



Myanmar

*Security situation,
return and
military service*



This report is not, and does not purport to be, a detailed or comprehensive survey of all aspects of the issues addressed. It should thus be weighed against other country of origin information available on the topic.

The report at hand does not include any policy recommendations. The information does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Danish Immigration Service.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

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Executive summary

The civil war that broke out after Myanmar's military took over power in February 2021 had spread to many parts of the country by 2024. Opposition forces in the form of ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) and People's Defence Forces (PDFs) have taken control over large swaths of Myanmar. The military authorities' response has mainly been intensive aerial bombardments of areas taken over by the armed opposition.

Generally, the level of violence has remained high across the country in 2024. Armed clashes, aerial bombings and violations by the authorities have caused many deaths and have displaced many civilians either internally or to neighbouring countries.

Fighting intensified in 2024 in some states and regions compared to 2023, while other parts of the country faced relatively less violence.

Being part of the opposition or being suspected of having a connection to the opposition can have consequences for people and their families in Myanmar, including arbitrary arrest, torture and death.

The military authorities in Myanmar continue to closely monitor their citizens both inside the country and abroad, e.g. by using informants, digital technologies, administrative methods and by checking people's phones.

The military authorities' ill-treatment of ethnic and religious minorities intensified after the coup in 2021. However, human rights violations committed by the junta have affected all ethnic and religious groups in Myanmar, including the Bamar majority. Heavy restrictions are put in place in order to limit the freedom of movement of the population inside Myanmar and on international travel.

There is very limited information about returns to Myanmar, including the military authorities' treatment of the few people who have returned. However, those returning may risk being subjected to violations, especially if they have been involved in anti-junta activities abroad. Those forced to return try to stay in areas under the control of the opposition.

The junta's need for manpower has resulted in the activation of a conscription law both for males and females, which has led to a mass escape of young Burmese men and women, either towards opposition-controlled areas or to neighbouring countries.

Young people recruited to serve in the military forces risk being involved in human rights violations and being used as human shields. Those who evade compulsory military service or desert their positions risk reprisals against them and their family members by the military authorities.

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Introduction

This report focuses on the development in the security situation in Myanmar since the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) published the last [report on Myanmar](#) in late summer 2023. In addition, the report looks into return to Myanmar and military service.

The purpose of the report is to provide updated information on issues relevant for the processing of asylum cases.

The report is based on interviews with nine sources with in-depth knowledge of the situation in Myanmar from within and outside Myanmar, supplemented with information from written sources. The figures on security incidents are based on data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED). ACLED collects data on reported conflict events around the world, based on a variety of sources, and provides event-based datasets. Most of the data collected by ACLED is based on publicly available reports.¹

It should be noted that obtaining reliable information about Myanmar is generally challenging. This difficulty is further exacerbated by the intensification of the armed conflict and the deteriorating security situation in the country. DIS has sought to address this issue by utilising a wide range of written sources and consulting oral sources with substantial knowledge and experience concerning Myanmar who actively monitor the ongoing conflict.

The consulted sources were briefed about the purpose of the interviews and that their statements would be included in a public report. Minutes were written for each interview. These were forwarded to the sources for approval, giving them the opportunity to amend, comment or correct their statements. All nine sources approved their statements, which can be found in [Annex 1](#). The sources were referenced in this report according to their own request.

For the sake of transparency and accuracy, paragraphs in the interview minutes have been given consecutive numbers, which are used in the report when referring to the statements of the sources in the footnotes. The Terms of Reference (ToR) are included in [Annex 2](#).

The report is a synthesis of the information obtained from oral and written sources and does not include all details and nuances provided by the sources. In the report, care has been taken to present the views of the sources as accurately and transparently as possible. The individual sources should not be held accountable for the content of the report.

Attention should be called to the changeable and unstable security situation in Myanmar and the fact that the information provided in this report may become outdated. Therefore, the issues addressed in this report should be monitored periodically and brought up to date accordingly.

¹ Austria, ACCORD, *Myanmar, first quarter 2024: Update on incidents according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)*, 13 May 2024, [url](#)

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The report is written in accordance with the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) COI Report Methodology.²

The research and editing of this report were finalised on 15 August 2024.

The report is available on the website of the Danish Immigration Service (DIS), [us.dk](https://www.us.dk), and is thus available to all stakeholders in the refugee status determination process as well as to the public.

² EUAA, *EUAA Country of Origin Information Report Methodology*, 22 February 2023, [url](#)

Abbreviations

AA	Arakan Army
DIS	Danish Immigration Service
CDM	Civil Disobedience Movement
EAOs	Ethnic Armed Organisations
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
KIA	Kachin Independence Army
KIO	Kachin Independence Organisation
KNLA	Karen National Liberation Army
KNU	Karen National Union
NLD	National League for Democracy
NRC	National Registration Card
NUG	National Unity Government
PDF	People’s Defence Forces
SAC	State Administration Council

Map of Myanmar



Source: Nations Online Project, *Political Map of Myanmar*, [url](#), n.d.

1. Background

On 1 February 2021, Myanmar’s military junta, known as the State Administration Council (SAC), ousted the democratically elected government led by the National League for Democracy (NLD) in a coup d’état.³ In this report, the terms junta, the SAC, the Myanmar military and the military authorities are used interchangeably to refer to the military rulers in Myanmar.

The coup led to widespread protests, where tens of thousands of civilians took to the streets, and a nationwide civil disobedience movement (CDM) was initiated by health care workers and civil servants, among others, who went on strike.⁴ The SAC forces crushed the nationwide protests and thousands were killed.⁵

In response, members of the civilian administration that was deposed in the military coup established a civilian government-in-exile called the National Unity Government (NUG), together with delegates from some ethnic groups.⁶

The coup triggered an insurgency, as pro-democracy activists took up arms against the military rulers and formed the People’s Defence Forces (PDFs) across Myanmar, facilitated by the NUG. Many of the PDFs have formed anti-junta coalitions with ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) that have been fighting for autonomy in the border areas for decades.⁷

For the past three years since the coup in 2021, PDFs, EAOs and other local armed groups have carried out armed operations against the SAC and affiliated forces in most regions and states in Myanmar.⁸

³ AI, *The State of the World’s Human Rights; Myanmar 2023*, 24 April 2024, [url](#); DIS, *Myanmar: Security situation*, 8 September 2023, [url](#), p. 1; ACAPS, *Myanmar; Three years post-coup: recent developments and humanitarian situation*, 20 February 2024, [url](#)

⁴ RFA, *Women account for 1 in 5 deaths in Myanmar since coup*, 7 May 2024, [url](#); DIS, *Myanmar: Security situation*, 8 September 2023, [url](#), pp. 1, 15

⁵ DIS, *Myanmar: Security situation*, 8 September 2023, [url](#), p. 1; RFA, *Myanmar’s junta kills 4 villagers following mass arrest*, 28 May 2024, [url](#); RFA, *Women account for 1 in 5 deaths in Myanmar since coup*, 7 May 2024, [url](#)

⁶ DIS, *Myanmar: Security situation*, 8 September 2023, [url](#), p. 1; RFA, *Conscription in Myanmar drives insurgent recruits: civilian government*, 6 June 2024, [url](#)

⁷ RFA, *Myanmar’s junta kills 4 villagers following mass arrest*, 28 May 2024, [url](#); RFA, *Airstrike targets insurgent meeting in Myanmar, 16 killed*, 10 June 2024, [url](#); ACAPS, *Myanmar; Three years post-coup: recent developments and humanitarian situation*, 20 February 2024, [url](#); DIS, *Myanmar: Security situation*, 8 September 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁸ ACAPS, *Myanmar; Three years post-coup: recent developments and humanitarian situation*, 20 February 2024, [url](#)

2. Security situation

Myanmar is divided into seven regions (Sagaing, Magway, Yangon, Mandalay, Ayeyarwady, Bago, and Tanintharyi) and seven states (Rakhine, Kachin, Chin, Shan, Kayin (Karen), Kayah and Mon) as well as the so-called union territory of Naypyitaw where the capital is located.⁹

The regions, and central Myanmar in general, are mainly home to the ethnic Bamar majority, who constitute an estimated 68 % of the population, whereas the states are primarily populated by different ethnic groups.¹⁰

The Bamar majority dominate politics, and the military ranks are mainly drawn from the Bamar who have historically supported the military until the coup in 2021.¹¹

2.1. Development in the security situation since summer 2023

The security and human rights situation in Myanmar has deteriorated since summer 2023.¹² Fighting between the SAC on the one side and the EAOs and PDFs on the other has intensified and spread across the country and into areas that have previously not witnessed armed clashes or insurgency, such as the major cities of Yangon, Mandalay and Naypyitaw.¹³

The opposition forces attacked the capital city of Naypyitaw in April 2024 for the first time ever using drones and rockets. The attack has boosted the morale of the opposition and illustrates the increased pressure on Myanmar's military rulers.¹⁴

According to Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), which is a human rights organisation that tracks political arrests, attacks and casualties in Myanmar, 5 405 people have been killed by the junta since the coup in 2021.¹⁵ Between 1 November 2023 and 1 May 2024, at least 1 015 civilian deaths were documented by the AAPP. According to the organisation, the number of civilian deaths in the recent months of fighting is likely twice the reported number, but the organisation cannot document the numbers because of the intensifying fighting.¹⁶

⁹ ACAPS, *Myanmar; Three years post-coup: recent developments and humanitarian situation*, 20 February 2024, [url](#), p. 2; DIS, *Myanmar: Security situation*, 8 September 2023, [url](#), p. 27

¹⁰ DIS, *Myanmar: Security situation*, 8 September 2023, [url](#), pp. 1, 27

¹¹ CIA, *The World Factbook*, n.d., [url](#); DIS, *Myanmar: Security situation*, 8 September 2023, [url](#), pp. 1, 12

¹² Globalist, *Myanmar: From Failed State to Total Collapse?*, 24 June 2024, [url](#); South China Morning Post, *In Myanmar's 'fight to the death', it's the junta and its warlords vs everyone else*, 6 July 2024, [url](#); Asia Times, *The road to a resistance victory in Myanmar*, 8 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³ Development organisation: 10; International organisation: 3; BHRN: 3; CHRO: 9; Academic source: 6; Women's rights organisation: 5; DIIS: 5-6; AI, *Human rights in Myanmar 2023, Overview*, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴ Diplomat, *Myanmar's Revolution Has Entered a New, More Complicated Phase*, 1 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵ AAPP, *Political Prisoners Post-Coup*, 18 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶ Los Angeles Times, *Civilian casualties rise in Myanmar's civil war as resistance forces tighten noose around military*, 9 May 2024, [url](#)

Opposition forces in the form of EAOs and PDFs have increased their coordination and cooperation against the military junta.¹⁷ In October 2023, three ethnic armed opposition groups in northern Shan State, who call themselves the Three Brotherhood Alliance,¹⁸ initiated Operation 1027 (referring to its launch date of 27 October 2023).

The operation resulted in major and unprecedented defeats for the SAC.¹⁹ This has increased the pressure on the junta, which is facing armed opposition on several fronts.²⁰ It has also given the armed opposition a momentum and allowed it to take control over larger parts of the country.²¹

The military authorities' response to lost territory has been an increased use of airstrikes.²² According to the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), the losses of ground troops and bases have forced the junta to use aerial bombardment as the primary military tactic in the areas controlled by the resistance.²³

Chin Human Rights Organization likewise stated that killings until 2023 were a result of military operations, executions, summary killings, torture, etc., whereas after mid-2023, civilian casualties and killings have increasingly been caused by airstrikes.²⁴ In addition to civilian casualties, the aerial bombardments have hit civilian targets such as places of worship, schools and hospitals.²⁵

The figure below, which is compiled by DIS, based on ACLED data, shows the increase in air and drone bombardments since the Three Brotherhood Alliance launched Operation 1027 in October 2023.²⁶

¹⁷ Development organisation: 3, 13-14; International organisation: 3; CHRO: 5; Academic source: 3; DIIS: 4; International NGO: 6-7

¹⁸ The three groups are: Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and Arakan Army (AA)

¹⁹ Development organisation: 4; International NGO: 6-7; International Crisis Group, *Ethnic Autonomy and its Consequences in Post-coup Myanmar*, 30 May 2024, [url](#)

²⁰ Development organisation: 4; International organisation: 3; DIIS: 13

²¹ Development organisation: 3; International organisation: 3; CHRO: 4-5; Women's rights organisation: 6; DIIS: 4-6

²² DIIS: 9; CHRO: 6; Development organisation: 15; BHRN: 4; Academic source: 9

²³ DIIS: 9

²⁴ CHRO: 6

²⁵ BHRN: 6; Women's rights organisation: 12; DIIS: 9; International NGO: 20; CHRO: 6-9; International organisation: 5; Development organisation: 9

²⁶ ACLED uses the term 'security event' when registering security incidents. In accordance with EUAA's use of ACLED data, DIS uses the term 'security incident' and only includes these three event categories: Battles, Explosions/Remote violence and Violence against civilians in the figures compiled by DIS.

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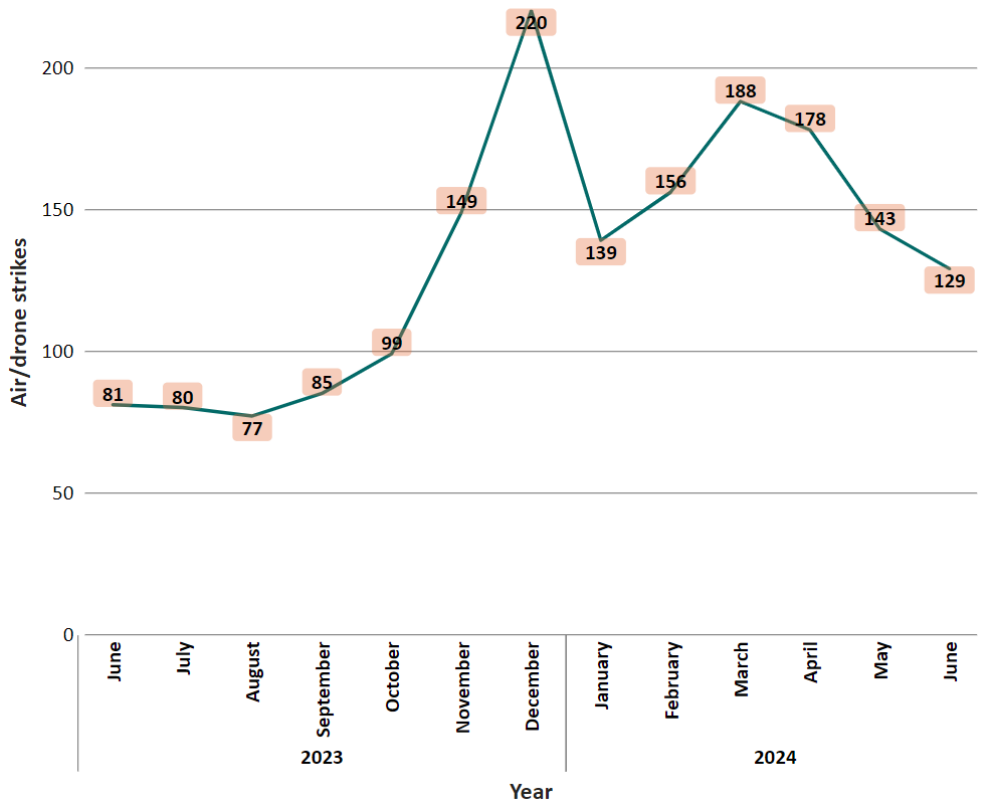


Figure 1: Myanmar, Air/drone strikes, June 2023 – June 2024

Besides losing territory, the military junta is also suffering from a low morale amongst their fighters and many desertions and defections.²⁷ This has forced the SAC to activate the military service law from 2010. According to this law, all citizen men aged 18-35 and all women aged 18-27 are eligible for compulsory military service.²⁸

The activation of the conscription law has resulted in many youths (both men and women) fleeing to neighbouring countries or moving to opposition-controlled areas inside Myanmar.²⁹ For more information about the conscription law, see section [5. Military service](#).

The fighting in Myanmar has also forced many people to leave their areas and either become internally displaced inside the country or seek refuge in neighbouring countries.³⁰ Opposition forces gained control over the strategically important border town of Myawaddy between Myanmar and Thailand around April 2024. The fighting that followed led thousands of people to cross the border and seek refuge in Thailand.³¹

²⁷ DIIS: 8, 13; Development organisation: 11

²⁸ BBC News, *Myanmar’s military government enforces conscription law*, 10 February 2024, [url](#); Development organisation: 11; DIIS: 13

²⁹ Development organisation: 12; Women’s rights organisation: 7; DIIS: 14; International NGO: 9

³⁰ International organisation: 4; Development organisation: 6

³¹ DIIS: 15-17; Development organisation: 5-8

Landmines constitute another threat to safety in Myanmar, as they are causing many civilian casualties, especially among children. All sides of the conflict are increasingly using landmines.³² According to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, landmines and unexploded ordnances had been reported in over half of the townships in Myanmar by October 2023.³³

Several sources described the violence in Myanmar as both arbitrary and targeted.³⁴ The junta bombs areas that are lost to the opposition, regardless of civilians casualties.³⁵ Some sources believe that it might be the strategy of the military authorities who want to punish and intimidate the population in these areas because everyone in such areas is considered opposition supporters.³⁶

Everyone can fall victim to the intensifying fighting, landmines and unexploded arms being used by both sides of the civil war, or be attacked by the junta or the opposition for being suspected of supporting the other side.³⁷

In addition to civilian killings, including by airstrikes and landmines, the military junta has committed different kinds of abuse against the civilian population, including arbitrary arrests, torture, extrajudicial killings and indiscriminate attacks.³⁸

2.2. Impact of the conflict on different areas

The so-called dry zone, which is made up of Sagaing, Magway and Mandalay regions, has become an opposition hotbed where junta forces have faced unprecedented opposition since the coup in 2021.³⁹

Until the coup, central areas like Sagaing had been peaceful; however, since the coup, Sagaing has reportedly faced more attacks by the junta than other regions or states.⁴⁰

Figure 2 below, which are compiled by the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD), based on ACLED data, illustrates the high level of conflict in Sagaing.⁴¹

³² International organisation: 5; CHRO: 7-8; International humanitarian organisation: 8; OHCHR, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar*, Thomas H. Andrews [A/78/527], 12 October 2023, [url](#), para. 36

³³ OHCHR, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar*, Thomas H. Andrews [A/78/527], 12 October 2023, [url](#), para. 36

³⁴ International organisation: 5; CHRO: 9

³⁵ CHRO: 9; International NGO: 10; DIIS: 9

³⁶ Development organisation: 9; BHRN: 4; International NGO: 10; DIIS: 9

³⁷ International organisation: 5; CHRO: 7-8; International humanitarian organisation: 8

³⁸ HRW, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 2024, [url](#)

³⁹ RFA, *Junta bombs dropped on wedding party in Myanmar leave 28 people dead*, 4 June 2024, [url](#); RFA, *Myanmar's junta kills 4 villagers following mass arrest*, 28 May 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁰ RFA, *Myanmar's junta kills 4 villagers following mass arrest*, 28 May 2024, [url](#)

⁴¹ ACCORD uses five categories when registering an incident: Explosions/Remote violence, Battles, Strategic developments, Violence against civilians, and Protests.

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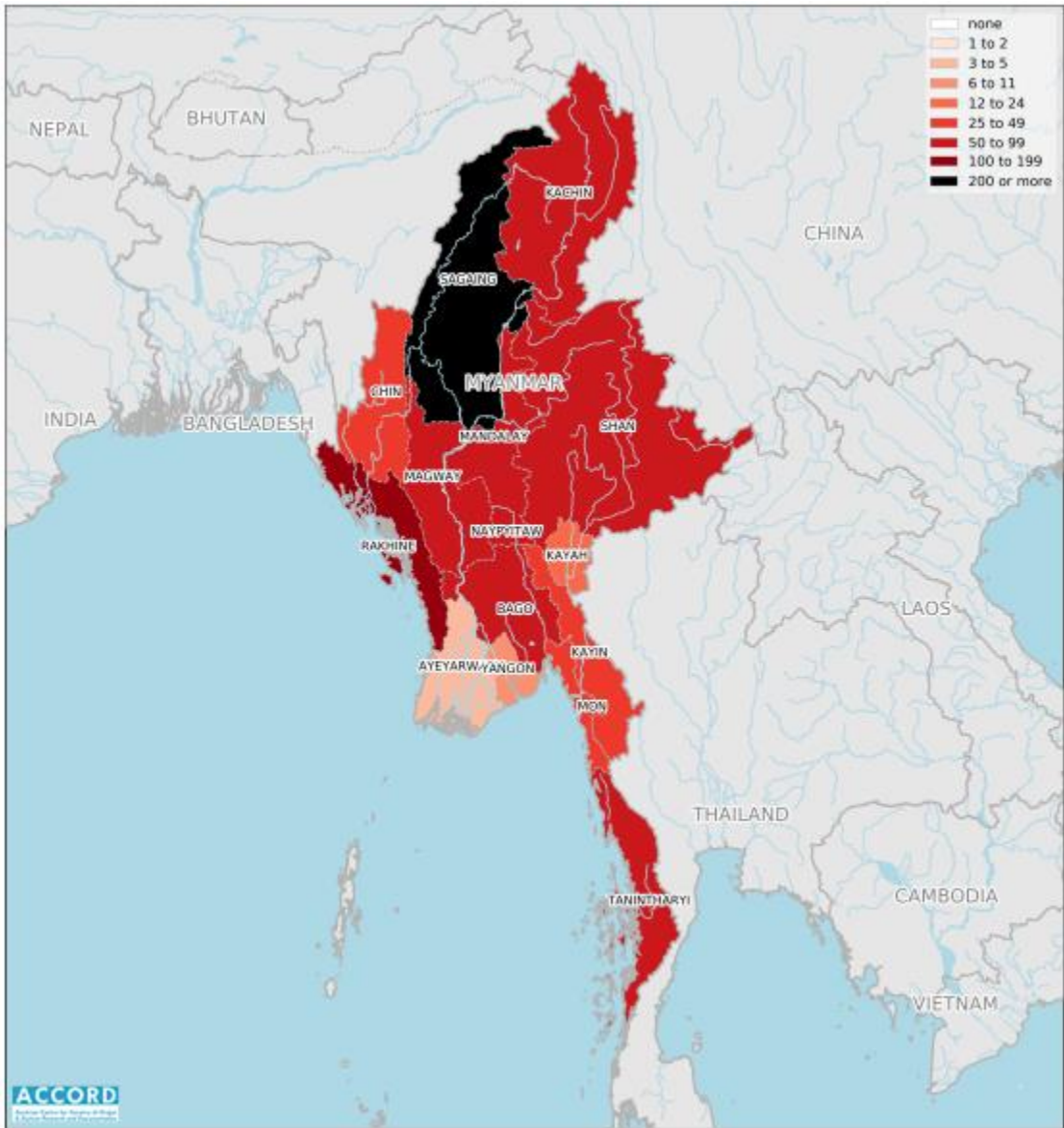


Figure 2: Number of reported incidents with at least one fatality, first quarter 2024
Compiled by Austrian ACCORD, based on ACLED data⁴²

Figure 2 shows the number of reported incidents with at least one fatality in the different regions and states in Myanmar in the first quarter of 2024. Sagaing, followed by Rakhine, have witnessed the largest numbers of such deadly incidents because of the heavy fighting in the two regions. By contrast, Ayeyarwangan is the region with the fewest security incidents reported.

⁴² Austria, ACCORD, Myanmar, first quarter 2024: Update on incidents according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 13 May 2024, [url](#)

2.3. Security incidents in all of Myanmar June 2023 – June 2024

The figures below, which are compiled by DIS, based on ACLED data, shows that the level of violence in Myanmar from June 2023 to June 2024 have consistently been high with a slight fluctuation during the period, as can be seen in figure 3. In general, there has been no change in the level of violence from the second half of 2023 to the first half of 2024.

