, the AA’s information officer, went unanswered Monday.

However, the junta reported Sunday that religious buildings, houses and shops in U Hla Hpay and Ywet Nyo Taung villages were destroyed by Arakan Army heavy weapon attacks and gunfire on April 12.

The AA’s Khaing Thu Kha also said in a message posted to his Telegram social network channel that Rohingya armed groups and the military carried out coordinated attacks on the AA in Buthidaung.

About 2,000 Rohingya residents of Buthidaung took to the streets on Sunday accusing the AA of unprovoked raids and killings in Rohingya villages.

Translated by Aung Naing. Edited by Joshua Lipes and Malcolm Foster.

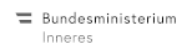
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RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

5,000 flee military raids on villages in Myanmar's Sagaing region

Nearly 5,000 villagers in central Myanmar's Sagaing region have fled their homes after junta troops conducted raids in Monywa township, home to the region's largest city, residents told RFA Burmese.

They are the latest to be left homeless by the three-year conflict in the country, where more than 2.8 million people are displaced and in need of humanitarian assistance amid access challenges, according to the United Nations.

On Wednesday evening, approximately 150 junta troops entered eastern Monywa township from neighboring Ayadaw township, prompting the evacuation of thousands of villagers from Kyauk Kar, Hta Naung Win and Ywar Ton, according to residents of the area.

A resident of Hta Naung Win, who spoke on condition of anonymity due to security concerns, said the column of troops carried small arms and heavy weapons.

"The junta troops spent a night in Kyauk Kar village and [Thursday] morning they advanced to Hta Naung Win, where they remain stationed," he said.

March raids on Monywa

The seat of Monywa township is Sagaing's largest city, located about 135 kilometers (85 miles) northwest of Mandalay on the banks of the Chindwin River. Home to around 372,000 people – nearly half of whom live in rural settings – Monywa serves as a major commerce hub and cultural center for the nation's poets.

Kyauk Kar, Hta Naung Win and Ywar Ton villages collectively comprise

more than 1,000 households, residents said.

Attempts by RFA to contact Nyunt Win Aung, the junta's social affairs minister for Sagaing and the regional spokesperson, for comment on the raids went unanswered.

Wednesday's raid marks the second time in just over a month that junta troops attacked eastern Monywa township, forcing residents to seek shelter.

In early March, the military set fire to several villages in the area, destroying more than 150 homes and displacing over 5,000 people, residents told RFA.

Translated by Kalyar Lwin. Edited by Joshua Lipes and Malcolm Foster.

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Sagaing region, Monywa township: Nearly 5,000 villagers flee their homes after junta troops conducted raids

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Document #2109679

RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

Junta attacks in Myanmar's Bago region kill 8, displace 6,000

Junta attacks since the weekend in central Myanmar's Bago region have killed at least eight people and displaced around 6,000 people, a rebel official and residents said Tuesday.

The attacks in Yedashe township, located about 290 kilometers (180 miles) north of Myanmar's largest city Yangon, followed intense fighting between junta troops and rebel forces that saw nearly 400 civilians killed by military airstrikes and heavy artillery around the country in the first three months of the year, according to data compiled by RFA Burmese.

The fighting in the Bago region comes as rebel groups across the country have gained more ground and pushed junta forces back toward the capital of Naypyidaw and Yangon.

Junta forces attacked villages surrounding Swar town in eastern Bago's Yedashe township on April 19 and have since killed eight civilians, including a child and a Buddhist monk, a spokesperson for the anti-junta Yedashe People's Defense Force, or YPDF, told RFA.

"Four people from Ywa Thit village [including a child] were the first to be killed [that day]," said the spokesperson who, like others interviewed for this report, spoke on condition of anonymity due to security concerns. "A day later, a monk was shot dead in Padauk Kon village and three men were also killed in the same village the day after that. The junta troops fired at whoever they saw during the offensive."

The spokesperson said junta troops remained in the village area on Tuesday and that the identities of the victims remained unclear.

RFA was unable to contact residents of the villages for more information, as telecommunications in the area have been impacted by the fighting.

Clashes between the military and rebel forces in Yedashe, a town situated on the east bank of the Sittaung River, first broke out on April 17. Ensuing attacks by the military have forced around 6,000 people to flee 23 villages, including Gway Pyauk Kone, Swar Ywar Ma, Khin Tan, Koe Tan, Ywar Thit, Taung Gyi and Padauk Kone, a resident of the township told RFA.

"Nearly everyone in this area has fled," said the resident, who also declined to be named. "Many people were also arrested," including some as they tried to escape the raids, he said.

The exact number of people who have fled the township was not immediately clear.

Attack helicopters deployed

When contacted by RFA, Tin Oo, the junta's economic minister and spokesperson for Bago region dismissed the reports as fake.

"This is the spread of fake news to threaten the people," he said. "The real information is that the villagers are living peacefully in their homes. It's only the PDFs who are fleeing."

Tin Oo added that there was "no fighting" in the area, and said junta security forces are working to "promote peace and security" there.

The YPDF spokesperson, meanwhile, told RFA that fighting "is still happening" and the military is deploying attack helicopters to carry out airstrikes.

"Aerial attacks take place almost every day, and people are facing a lot of difficulties," he said. "Some people were injured and have no access to medical treatment. They're too afraid to seek care outside of the area."

Local agriculture has also been impacted by the fighting ahead of the summer paddy harvest, he added.

Hundreds killed

The civilian deaths in Yedashe came as an investigation by RFA found that at least 397 civilians were killed and 889 injured by military airstrikes and heavy artillery around the country from January to March this year.

The majority of the victims were from Rakhine, Shan and Kachin states, and Sagaing and Bago regions – comprising 52% of the total casualties caused by aerial attacks and artillery, data compiled by RFA shows.

In one of the larger casualty events, eight civilians were killed and 15 wounded when the military carried out an airstrike on a monastery in

Kayin state's Hpapun township on March 31, days after the ethnic Karen National Liberation Army had seized control of the area.

The victims were among hundreds of civilians who had sought shelter at the monastery amid the fighting, according to David Eubank, the founder of the Free Burma Rangers, which conducted rescue operations at the site.

"More than three hundred bombs were indiscriminately dropped from a Y-12 transport plane, accompanied by nine separate attacks from jet fighters," he said in a message posted to the group's Facebook page following the attack. "Among the refugees seeking sanctuary here, the majority were Buddhists from Hpapun. They thought it would be safe to hide in this monastery."

Targeting civilians

Col. Naw Bu, information officer for the ethnic Kachin Independence Army, told RFA that the military is "deliberately targeting civilians."

"Revolutionary groups are formed by the public, so the military has decided to attack the public and these incidents are inevitable," he said.

Attempts by RFA to contact junta spokesperson Major General Zaw Min Tun for a response to Naw Bu's comments went unanswered Tuesday.

But previously, junta officials have acknowledged that civilian casualties do occur during conflict and told RFA it is "unjust" to solely blame the military for such incidents.

Nang, an official with the ethnic Pa-O Youth Organization, which monitors civilian casualties resulting from the conflict in Shan state, told RFA that "every armed organization bears the responsibility of safeguarding civilian life and security."

"It is imperative to refrain from targeting people who are not engaged in the conflict," he said. "In addition, in areas where military objectives are present, minimizing harm to civilian populations is paramount."

According to data independently compiled by RFA, junta airstrikes and artillery fire have killed at least 1,677 civilians and injured 3,263 others between the military's Feb. 1, 2021, coup d'état and the end of March 2024.

Translated by Aung Naing and Kalyar Lwin. Edited by Joshua Lipes and Malcolm Foster.

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