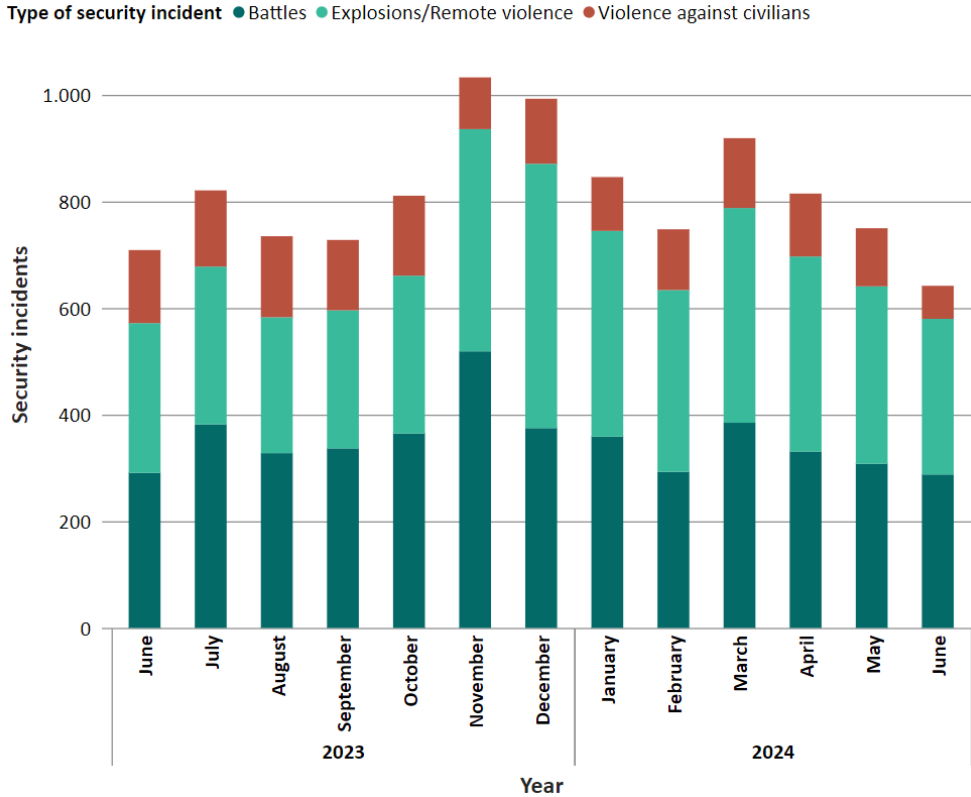


Figure 3: Myanmar, Security incidents, June 2023 – June 2024

Sagaing, Shan, Rakhine, Magway, Kachin and Mandalay continued to experience the highest levels of violence in the period from June 2023 to June 2024 as can be seen in Figure 4 below.

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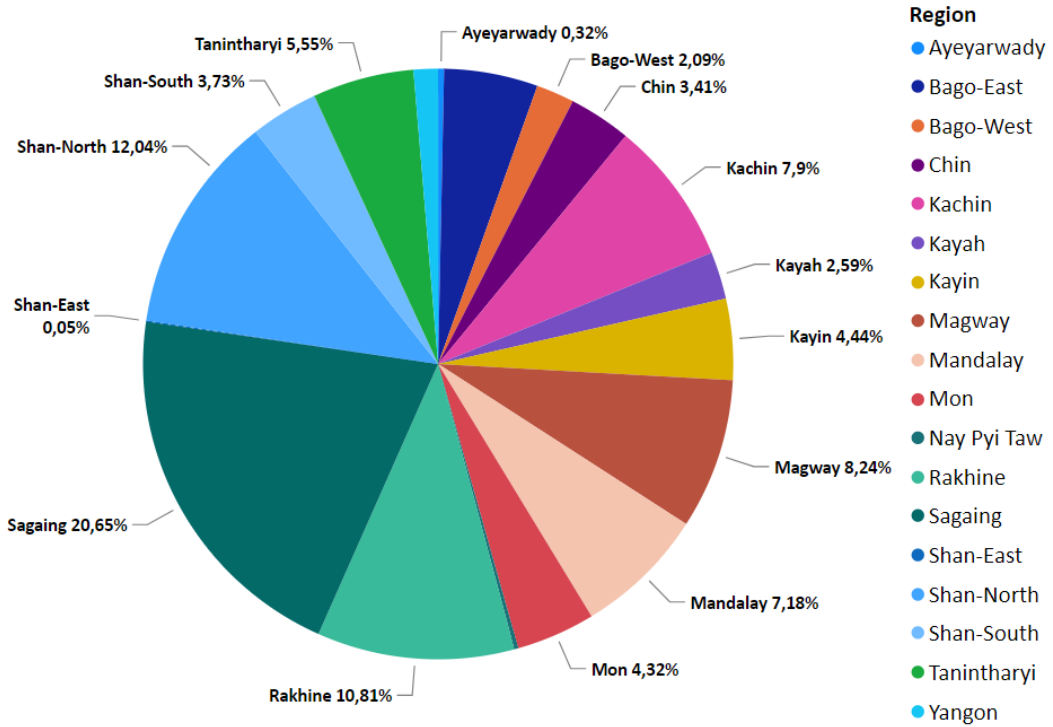


Figure 4: Myanmar, Security incidents by region, June 2023 – June 2024

2.3. Security incidents in selected areas June 2023 – June 2024

The following sections will focus on the security situation in Rakhine State, Kachin State, Chin State, Karen (Kayin) State, Shan State, Sagaing Region, Mandalay Region and Yangon Region.

2.3.1. Rakhine State

Rakhine State (previously known as Arakan State) lies in western Myanmar. The state has international borders with Bangladesh in the west, and internally, Rakhine borders Chin State in the north and the regions of Magway, Bago and Ayeyarwady in the east.⁴³

According to the latest census in 2014, the state’s population was estimated at approximately 3.2 million.⁴⁴ The Rohingya population in Myanmar predominantly live in Rakhine State.⁴⁵

The state has witnessed intense fighting between the junta forces and the Arakan Army (AA), which is an EAO fighting for the restoration of Arakan sovereignty.⁴⁶

⁴³ MIMU, *Rakhine State*, 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁴ MIMU, *Census Atlas Myanmar, The 2014 Myanmar population and housing census*, 2014, [url](#), p. 10

⁴⁵ CIA, *The World Factbook*, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁶ Stimson Center, *Understanding the Arakan Army*, 21 April 2023, [url](#)

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Figure 5 below shows a drastic increase in security incidents in Rakhine State since November 2023.

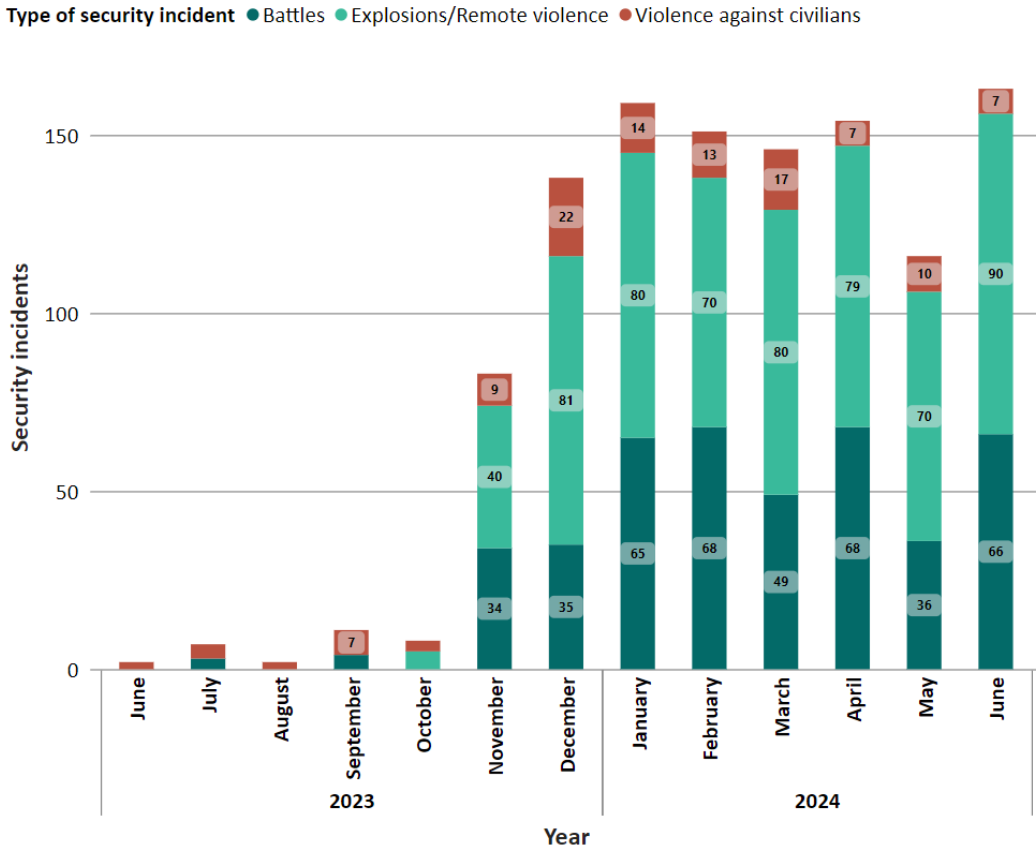


Figure 5: Rakhine State, Security incidents, June 2023 – June 2024

2.3.2. Kachin State

Kachin State lies in northern Myanmar and borders China and India. Inside Myanmar, the state borders Sagaing Region and Shan State.⁴⁷ According to the 2014 census, Kachin State's population was estimated at approximately 1.7 million people, which constitute about 3 % of Myanmar's overall population.⁴⁸

The Kachin population represent a number of ethnic communities who speak 12 languages from the Tibeto-Burman linguistic family.⁴⁹ Currently, it is estimated that over 90 % of the Kachin population identifies as Christians, with approximately two-thirds being Baptists. The

⁴⁷ MIMU, *Kachin State*, 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁸ Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia, *The Kachin Conflict, Testing the Limits of Political Transition in Myanmar*, 3 July 2018, [url](#), p. 1; MIMU, *Census Atlas Myanmar, The 2014 Myanmar population and housing census*, 2014, [url](#), p. 10

⁴⁹ MRG, *Kachin in Myanmar*, August 2017, [url](#)

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Kachin Baptist Convention is the most influential church and extends its influence beyond religious activities.⁵⁰

After the military coup in 1962, the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO), along with its militant wing, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), was founded to fight for Kachin's autonomy and independence.⁵¹

Figure 6 shows an increase in security incidents in Kachin State since January-February 2024.

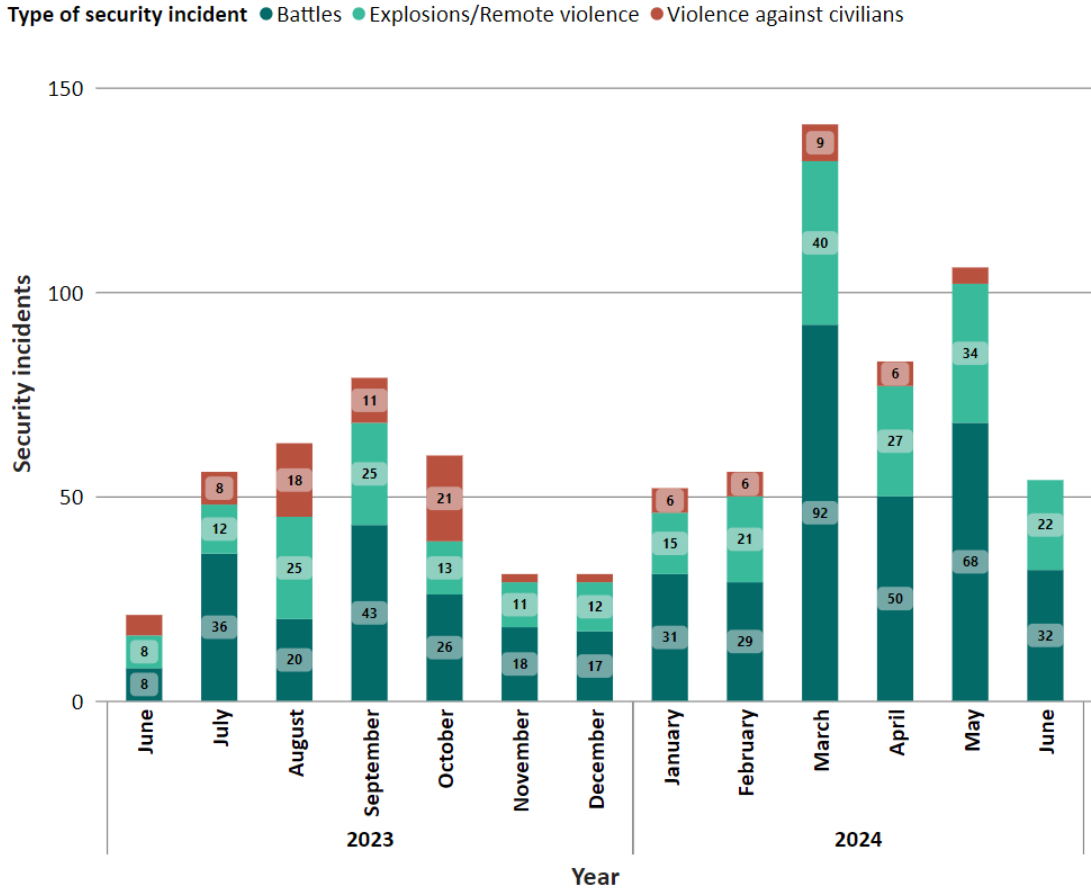


Figure 6: Kachin State, Security incidents, June 2023 – June 2024

⁵⁰ Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia, *The Kachin Conflict, Testing the Limits of Political Transition in Myanmar*, 3 July 2018, [url](#), p. 16

⁵¹ Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia, *The Kachin Conflict, Testing the Limits of Political Transition in Myanmar*, 3 July 2018, [url](#), pp. 12, 15

2.3.3. Chin State

Chin State is located in the country's western part and shares international borders with India and Bangladesh.⁵² According to the 2014 census, Chin State's population was estimated at approximately 480 000 people.⁵³

The Chin community, an ethnic minority in Myanmar, forms the largest portion of Chin State's population. Approximately 90 % of the Chin population identifies as Christians. In recent years, the state has been in conflict due to the intense clashes between the Myanmar military and various armed ethnic minority factions.⁵⁴

The level of violence in Chin State has been fluctuating between June 2023 and June 2024 with clashes continuing while this report was written, as can be seen in figure 7 below.

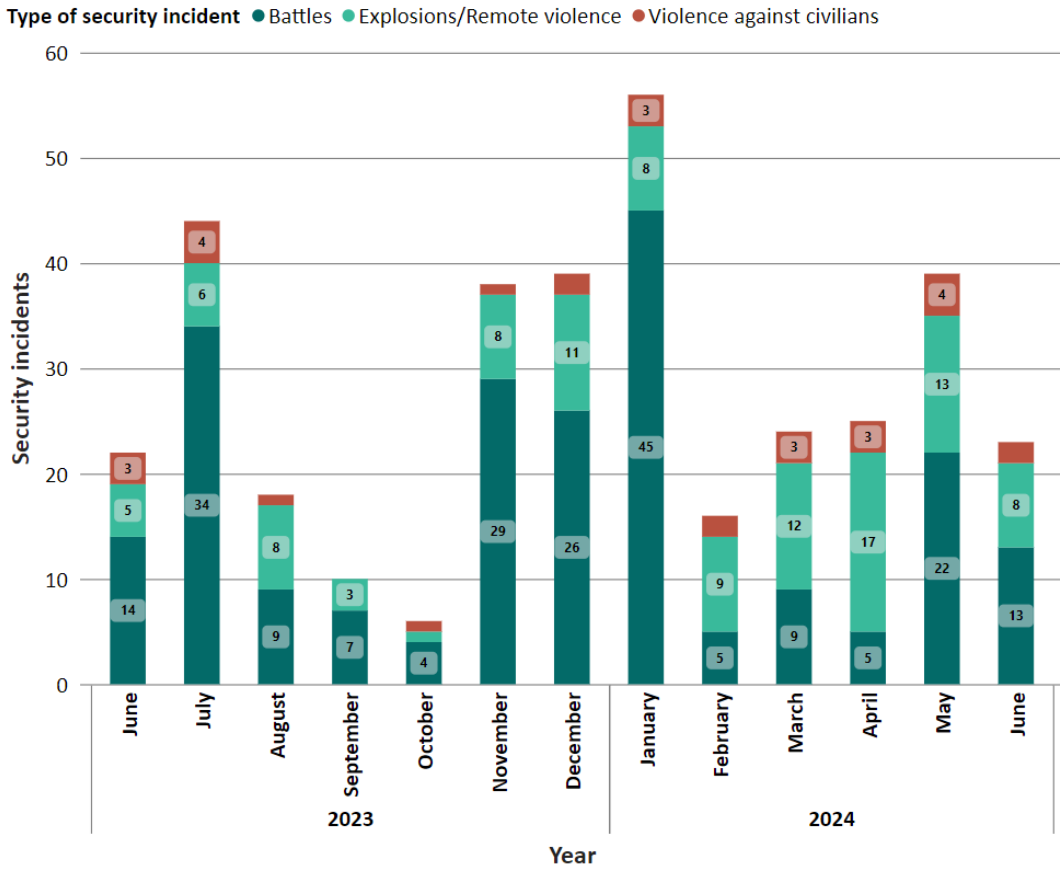


Figure 7: Chin State, Security incidents, June 2023 – June 2024

⁵² MIMU, *Chin State*, 2024, [url](#)

⁵³ MIMU, *Census Atlas Myanmar, The 2014 Myanmar population and housing census*, 2014, [url](#), p. 10

⁵⁴ MRG, *Myanmar/Burma – Chin*, 19 June 2015, [url](#), pp. 1-2

2.3.4. Kayin (Karen) State

Kayin State, also referred to as Karen, is located in the eastern part of Myanmar, stretching along the long border with Thailand. In Myanmar, it borders Kayah, Naypitaw, Bago and Mon.⁵⁵ According to the 2014 census, the state’s population was estimated at around 1.6 million.⁵⁶

The predominant residents of Kayin State are the Karen population, which is a term that is used to describe several ethnic groups that live in the state. From 1949 onwards, Kayin State has been a battleground marked by conflicts between the Myanmar military and the Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army (KNU/KNLA), one of the oldest and largest ethnic armed organisations in Myanmar.⁵⁷

As figure 8 below illustrates, there has been a continuous level of violence in Kayin State from June 2023 to June 2024, spiking in spring 2024.

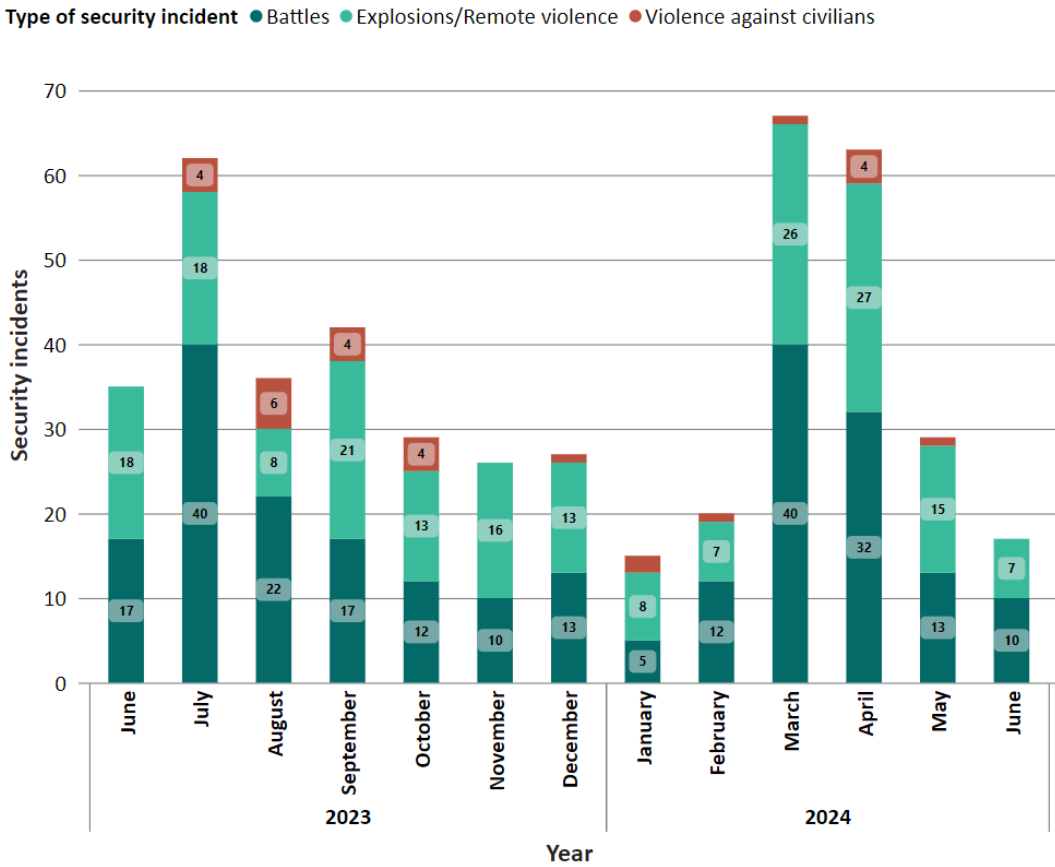


Figure 8: Kayin (Karen) State, Security incidents, June 2023 – June 2024

⁵⁵ MIMU, *Kayin State*, 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁶ MIMU, *Census Atlas Myanmar, The 2014 Myanmar population and housing census*, 2014, [url](#), p. 10

⁵⁷ AI, *Myanmar: “Bullets rained from the sky”: War crimes and displacement in eastern Myanmar*, 31 May 2022, [url](#), pp. 1-2

2.3.5. Shan State

Shan State is the largest state in Myanmar and is located in the east of the country. The state has international borders with China, Laos and Thailand. In Myanmar, Shan State borders Kachin, Sagaing, Mandalay, Naypyitaw Union Territory, Kayin and Mon.⁵⁸ According to the 2014 census, Shan State's population was estimated at approximately 5.8 million people.⁵⁹

The state was the scene of Operation 1027 in October 2023 when three armed opposition groups launched an attack on the junta’s forces, which resulted in significant losses for the junta. China brokered a ceasefire between the Myanmar military and the three groups in January 2024.⁶⁰

As illustrated in figure 9 below, there has been a high level of violence in the state from October 2023 until January 2024, where the ceasefire led to a decrease in violence. Fighting has continued, however.⁶¹

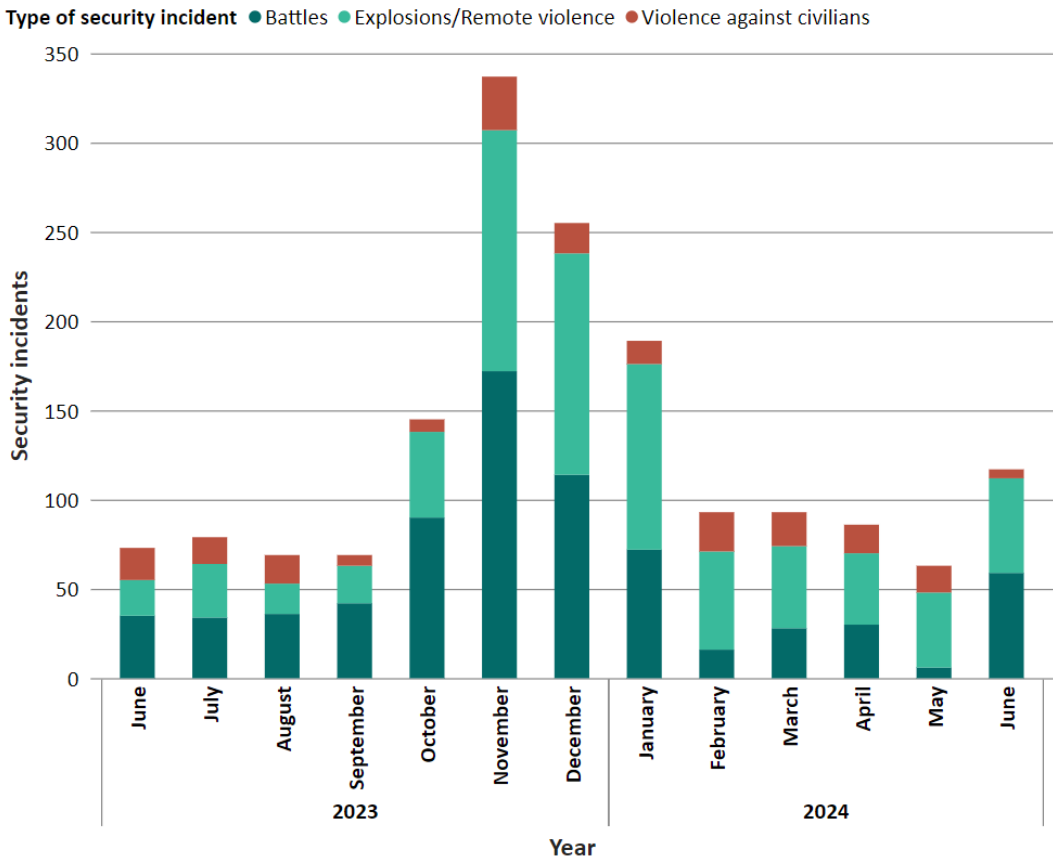


Figure 9: Shan State, Security incidents, June 2023 – June 2024

⁵⁸ MIMU, *Shan*, 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹ MIMU, *Census Atlas Myanmar, The 2014 Myanmar population and housing census*, 2014, [url](#), p. 10

⁶⁰ International Crisis Group, *Ethnic Autonomy and its Consequences in Post-coup Myanmar*, 30 May 2024, [url](#)

⁶¹ Diplomat, *Fighting Erupts in Myanmar’s Shan State as Armed Groups Resume Offensive*, 4 July 2024, [url](#)

2.3.6. Sagaing Region

Sagaing Region is located in the north-west of Myanmar. The region shares international borders with India and internally, Sagaing borders the states of Kachin, Shan and Chin, as well as the regions of Mandalay and Magway.⁶² According to the 2014 census, Sagaing Region’s population was estimated at approximately 5.3 million people.⁶³

As mentioned earlier, the region has experienced more attacks by the junta than any other state or region in the country.⁶⁴ Fierce clashes between junta forces and local PDFs have forced many inhabitants to flee their homes. In April 2024, around 200 people were killed in an airstrike on a village in Sagaing.⁶⁵ As Figure 10 illustrates, the level of violence in the region has in general decreased in the first six months of 2024 compared to the last six months of 2023.

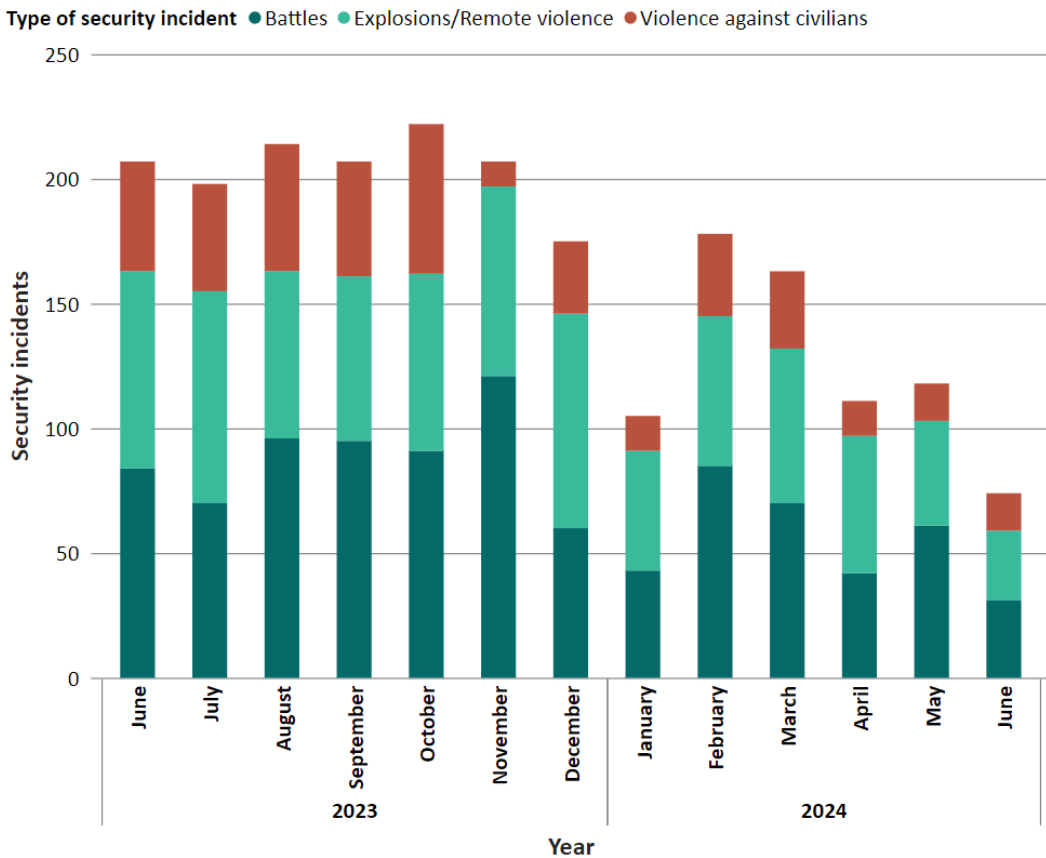


Figure 10: Sagaing Region, Security incidents, June 2023 – June 2024

⁶² MIMU, *Sagaing*, 2024, [url](#)

⁶³ MIMU, *Census Atlas Myanmar, The 2014 Myanmar population and housing census*, 2014, [url](#), p. 10

⁶⁴ RFA, *Junta bombs dropped on wedding party in Myanmar leave 28 people dead*, 4 June 2024, [url](#); RFA, *Myanmar’s junta kills 4 villagers following mass arrest*, 28 May 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁵ RFA, *Over 20,000 people flee as Myanmar’s military raids Sagaing region villages*, 20 April 2024, [url](#)

2.3.7. Mandalay Region

The region is located in central Myanmar and is home to the second largest city (Mandalay) in the country.⁶⁶ According to the 2014 census, Mandalay Region's population was estimated at approximately 6.2 million people.⁶⁷

The region has witnessed heavy clashes between junta forces on the one side and EAOs and local PDFs on the other.⁶⁸ As figure 11 below shows, the violence peaked in June 2024 compared to the previous months of 2024.

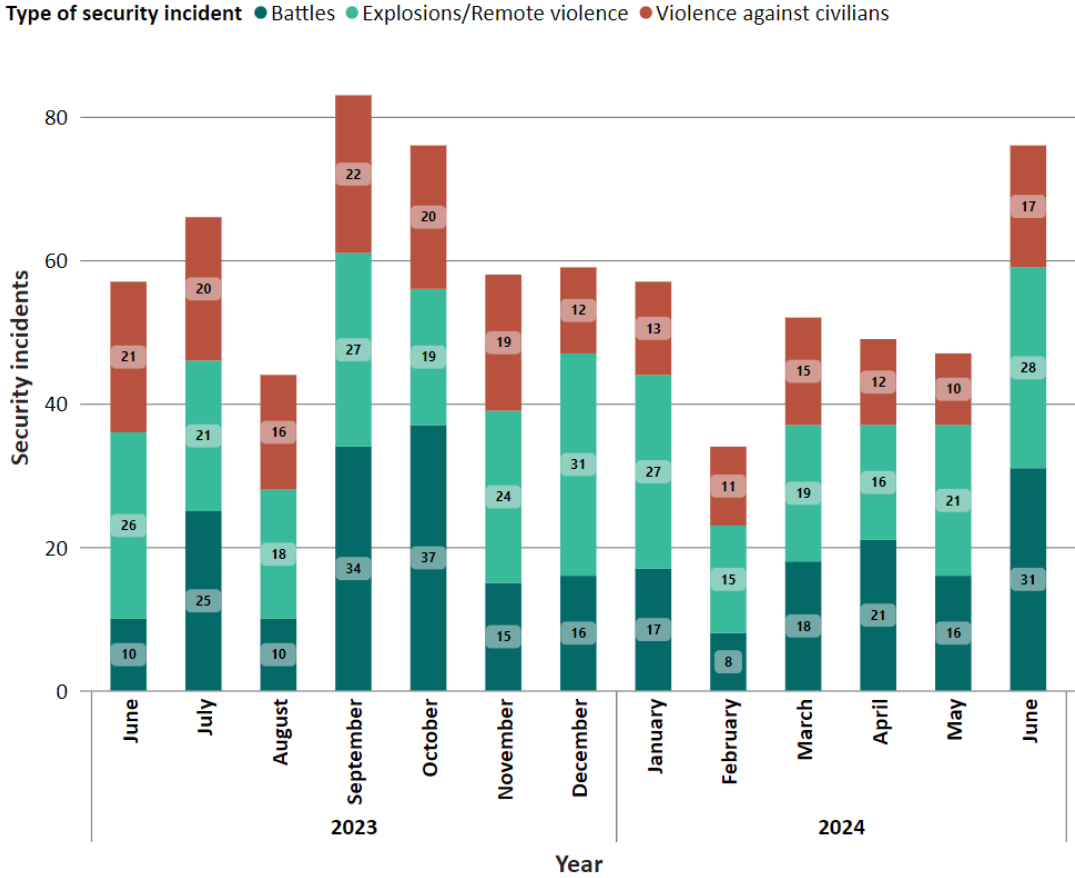


Figure 11: Mandalay Region, Security incidents, June 2023 – June 2024

⁶⁶ Nations Online Project, *Administrative Map of Myanmar*, n.d., [url](#)

⁶⁷ MIMU, *Census Atlas Myanmar, The 2014 Myanmar population and housing census*, 2014, [url](#), p. 10

⁶⁸ AP, *Fierce fighting breaks out as militias launch new attacks against regime in Myanmar's civil war*, 5 July 2024, [url](#)

2.3.8. Yangon Region

The coastal region of Yangon is home to the largest city (Yangon) in the country and is the most densely populated region in Myanmar.⁶⁹ In 2014, the region’s population was estimated at around 7.4 million people.⁷⁰ Yangon City is the industrial and commercial hub of the country.⁷¹

Figure 12 below shows that Yangon, which is under the control of the junta, has witnessed clashes, explosions and attacks against civilians. In the first half of 2024, however, the level of violence has decreased in comparison with the second half of 2023 where the level of violence was fluctuating. June 2024 experienced the lowest level of violence in a year, with no reported battles or violence against civilians.

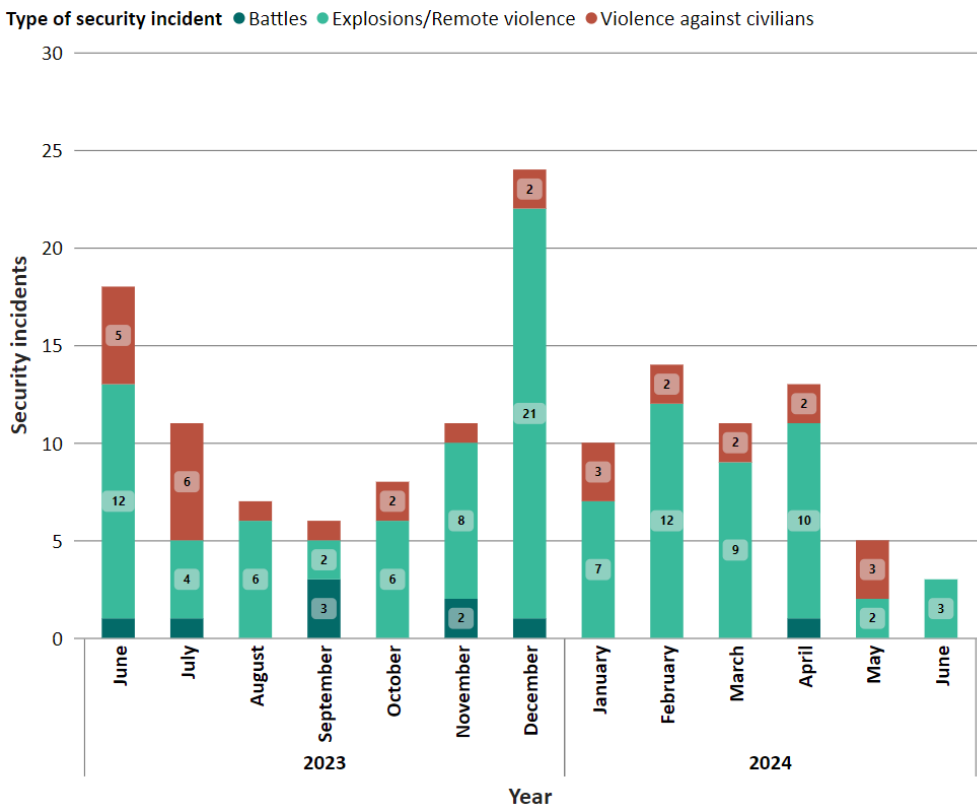


Figure 12: Yangon Region, Security incidents, June 2023 – June 2024

⁶⁹ MIMU, *Yangon*, 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁰ MIMU, *Census Atlas Myanmar, The 2014 Myanmar population and housing census*, 2014, [url](#), p. 10

⁷¹ Britannica, *Yangon*, 21 July 2024, [url](#)

2.4 Military authorities’ treatment of the opposition

The junta has responded violently to opposition and dissent, and the military authorities have arbitrarily detained thousands of anti-coup activists and critics since the coup in February 2021.⁷² Protesters, journalists, human rights defenders and members of opposition groups have been prosecuted in trials that have not met international standards.⁷³

People affiliated with or suspected of being affiliated with armed opposition groups face consequences such as arbitrary arrest, detention, extortion, seizure or destruction of property, torture, sexual violence, disappearance and extrajudicial killing.⁷⁴ One source said that the military authorities act with impunity with regard to treatment of people with suspected affiliation with the opposition as well as their family members.⁷⁵

As of April-May 2024, Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) activities were still taking place in the country, albeit with much less frequency. This is due to the fact that a large number of persons participating in CDM have gone underground or left for other countries or areas not under the control of the SAC.⁷⁶

According to one source, the number of CDM protests in junta-controlled areas is very low because it is dangerous to participate in such protests. The military authorities have declared martial law in large parts of the country, which allows them to shoot at will if people are grouping or protesting.⁷⁷

Many civil servants who participated in CDM and left their public jobs after the coup in 2021 have fled to opposition-controlled areas where they are running schools, hospitals and other public institutions.⁷⁸

2.4.1. Military authorities’ treatment of family members

Family members of people with suspected or real affiliation with the opposition face reprisals by the authorities, including detention, confiscation of property and killings.⁷⁹ Persons working with international NGOs, academics and human rights organisations outside the country fear

⁷² Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2024, Myanmar, Key Developments in 2023*, n.d., [url](#)

⁷³ HRW, *Our Numbers Are Dwindling, Myanmar’s Post-Coup Crackdown on Lawyers*, 8 June 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁴ Development organisation: 17; BHRN: 7-10; CHRO: 14, 19, 21-22; Academic source: 12, 17; Women’s rights organisation: 14-15, 17; DIIS: 25, 28-29; International NGO: 17, 20; OHCHR, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Thomas H. Andrews [A/78/527]*, 12 October 2023, [url](#), para. 16

⁷⁵ BHRN: 12; Academic source: 15

⁷⁶ International organisation: 13-14; BHRN: 9-10; Academic source: 15; Women’s rights organisation: 15-16; DIIS: 26-30; International NGO: 18-19; CHRO: 16

⁷⁷ CHRO: 17-18

⁷⁸ BHRN: 9; DIIS: 27; CHRO: 16; OHCHR, *Situation of human rights in Myanmar; Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Thomas H. Andrews (26 February–5 April 2024) [A/HRC/55/65]*, 20 March 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁹ Development organisation: 22; International organisation: 16; BHRN: 12; CHRO: 23, 30; Academic source from Myanmar 21-22; Women’s rights organisation: 17, 21, 31; International NGO: 22

reprisals by the junta against their family members inside Myanmar.⁸⁰ Therefore, many try to hide their real names or refrain from performing anti-junta activities.⁸¹

2.5. Monitoring

The military authorities in Myanmar continue to monitor its citizens by using various methods in order to control the views of the population. The military authorities have persecuted individuals who have expressed anti-junta views or views deemed unacceptable by the military authorities.⁸² As a result, several monitoring systems have been implemented in order to persecute any form of dissent.⁸³

One monitoring system is built upon the administrative division of the country in so-called wards in which several hundred families live. Local representatives in these wards, who are loyal to the military junta, monitor people's movement and activities.⁸⁴

Informants are used to gather information both inside Myanmar and abroad, especially in neighbouring countries like Thailand and India.⁸⁵ These informants can be motivated by ideology or financial incentives.⁸⁶

People are aware of these monitoring mechanisms and are increasingly cautious about how they express their opinion, to whom and in which forum.⁸⁷ The military authorities control the telecommunication sector in the country and use telecommunication companies to access data and communication of the population.⁸⁸

Access to social media like Facebook is restricted. Therefore, people use VPNs to avoid censorship while accessing such media. The military authorities have forbidden the use of VPNs, however; people thus risk being charged with terrorism if they are caught using VPNs.⁸⁹ The military authorities try to control people's posts on social media, and individuals who like, share or support posts critical of the junta face punishments.⁹⁰

In May 2024, the activist group Justice for Myanmar uncovered a digital partnership between the junta and Chinese companies, enabling the military authorities to increase their control of the internet and allowing them to intercept and decrypt web traffic as well as to block applications and websites, including VPNs.⁹¹

⁸⁰ Development organisation: 22; International organisation: 16; CHRO: 15; Academic source: 22; Women's rights organisation: 21

⁸¹ Development organisation: 22; CHRO: 30; Academic source: 22; Women's rights organisation: 21

⁸² Development organisation: 23; CHRO: 25

⁸³ DIIS: 31

⁸⁴ Development organisation: 24; DIIS: 31; International NGO: 24

⁸⁵ International organisation: 19; CHRO: 28; Academic source: 19; DIIS: 39; International NGO: 24

⁸⁶ Academic source: 19

⁸⁷ International organisation: 17; CHRO: 27, 29; Academic source: 20

⁸⁸ International NGO: 23; CHRO: 24

⁸⁹ CHRO: 24; Academic source: 18

⁹⁰ BHRN: 16; CHRO: 20, 25, 29; Academic source: 18; Women's rights organisation: 28; International NGO: 4

⁹¹ Justice for Myanmar, *The Myanmar junta's partners in digital surveillance and censorship*, 19 June 2024, [url](#)

People in Myanmar also risk having their smart phones checked when stopped at checkpoints, including by technologically advanced methods, which help the military authorities extract information from people's phones.⁹² If the authorities find anti-junta material, the owner risks being arrested and interrogated.⁹³ This has opted many people to use a so-called 'burner phone' when they go out. Therefore, people have two or more phones: one main phone kept at home or in a safe place, which is used to access social media via VPNs; and another one cleared of any material that might bring people in trouble with the authorities.⁹⁴

Another way of monitoring the population is reportedly through arbitrary arrests where the authorities arrest people and torture them in order to extract information about anti-junta activities.⁹⁵

2.5.1. Monitoring of the diaspora

The military authorities in Myanmar extend their monitoring to the diaspora abroad.⁹⁶ Especially high-profile individuals with connections to the National Unity Government (NUG) or other opposition groups are targets of the junta's monitoring.⁹⁷ Moreover, several sources who work with the human rights situation in Myanmar said that they are subjected to surveillance by both informants and online monitoring, especially in Myanmar's neighbouring countries.⁹⁸

According to a development organisation, people who post critical material online about the military rulers of Myanmar risk persecution and abuse upon return to Myanmar. The source did not know of any cases, however, where a person had been arrested upon return to Myanmar for posting anti-junta material on social media.⁹⁹ According to two sources, embassies of Myanmar staffed with pro-junta employees have monitored opposition members abroad.¹⁰⁰

⁹² Development organisation: 23; International organisation: 17; Academic source: 18; CHRO: 20, 22; BHRN: 13

⁹³ Development organisation: 23; CHRO: 20-22

⁹⁴ VoA, *Cover Stories and Burner Phones: How Myanmar Journalists Report Under Military Rule*, 25 June 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁵ CHRO: 26

⁹⁶ Development organisation: 26; International organisation: 19; BHRN: 15; CHRO: 27-28; International NGO: 24

⁹⁷ Development organisation: 26; CHRO: 27; International NGO: 25

⁹⁸ Women's rights organisation: 22; Academic source from Myanmar: 20; CHRO: 27-28; BHRN: 17

⁹⁹ Development organisation: 27

¹⁰⁰ DIIS: 34; BHRN: 15

3. Ethnic and religious minority groups

3.1. Treatment of ethnic and religious minority groups

According to several sources, consecutive authorities that have ruled over Myanmar since its independence have historically discriminated and alienated ethnic and religious minorities from the political process. This was also the norm before the coup in 2021.¹⁰¹ One source stated that there has allegedly always been distrust between the different minorities in Myanmar and the Bamar majority.¹⁰²

The ill-treatment of ethnic and religious minorities intensified after the coup in 2021. Since then, also members of the ethnic majority group, the Bamars, have been subject to various forms of abuse. Ill-treatment of religious minorities has taken place in the form of limiting their freedom of assembly, denying their access to public services, destroying their places of worship and other religious sites, detention, rape and killings.¹⁰³

Two sources assessed that in general, the Muslim minority in Myanmar, of which the Rohingyas are the most well-known, has been treated worst among the minority groups in the country, in terms of violent treatment by the authorities.¹⁰⁴ According to one source, Muslim, Hindu and non-Buddhist-Chinese minority groups are treated as ‘double minority’, which means that they are both members of ethnic and religious minorities and are not considered among the 135 recognised ethnic groups of Myanmar. Therefore, they are systematically being denied citizenship.¹⁰⁵

An academic source from Myanmar believed that the military junta does not discriminate in terms of religion but targets anyone who is against the junta.¹⁰⁶ An international organisation was of the view that even within the same communities of ethnic and religious groups, there has always been a pro- and anti-junta sentiment.¹⁰⁷

3.2. Freedom of movement

By law, there are no specific restrictions on freedom of movement for ethnic minority groups, with the exception of the Rohingyas and other ethnic minority groups that are not among the 135 officially recognised ethnic groups in Myanmar.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ Development organisation: 16; BHRN: 5-6; CHRO: 10-13; Academic source: 11; Women’s rights organisation: 10-13; DIIS: 22-24; International NGO: 11-16

¹⁰² International organisation: 7-8

¹⁰³ International NGO: 11, 13; Women’s rights organisation: 10-12; CHRO: 11-13; BHRN: 6; DIIS: 23

¹⁰⁴ DIIS: 22; BHRN: 6, 23

¹⁰⁵ DIIS: 23

¹⁰⁶ Academic source: 11

¹⁰⁷ International organisation: 7-8

¹⁰⁸ CHRO: 31-33; International humanitarian organisation: 1-2; International organisation: 21-22; Women’s rights organisation: 30

Rohingyas (as well as Kaman, Maramargyi and other ethnic minority groups that are not among the 135 recognised groups listed in an annex to the constitution) face obstacles and cannot move around the country freely. Rohingyas do not hold citizenship and are not allowed to travel both inside the country and abroad. In order to leave their township, they need a travel authorisation, which is possible to obtain; however, according to sources, people cannot rely on obtaining one, as it is a lengthy, arbitrary and discriminatory process.¹⁰⁹

Junta officials reportedly continue to arrest hundreds of Rohingyas for unauthorised travel within the country and have also stopped issuing travel authorisations in Rakhine State for some humanitarian organisations since late 2023.¹¹⁰

3.2.1. *In-country freedom of movement*

Regional and local directives, orders and instructions reportedly limit the freedom of movement and there have been reports of road blocks, random searches of private cars and taxis as well as nightly curfews in Yangon and other cities, which further restricted movement.¹¹¹ Particularly across Rakhine State, all communities are confronted with movement restrictions.¹¹²

To travel inside the country, people usually use their national identity card, the National Registration Card (NRC), which facilitates people’s movement within Myanmar. It is required to be carried at all times, especially while travelling.¹¹³

Sources interviewed by DIS stated that freedom of movement within Myanmar is very limited, especially in SAC-controlled areas. The risk of arbitrary detention is high if a person tries to move somewhere else.¹¹⁴ According to one source, travelling has become increasingly difficult within the reporting period.¹¹⁵

The ongoing armed conflict, e.g. in terms of fighting, shelling, airstrikes, landmines, checkpoints and road blockages, significantly limits people’s ability to move around the country.¹¹⁶ DIIS assessed that there is no freedom of movement in any area controlled by the military authorities, regardless of whether people belong to the Bamar majority or the ethnic minorities, because of the many checkpoints and fighting across the country.¹¹⁷

¹⁰⁹ International humanitarian organisation: 1-4; USDOS, *2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Burma*, 23 April 2024, [url](#); DIIS: 35

¹¹⁰ OHCHR, *Situation of human rights in Myanmar; Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Thomas H. Andrews (26 February–5 April 2024) [A/HRC/55/65]*, 20 March 2024, [url](#), para. 83-84

¹¹¹ USDOS, *2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Burma*, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

¹¹² New Humanitarian, *Denial of humanitarian assistance is a death sentence in Myanmar*, 11 June 2024, [url](#)

¹¹³ CHRO: 34-35

¹¹⁴ CHRO: 31; BHRN: 19; International humanitarian organisation: 10

¹¹⁵ International humanitarian organisation: 5

¹¹⁶ International humanitarian organisation: 5-9; DIIS: 35; International NGO: 28; Development organisation: 28; CHRO: 33; Women’s rights organisation: 30-31; Academic source from Myanmar: 24; BHRN: 19

¹¹⁷ DIIS: 35

EAOs and the NUG have warned civilians to travel only in case of an emergency in areas affected by violence due to escalating fighting with the junta.¹¹⁸

An international organisation assessed that in addition to the conflict dynamics, individuals' freedom of movement is linked to where they originate from, as the military authorities might perceive them as being supportive of the opposition.¹¹⁹ For people from the border areas populated by ethnic minority groups, as well as families of EAO members, moving to junta-controlled areas entails a risk, according to a women's rights organisation.¹²⁰

A person's home area appears on his or her National Registration Card (NRC). The military authorities thoroughly investigate travellers holding identity cards from other states or regions, especially individuals from central Myanmar because many PDFs, who are mostly from that area, have joined EAOs. According to sources interviewed by DIS, particularly people in Sagaing and Magway [central Myanmar] as well as the Chin population might face difficulties when moving outside their PDF-/EAO-controlled areas and passing through SAC checkpoints.¹²¹

It is possible for persons belonging to ethnic minority groups to travel to other EAO-controlled areas; in some areas, however, the EAOs restrict access for people from central Myanmar because they fear that they could have been sent by the military.¹²²

3.2.2. Possibility of settling outside one's home area

Local regulations restrict citizens' rights to settle and reside anywhere in Myanmar.¹²³ An example is the so-called household lists that list all members of a household, which makes it relatively difficult for people to settle individually in another area. Household lists must be updated when members of a family change. The head of the household can apply for the household registration list at the local offices of the central government. Without a functional, public administration at the local level, access to household lists can be difficult.¹²⁴

Moreover, if persons from EAO-controlled areas want to move to junta-controlled areas, they have to be part of the household registration list of the city's residents. In addition, they cannot say that they are from EAO-controlled areas.¹²⁵

Another obstacle is that if someone wants to visit another township and stay outside their village of origin, they need to register the overnight stay with the local ward administrator within 24 hours.¹²⁶ Unannounced household checks conducted by the SAC at night are reportedly common, especially in Yangon City, Mandalay and other places. The purpose is

¹¹⁸ USDOS, *2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Burma*, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁹ International organisation: 23

¹²⁰ Women's rights organisation: 31

¹²¹ CHRO: 36; Women's rights organisation: 30-31; International organisation: 23

¹²² Women's rights organisation: 31

¹²³ USDOS, *2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Burma*, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁴ International humanitarian organisation: 12

¹²⁵ Women's rights organisation: 31

¹²⁶ CHRO: 37; International humanitarian organisation: 10; Academic source from Myanmar: 24; USDOS, *2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Burma*, 23 April 2024, [url](#); BHRN: 22

reportedly to check whether there are unregistered guests. If the visitor is not formally registered, both visitor and host risk having trouble with the military authorities.¹²⁷

In addition, the activation of the military service law in February 2024 affects the freedom of movement within the country; as people fear being conscripted, they refrain from formalising their status in a new area because they are afraid of contacting public officials.¹²⁸

Furthermore, some ethnic armed groups have their own conflicts among each other. Consequently, it may not be easy for ethnic minorities to settle in an area controlled by another ethnic group.¹²⁹

Other obstacles to moving and settling outside one's home area include economic impediments. There has been a spike in prices because of the armed conflict, e.g. on fuel, which makes transportation much more difficult. Moreover, settling outside one's home area would require means to make a living as well as the payment of informal fees, as extortion is widespread all over the country.¹³⁰

An international organisation assumed, however, that people with economic means find ways to settle outside their home area, e.g. in Yangon or Mandalay, if they do not have to cross SAC-controlled areas. Other obstacles related to moving to major cities include a lack of family networks and knowledge of how to sustain a living in a major city.¹³¹

3.2.3. Foreign travel

To travel abroad, citizens of Myanmar need a passport and a letter from the SAC authorities.¹³² If they want to travel, or buy bus tickets, they need a special letter from the military authorities stating that they are not associated with any anti-junta group and that they are not supporting any opposition group.¹³³ Many former political prisoners reportedly continue to be subject to surveillance and restrictions, including the inability to obtain identity and travel documents.¹³⁴

The US Department of State reported that the military authorities restricted foreign travel for pro-democracy supporters and increased control measures on travellers in 2023. For instance, the junta refused to issue or cancelled passports of pro-democracy supporters. Additionally, all travel bookings had to be made at least 10 days prior to departure and had to be shared with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Moreover, there are reports of travellers facing questioning and detention at airports.¹³⁵

¹²⁷ CHRO: 37; Academic source from Myanmar: 24; USDOS, *2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Burma*, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁸ International humanitarian organisation: 13

¹²⁹ Development organisation: 28; International NGO: 28

¹³⁰ International humanitarian organisation: 7, 11, 14

¹³¹ International organisation: 24

¹³² CHRO: 34, 39

¹³³ CHRO: 39

¹³⁴ USDOS, *2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Burma*, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁵ USDOS, *2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Burma*, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

As regards CDM activists, the military authorities have a list of persons who joined the CDM. Whenever these persons are about to leave the country and the military authorities scan their passports, they will see whether they are listed by the SAC to be arrested for joining CDM.¹³⁶ One source stated that there has been a leak of an order that enables the immigration office to arrest people when they apply for a passport.¹³⁷

3.2.4. Cross border movements

As regards cross border movements, it is possible for people living in the border areas to cross the border and return again from Myanmar's neighbouring countries. Most of these cross border movements are irregular.¹³⁸ Especially in the areas bordering India, China and Thailand, there is still a lot of irregular movement, whereas cross border traffic with Bangladesh is becoming more and more restricted.¹³⁹

The military authorities are striking down on the irregular cross border movement by introducing the universal ID number (UID), which is a new biometric database that requires re-registration with the military authorities, who were still in the process of rolling it out in June 2024.¹⁴⁰ As of 1 May 2024, citizens of Myanmar entering India, China and Thailand have to carry a UID; national ID cards will no longer be valid at these borders.¹⁴¹

It used to be legal for certain ethnic minority groups to travel to the neighbouring village across the border on a daily basis. However, since the military authorities introduced the UID, which not all citizens hold, it has become more difficult to cross the border regularly.¹⁴²

Moreover, there were reports that the junta had attempted to pressure the Thai government to impose stricter control on the Thai-Myanmar border to prevent pro-democracy supporters from leaving Myanmar.¹⁴³ In February 2024, India announced it would end its visa-free movement policy with Myanmar for internal security reasons.¹⁴⁴

Persons who want to travel legally to Thailand from Myanmar have to obtain a visa, e.g. by applying for language courses. They can return to Myanmar through the airport or border gates without facing consequences, unless the military authorities suspect them for working against the junta.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁶ CHRO: 39

¹³⁷ CHRO: 39

¹³⁸ International NGO: 32; International humanitarian organisation: 24-25; Development organisation: 32; Academic source from Myanmar: 31-32; CHRO: 48

¹³⁹ International humanitarian organisation: 25

¹⁴⁰ International humanitarian organisation: 25, 27

¹⁴¹ RFA, *Myanmar now requires biometric 'smart card' to exit country by border*, 20 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴² International humanitarian organisation: 26

¹⁴³ USDOS, *2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Burma*, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴ Reuters, *India to end free movement policy with Myanmar for 'internal security'*, 8 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵ Women's rights organisation: 33

4. Return

In general, a very limited number of people have returned to Myanmar from abroad.¹⁴⁶ There is very little information about voluntary, individual returns to Myanmar, including what has happened to the few people who have returned.¹⁴⁷ At times, the military authorities failed to cooperate with UNHCR and other humanitarian organisations in terms of assisting and protecting returning refugees, asylum seekers or other individuals of concern.¹⁴⁸

4.1. Conditions upon return

Individuals returning must have a passport and universal ID number (UID).¹⁴⁹ If a returnee meets all the formal requirements in terms of travel documents, documentation, etc., has not violated any immigration rules, and has not been involved in anti-junta activities, it may be that nothing happens to this person upon return.¹⁵⁰ Another source stated, however, that having the right documents will not guarantee that a person can return without facing problems, as everything is random and uncertain.¹⁵¹

Generally, sources assessed that all returnees may risk being subjected to violations, unless the returnee is affiliated with the SAC.¹⁵² People abroad may nonetheless choose to return to Myanmar if they cannot sustain a living abroad. According to one source, they may return to villages in opposition-controlled areas where the SAC's administrative system has broken down, and where they will not be monitored as much as if they returned to a city with SAC presence.¹⁵³

People who have participated in anti-junta activities abroad and return face risks such as arrest, detention, human rights abuses, extortion, torture, enforced disappearance and killing.¹⁵⁴ Moreover, if youths return to Myanmar, they risk being conscripted into the SAC's army by force under the recently activated conscription law.¹⁵⁵

Return to Myanmar entails risks for human rights defenders, activists and CDM activists.¹⁵⁶ A women's rights organisation stated that if individuals abroad have expressed anti-junta views

¹⁴⁶ International humanitarian organisation: 18; Academic source from Myanmar: 25-27; Women's rights organisation: 32

¹⁴⁷ International humanitarian organisation: 16, 18

¹⁴⁸ USDOS, *2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Burma*, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁹ International humanitarian organisation: 19, 25; Development organisation: 29

¹⁵⁰ BHRN: 24; International humanitarian organisation: 18

¹⁵¹ Academic source from Myanmar: 29

¹⁵² CHRO: 48; Women's rights organisation: 32; BHRN: 24; Academic source from Myanmar: 26; International humanitarian organisation: 15

¹⁵³ CHRO: 46-47

¹⁵⁴ International humanitarian organisation: 20; Development organisation: 30; DIIS: 38; BHRN: 24-25; CHRO: 41, 44

¹⁵⁵ CHRO: 43

¹⁵⁶ Women's rights organisation: 35-36; CHRO: 42

on social media, such persons would be arrested by the military authorities upon return to Myanmar, either at the airport or at home.¹⁵⁷

People returning to Myanmar or to junta-controlled areas of the country tend to delete any compromising material on their phones, computers or in the form of documents on them, as it could lead to arrest or torture.¹⁵⁸

People in Myanmar who travel and return regularly take precautionary measures. For example, they avoid using their real names during conferences abroad and avoid mentioning their organisation's name in order not to give any information that may associate them with the opposition.¹⁵⁹

If a person returning to Myanmar has a family member in detention, it may pose a risk for the returnee who would be under strict surveillance and frequently interrogated by the military authorities.¹⁶⁰

Members of ethnic minority groups would face particular difficulties upon return. They could for instance be subjected to extra scrutiny because the military authorities suspect them of being pro-opposition, e.g. involved with EAOs or supporters of the independence movement.¹⁶¹

Finally, sources assessed that Rohingyas and Muslims in general are overall more exposed to mistrust, discrimination and negative pressure from the military authorities which is why they will be at higher risk than other groups upon returning to Myanmar.¹⁶²

4.1.1. Return from Europe/neighbouring countries, forced/voluntary return

It is not clear whether treatment upon return differs depending on whether a person returns from a neighbouring country or from Europe, or depending on whether a person returns voluntarily or is forcibly returned.

An international humanitarian organisation had the impression that it does not make a difference whether a person returns from Europe or a neighbouring country, or whether the return is voluntary or forced.¹⁶³ DIIS assessed, however, that rejected asylum seekers risk persecution upon return to Myanmar if the junta knows about their attempt to seek asylum abroad.¹⁶⁴

Chin Human Rights Organization assumed that the risk would be higher for a person returning from Europe than for a person returning from a neighbouring country, such as India or Thailand. The source added that it makes a difference whether a person returns officially, e.g.

¹⁵⁷ Women's rights organisation: 35

¹⁵⁸ International NGO: 29-30; BHRN: 26

¹⁵⁹ DIIS: 40; Women's rights organisation: 34

¹⁶⁰ Women's rights organisation: 37; International humanitarian organisation: 21

¹⁶¹ International humanitarian organisation: 19, 22; International NGO: 31

¹⁶² International humanitarian organisation: 19; BHRN: 24

¹⁶³ International humanitarian organisation: 22-23

¹⁶⁴ DIIS: 39

through an international airport, rather than by crossing borders where there are no SAC guards to monitor the return.¹⁶⁵

As regards forced returns, the military authorities search for information about an individual being forcibly returned, in addition to the information they already have. One source believed that if the returnee is not associated with anti-junta activities, it might be safe to return. According to the same sources, however, there are no guarantees regarding the military authorities' treatment of returning individuals.¹⁶⁶

Cases of forced return were reported from Thailand, India and Malaysia.¹⁶⁷ A couple of CDM activists were returned from Malaysia and have subsequently disappeared.¹⁶⁸ Individuals forcibly repatriated from India are assumed to have been placed in detention.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ CHRO: 48

¹⁶⁶ Women's rights organisation: 38

¹⁶⁷ USDOS, *2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Burma*, 23 April 2024, [url](#); International humanitarian organisation: 16; CHRO: 41-42

¹⁶⁸ CHRO: 42

¹⁶⁹ International humanitarian organisation: 16

5. Military service

On 10 February 2024, the military authorities issued an order that activated the 2010 People’s Military Service Law. According to the law, male citizens aged 18 to 35 and female citizens aged 18 to 27 are eligible for conscription; however, ‘professional’ men and women are eligible for conscription up to the ages of 45 and 35 respectively.¹⁷⁰ The junta proclaimed they intended to conscript 5 000 persons per month from the month of April 2024.¹⁷¹

In April 2024, the military authorities called up the first group of 5 000 conscripts.¹⁷² Although the junta had initially stated they would not conscript women in the first badge, reports were coming out of Myanmar in April 2024 that female youths were being targeted for arrest and forced recruitment, especially in rural areas.¹⁷³ In June 2024, the junta officially proclaimed that they would also start recruiting women.¹⁷⁴

In June 2024, Radio Free Asia reported that the military authorities had recently concluded military training of a second round of conscripts and was now recruiting for a third round.¹⁷⁵ Since February 2024, the junta has recruited and trained approximately 9 000 people who were drafted through two conscription rounds based on a lottery system.¹⁷⁶

Recruitment by the junta has reportedly involved coercing youths, including minors, threats of violence or property destruction, as well as threats and heavy fines for parents of draft evaders.¹⁷⁷

Even before the activation of the military service law, there were widespread reports of forced recruitment by the junta. For example, abductions of young men for military purposes appeared to be more and more common; and in November 2023, junta forces reportedly detained young people in Yangon for conscription or ransom.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁰ OHCHR, *Situation of human rights in Myanmar; Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Thomas H. Andrews (26 February–5 April 2024) [A/HRC/55/65]*, 20 March 2024, [url](#), para. 37; OHCHR, *Myanmar: Military junta even greater threat to civilians as it imposes military draft, warns UN expert*, 21 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷¹ OHCHR, *Myanmar: Military junta even greater threat to civilians as it imposes military draft, warns UN expert*, 21 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷² Women’s rights organisation: 39, 46; DIIS: 41; CHRO: 49

¹⁷³ CHRO: 52; DIIS: 41

¹⁷⁴ DIIS: 41

¹⁷⁵ RFA, *Myanmar draft-dodgers fear retribution against families*, 5 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷⁶ RFA, *Conscription in Myanmar drives insurgent recruits: civilian government*, 6 June 2024, [url](#); RFA, *Myanmar draft-dodgers fear retribution against families*, 5 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷⁷ RFA, *Conscription in Myanmar drives insurgent recruits: civilian government*, 6 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷⁸ OHCHR, *Situation of human rights in Myanmar; Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Thomas H. Andrews (26 February–5 April 2024) [A/HRC/55/65]*, 20 March 2024, [url](#), para. 40; USDOS, *2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Burma*, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

5.1. Reactions to the activation of the military service law

The conscription drive has led many young people to flee Myanmar or escape into opposition-controlled areas.¹⁷⁹ According to one estimate, more than 100 000 people have fled Myanmar since the law was activated in February 2024.¹⁸⁰

In June 2024, it was reported that the military authorities had halted applications for passport conversions as a part of its effort to keep people from fleeing Myanmar to avoid conscription. Since the beginning of May 2024, men aged 23 to 31 have been banned from working abroad, which was otherwise a way to avoid the draft.¹⁸¹

A women’s rights organisation reported on three cases of people committing suicide after having received a call-up.¹⁸² Youths in the cities, who had otherwise been neutral or not against the military, are reportedly turning against the military authorities because they do not want to be conscripted.¹⁸³

Some families try to pay bribes in order to avoid conscription for their sons and daughters; that is why some sources believed that families with low income face a higher risk of having their youths taken by the military than families with financial means.¹⁸⁴

5.2. Human rights abuses

Persons conscripted for military service can be involved in human rights abuses when they enter the military, as they have to obey orders.¹⁸⁵

Moreover, conscripts can be subjected to human rights abuses themselves during military service.¹⁸⁶ Conscripts can be sent to the frontline without proper training and used as human shields.¹⁸⁷ There have been examples of new recruits being used as human shields. Some Rohingyas have been forced to join the army to fight in Rakhine State, in spite of them not being eligible for conscription under the military service law, as they are not citizens.¹⁸⁸

¹⁷⁹ RFA, *Myanmar junta halfway to recapturing Kayah state capital*, 7 June 2024, [url](#); RFA, *Conscription in Myanmar drives insurgent recruits: civilian government*, 6 June 2024, [url](#); RFA, *Myanmar draft-dodgers fear retribution against families*, 5 June 2024, [url](#); International organisation: 28; CHRO: 51, 54; Development organisation: 34; BHRN: 29; Academic source from Myanmar: 37

¹⁸⁰ RFA, *Myanmar’s junta halts passport conversion as Thailand mulls worker amnesty*, 7 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁸¹ RFA, *Myanmar’s junta halts passport conversion as Thailand mulls worker amnesty*, 7 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁸² Women’s rights organisation: 43

¹⁸³ DIIS: 42

¹⁸⁴ BHRN: 29; Development organisation: 35; Women’s rights organisation: 45

¹⁸⁵ International NGO: 36; Academic source from Myanmar: 35; DIIS: 43, 46; Development organisation: 33; BHRN: 28; International organisation: 27; CHRO: 49

¹⁸⁶ BHRN: 27; CHRO: 50; DIIS: 45-47

¹⁸⁷ CHRO: 50; Academic source from Myanmar: 34; International NGO: 35; Women’s rights organisation: 41; International organisation: 27; BHRN: 20; DIIS: 41

¹⁸⁸ DIIS: 41; CHRO: 51; OHCHR, *Situation of human rights in Myanmar; Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Thomas H. Andrews (26 February–5 April 2024) [A/HRC/55/65]*, 20 March 2024, [url](#), para. 41; New Humanitarian, *Denial of humanitarian assistance is a death sentence in Myanmar*, 11 June 2024, [url](#)

In addition, conscripts can be subjected to ill-treatment in the form of physical or sexual abuse of the conscripted soldiers or their female relatives; being used as servants for the officers and their families; not receiving salaries for extended periods; shortage of food and isolation without contact to family members.¹⁸⁹

One source stated that conscripts belonging to ethnic minority groups may be treated worse by their commanding officer than ethnic Bamar recruits. They also risk being sent back to their home area to fight against their own people.¹⁹⁰

5.2. Consequences of evasion and desertion

If an individual evades or deserts from military service, he or she will be perceived as being supportive of the opposition.¹⁹¹

Persons who evade or desert from military service face serious consequences.¹⁹² For instance, draft evaders risk imprisonment between three to five years, being fined, or both.¹⁹³ Moreover, a draft evader could face torture or be shot on the spot.¹⁹⁴

Deserters or defectors risk being shot, hanged, sentenced to death or life imprisonment, or sent to the frontline.¹⁹⁵ The military authorities treat deserters as opposition supporters and terrorists; the junta uses the law in order to prosecute their opponents as people who endanger the state's security.¹⁹⁶ Low-ranking officers and soldiers who have defected to the opposition have been sentenced in absentia.¹⁹⁷

The military service law does not stipulate a penalty for family members of draft evaders. The law states, however, that anyone who encourages or assists in violating military service can be imprisoned for up to one year and fined. In June 2024, the military authorities were reportedly distributing call-ups to young people eligible for military service, warning that if they failed to register, action would be taken against their families.¹⁹⁸

¹⁸⁹ DIIS: 46

¹⁹⁰ Women's rights organisation: 41

¹⁹¹ CHRO: 57; Academic source from Myanmar: 38; DIIS: 48; Women's rights organisation: 44; International NGO: 38; International organisation: 29; Development organisation: 36

¹⁹² Academic source from Myanmar: 36; BNHR: 29-30; International NGO: 37; Development organisation: 34; DIIS: 48

¹⁹³ Women's rights organisation: 40, 45; CHRO: 53; International organisation: 28; DIIS: 44; RFA, *Myanmar draft-dodgers fear retribution against families*, 5 June 2024, [url](#); OHCHR, *Myanmar: Military junta even greater threat to civilians as it imposes military draft, warns UN expert*, 21 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁹⁴ CHRO: 53; Academic source from Myanmar: 36

¹⁹⁵ International NGO: 37; Academic source from Myanmar: 36, 39; BHRN: 30; DIIS: 48; International organisation: 28

¹⁹⁶ International NGO: 39-40

¹⁹⁷ DIIS: 49

¹⁹⁸ RFA, *Myanmar draft-dodgers fear retribution against families*, 5 June 2024, [url](#)

5.2.1. Prison conditions

Conditions in prisons and military detention centres are reportedly harsh and often life-threatening due to degrading and abusive treatment, overcrowding as well as inadequate access to medical care and basic needs, including food, hygiene and shelter.¹⁹⁹

There are reports of torture, ill-treatment, deaths, solitary confinement for months, bad sanitary conditions and no information from the outside.²⁰⁰ Tough interrogation techniques, including beatings and deprivation of food, water and sleep, were allegedly intended to intimidate and disorient detainees.²⁰¹

Some people bribe their way to better prison conditions, e.g. better food, showers, etc. If a prisoner has family or friends outside of prison, they can send the prisoner food, bedding, etc.²⁰²

Some sources stated that political prisoners are treated worse than other prisoners.²⁰³ In August 2023, there were reports of physical abuse in Thayarwaddy Prison, which particularly targeted pro-democracy prisoners.²⁰⁴ Persons arrested for being members of EAOs have been placed in detention centres notorious for torture.²⁰⁵

Two sources said that the treatment of a prisoner depends on their involvement with the anti-junta movement rather than their ethnicity.²⁰⁶ An international NGO assumed, however, that prison conditions for evaders and deserters belonging to ethnic minority groups are worse than prison conditions for ethnic Bamar, as discrimination against all types of minorities is widespread on all levels of society.²⁰⁷

¹⁹⁹ International NGO: 41; Women’s rights organisation: 47; Development organisation: 37; CHRO: 58-59; Academic source from Myanmar: 39-40; DIIS: 50; USDOS, *2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Burma*, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

²⁰⁰ Women’s rights organisation: 47; Development organisation: 37; CHRO: 59; USDOS, *2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Burma*, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

²⁰¹ USDOS, *2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Burma*, 23 April 2024, [url](#); RFA, *Women account for 1 in 5 deaths in Myanmar since coup*, 7 May 2024, [url](#)

²⁰² Academic source from Myanmar: 39

²⁰³ Academic source from Myanmar: 40; Women’s rights organisation: 47; CHRO: 59-60

²⁰⁴ USDOS, *2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Burma*, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

²⁰⁵ CHRO: 59

²⁰⁶ Academic source from Myanmar: 40; CHRO: 60

²⁰⁷ International NGO: 43

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Annex 1: Meeting minutes

Academic source from Myanmar, 4 April 2024

Access to information

1. It is hard to access information but in addition to published information, the source follows online news and Myanmar media in exile, which she subscribes to, but the real up-to-date information comes from various chat groups on different apps and platforms. Additionally, she follows Facebook. She gets most up-to-date information from these advocacy people and activists chat groups. Information is never complete, as people inside Myanmar cannot speak or write openly; it is very hard to communicate with people who live inside Myanmar.
2. From inside the country, people do send out information on social media. For example, the source just read a Facebook post shared in the various chat groups about an attack on the capital city, Naypyitaw, with pictures of some buildings with smoke coming out. No one would have imagined that this could happen.

Main changes in the security situation since summer 2023

3. Since October 2023 and operation 1027, there has been more mobilisation to the ethnic armed groups (EAOs) who are being more coordinated. People are more optimistic but the economy is very bad. The main opposition movements are more united; the armed groups are more united with the National Unity Government (NUG), the government in exile. The opposition is united in their resolution to get rid of the military. Moreover, people are saying that the opposition gets help from China who could be playing on both sides because militias, ethnic groups, cannot have that amount of arms without the backing of China.
4. The situation is very dangerous for people living there; people do not dare to go out on the road because they risk being attacked by either side – you can be attacked by militias, some vigilantes or by the junta. Additionally, you can be wrongfully suspected of supporting either side. Therefore, if someone does not like you, he/she can tip the military and say that you support terror, for example. If they do not like you, you can be targeted.
5. In addition to operation 1027, the activation of the conscription law is a major development.
6. There is a lot of corruption in Myanmar. With the activation of the conscription law, the military authorities are demanding money. For example, they might say that your son, your nephew, or your husband is on the list. Then you pay or you do not. Those who are conscripted are those who cannot pay. There is a huge discrimination between the rich and the poor. The poor are being targeted because they cannot pay bribes.
7. However, no one is safe; neither poor nor rich people are safe. The rich people in Myanmar are forced to donate to the military. The military government is short of money; hence, if

you have money, you are targeted. It is a mental and a physical pressure too; you can be taken in and tortured or murdered. This is the risk for the rich people. As regards the middle classes, they can be fighting each other depending on their ideology or due to some tip-off for supporting one side against the other whether true or not.

8. Generally, fighting has escalated and the tables have turned. Moreover, we have seen fighting among each other – among residents, small divisions in the neighbourhoods, the different villages – because of suspicion.
9. There is more and more targeted violence. The source saw on social media that a township bureaucrat, who was involved in conscription, had been shot at a roadside tea shop while he was having tea. This is an example of the targeted attacks taking place against those people who are seen to be supporting the junta, for example the bureaucrats, some banking executives, and also, recently, there has been targeting of people helping the junta with importing jet fuel. The import of jet fuel is a very serious issue because aerial bombardment is the only tool left in the hands of the junta to suppress the opposition. The opposition has zero tolerance towards those who are helping the junta. Previously, they targeted bankers but now they target people importing jet fuel who live in Yangon.
10. In addition to targeted attacks, you may also be targeted by mistake or for reasons of gossip or rumours; no one is safe. Maybe in big cities like Mandalay or Yangon, there is less of this but the disputes between people, which the source mentioned, happened in the middle of Yangon. It is a very dangerous climate and uncertain times. Even if you are not involved in any of this, you can be mistaken for being involved with the other side.

Military authorities' treatment of ethnic and religious minority groups

11. Three groups are being particularly targeted because they have been the most resistant. Among the ethnic groups, the Chin and the Karenni are the most targeted. The targeting by the military is indiscriminate in terms of religion; the Chin and the Karenni are mainly protestant Christian, but one area in the middle of the country, which is called Sagaing, and which is a hotbed for resistance, is a Buddhist-dominated area and they are being targeted as well. The authorities are not discriminating in terms of religion because they target whoever resists them. At this time, the military is actually promoting Buddhism because these top generals are Buddhists. If you are Chin, Karenni or from Sagaing, the authorities will be suspicious of you, as these are from the most resisting areas.

Military authorities' treatment of people with suspected or real affiliation with the opposition

12. People suspected of being involved with a specific ethnic armed organisation (EAO) such as Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), Arakan Army (AA) and Chin National Army (CNA) can indeed encounter problems with the authorities because of this suspected involvement, even without a specific suspicion. Even a random tip-off or photo, e.g. of you buying food at a fundraising, could get you in trouble. The

source heard of a doctor about a year ago who went home to visit Myanmar from the US after having participated in a fundraising meeting; he was never seen again.

13. The consequences that you will face because of your suspected affiliation with opposition groups depend on the charges against you. If you are a high-profile case, no one can help you. However, if you are just taken in, you can bribe your way out again. Once your guilt is decided and your sentence is set, you go to jail and you can bribe a lot there, e.g. to have a better bed, better food, to have a shower.
14. Civil disobedience is still taking place. The source knows of a university teacher who participated in a CDM strike and thus did not go to the university; as a result, she was fired. People who participate in CDM are asked to return to work and if they do not come back, they are fired.
15. The junta is not systematic in its response to protesters or participants in the CDM. There are no rules that they follow. If they are suspicious of you today, they can arrest you; the situation is unpredictable. Anyone can be taken in for questioning, even based on trumped-up charges. If they take you in, they might verify the extend of your relationship to the anti-junta movement in order for them to see whether you are a big threat or not a big threat. The military is being very vindictive and desperate, however, so they are even more unpredictable.
16. The military uses violence against opposition groups and civilians all the time; physical violence is the only thing the junta understands. The military responds to violent opposition activities, e.g. the PDFs, with vengeance; they want to crush them and they will strike indiscriminately.
17. As regards persons with actual or perceived association with anti-government activities, the military will come and arrest them. If they are not at home, the military will more often than not arrest the parents, the husband or the children instead.

Monitoring of citizens by the military authorities, including online-monitoring

18. The Myanmar authorities do monitor their citizens' communication; they do check people's phones, for example. Myanmar people are very resourceful, however, so people have now turned to communicating via VPN and on Signal, which cannot be monitored. The junta is disorganised though and thus not very competent in their monitoring. The Myanmar authorities monitor people for example by checking their phones and social media.
19. The military also use informants: sometimes, people are making money out of this business. A person can say: 'I am watching you' whether he/she is actually a formally appointed informant or not. Everybody is trying to make money out of each other. This is what the situation has turned into – to this sort of fear and uncertainty. People are taking advantage of this situation.
20. The source does not think that the junta has the connections or the technology to police the diaspora. However, Myanmar people in the diaspora are commonly careful about not visiting e.g. Thailand or Cambodia if they have been active because these countries are geographically close to Myanmar and they are not open democracies. Some junta

sympathizers could be there who could attack or kidnap people who have been active. If the source goes there, she does not post it online on Facebook. The source and others do have this concern and do not want to take risks at all.

21. People are careful participating in demonstrations abroad; therefore, some people wear masks. If these people's faces are captured on camera and this gets sent back, it can pose a great danger for them if they return – and even if they do not go back, their families can be in danger. Some have been disowned because of their activism outside Myanmar, some have been unfriended, and some may have fallen out with their family members too.
22. If you have a nephew, a sister, parents or other family members in Myanmar and you yourself are outside Myanmar where you attend meetings, fundraisings etc., the Myanmar authorities cannot attack you but they can attack your family members inside the country if they get your photo at some event. This is a big threat for the diaspora. People in the diaspora do not dare speak out against the junta because they fear for their family inside Myanmar.
23. Individuals who have participated in a demonstration abroad will indeed risk a criminal prosecution upon return to Myanmar; they are in danger. As regards the specific charges, the junta is not a systematic government who follows the rules; the charges could thus be anything. Just a photo of you at a fundraising could raise their suspicion of you and lead to you being taken in.

Freedom of movement

24. Since the coup, there has been restrictions on movement. If you are staying at someone else's house where you are not formally registered and your host forgets to inform the township council that you are visiting, both of you can get in trouble. In some resistance areas, it is difficult to travel. The source has recently heard of roads being blocked in Rakhine state; some people are thus stuck in Rakhine state and unable to go back home. The roads are being blocked in the whole state, the source has seen on social media. People are collecting funds to support the people who are stuck there, e.g. to buy food and shelter.

Return

25. People who have been active in the CDM have not returned; no one the source knows have returned since the coup.
26. As regards people who have not been actively involved in anti-junta activities, the source only knows one person who returned and who is currently there. This person did not face problems but she also had some connections in the military; she was thus sure of protection. The source thinks, however, that this person's connections with the military makes her even more exposed to danger. Some people thus do go back but the source has noticed that they do not post this on social media. They go back very quietly.
27. Only one percent of the people the source knows have gone back.

28. The source only has second-hand information regarding specific cases of return; a doctor from the United States - who was not active in the CDM except for participating in some fundraising - went home to visit Myanmar and he was arrested by the authorities and not heard of since. This was over one year ago.
29. As regards required documents, you needed certain documents to return in the past, e.g. 30 years ago, to guarantee that you had work in the country to go back to. In these days, however, the source does not think that documents matter in order for you to return without facing problems. Everything is random and uncertain; nothing will guarantee a safe return.
30. Regarding a possible difference in the treatment of voluntary and forced returnees (e.g. rejected asylum seekers), the source has not seen people being forced to go home to Myanmar from the country in which she is staying.
31. It is possible for people living near the border to cross the border, e.g. between Thailand and Myanmar. Since conscription was introduced in February 2024, many young males and females have escaped, mostly across borders. These cross-border movements concern the government but it is still possible. The young people call it road trip.
32. The source does not think that the terms legal or illegal border crossing apply in these cases; you can pay the police and stay.

Military service

33. It is too early to say whether a person risks being called up again once he/she has completed military service, as conscription law was not activated until February 2024. Some people say that once you have been taken for military service, you are not coming back. The reason for this is that the junta wants to crush the dissidents and dissidents are coming from this age group. The military are thus taking those people in to destroy them. The junta knows that they are losing. The purpose of conscription is thus not to add more men to their forces but rather to destroy these young men and women who oppose them the most. That is the strategy to get rid of the opposition.
34. The source does not think that the junta has the resources to train the conscripts properly. Therefore, the conscripts may be used as human shields. And if there is any resistance, you might be killed. The source thus does not think that the military's intention is to train them and wait until they are fully trained and then use them at the frontline. They will rather be deployed unready and sacrificed.
35. People conscripted to the Myanmar military will indeed risk being involved in human rights abuses - from the moment they enter the military.
36. The consequences of evasion and desertion are severe; the source assumes that you will be shot on the spot if you refuse to go with the military. The same will happen if you desert from military service.
37. However, a lot of people are determined not to serve; that is why they all run away.
38. If a person evades or deserts, he/she will be imputed a political opinion for having evaded or deserted; the military will look at the person as someone who opposes them.

39. A military defector will get the severest of the sentences if not killed. And prisoners in Myanmar prisons are treated very harshly, including those who are not imprisoned for political reasons. The prison conditions are extremely bad but some people bribe their way to better conditions, e.g. better food, better shower etc. And if you have family or friends outside of prison, they can send you food, bedding etc.
40. Everyone is treated badly in prison; however, political prisoners are treated worse. The way you are treated in prison will depend on your political position rather than on your ethnicity.

International organisation, 12 April 2024

Access to information

1. The source gets information from a variety of sources – from public sources that are readily available and directly both from people working in Myanmar and abroad as well as from the source's own personal observations in the country.
2. The source experiences many limitations when trying to verify information about the situation first-hand; there are many locations that the source wishes to be able to go to but where access is not granted, often due to safety and security reasons. There are also concerns about which people the source's organisation can engage with because these people will be subject to scrutiny and sometimes questioning.

Main changes in the security situation since summer 2023

3. The dramatic changes in the security situation are the intensification of clashes that are happening almost simultaneously around the country, especially since October 2023, meaning many different armed actors involved, i.e. the ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) or the local defence forces in addition to the SAC, the Myanmar armed forces. This also means a dramatic change in the territorial control or areas of influence by EAOs or the PDFs, which also means that the governance structure that was organised by the SAC has either diminished or disappeared in certain locations and is being taken over by other groups. However, there are challenges around that because some of these are quite new armed groups and putting in governing structures, e.g. health, help taking care of water, electricity etc. is a major challenge. There is another element where each of the different areas are now putting in different types of governance structures; there is thus a huge fragmentation of the territory.
4. Another huge difference since last year is the direct impact in the neighbouring countries. There has always been inflow and outflow of people, illicit drugs etc. but the source thinks that that has intensified with conscription law, with fighting impacting very much the neighbouring countries in terms of displacement. The source also understands that illicit drug trade has increased as well. Except Laos, all the neighbouring countries - Bangladesh, India, Thailand, and China - have been affected.

5. The source thinks that the violence that has been happening across the country has been a combination of random and targeted violence. There are military, operational targets that different armed actors undertake for military, operational reasons. Certain strategic posts, strategic locations, or border posts, military compounds can all be targets. However, there are also many collateral and random incidents. Incidents like shelling or firing that land on a market and kill civilians have increased. Moreover, there is the issue of landmines, which are being used by all the actors. They affect everybody; these mines are having the heaviest toll on the children of Myanmar.
6. When the military go into areas that are perceived to be anti-SAC and arrest people, subject people to inhuman treatment etc., the source's impression is that it is both targeted and random. The military authorities probably go and have lists of people that they do target but at the same time, one of their tactics has been to increase the fear of the population; they thus also conduct arbitrary arrests.

Military authorities' treatment of ethnic and religious minority groups

7. As regards religious actors, there have always been those who are very pro and very close to the authorities and those who are not. The source does not think that you can divide that based on religious lines but rather leanings of different actors; for example, even among the Buddhist monks, there have been different leanings. Religious leaders do play quite an influential role. The source thinks that there is a sense that the authorities mobilise certain religious leaders for their political needs. That has also created divides within, e.g. the Buddhist community, the Catholics etc.
8. As regards ethnic groups, it is also not black and white. There are those who are seen as closer to the SAC and there are those who have constantly been fighting the central authorities. There is a general shared sense that those who are in the central part of Myanmar who are from the Bamar ethnicity versus the ethnic organisations or people who are in the outer parts of Myanmar have always had a very tense relationship; that has been part of the history.
9. What is happening now is more a coalescing of the ethnic armed groups as a common enemy towards the authorities. Within that, some of the Rohingya communities for example who are stateless tend to be sandwiched between different power players who are in Rakhine. Currently, the source thinks they are sandwiched between the SAC authorities in Rakhine and the Arakan Army that is in Rakhine.
10. It depends on which minority group but people can encounter problems with the authorities simply because they belong to certain ethnic minority groups. The source thinks there has been a trend in this conflict; currently, people with a Rakhine ID number are very much targeted and their movement has been very difficult in the country at airports and checkpoints. A few months ago, it was more also people who are from Sagaing in the northwest region; they were having challenges but these people are mostly Bamar.
11. The military have been targeting based on how the military operations have been going and the fierce resistance they have been receiving. They have been tending to target the groups from certain locations. The most recent example was when many people were

trying to fly back from Yangon into to Rakhine, people who are from Rakhine; many at the airport were detained for questioning. The purpose was to decrease the number of people going back into Rakhine to be able to support the ongoing insurgency. That put a huge stop on people returning and going back to that state.

Military authorities' treatment of people with suspected or real affiliation with the opposition

12. If people are suspected of being involved with or are members of a specific group, such as Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), Arakan Army (AA) and Chin National Army (CNA), the source would imagine that they would get a harsh treatment. The source has not directly spoken to people who have recently been detained or interrogated for this reason but the source believes that such people would go through a harsh treatment because the authorities are in a survival mode currently; every decision they take currently in the country is thus based on that fact and it is their utmost priority for now.
13. Civil disobedience and anti-SAC protests do still take place but in different shapes and forms. There have not been outright public demonstrations since violence was used against the civil disobedience movement in the post-coup period. However, there are still anti-SAC or sometimes anti-EAO demonstrations that are fuelled by the SAC; they do still happen in certain locations inside the country.
14. As regards the military's response to people engaged in CDM, an example is a student who had been part of the post-coup protests and who had gotten a scholarship and was about to leave Myanmar. However, because the authorities have a list of people who were/are part of the CDM – they have a long list, whether a person has just attended a protest – these people were detained and unable to leave the country. The military authorities are extremely sensitive to anything that is against them and the level of punishment is thus very harsh.
15. The military has not shown willingness to resolve issues through negotiations. Previously, there have been ceasefires, which had held until November 2023. The ceasefire in northern Shan State is holding for now due to the Chinese influence. Attempts for other ceasefires have been made for example in Rakhine and that has not yielded results since the clashes erupted in November 2023. Therefore, the military's natural leaning right now, the source thinks, is to militarily respond.
16. Family members of persons with actual or perceived association with anti-SAC activities are naturally affected. The source has spoken to Myanmar nationals who have indicated that the level of revenge towards family members is at a level that they have never seen. For those reasons, many have stayed outside and do not intent to go back any time soon. This represents the extent to which the conflict has been affecting families as well.

Monitoring of citizens by the military authorities, including online-monitoring

17. After the coup, the level of cautiousness had increased, even amongst the staff of the source's organisation; one never know who is listening. There is the monitoring over the phone, the checking of people's phones at checkpoints etc. but the huge change is the cautiousness amongst staff members. If the source's organisation's staff know that a staff member's family has a link to the military, that in itself raises a lot of suspicion. It is thus a part of the staff's day to day life that they are very cautious about what they say. Everybody in Myanmar are very cautious.
18. The source believes that those e.g. who are residing in IDP camps are much more easily monitored. There are reasons why the Rohingya population are confined in a certain location with checkpoints still in place; the military can thereby maintain a grip on them. However, the source is not able to quantify whether the military authorities monitor members of certain groups more than other groups.
19. As regards monitoring abroad, the source knows that the military authorities do monitor in Thailand where there are many informants who are operating on the other side of the border because there are many refugees but also many of the anti-SAC political actors are based in Thailand. The source assumes that there is also online-monitoring of the diaspora.
20. If people participated in a demonstration in Denmark or another country outside Myanmar and images of them doing so appeared on YouTube or another public media platform, the source assumes that these individuals would be at risk of reprisals upon return to Myanmar because many have left Myanmar and have not come back; they know that their names are on the list. The source assumes that these individuals may be arrested and face criminal charges upon return to Myanmar but the source does not know of any cases.

Freedom of movement

21. As regards restrictions on movement, firstly, the Rohingya population tend to have difficulties if they do not have documentation to move outside of the townships. Secondly, there are Rohingya who do not have the necessary papers to move outside of Rakhine. Other people from Rakhine who do have IDs do not need permission to travel outside of Rakhine.
22. The source has not heard of other challenges based on ethnicity besides for the Rohingya population in terms of wanting to move from one location to another.
23. With the current conflict dynamics, however, it is especially people in the north-western region of Sagaing, Magway or the Chin population who might face difficulties moving outside of their PDF/EAO areas of control and going through the SAC checkpoints. The freedom of movement is thus more linked to the current conflict dynamics and where people are originally from, as the authorities will then associate such persons as being supportive of one side rather than the SAC. Because of that, the source believes that many people do either restrict their movement or find different ways of moving where they do not have to go through SAC checkpoints or where they bribe their way through SAC checkpoints.
24. As regards whether people from ethnic minority groups would be able to settle outside their home area if they did not have to cross SAC-controlled areas, e.g. in Yangon or

Mandalay, the source thinks that people with the economic means do find ways to do so. When northern Shan conflict was happening, there were many people who moved to Yangon. Those with economic means do manage to do that. Coming to major cities, however, there are other hurdles but it is possible. Many people would not have the ability to pack and just leave if you do not have family networks, if you do not know how to sustain a living in a major city; that is why people are forced to remain where they are.

Military service

25. As regards the conscription law that was activated in February 2024, the source notes that there have perhaps been put some exceptions in place, e.g. for women. The source was informed that the authorities are looking at categories of exceptions within that but the source's organisation has not seen the list of the entire exceptions. There is thus a potential change in the law.
26. It is premature to say whether a person who has completed military service risk being called up again. However, when you look at the reason why they proceeded to enforce this law, the source thinks it is due to not having enough manpower; they thus activated the law to increase the number of fighters among the military's ranks.
27. The source assumes that persons conscripted for military service risk being involved in human rights abuses and they will not receive proper training.
28. As regards the consequences of evasion and desertion, many people have fled because they did not want to be part of the military but the source is aware that there have been arrests. Deserters who are caught are sometimes sent to the frontline.
29. As regards whether a person who evades or deserts will be imputed a political opinion, the source assumes that such a person will be seen as someone not in support of the military/SAC.

International NGO, 16 April 2024

Access to information

1. The source's organisation has several local partners inside Myanmar that provide the source with information about the situation in the country. The main task of some of these partners is to gather information, document and shed light on human rights abuses. The source mentioned that their organisation keep their activities, along with the number and names of employees and partners within the country, confidential to protect them from potential reprisals.
2. One of the tasks, which the organisation is undertaking, is to help and protect human rights activists in Myanmar. These also constitute another source for information.
3. People use VPNs in order to avoid being detected by the authorities. There is surprisingly much information being shared by networks on social media platforms like Facebook, Signal and Telegram.

4. The organisation experiences challenges in getting information from within the country. A large portion of the country is not under the control of the military junta; according to some estimates, more than 60 % of Myanmar is not under the control of the military government. The military authorities do their best to cut all forms of communication to and from these areas controlled by other actors by blocking access to the internet and intercept as much communication as possible; this includes clamping down on social media users who are critical of the junta. People thus resort to using VPN, they share things on social media, including things that bring them at risk, and they use other unofficial channels of communication. All forms of free press are shut down and many journalists have left the country. This all limits access to information.
5. The source's organisation try to verify any information that comes out of Myanmar by triangulation and by using a wide variety of sources.

Main changes in the security situation since summer 2023

6. The creation of the Brotherhood Alliance is a significant development and not only in Shan State. The junta forces withdrew from region following a sort of ceasefire there. The junta was very surprised when the opposition forces in this area joined the other groups and launched the successful Operation 1027. It has resulted in a surge of different alliances among the ethnic groups that are fighting the military junta. Some of these groups did not cooperate before. This has made it more difficult for the military authorities to continue their earlier policy of divide and rule when they had these ethnic groups fight each other.
7. The opposition's offensive in October 2023 showed that it is possible for armed ethnic groups to cooperate with each other, which was not usual before that.
8. The enforcement of the conscription law is another significant development. People do not know whether it is safer to stay where they are or to move to another area. There are stories of people being dragged from buses and put in rows according to their age and then put on the same buses again.
9. This situation has created a pressure where more people are leaving Myanmar to the neighbouring countries. The source's organisation have observed this trend among their staff and among their partners too. This pressure might force the ASEAN countries to intervene more than before.
10. Violence in Myanmar has been targeted in areas where support for the PDFs and the EAOs has been strong. The interesting thing about Myanmar is that there are groups that have control over several patches of land close to each other and the situation can change rapidly. The authorities target people who are critical of the military junta.

Government treatment of ethnic and religious minority groups

11. Members of the ethnic minority groups have another kind of citizenship than the Bamar. In addition, a person's citizenship determines which types of services the individual can access in the public sector; e.g. ethnic minority groups cannot study at university and there

are certain healthcare services that only the Bamar can receive. This has always been the case, even during the government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

12. Discrimination by law and in practice against ethnic minority groups has existed since the ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) started fighting against the central government.
13. The source's organisation has gathered evidence of attacks against members of religious minority groups who often also belong to ethnic minority groups and live in areas where there is an armed conflict. Usually the minority groups are subject to several types of discrimination. The majority of the Kayin people, previously known as Karen people, for example, are Christians and they are subject to wide discrimination.
14. Discrimination against religious minorities can be in the form of limiting their freedom of speech and freedom of assembly or attacking their places of worship such as mosques and churches or other religious symbols. This is because the extreme form of national conservative Buddhism is closely related to the military junta who believe that Myanmar should be a pure Buddhist country.
15. People from ethnic or religious minority groups do face problems with the authorities solely because they belong to these minorities.
16. After the coup in 2021, resistance against the military junta spread to areas populated by the Bamar that used to be calm and more developed than the ethnic areas. The majority of the three million internally displaced people in Myanmar today are from areas that have not seen fighting before. This means that it is the first time that they are displaced and the civil society actors there are not organised to help and support these people.

Government treatment of people with suspected or real affiliation with the opposition

17. The authorities treat people with suspected or real affiliation with the opposition extremely violently. Human rights organisations have documented cases of torture, assault, rape and other cruel treatment.
18. The civil disobedient movement (CDM) is still active against the government; for example, shop owners keep their shops closed or people do not leave their homes on certain hours. The source has seen some very interesting photos from Yangon where streets were deserted during the middle of the day under one of these civil disobedience actions. In areas that are controlled by the military junta, there are for example youth meetings at hotels with two different agendas: one public agenda and another one with an anti-junta content.
19. The authorities do their best in order to suppress the anti-government protests. For example, the authorities register all the shops that are shutting down and participating in CDM and punish the owners afterwards. For this reason, a few months after the military coup in 2021, many people who were part of the CDM either escaped to ethnic-controlled areas and established the PDFs or went underground and began establishing networks against the authorities.
20. If the military authorities believe that people in a village support the PDF, they will take all men and shoot them outside their homes. Alternatively, they would simply burn the whole village down. The source estimates that around 30 000 homes have been torched by the

military since the coup. Attacks have also been documented against IDP camps, schools, medical centres and music concerts.

21. The authorities face major difficulties in attacking ethnic areas in ground operations. That is why they use airplanes, drones and missiles in order to hit military opposition camps and centres. This raises the risk for civilians being hit because such attacks are not precise.
22. Family members of people with perceived or real affiliation with the opposition do face a big risk of ill-treatment. Families of deserters do face serious repercussions if the authorities cannot find the deserter. Usually in Myanmar, families of military personnel live in houses that are very close to the military barracks. This makes it easy for the authorities to punish the family if a government soldier deserts.

Monitoring of citizens by the Burmese authorities, including online-monitoring

23. The Norwegian telecommunications company Telenor sold their operations in Myanmar where they had around 18 million customers because the company could not comply with the demands of the military junta. The new owners are people affiliated with the military. All the data of these customers have now been given to the military. The military control all internet connection in the country. That is why people are very aware of the fact that their communication will be intercepted. That is why people use VPNs or encrypted messaging services.
24. The authorities also use informants in order to monitor the population. Chiang Mai in Thailand is a known hub for informants for the Burmese military junta because there are so many Burmese people there. There are between 3 and 4 million Burmese in Thailand; many of them are migrant workers and some of them cooperate with the military rulers in Myanmar and gather information for them. However, the military junta's resources are limited and they cannot monitor people living far away from Myanmar's borders.
25. The authorities' monitoring mainly targets opponents of the military junta as well as ethnic and religious minorities.
26. The junta use online trolls to discredit and attack people who are in opposition to them.
27. The source does not know how big the risk is for people who participate in a demonstration or other activity against the military junta abroad and then return to Myanmar.

Freedom of movement

28. Generally, people are able to travel to other parts of the country but Myanmar is a country with a large number of ethnic groups and some of these groups are in conflict with each other. Therefore, the possibility to travel inside the country depends on the area. Areas that are not under the control of the military junta have experienced a large influx of people from other parts of Myanmar who have escaped to these areas to seek refuge.

Return

29. The source's organisation have partners who have employees who travel between government-controlled areas and areas controlled by ethnic armed organisations (EAOs). Some of these people were arrested and tortured when they crossed into government-controlled areas because the authorities found compromising documents when they searched them.
30. The source's organisation encourage their employees and partners to delete any compromising material they might have on their phones and computers so that they do not get in trouble with the Burmese authorities. There are lists of opposition people and others who are wanted by the military junta and if a person's name is on one of these lists, he or she will surely get arrested at checkpoints or at the airport.
31. Ethnic groups would be subjected to extra scrutiny if they returned to Myanmar from abroad via government-controlled border crossings or airports because the authorities suspect all these people of being pro-opposition.
32. There is a cross-border movement of ethnic people living in the border areas to and from the neighbouring countries of Myanmar. These are typically illegal crossings. Some of the Karen people have a special permit to reside in the Thai border town of Mae Sot because they live on both side of the Thai-Burmese border.

Military service

33. The recently activated conscription law has really sent shock waves through the population. A majority of 80–90 % of the population is against the military and they find it difficult to accept being drafted into the armed forces. People are terrified that they themselves or their sons, brothers or other family members will be conscripted, even though the authorities have said that the number of the people who will be drafted is 50 000–70 000 out of the 14–15 million people who are of conscription age. This is the biggest change in the mentality of the people that the source have noticed since the coup happened.
34. The source assumes that the conscription law will be used against people who are against the military junta, people who will not pay a bribe and ethnic minorities whom the authorities do not like. The law opens up for new possibilities of sanctioning such vulnerable people.
35. People conscripted under the new law are at the risk of not being trained well and of being used as cannon fodder for the military. That is one of the reasons why people are reacting so negatively to this law. The source finds it unlikely that the authorities will conscript the full number of people that they have announced, as it would be difficult to absorb such a large number of conscripts into the armed forces if they are against the military junta.
36. These new conscripts do very much risk being involved in human rights abuses.
37. The authorities treat deserters very violently. The military junta will punish deserters by shooting them.
38. After the opposition's latest military operations, large numbers of government soldiers have deserted in unprecedented numbers. Whole battalions have surrendered to the

opposition and the commanding officers of these battalions have been declared traitors by the military.

39. The authorities treat deserters as opposition supporters and terrorists. The authorities use a paragraph in the law under which they can prosecute their opponents as people who are endangering the state's security. It is this paragraph that has made it possible for the authorities to imprison around 20 000 people.
40. One must have in mind that there are no fair trials in Myanmar. The judicial system is filled with people who support the military junta and who arbitrarily send people into prison.
41. The prison conditions – for evaders, deserters and others – are terribly bad. Without the food and other necessities provided by their families, the inmates would not survive in prison.
42. It is a tradition in South East Asia to release large numbers of prisoners during special occasions like the Water Festival. This also happens in Myanmar; however, the released ones are not strong opponents of the junta but social media stars or actors who have expressed some criticism against the authorities.
43. The source assumes that the prison conditions for evaders and deserters from ethnic minority groups are worse than the prison conditions for the ethnic Bamar, as discrimination against all types of minorities, including ethnic, religious and sexual minorities, is widespread on all level of society.

Development organisation, 24 April 2024

Access to information

1. As the source's organisation has worked in Myanmar for around 15 years, they have an extensive network within the country from where they get information about the situation there.
2. Because of the military coup and security concerns, the source's organisation cannot openly disclose their activities, e.g. put up an add on a website but communicate through networks instead. There are thus limitations and concerns regarding the safety of people who engage with the organisation.

Main changes in the security situation since summer 2023

3. The situation in the country is changing continuously. The alliance of three ethnic armed opposition groups, the Three Brotherhood Alliance, has created a new momentum. The source does not know if this is a game changer. This alliance has opened a new front against the military and has boosted the morale within the People's Defence Forces (PDFs) and the ethnic armed groups in other parts of the country.
4. One of these three groups is the Arakan Army and they operate primarily in the state of Rakhine. This group has expanded the front of fighting against the military in the states of Rakhine and Chin. The military junta is under pressure on several fronts.

5. Finally, the major development that has occurred during the last couple of weeks is that the most important border city between Myanmar and Thailand, Myawaddy, has been taken over by an ethnic armed group in Kayin State. Currently, there is a group of 100 soldiers who have barricaded themselves and are defending an area outside the town. However, the town itself is currently not under the junta's rule.
6. The Thai authorities are very aware of this situation and are observing the developments from the Thai side of the border. The Thai prime minister visited the Thai town of Mae Sot that is on the other side of the border. Thailand has allowed around 3 000 refugees who were fleeing the fighting in Myanmar to cross the border and find refuge on the Thai side.
7. The authorities in Thailand have declared that they will support the humanitarian efforts to aid the people in Myanmar who are suffering from the continuous fighting there.
8. However, according to Thai media, Thailand will not allow any armed anti-junta group to operate from within its borders. At the same time, the Thai authorities refuse to let the military junta in Myanmar use their airspace and territories to bomb opposition areas. There have been some incidents where stray bullets or shells have fallen into Thailand from Myanmar.
9. It is commonly known that the military in Myanmar will start randomly bombing the areas that it loses to the opposition without any consideration for civilian casualties. Sometimes, it seems as if the military junta use bombing of civilians as a strategy to punish them.
10. The source does not know how things will develop but the military is under pressure and it is continuously losing territories. The morale of the military forces under the junta is low. Lately, there was a drone attack against the capital Naypyitaw that did not cause much damage but it showed that even the capital is not a safe place.
11. These incidents show that the morale of the army is declining and people are deserting from the military. This has been going on for a long time and this is one of the reasons that the compulsory military service law has been activated. This happened in the beginning of this year and is being implemented now.
12. It also means that the young people are fleeing the country or escaping to other areas within the country in order to avoid being conscripted to the army.
13. The PDFs, which consist of angry youths who took up arms after the coup in 2021, and they are cooperating with the ethnic armed groups that have been fighting the military for many years. Some of the attacks are ad hoc; e.g. those that are targeting people who are working with the military in order to implement the conscription law. There are also fronts where the military is fighting against the ethnic armed groups.
14. The military coup has resulted in increased cooperation and coordination among the ethnic armed groups in Myanmar. It is difficult to see what will happen if the opposition succeeds in toppling the junta. Because the ethnic armed groups are primarily interested in gaining more rights for their own ethnic groups. One scenario is that the country will be divided as it happened in Yugoslavia. However, Myanmar's neighbouring countries and especially China are not interested in the fragmentation of the country and do not support any group's secession from the country.

15. The situation in the country is a civil war. The military junta has the upper hand in terms of their advanced weapons. The ethnic groups are launching an insurgency against the military junta. These groups know their territories and they use this knowledge for their benefit. That is why the military usually bombs using the air force because it is not possible to advance fast enough by using land forces.

Military authorities' treatment of ethnic and religious minority groups

16. The country has been involved in the longest civil war in the world. It has been raging for around 70 years now. Historically, the ethnic minorities have been treated very badly in Myanmar, including by the government that was running the country before the coup, and there has always been discrimination against the ethnic groups. Politically the ethnic groups were not included that much in the political process. What has changed now is that the military is not only targeting the ethnic minority groups but also the ethnic Bamar who are the largest ethnic group in the country and who constitute the majority in the junta's armed forces.

Military authorities' treatment of people with suspected or real affiliation with the opposition

17. People who are suspected of being affiliated with or who are in fact affiliated with armed opposition groups do face major consequences. Such people will typically be arrested and taken to a police station to be interrogated. In many cases the detainees will be beaten and tortured physically and psychologically. Then they will be jailed under terrible conditions. They will later be prosecuted under sham trials.
18. In one case the source knew the implicated person who was a journalist and who was at the risk of being sentenced to two-three years in prison. The reason for that was that he had posted a condolence message on his Facebook profile after his village in central Myanmar was bombed and over 100 people were killed. He was released but there are many others who have been given long prison sentences for suspected affiliation with the opposition. Journalists are those who usually get very long sentences for up to ten years for absurd accusations.
19. Another example was a journalist from Rakhine State who was sentenced to several years in prison because he reported on a severe storm that hit the state and caused many casualties.
20. During the months after the coup, there were many lawyers who were willing take these cases and defend the journalists who were arrested and charged by the junta. Over time, however, the lawyers themselves became targeted and it has become harder to find lawyers who are willing to take such cases.
21. The source has not heard of actions of civil disobedience lately in the junta-controlled areas because it is too dangerous. However, there are many thousands of employees who have not returned to their jobs since the coup. Some of these have now been fired. Some have had their official residence taken from them because the residence was connected to

their job. For many people leaving their job after the coup, it was a big decision to take; it jeopardised not only their source of income but they also risked losing their home and being interrogated.

22. People who are suspected of being affiliated with the opposition do risk being arrested, threatened and their homes expropriated. Even family members of such people are at risk of being arrested although this is not the most common method the junta uses in order to pressure people who sympathise with the opposition. That is the reason why people in Myanmar that we work with try to keep a low profile because their families are still in Myanmar.

Monitoring of citizens by the military authorities, including online-monitoring

23. People risk having their phones checked when they are stopped at checkpoints. This is because the authorities want to see what people are posting on social media. If people write something negative about the junta, they are at a high risk of being arrested and interrogated. The process is arrest, interrogation and jail after being charged by specific articles in the law. Some might be released after the arrest and not be charged. In addition, the authorities can use more sophisticated methods to extract more information from people's phones and find out who their friends are.
24. There is a strong monitoring system in the country which is built upon the administrative division of the country in so-called wards in which several hundred families live. Local representatives of the authorities in these wards keep an eye on who is moving to their area and what people are doing. These ward officials are usually loyal to the military junta.
25. The authorities do monitor social media. That is why people are very careful of what they are commenting on and posting in order to avoid problems. Often people try to have more than one phone so that they can use one publically and another one that they use inside their home.
26. The Burmese authorities do also monitor people in exile. Members of the Burmese government in exile, the National Unity Government (NUG), are very careful about their movement and they primarily resort to having their meetings online without revealing where they are residing. Although the source does not have any proof of it, he is sure that the junta's monitoring (even online-monitoring) is happening systematically.
27. The authorities are not overly sophisticated and do not have enough resources to systematically monitor Burmese people's anti-junta activities abroad, including activities on social media, and then prosecute them if they return to Myanmar. Nonetheless, if a person posts anti-junta material on his or her social media account, this person does risk arrest if he or she were to return to Myanmar. The source does not know any cases where a person has been arrested upon return to Myanmar for having posted anti-junta material on social media. However, the example of the journalist who was imprisoned for having posted a condolence message on his Facebook profile lamenting the people from his village who were killed because of bombing shows how dangerous it is to post anything that might be interpreted as critical of the authorities.

Freedom of movement

28. The ethnic armed groups have their own conflicts among each other. That is why it is not easy for ethnic minorities to settle in an area controlled by another ethnic group; it depends on the local conditions in that area.

Return

29. People must have a passport in order to leave and return to the country. In some of the regions that are under the control of the ethnic groups, there are other types of documents that people use in order to travel. Upon returning to Myanmar the authorities will check the returnee's passport to see which stamps there are on the passport in order to find out which countries the person has travelled to.
30. People who are known to have had anti-junta activities abroad and return to Myanmar do face major risks.
31. The source does not know if the authorities differentiate between people who return from neighbouring countries such as Thailand and India or from western countries. The source knows, however, that people can be asked if they have visas and stamps from Schengen countries upon return to Myanmar.
32. People who live in the border areas can cross the border to the neighbouring countries such as Thailand and India. The Myanmar-Thai border is not fully guarded, which allows people to cross the border. Journalists do also travel between Thailand and Myanmar from such areas. Although it is risky, people do it.

Military service

33. People who are conscripted to serve in the military in accordance with the military service law that was recently activated do risk being involved in human rights violations. The military junta does not follow international conventions. They bomb civilians without any consideration. Therefore, those who will be recruited do also risk being ordered to do the same.
34. The source is not sure what the punishment would be if someone refused to be conscripted to the military. The source believes it would be a severe punishment. After the conscription law was activated, many young people did not dare to leave their homes for several weeks because they were afraid of being forcefully conscripted. Many young people have left the country or have escaped to the ethnic areas in order to avoid conscription.
35. Nevertheless, if families have money they can bribe the officials and avoid conscription to the military. Therefore, it is families with low income that face higher risk of having their youths taken by the military.
36. The source believes that a person who avoids conscription or who deserts from military service will be seen by the military junta as someone who is not loyal to the country because the military sees itself as the defender and protector of the country.

37. The situation in the prisons is very serious. A book was written by the Australian Sean Turness who is a former economic advisor to Aung San Suu Kyi and who was imprisoned for a year. In that book, he describes the terrible situations in Burmese prisons. There is also the account of Vicky Bowman who is a former British ambassador, who was imprisoned for several months, about the same subject. They both confirm the image of ill-treatment and bad sanitary conditions inside the prisons as well as not getting any information from the outside.

Women's rights organisation, 26 April 2024

Access to information

1. The source's organisation gets information from network organisations, from coordination with partners, donors, networks as well as from the news, including Facebook and news webpages.
2. Normally, in the areas in which the source's organisation operates in the ethnic border areas, there is still internet connection; the source's organisation can thus get information on the social media platforms. In other parts of the ethnic border areas, however, the internet connection is cut and mobile connection is not working properly which makes it difficult to access information about what is happening in Myanmar.
3. Last year, when there was a major conflict in Northern Shan State, i.e. operation 1027, it was very difficult to communicate even with the staff of the source's organisation who were living there, as the connection was cut. Since the ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) took control of those areas in Northern Shan State, connection has periodically been cut due to lack of fuel to function the mobile towers. During this month of April 2024, the connection was cut and the source's organisation could not communicate with their staff in these places that are now under the control of EAOs.
4. As the source is staying outside the country, it can be challenging to get information out from the source's organisation's staff and other sources inside the country when there is no internet connection and no mobile phone connection; then it is difficult to know what is going on, what is the situation, how is the safety of their staff etc.

Main changes in the security situation since summer 2023

5. Many armed groups formed as a result of the military coup. The National Unity Government (NUG), the government in exile, support the People's Defence Forces (PDFs). The PDFs and the Burmese military are fighting each other and the PDFs are expanding a lot, seizing most of the junta's areas and their posts.
6. The Burmese military are losing many of their military posts, the EAOs take control over large areas and the military suffer many losses. In March 2024, Kachin Independence Army (KIA), an EAO, started their intense military operations in Kachin State. They started their operations close to the KIA headquarters in Laiza City in the borderland to China and most

of these areas are now under the control of KIA. The road is now closed and it is difficult to travel.

7. Another threat for the citizens of Myanmar is the military service law, which was activated in February 2024. Most young people who are in the military service age thus tend to flee. Some flee to neighbouring countries without proper documents and have thus been arrested in the neighbouring countries and had to return. There have been many of those cases recently. Others flee to areas controlled by ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) and some join the EAOs or find job opportunities and stay there.
8. Even people who have not participated in violent opposition activities as well as those who are not eligible for military service have to flee because of what is happening both in the junta-controlled areas and the EAO-controlled areas, as the military groups recruit people without their consent. Young people are not safe to stay even at home; e.g. at night around 6 or 7 pm, the military will come and seize the young people to fight for the military. Some EAOs are also forcefully recruiting young people to their join their army.
9. Even people who are not of compulsory military service age, normal villagers, and people who have not participated in opposition activities are at risk of being targeted by the military's violence. For people in the big cities, there is no high risk but as regards people in the villages, the Burmese military used to go through the villages, burn the villagers' houses, arrest people and destroy properties; it is thus not safe to stay there, especially in the conflict areas.

Military authorities' treatment of ethnic and religious minority groups

10. As regards religious groups, they can freely conduct praying services anywhere. Recently, however, there was a case where a Baptist priest was arrested in December 2022. He was released in the morning of 17th April 2024 and then arrested again at night. He is a very influential person within Kachin Baptist Church Convention.
11. Just in within this month of April 2024, a Baptist pastor was shot dead by unknown perpetrators. He was active in anti-coup protests against the military junta.
12. The fact that religious minority groups are able to conduct praying services does not mean that they are free to practice their faith because the military and its aligned militias are targeting priests and religious leaders who used to speak out about the human rights situation. They also target churches, temples and schools because these places are used as shelters for IDPs. This is not only happening in the ethnic border areas but all over Myanmar.
13. Discrimination of ethnic minority groups has been happening for a very long time in Myanmar. When members of ethnic minority groups travel or apply for e.g. a passport in the military junta-controlled areas, the military authorities tend to delay the process and question these people; the procedures are longer for members of ethnic minority groups than for people who are not members of an ethnic minority group.

Military authorities' treatment of people with suspected or real affiliation with the opposition

14. People may encounter problems with the military authorities for real or suspected affiliation with a specific group, such as Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), Arakan Army (AA) and Chin National Army (CNA). The military junta accuse people of being informants or being a part of an EAO and they just arrest the villagers, especially males, and kill them. Those cases are happening a lot.
15. Anti-government protests are not really taking place in military-controlled areas because protesters would be arrested. However, there are protests by the villagers against the military coup and the military junta in areas that have been taken by EAOs. On the other side, the military authorities used to organise protests in support of the military junta and protect these protesters.
16. The majority of people involved in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) are continuing. However, some people – those who faced hardships for 1-2 years in the form of a difficult financial situation and who cannot travel abroad or stay in another area for an extended period – have dropped the CDM and have returned to work. Those people have been allowed to resume their work and the junta accept those people. Sometimes, these people have had to sign a document saying that they cannot engage in CDM etc.
17. If people do engage in anti-government protests, the military will respond with violence and arrest of CDM people or, if the CDM people themselves are not at home, they will arrest their family members. Sometimes, the military will also seize their houses; they will say that it is restricted property.
18. As regards the military's response to opposition activities (PDFs), the military junta do not accept the armed opposition groups, the PDFs. The military and the PDFs fight each other and their fight is not based on ethnicity.
19. It is high risk to work for an organisation that reports on human rights violations in Myanmar, especially human rights violations by the Burmese military. The military and their people, i.e. local administrative people and the police, will come to the organisation's office and ask questions; and if they suspect anything of this organisation, they will arrest their employees without any proper accusation. If the military authorities know that someone is working in the human rights area, they will trace this person and tend to arrest him or her.
20. Even people working for civil society organisations are at risk, especially if the organisations are not registered in Myanmar. Likewise for people working as activists and human rights defenders, it is a risk for them to stay in military-controlled areas, as the military authorities will trace them and try to arrest them. These people cannot work in junta-controlled areas. They thus tend to relocate to EAO-controlled areas or go abroad.
21. There is also a risk for family members of people working for human rights organisations, civil society and as activists. Staff of the source's organisation do not share information about where they are working; their families do not even know it or they instruct their

families not to say anything because there is a risk that the military authorities will arrest a family member if they cannot find the person they are looking for.

Monitoring of citizens by the military authorities, including online-monitoring

22. The Burmese people's physical and mental safety is at a very low level because whatever they do, it may draw the military's attention or concern; it is really hard for people across Myanmar. It is especially hard for people working for human rights promotion, human rights organisations, because during the National League for Democracy (NLD) government time, most civil society organisations and other organisations worked freely. The military thus know which organisations are working on what, which persons are working for which organisation and they know the people who advocate or talk a lot in public. The military are thus now monitoring the activists – whether they return or not, their houses, their family's movement etc.
23. As regards phones, Burmese people do not feel safe using the telecom companies that are controlled by the military. And they do not dare using SIM cards. The source's organisation thus instead use the Signal app or other apps to feel secure. They also received information that the military tend to control what kind of calls are made. If people make a phone call, the military will capture which words are said, e.g. they will capture if words such as 'human rights' are mentioned. Moreover, people have to register with their identification for the SIM cards; the military can thus also trace which person is using which number.
24. People are also afraid of being monitored via their bank accounts because the banks are obliged to provide the military with all the information they demand about their customers. This is thus also not safe for the Burmese people.
25. The military is especially monitoring members of certain groups such as organisations working on human rights, former NLD supporters, former NLD members of parliament, people who are well known to lead the CDM and protests as well as people associated with EAOs and their families who live in the cities.
26. The source's organisation is not sure whether the military authorities monitor the political opposition outside of Myanmar.
27. The source is not sure whether the military authorities are able to monitor people in the diaspora online. Organisations like the source's organisation tend to hold online meetings, online workshops or forums etc. They thus have to be extra cautious about people who enter the meeting, the Zoom.
28. If people outside Myanmar post something on social media, e.g. Facebook, they will be worried about online-monitoring because the Burmese military are very good at monitoring Facebook. The junta have their own special group that tend to monitor Facebook and people supporting the junta are also monitoring who is saying what on e.g. Facebook. Likewise, on Telegram, there is a huge military support group. Military supporters used to form groups and share information on Telegram, plan for what should be happening, how they should support the military, which people should be killed etc.

These people support the military a lot by searching and monitoring which organisations are against the military etc.

29. If individuals participated in a demonstration outside Myanmar, e.g. in Denmark, and their picture appeared on YouTube or another social media platform, they would only be at risk in that country if someone assigned by the Burmese military assassinated them. If such a person went back to Myanmar, however, there would possibly be a high risk because the military always monitor and they have a list of suspects; if they suspect someone of being against the military, they put this person in their immigration system of suspects. This person could thus be arrested if he or she returned to Myanmar through the airport. The military would take such a person and he or she could risk disappearance or, sometimes, if the authorities have a particular legal article, they could charge and prosecute this person.

Freedom of movement

30. As regards whether persons from ethnic minority groups can move freely across Myanmar, for now, travelling within the country is allowed unless there is a conflict situation; however, one risks being stopped by the military if there is a military post or a checkpoint. Normally, people are free to travel from one place to another but the military suspects and investigate thoroughly travellers holding Identity Cards from other states or regions, especially people from central Myanmar because they are many PDFs from central Myanmar who have joined EAOs.
31. People who are family members of EAO members or for those who stay in the ethnic areas, it entails a risk for them to move to the junta-controlled areas; it is unsafe for them, especially if they are family members of well-known EAOs leaders. Therefore, most of them only stay in the EAO-controlled areas and some go abroad. If family members of EAO members or from EAO-controlled areas would like to move to or stay in the junta-controlled areas, they have to be part of the household registration of the city's residents; they cannot say they are from EAO-controlled areas. It is possible for persons from ethnic minority groups to travel to other EAO-controlled areas but in some areas, the EAOs restrict access for people from central Myanmar because they could have been sent by the military.

Return

32. To the source's knowledge, nobody who fled has returned because such a person returning would risk being arrested.
33. Burmese people who want to travel between Thailand and Myanmar legally and who are not studying at a university or working in Thailand tend to apply for language courses; in this way, they can get a visa for a short period, up to one year. They use this visa and if they go back to Myanmar with this kind of visa and passport through the airport or border gates, it is somehow safe unless the junta suspect that they are a part of those who are working against the junta.

34. As return to Myanmar entails a risk, most people, including people from the source's organisation, only identify themselves as individuals when they travel [and not as part of a group or an organisation] and they indicate that they are only visiting; they do not give any information that may associate them with any group that can be seen as working against the military. Moreover, they do not dare to travel to Myanmar through the official border crossings. Some people travel by car and not through the airport; either through the official border crossings or they use the unofficial border crossings.
35. If individuals have expressed views that are against the military abroad and have appeared in the social media, such persons would surely be arrested by the Burmese military, either at the airport or at home, if they returned to Myanmar. For sure, the military would try to get a hold of such persons, arrest them and question them and then it is unknown what would happen to them after that. It entails a high risk for human rights defenders to return to Myanmar.
36. If a person returning is known as an activist, the military authorities will arrest and question this person; it does not matter whether he or she returns from Europe or a neighbouring country.
37. If a returnee has a family member detained in Myanmar, it may pose a risk for the returnee.
38. As regards whether it makes a difference whether a person returns voluntarily or is forcefully returned, the military will search information about that person who is forcefully returned in addition to the information they already have. If this individual is not associated with activities against the military, it can somehow be safe. However, it is impossible to know about the military authorities' intention; they will do whatever they like. If the military authorities want to arrest somebody, they can just arrest this person.

Military service

39. In April 2024, the military called up the first group for military service; 5 000 young people were conscripted and the military started to train them.
40. The penalty of draft evasion is stated in the law; there is a prison sentence if a person refuses to serve.
41. People who do get conscripted are at risk, e.g. of being sent to the front after just six months training, of being killed in the training, or, if the military have recruited persons from the ethnic minority groups, such conscripts could be sent back to their home area to fight against their own people. In addition, if people from ethnic minority groups are in military training, they might be subject to attention and be treated worse by their commanding officer than ethnic Bamar recruits. If these young people are in the hands of the military, the military can do whatever they want to them. It is very high risk.
42. If an individual is staying abroad or is studying, this person can get an exemption from military service with a notice or appeal letter sent to the local administration.
43. Some people are very afraid of being called up. The source has heard of two cases of people who committed suicide after having received a call-up. In another case, a young

man received a call-up and the family forced him to be recruited because if he did not go, the military would do something to the family; this young man hanged himself.

44. If people refuse to serve, they may be considered pro-resistance or as someone who do not support the military.
45. If people refuse to join the military, they might be arrested if they are home. There is also information saying that the family has to pay a bribe not to the military but to the local administrators who collect lists.
46. As regards whether draft evaders and deserters from ethnic minority groups are treated worse in prison than ethnic Bamar, there are currently no cases because the 5 000 people that the military has recruited are mostly Bamar.
47. In general, the prison conditions in Myanmar are bad, especially for the political prisoners. The military authorities tend to use physical torture a lot and there are also examples where they let prisoners stay in solitary confinement for months in order to mentally torture them; and these prisoners tend to get a mental illness.
48. There are also many cases where the military authorities just arrested innocent civilians on false accusations of e.g. being related to KIA or other EAOs; they arrest innocent civilians, put them in jail, torture them and if they die, they might send the body back to the family or they just burn the body and then the evidence disappears. Other innocent people arrested were released but with many bruises and some died. Those cases are happening a lot in Myanmar.

Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), 29 April 2024

Access to information

1. The source gets information about the current situation in Myanmar by following several independent online media and networks that cover the situation in Myanmar and by cooperating with Burmese researchers in Myanmar and Myanmar's neighbouring countries.
2. There are major challenges in getting information from Myanmar. It is dangerous for local researchers to conduct interviews with supporters of the military authorities and there are technical issues in communicating with people within Myanmar. People inside the country risk having their phones checked by the authorities when they are stopped at checkpoints. That is why journalists, researchers and others who might have material on their phone that might get them in trouble with the authorities must either carry a burner phone with them or keep their phone at home.
3. The military authorities have changed the law after the coup and made it much easier to prosecute and imprison people for having any material that might be considered to be against the authorities.

Main changes in the security situation since summer 2023

4. The armed resistance has gained strength and taken over more territory. The old ethnic armed groups have expanded their areas and sometimes, they are cooperating with the people's defence forces (PDFs) and other resistance forces.
5. Some areas that have not previously been against the military authorities have joined the resistance. This has expanded the areas that are not controlled by the military junta.
6. Another change is that many small towns and cities have been taken over by resistance forces. Previously, it was ethnic areas and scarcely populated areas that were under the control of the resistance. However, the situation is different now.
7. The armed resistance groups have also been able to take over major roads, trade routes and border crossings.
8. More and more soldiers have surrendered and that has meant that the number of military junta soldiers is smaller.
9. These losses of ground troops and bases have forced the military to use aerial bombardment as the primary military tactic without any regard to civilian casualties in the areas that are controlled by the resistance. There are some indications and intelligence from within Myanmar that suggest that the military junta are deliberately bombing civilian targets like schools, hospitals and places of worship. This is a part of a scare campaign and is meant to punish the civilians who live in and support the armed resistance in these areas.
10. This is not something new. The military junta have historically attacked and bombed civilian targets especially in the ethnic areas even before the coup. The bombing of civilians has resulted in large numbers of Burmese people fleeing their areas.
11. The military junta are able to continue bombing civilian targets because there are no universal sanctions against exporting arms and fuel to the military authorities in Myanmar.
12. Even though there are no general and statistically verifiable opinion polls about what the people in Myanmar think, it seems that a large proportion of the population in Myanmar generally support the resistance. The fact that the resistance easily takes over new territories with the population's consent and support indicates the general support for the resistance. In addition, when the military junta forces reconquer a town, they usually reduce it to rubble and the population does not express any happiness for being under the military rule again.
13. The military junta have been weakened because of desertion, fatigue from fighting on many fronts and low morale among its fighters. As a reaction to this, in February 2024, the military junta activated the conscription law from 2010, which has never been used before because it was deemed too unpopular.
14. The activation of the conscription law has spread panic especially among the youth because the law includes both men and women. The youth are trying to leave the country in different ways or they are going to the resistance-controlled areas. However, many of such areas have reached their saturation point and are facing difficulties in absorbing and supporting all the people moving in.
15. The latest major development is that the resistance forces have taken control over the important city of Myawaddy on the Thai border. This city has for a long time been seen like

a ‘wild west’ place because it is known to have illegal casinos and cyber scam centres and even before the coup, there were different groups who were controlling it. The main militia in the city who had been working with the authorities since 2010 declared that it would be an independent force and no longer receive salaries from the junta. The militia changed its name to the Karen National Army and cooperated with the older Karen National Union forces who have always fought the military authorities. This happened in the middle of April 2024.²⁰⁸

16. The current situation in Myawaddy in terms of controlling the city is not clear. The militia that dominates the city is involved in shady businesses like casinos and scam centres that moved to the city after operation 1027 forced several of them to shut down in other places.
17. This fighting in the border areas has created a new wave of refugees who are heading towards Thailand and the Thai authorities have shown goodwill in accepting these refugees. However, Thailand has not ratified international refugee conventions.
18. Neither the military junta nor the resistance have full control over the important trade routes to the neighbouring countries. As long as none of the neighbouring countries is supporting the resistance groups, it is unlikely that these groups will gain full control over the trade routes.
19. Any area in which the resistance is strong or where the resistance is gaining territory is a target for the junta. The military authorities have bombarded festivals, concerts and other civilian gatherings. The aerial bombardment is indiscriminate and targets all areas outside of the major cities like Yangon and Mandalay.
20. Thailand has mostly been supportive of the junta. China has been ambiguous in its position towards the Burmese resistance. India under Modi’s government seems to be a strong supporter of the Burmese junta. Mizoram is the only Indian state that has accepted to make a local cooperation agreement with a resistance group from Myanmar in order to receive Burmese refugees.
21. Many internally displaced people (IDPs) have moved to the resistance-controlled areas where they are vulnerable to attacks by the military junta or they have moved to the neighbouring countries. The reason why most of the IDPs are not heading towards junta-controlled areas is that they are afraid of being subjected to persecution by the authorities.

The military authorities’ treatment of ethnic and religious minority groups

22. The ethnic and religious minorities have been treated badly since the country’s independence in 1948 and this bad treatment worsened after the 1962 military coup. However, there have been various levels of ill treatment. It is as if there is a hierarchy of minorities. The Muslim minority has been treated worst among the minority groups both in

²⁰⁸ However now the military junta has regained some of the control, based on the notion that the KNA has turned and is by summer 2024 partly collaborating with the junta again.

terms of violent oppression and mistreatment by the authorities. Even though their ancestors could obtain ID cards, the youth from Muslim minority groups have been denied access to these cards during the last 10-15 years. The discrimination against Christians was less after 2010 under Aung San Suu Kyi and Thein Sein than it has been since the coup in 2021.

23. Muslim, Hindu and Chinese minority groups are treated as ‘double minority’ and are not considered among the 135 recognised ethnic groups of Myanmar. They thus do not have Burmese citizenship. The ID-cards were previously granted to some members of these ethnic groups which is why some Rohingyas have ID cards and were able to vote during the 2010 and 2015 elections. However, this has changed; they are systematically being denied citizenship now and were not allowed to vote in the 2020 elections.
24. Ethnic minorities try to avoid using the official judicial system and tend to adhere to their own ethnic leaders or local judicial systems in the ethnic areas in resolving different issues.

The military authorities’ treatment of people with suspected or real affiliation with the opposition

25. People who either are connected to the ethnic armed groups, PDFs and the National Unity Government or are perceived to have relations with these groups risk imprisonment. For decades, people were at risk of being oppressed if they had any relation to the ethnic armed groups even when there was no fighting between these groups and the army. The ethnic armed groups have been considered terror groups and have been blacklisted by the military junta. The law that is called ‘Unlawful Association Act’ is used to prosecute anyone who is associated with any resistance group.
26. There are still anti-military junta activities in Myanmar today and the civil disobedience movement (CDM) still exists. Lately there was a flash demonstration in Yangon after a long time without such activities. People in the junta-controlled areas do not dare to go out and demonstrate openly against the military authorities.
27. Many civil servants who left their jobs in protest against the coup in 2021 (i.e. joined the civil disobedience movement) have not returned to their jobs. Some of them have become part of the alternative public institutions in the areas that are not controlled by the junta, and which are either established by the parallel National Unity Government (notably in Burmese majority areas in the central part of the country) or by new sub-national level councils. Schools, hospitals, police forces and even judicial courts are being membered by former civil servants in the areas controlled by the NUG/PDFs or by ethnic armed organisations in the ethnic border areas. Others are trying to hide in order not to draw the attention of the authorities.
28. The military junta reacts violently against CDMs and demonstrations. Many activists are imprisoned or have been forced to leave the country because they are considered to be targets for the military authorities. The authorities tried in the beginning to force the civil servants to return to their jobs. Especially schoolteachers were threatened in order to staff

the reopening of the schools after the Covid-19 pandemic. Some did return but others stayed away.

29. The junta reacts violently against armed resistance groups and attacks those who are fighting the junta.
30. Family members of deserters, CDM activists and other resistance activists also risk being persecuted by the military junta. Parents of CDM activists have found themselves forced to disown their own children in public statements on media controlled by the military authorities. It is a well-known strategy of the junta to go after family members of persons who are or who are perceived to be part of the resistance.

Monitoring of citizens by the Burmese authorities, including online-monitoring

31. The authorities use several methods to monitor the population both offline and online. One method is the local administrative officials who were appointed after the coup and who are loyal to the junta. These officials make 'household lists' so everyone who lives in the house must be registered in these lists. Even visiting guests are required to be added to these lists. These officials go around at night in order to check and see who is staying in the houses. This is used in order to find dissidents and to scare the population.
32. The authorities proclaimed the need to register the population in order to arrange an election. Now the junta state it is a census in order to register people for conscription because it is obvious they will not be holding any elections.
33. There is no difference in which groups are more subject to be monitored by the authorities. Everyone is at risk of being monitored either electronically or by spies.
34. The source is sure that the junta use the embassies that are loyal to them to monitor opposition members abroad. The embassies in Australia and the United Kingdom are for example staffed with loyalists of the military junta. The source has participated in conferences in Europe related to Myanmar and saw how some participants were afraid that there might be infiltrators amongst the participants.

Freedom of movement

35. There is no freedom of movement in any area controlled by the military authorities regardless of whether people belong to the Bamar majority or the ethnic minorities. The reason is the many checkpoints on the roads and the fighting all over the country. The Rohingyas face more restrictions on movement because they do not have any ID documents.
36. After the coup in 2021, people started to move to the ethnic areas in order to escape from the military rule. Similarly, some of the soldiers who have recently deserted have moved to settle in the ethnic areas or fled to Thailand and India.
37. The ethnic areas have shown a great level of solidarity with people who have moved there to stay in these areas outside of the military junta's control.

Return

38. Burmese people who have participated in anti-junta activities abroad will not dare to return to Myanmar. Such people are at risk of reprisals by the military authorities.
39. Burmese rejected asylum seekers do risk persecution in case they return to Myanmar if the authorities get to know about their attempt to seek asylum abroad. The source does not know any Burmese who has participated in anti-junta activities abroad who dares to travel back to Myanmar. Some Burmese people do not even travel to Chiang Mai in Thailand and the other neighbouring countries because they believe that there are informants there who work for the junta.
40. The source knows academic people from Myanmar who travel legally abroad and participate in meetings and conferences and who return to Myanmar. Such people do not risk reprisals from the authorities if they take care and do not use their real names during the meetings and conferences.

Military service

41. The Military authorities began the recruitment of conscripts already in April 2024 and they have proclaimed that they will not conscribe women in the first badge.²⁰⁹ In spite of this, there is no popular support for conscription neither among youth nor among their parents. People see conscription as a way for the military to get soldiers that they can use as human shields without any proper training. There have already been examples where new recruits have been used as human shields; some Rohingya people were forced to join the army and were sent to fight in Rakhine state. Around 100 of them were killed during the fighting there.
42. The conscription law has even agitated the youth who are living in the cities and have otherwise been neutral or not against the military junta. Even this segment of the population is turning against the military authorities because they do not wish to be conscripted.
43. There is no doubt that persons conscripted for military service will be involved in human rights violations.
44. The punishment for evading conscription is imprisonment for a period of three to five years.
45. Some of the former soldiers who deserted their posts have come forward and stated to the media that the miserable conditions they endured during their military service made them want to fight against the junta even more.
46. Military deserters mention two main reasons for their desertion. One is that they do not want to kill civilians or participate in the serious human rights violations that the military authorities force their soldiers to commit. The second reason is that the soldiers do not want to suffer from ill-treatment and abuse against them or their family members. This ill-treatment can take many forms: physical or sexual abuse of the soldiers or their female relatives; being used as servants for the officers and their families; not receiving salaries for

²⁰⁹ In June 2024 the junta proclaimed that they would also start to recruit women.

extended periods; shortage of food; and isolation without being able to contact family members.

47. The source likewise assumes that the new conscripted soldiers will not receive any better treatment than the current soldiers and that they will not get their salaries.
48. Those who either evade conscription or desert from military service will be seen as defectors and supporters of the resistance. Two generals were sentenced to death while three others were sentenced to life imprisonment for withdrawing from battles, although they did not join the resistance. These severe punishments can explain why there are not that many high-ranking officers who desert their posts; it is simply too risky for them.
49. Low-ranking officers and soldiers who have defected to the resistance have been sentenced in absentia. The source does not know the number.
50. The source believes that the prison conditions for deserters are as bad as for all other prisoners in Myanmar.

Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO), 30 April 2024

Access to information

1. The source's organisation uses multiple sources to get updated information about the situation in Myanmar: they have partners on the ground, field staff currently based in the field and they have strong coordination with local administrative bodies, IDP committees, village leaders, community leaders, religious leaders etc. They also have partners who are township-/area-based, local Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) as well as five local media partners who assist the organisation in getting access to information. When things happen, the source does not just use one source but multiple in order to verify the information and data.
2. The source's organisation expanded the area they monitor from Chin State to areas into Sagaing Region and Magway Region and additionally northern Rakhine State.
3. The source experiences many challenges related to safety and security; in order to be able to travel from one place to another, there are military checkpoints, exits and entrances into towns, military stations along the border etc. It is safer to travel in areas that are not controlled by the military but in major towns, it is a challenge. The source tries to mitigate these challenges by having security measures in place.

Main changes in the security situation since summer 2023

4. The current situation in Chin State has changed in the last three years and since the beginning of 2024, the security situation has changed a lot in terms of military operations and military deployment in Chin State. Until mid-2023, the military was still capable of military deployment and military operations in Chin State on the ground. However, after mid-2023, the conflict dynamics changed a lot; the military has become incapable of troop

deployment and enforcement in Chin State and local PDFs are advancing with their attacks on the SAC.

5. Since the second week of February 2024 in Chin State, no military forces were seen in rural areas; there were only military outposts in major towns. The military checkpoints in rural areas were now under the control of local defence forces, including Chin National Army (CNA), Chinland Defence Forces (CDFs) and Arakan Army (AA). Outside of Chin State where Chin people reside in Sagaing and Magway, there are Chin-led PDFs operating.
6. In terms of safety and security for the civilian population, the source sees an increase in the military's attacks by air strikes; for example, the source has documented the killing of 389 civilians of the Chin population (in Chin State and other places) since the coup in 2021. Until 2023, the killings were a result of military operations, executions and summary killings, torture etc. After mid-2023, however, the civilian casualties and killings have been caused by airstrikes. In 2023, the organisation has documented the killing of 59 Chin civilians in airstrikes. In 2024, until April, the source has documented 39 Chin civilians killed in airstrikes. Therefore, even though the military is incapable of ground operations, the military's airstrikes and airpower make people insecure.
7. In addition to airstrikes, there is the landmine issue. Even though the military do not have outposts in rural areas, there are incidents of landmines with civilian casualties. Recently, there were many landmine incidents in the towns where the military has outposts. In 2024 until April, there has been 24 landmine incidents with civilian casualties in Chin State.
8. Therefore, currently, airstrikes and landmines are the biggest issue in Chin State. The source met with 19 teachers from Chin State recently who said that children in Chin State are afraid of going to school because of these issues. The military is also targeting schools and hospitals.
9. The violence across the country has both been random and targeted against specific groups. Since mid-2023, the organisation documented 17 churches destroyed in airstrikes in Hakha township; the military particularly attacked religious buildings, churches. Moreover, there was an incident in Kanan where 17 civilians were killed. The military is not only targeting the local defence forces; civilians, religious buildings, public schools, hospitals etc. are all targets.

Military authorities' treatment of ethnic and religious minority groups

10. Ethnic and religious minorities have been a major issue in the country even before the coup but the treatment of these minorities has been different after the coup in 2021. After the coup, the military's direct attacks against ethnic and religious minorities have intensified. If a person is from an ethnic minority group and does not speak Burmese, he or she will be targeted. If someone is arrested by the military and they identify that the individual is not Bamar, this person can be in trouble.
11. The military target religious minorities including the Chin of which more than 90 % are Christian. In Chin State, the military imposed martial law two years ago and restrictions on religious gatherings, which are only allowed between the hours of 6 am and 6 pm. Anything outside of these hours, including any movement outside of the house, is punished

by arrest or shoot on sight by the SAC. Therefore, as is customary in Chin, evening prayers are impossible. In some townships, church figureheads must present a list of attendees to the SAC authorities. Going to church is only allowed on Sundays with some limitations and two weeks ago, in Hakha township, the military authorities announced that only five people are allowed to go to church at the same time.

12. From the source's perspective, the military is targeting religious institutions, religious movements and gatherings because the military perceives these religious institutions as supportive of the opposition movement in Chin State.
13. In the previous three years, whenever the military conducted ground operations across Chin State, they would always choose church buildings as their shelter because they anticipated that the opposition forces would not attack these places. Whenever they left, however, they destroyed the religious properties. This is evidence that the military is targeting people based on religion.

Military authorities' treatment of people with suspected or real affiliation with the opposition

14. Suspected affiliation with ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) will lead to arrest and the potential for torture and even being killed. Suspected affiliation with PDFs will lead to similar consequences – particularly in areas that do not have a history of having an EAO, which are based on the border that have defined territories. For example, in places like Sagaing and Magway, the situation can be gruesome. In November 2023, two PDF members were killed in Magway; they were set on fire by a Pyu Saw Htee [a pro-junta paramilitary group] that operates across the Burmese heartland in Magway and Sagaing. It is thus not a good situation to be accused of or be arrested while wearing a uniform or engaged in Chin National Army (CNA) activities or any armed group.
15. The situation is not good for any resistance actor but in the case of somewhere like Chin State, there is a CNA army camp, which operates close to the border, and CNA - and EAOs in general - are sometimes more organised, have a better code of conduct, they have bases and they know the terrain; they can disappear into areas where the SAC is not as prominent or is not patrolling etc. But in areas like Sagaing and Magway, there are certain villages that are Pyu Saw Htee villages, there are certain villages that are heavily SAC, and then there are thousands of PDFs operating, some of them are 50 strong, some are 15 strong and some of them are 1 000 strong. And people who are part of the resistance in those areas in Sagaing and Magway are particularly vulnerable; not only people who are directly part of the PDFs or local defence forces but also their family members, e.g. sons and daughters, as well as people involved in humanitarian aid that are also linked to the PDF activities. It is not a safe situation.
16. In Chin State, and it is probably the same in other ethnic states, most of the CDM people have now moved into areas that are under control of EAOs and largely try to operate parallel to the SAC governmental structures. This is why the SAC are bombing those facilities in places like Chin State, e.g. hospitals. They are targeting those facilities because

they are seen as a parallel administration, which the SAC generally restricts. The source thinks that this is also happening in Karen, Kachin and in Rakhine.

17. In terms of active protests and strikes, few odd protests have been documented; there was even one in Yangon. They are very short, however, because it is too dangerous. In most parts of Myanmar, anti-government protests do no longer take place because firstly, people – whether members of armed groups or activists – think it is time for armed revolution; it is the right way to respond. Secondly, it is too risky to participate in anti-government protests. In most parts of Myanmar, the military authorities have declared martial law; this implies that the military can shoot at any time they want, e.g. if the people are grouping, protesting etc. Therefore, there are not many anti-government protests taking place anymore; if they do take place, they occur in safe areas where the local resistance forces have control. In military-controlled areas, there are almost no protests at all; even if they do take place, the protests are kept secret so that the authorities will not find out about them.
18. If anti-government protests were to take place in military-controlled areas, they would be brutally suppressed; there would be attacks and killings.
19. In the very beginning of the coup, the military amended a law that enabled the authorities to arrest anyone associated with anti-government activities. Most of the arrests of civilians take place with reference to this law. If you simply take a photo with your friend in a revolutionary force or you visit a place where the resistance force are present, you are very much likely to be arrested. Recently, a very famous pastor, the secretary of the Kachin Baptist Church was also arrested based on the same law. He was accused of associating with KIA (Kachin Independence Army).
20. Therefore, whenever you travel around Myanmar and come across e.g. airports, checkpoints etc., you have to be very careful about the photos you carry on your phone and the messages on your social media accounts. Whenever the military want to arrest someone, they will simply check their phones. The military even have good technologies now, maybe with the support of China, which makes it possible for the military to check deleted photos and data. These are their tools to arrest the civilians. According to the law that they adopted early in 2021, people will be arrested even for chats or talks associated with resistance groups – not only EAOs but also PDFs and the NUG.
21. In one case, a friend of the source received lifetime prison sentence in Hakha in Chin State for supporting the CDM. When she tried to visit Yangon, she came across a military checkpoint in Hakha where the military looked at her telephone and saw a screenshot of a money transfer to support the CDM movement; she was charged under the terrorism law even though she is not related to local defence forces. The military can thus use this law to punish people.
22. The source's organisation documented the arrest of more than 1 500 Chin civilian residents since the coup. If the military come across pictures associated with CDM upon checking people's phones, e.g. at a checkpoint, they will arrest them. In February 2024, three youths were sentenced to six years' prison on the basis of a photo that connects them to the local defence forces. Hence, all people, especially the youth, are afraid of passing military

checkpoints, even though they are not affiliated with armed groups, because they fear that the military will create stories about them and send them to prison.

23. Family members of activists or of PDF members are also at risk because they are guilty by association, under the anti-terror law. A number of wives of PDF members have been arrested for holding money, sharing information or housing PDFs etc.

Monitoring of citizens by the military authorities, including online-monitoring

24. As regards social media, since the coup, use of social media like Facebook and others has been restricted and can only be used through specific SAC-provided SIM cards, Mytel, or through VPNs, which are illegal; if a person is caught using VPN, the SAC will charge this person of terrorism.
25. The reason the source can say that the military is monitoring social media is because, in the past two-three years, many people have been arrested for pressing a like or following anti-military Facebook groups or joining Telegram groups. Many people have been arrested based on those acts.
26. Another way in which the military monitor people and gather information is through torture, according to a military defector from the Military Intelligence Agency in Hakha that the source spoke to. Because the military authorities lack information and informants – they do not have reliable sources to monitor local defence forces and people they are targeting – they arrest some people, torture them and ask them questions, thereby trying to get information. Most of the youth arrested face torture, according to this defector.
27. As regards monitoring of political dissidents abroad, the military authorities especially monitor in Thailand and India. The source's organisation received unverified information that the military even sends some of their intelligence personnel to the border areas, especially to the areas where politicians and activists are based. The source's organisation thus have to be very careful as to who they speak to when they go to the border areas. In these areas, there have been arrests of people associated with the resistance, also done by the Thai or Indian authorities, presumably because of information leaked by the SAC intelligence to the Thai or Indian authorities. The military does thus also monitor their citizens outside of Myanmar.
28. From the source's organisation's network, it is clear that the military have many local informants who are being used in the countries where the source's organisation is present. The source thus strongly believes that they monitor and try to find any possible information that they might be able to gather; this is one of their roles and responsibilities when it comes to monitoring. It could be physical information; it could also be online.
29. As regards online monitoring, the source assumes that the military authorities do monitor activities online, although they do not have a strong system to monitor people inside Myanmar, as people use a different network, different SIM cards, mobile phones. If a person has a Facebook account and follows the NUG or attends an online workshop, a training or a meeting, the military can easily find this person. However, the military will not monitor everyone; they will have their target group who are more activist. The military is closely monitoring those people – what they do on social media, what they share on social

media. Therefore, to mitigate the risk of being monitored on social media, people have two or three Facebook accounts, e.g. the source has an account with no activities. In one case, a famous singer posted something that seemed to be supportive of local resistance groups. She was arrested immediately. She was later released but the arrest was based on her Facebook post.

30. As regards potential risks related to a person's participation in a demonstration abroad, e.g. in Denmark, the only reprisals he or she would be concerned about would be if he or she still has family members inside Myanmar and if the SAC would track them down. However, most people would not use their own family name but would use pseudonyms on their Facebook profiles etc. If the SAC did go to this kind of lengths, there would be a possibility of reprisals towards the family members. The source does not know of any of such case having taken place. People who have family in Myanmar would not dare post anything about participating in demonstrations or any anti-government activity; they would then have to move their family to a safe place. There might be a risk for a person demonstrating if this person were living on the border, e.g. Mae Sot, where there is the potential to have more SAC presence in those towns undercover; otherwise, the source does not think that there would be direct reprisals.

Freedom of movement

31. In general, there are no restrictions on freedom of movement by law for ethnic minorities, e.g. for a Chin to settle outside of Chin State, but in practice, the source finds it very dangerous, especially in the SAC-controlled areas.
32. By law, there are no restrictions on the freedom of movement of ethnic minority groups, with the exception of the Rohingyas. In addition to the Rohingyas, the source recently got information from Rakhine State that the Rakhine population can no longer go to Yangon and the Rohingyas cannot even go out of their own town or village. When operation 1027 was initiated, many Rakhine residents tried to return to Rakhine State where most of the areas are controlled by the Arakan Army (AA); however, many were arrested, especially the males.
33. It is possible for ethnic minority groups to travel across Myanmar but at their own risk. Whether they can travel and settle outside their home area, e.g. a person from Chin State in Mandalay or Yangon, really depends on the security situation. For the vast majority of the population in Chin State, the source thinks it would be very unsafe to do so. It is not the case that they cannot physically do so but in some cases, they would end up being arrested; in other cases, it would be suicidal.
34. To travel inside the country, people usually use their national identity card, which can be easily acquired. The national identity card, which is pink-coloured, is the only identification card that shows one's ethnicity, religion and birthplace. It is required to be carried at all times, especially while travelling. It is not a passport, however, which is used for international travel.
35. The ability to move around depends on the National Registration Card (NRC). A large part of the Chin population will have that documentation, which in the past would mean that

they could get on flights and busses etc. as opposed to e.g. the Rohingya population that largely do not possess that particular piece of documentation. That documentation facilitates the ability for people to move within Myanmar.

36. A person's home area appears on the National Registration Card (NRC). If a person travels to Myanmar mainland, e.g. Yangon or Naypyitaw, and the military sees on the NRC that he or she is from certain townships in Thantlang in Chin State, he or she might be arrested and interrogated. It is sensitive to have Thantlang written in the NRC; people from Thantlang have been arrested when they passed military checkpoints.
37. If a person wants to travel by air from one town to another in Myanmar, he/she has to get some kind of recommendation letter from the township head or from the military post in the township. Moreover, if a person wants to visit another township, he/she will have to register there within 24 hours that he/she is visiting and staying there. Especially in Yangon City, Mandalay and in other places, there can be a surprise check at any time by the SAC; they will come and knock on the door, check if there are any guests who are not registered with the SAC at the local level.
38. There are not many young people travelling within Myanmar, however; only some older people as well as Christian pastors. Most young people are afraid of travelling within Myanmar also because of the military conscription.
39. The military authorities have a list of people who joined the CDM and whenever these persons are about to leave the country and the military authorities scan their passports, they will see whether these persons are on the list, listed by the SAC to be arrested for joining CDM. Whenever people use their passport, the military authorities will check whether they are on the list of CDM people or activists; they can thus easily trace those people. Recently, we have seen the leak of an order that enables the immigration office to arrest people even when they apply for a passport. Furthermore, citizens in Myanmar can only travel abroad if they have a letter from the SAC authorities. If they want to travel, even to buy tickets, people need a special letter from the military authorities, stating that they are not associated with anybody, with any group and not supporting anyone.

Return

40. In Malaysia, there are around 12 detention centres that house 300-400 people, mostly Chin migrants. The SAC visit these facilities and try to persuade the detainees to sign away in order to go back to Myanmar. The source's organisation has not yet been able to monitor what happens to these people upon return. These people return to Myanmar under duress. The UNHCR do get access to visit these facilities and those people with UNHCR registration papers are sometimes allowed to leave the detention centres. The vast majority of people will not possess this because of the slow processing time in Malaysia. Some of the people have been in these detention centres for years.
41. Being in a foreign country where there is a foreign government is also a concern issue; India has recently returned people to Myanmar. These people could be just civilians who are not involved in the anti-junta movement; however, the source's organisation is very concerned because they believe that it is never safe to be handed over to the Burmese

authorities, as they can do whatever they want to these returnees, including arrest and torture. The source has not seen many people being returned yet but it is a concern issue. The source's organisation was unable to follow what happened to these people upon return; they do not have evidence that the returnees were arrested or tortured. They believe, however, that arrest and torture would happen to people returning if they had some association with the anti-government movement, including if they went home to visit friends in the local armed forces or if they had pictures on social media that shows an association.

42. From Malaysia, there have also been deportations of CDM people, as the Burmese embassy in Malaysia runs as an SAC embassy. The source thinks that there are a couple of cases of CDMs being returned and disappearing, probably into incarceration; however, the source cannot confirm that. There was one case two few weeks ago where a man was deported from Malaysia and was shot outside of Kalay Town [a town in Sagaing Region that is bordering Chin State] as he was trying to return home.
43. The other concern is that if youths are returned to Myanmar, they risk being conscripted into the SAC by force under the conscription law.
44. Returnees who have been involved with the opposition abroad will definitely face problems upon return. If someone has openly shown their direct or indirect involvement with the resistance forces and then returns to Myanmar, there would be a high risk that this person would get arrested and even tortured.
45. When people return to Myanmar, they are aware that there are local, military informants around them. They can always be spot-checked, arrested, detained and beyond, at any time and in any place. However, it is not certain when this will happen. Therefore, the fear, the insecurity, the feeling of unsafety is all the time there.
46. People abroad may choose to return to Myanmar because they have not received enough support and have no relatives living abroad who can support them to stay there. In order to reduce the cost of daily survival, they thus might choose to go back to Myanmar to villages in liberated areas where they can do some farming, rely on communities etc. Going back to towns is a little more challenging because of the SAC soldiers still present in there. However, the SAC also have limited resources, the source's organisation believes. Even when the SAC go around and patrol in towns, they would go around in a big group because they are also aware that there may be possible attacks from local defence groups. Therefore, especially within the last few months or year, people are not arrested and detained as fast as before but they are still afraid inside Myanmar.
47. This is related to the SAC's administrative system. Successive military governments have administered Myanmar by having representatives in towns and villages who collect names, do household registrations etc.; they are really working as administrators for the army now. In larger cities and larger towns, these systems are still in place, whereas in rural areas, which may have been liberated for a short term or slightly longer term depending on where fighting is occurring, these systems have broken down. People can thus go back to these places and not be monitored as much as if they were going back to a city where the SAC still maintains a large presence.

48. As regards return from Europe compared to returning from a neighbouring country, it makes a difference whether one returns officially, e.g. through an international airport, as opposed to crossing the border from e.g. India or Thailand. From India or Thailand, people can easily cross the border and do it quite safely; there are no SAC guards who can monitor these returns. The question is about international travel, through airports. The source assumes that it would be much easier to return to Myanmar from Malaysia, Singapore or Thailand because this is where many Burmese people travel back and forth to, e.g. as workers. If someone is returning from a European country, on the other hand, the risk might be different. However, either way, the source does not think it is safe to return to Myanmar. Currently, for Burmese citizens, if you are not a part of the SAC, you would not return, unless you had no choice.

Military service

49. Conscripts do risk being involved in human rights abuses. Recently, there was a report that the first badge of conscripts, around 5 000, had been trained and sent to their particular posts. Now they are beginning with the second badge, using the conscription law. It is yet to be confirmed that the conscripts are involved in violations but as a part of the military, they would eventually be involved in human rights abuses.
50. In the source's view, conscription is a mass human shields operation and thus constitutes a human rights abuse in itself. In Rakhine State, Rohingyas are being rounded up, given very basic training and sent off to the frontline basically as cannon fodder.
51. The way that the military is conscripting is more than a simple call-up. In many areas, the military go from village to village and demand the names of at least 10 people to be conscripted from each village; people thus escape to the liberated areas or even to neighbouring countries. Many students are applying for schools abroad. In Rakhine State, some minority communities have been trained and sent to the frontline. It is thus not only the Bamar who are being conscripted. Even in Hakha township in Chin State, the SAC began to monitor how many youths there were in each family, females and males in the households and they began to collect those lists; it is thus obvious that conscription is taking place everywhere in Myanmar.
52. Although the military conscription law include both males and females, the military spokesperson stated that the military would not begin with the females. However, there is information coming out from Myanmar now that even female youths are being targeted for arrest and forcefully recruited especially in the rural areas. This might not be on a large scale and therefore, there may not be direct evidence yet.
53. According to the conscription law, a person who evades military service will be arrested. The consequences in practice will also be arrest and maybe even torture. However, the source does not think that it is possible to evade unless you flee.
54. Although one has to consider the risk of being imprisoned, a large number of the people who have been recruited at the ground level are deciding to flee; that is the choice that people are making presently.

55. Reports are coming out that the military authorities are using officials to go out and collect names of people from each village or town. Some of those administrators are in harms way now: some are helping youth to escape; some are disappearing themselves; some have been killed in other areas of Myanmar for collecting names by either PDFs or EAOs or individuals. It is thus dangerous for those people collecting names for conscription.
56. There are also reports that when the military came to take young people eligible for conscription from their homes and asked the parents about their children's whereabouts, the parents were fined if their children had travelled abroad to study.
57. If someone refuses to serve, he or she will be considered as someone who does not support the SAC but who is with the revolution. This means that the SAC can do whatever they want to this person, including torture or killing.
58. As regards the prison conditions, including for evaders and deserters, there is a main facility in Chin State, in Hakha, where people are detained. There are over 50 detainees in Hakha Detention Centre. The conditions in there are bad. Family visits are only allowed once a week, the family is not allowed to provide the detainee with books, except if they pay a bribe to the officer. A woman who had a life-time imprisonment got a bad medical condition but her request for medical treatment in Hakha City Hospital was rejected three times. After two months, when she lost conscience, she was finally allowed to be taken to Hakha City Hospital where she stayed for two weeks before she went back to prison. The military usually rejects medical treatment for the prisoners unless a bribe is paid.
59. If some people are arrested because they are members of the EAOs, they will be placed in detention centres notorious for torture. Likewise, if some people are well-known for their involvement with the anti-government movement, they will be sent directly to those centres for long-time torture and interrogations. These people will not simply be sent to the court or to jail.
60. How you are treated in prison largely depends on your involvement with the anti-government movement rather than discrimination based on ethnicity; however, your ethnicity might make the military government see you as someone who is involved with the anti-government movement.

Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN), 3 May 2024

Access to information

1. The source has a team of employees on the ground inside the country in many locations. Additionally, the source gets information from the media, foreign media, social media and from non-state actors on the ground in Myanmar. The source's organisation is monitoring and documenting the situation and they are doing some research as well.
2. It is a huge challenge to operate inside the country; the civil war, the military's attacks and killing of people make it very difficult for individuals to move around. Access to information

is also very difficult when there is a war zone - you are not able to go there. Sometimes, the military uses fighter jets to bombard the civilians.

Main changes in the security situation since summer 2023

3. There are hundreds of armed groups nowadays from every local area. The civilians, young students, were being killed in the street so they decided to take up arms and fight back. Many civilians are suffering because of the military's actions: when any place is liberated, the military shoot and bomb these civilian-populated areas and they use fighter jets and heavy artillery. Many civilians have been killed because of what the source describes as crimes against humanity committed by the military.
4. Generally, the military is using fighter jets and heavy guns in places where they are fighting. There have been many incidents, however, where the military have used fighter jets in places where there were no fighters; the military were just randomly bombing civilians. The military's use of bombardment, artillery and heavy guns without discrimination means that the military consider anyone who is not among them as being against them.

Military authorities' treatment of ethnic and religious minority groups

5. Ethnic minorities such as Chin, Karen etc. – anyone who is against the military – are treated very badly. In general, most of the people are against the military. There are heavy problems in many places around the country, especially in the ethnic minorities' areas because in these areas are the ethnic armies, the ethnic politicians, the ethnic leaders; they do not want the military so they are fighting back. The military have always treated the ethnic, religious minorities as a target. The mind-set of the junta is that they are against the minorities.
6. Anyone could be targeted, however, but the Muslims are targeted the most and Christians; hundreds of churches and mosques have been destroyed in this civil war, many women have been raped and killed and some people have been burnt alive.

Military authorities' treatment of people with suspected or real affiliation with the opposition

7. People with suspected affiliation with Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) can surely encounter problems with the authorities because of this suspected affiliation; there are hundreds of cases, e.g. of people with suspected affiliation who were beaten to death. Even in big cities like Yangon and Mandalay where no EAOs are operating, some people were arrested and shortly after, their family received a phone call to collect the body of their family member. And the bodies showed that they were beaten to death in a gruesome way. This happened because they were suspected of affiliation with the opposition.
8. Recently, two young boys, who were actually Bamar, were literally grilled by the military because they were suspected of being PDFs; it happened in the town of Kawlin in Sagaing Region in northern Myanmar.

9. Civil disobedience and anti-government protests do still take place today. In liberated areas, there is no need for the civil disobedience movement (CDM); however, there are many CDM people, teachers and government employees, who are sheltering in liberated areas. They are running hospitals and schools; they are helping the population as far as they can. In other areas, the military is in control; in those areas, it is very difficult for them. Civil disobedience actions are happening but the people participating are trying to hide it.
10. The military is targeting anyone who is pro-democracy and against the military coup. The military has a list of people involved in CDM and CDM people cannot travel anywhere; they have to be smuggled out of the country e.g. to Thailand. People are leaving the country but they have to pay a lot of money to get out.
11. As regards People's Defence Forces, they are operating under the ethnic armies, they are fighting against the military under the guidance of EAOs in many ethnic areas. The military is losing bases, camps, villages etc.; the military have lost are around 53 villages and cities.
12. If you are involved with any anti-junta activities, you have to be very quiet; you cannot openly do anything because of the threat. If the military government finds out about anti-junta activities, they can officially confiscate your property and the family members will be jailed. In reality, there are no rules; the military can do whatever they like to the people with suspected affiliation with the opposition and their family members.

Monitoring of citizens by the military authorities, including online-monitoring

13. The military government can monitor their citizens in many ways also because of the external help they get from China, Iran, Russia, Pakistan, Israel etc.; the military receives many technologies so people are being monitored, e.g. on social media and in many ways. Locals are monitored as well. The military has formed pro-military mobs and they are sometimes monitoring the locals. For example, they recruit anti-Muslims or anti-Christians as pro-military gangs or militias and these groups destroy churches and mosques and they attack religious minorities.
14. As regards whether some groups are monitored more than other groups, the source states that anyone is targeted, even the Buddhists.
15. The source has no information regarding whether the military authorities monitor political dissidents abroad but does not think that they have the ability to systematically monitor political dissidents abroad. Sometimes, the military authorities do espionage and monitor Burmese nationals abroad through their embassies. They monitor some figures. The source states that its employees have to be very careful when they go to Thailand and Southeast Asia; they cannot share with anyone where they are staying, what they do, when they are arriving and when they are leaving.
16. The source is not sure what specific activities are monitored abroad. There is definitely online-monitoring, e.g. on social media.
17. Events such as demonstrations are monitored. The military take pictures from the embassy but they also send people when there is some kind of event, like a fundraising or a protest, to take pictures when they want to identify who is the key person in that location. In the

future, they might come up with some counter-strategy to eliminate the threat from outside the country; people participating in a demonstration abroad will then be easily targeted.

18. A person who has participated in a demonstration abroad will – together with his or her family – be at risk upon return to Myanmar. He or she cannot return to Myanmar; it would mean the death sentence.

Freedom of movement

19. There is no freedom of movement in Myanmar anymore because it is too dangerous, especially if you are from a minority. For example, if your identity card states that you are Muslim and Bengali, it is seriously dangerous to travel.
20. If you are around 30-35 years old, they take you and send you to the frontline to help the military. Names are coming out of people who have gone missing. The source's organisation know that these people will be easily located at the frontline because the military kidnap them and send them to help carrying bags and weapons and sometimes, they use them as human shields.
21. The human shield method has been used for a long time, since the revolution started; it is not something that came with the activation of the conscription law. What the junta does is that they go to a village and take 5 or 10 people and let them walk right in front of them so that if there are landmines, these people will be hit. It is not only Rohingyas who risk being used as human shields; anyone conscripted to the military is at risk but Muslims are more likely to fall victim to this method than other groups.
22. As regards the possibility of settling outside one's home area, the source states that, according to the law, if you are not from a specific town or area, you are considered a foreigner; this is the case even though your ancestors were born and brought up in Myanmar. However, in big cities like Yangon, which is a metropolitan city, there are people from around the world and from around the country.
23. Muslims are more frequently considered non-citizens than other groups, not only the Rohingyas. There are six ethnic groups that are Muslim of which the Rohingyas are the most well-known. Most Muslims, i.e. 70 % of Muslims, do not get citizenship, education or other rights, not only the Rohingyas. In Myanmar, if you do not have a citizenship card it means that you do not exist and you cannot move around freely in Myanmar.

Return

24. The source does not think that anyone would go back unless he or she were working for the military. If you are living as a normal civilian citizen and you are not involved in any anti-military movement, it might be that nothing happens to you upon return. Once you are involved with any anti-junta activity, however, it is very dangerous for you to go back. Moreover, Muslims returning to Myanmar would more frequently be subject to scrutiny and negative attention from the military authorities than other groups upon return.

25. If people have joined an opposition group after having left Myanmar, they must never go back. It would be too dangerous for them even going to the border areas; many people disappear. Their family members would also be at risk and the military authorities confiscate the family's property.
26. The source's organisation advises people returning that they have to be very careful about what they have on their mobile phones, it can have consequences.

Military service

27. Persons conscripted for military service definitely do risk being subjected to human rights abuses. One Muslim conscript was forced to eat pork; he refused and he was killed.
28. Conscripts also risk committing human rights abuses themselves, as they have to obey orders; otherwise, they will be shot and killed by their officers.
29. The source does not know what the consequences would be if people refuse to be recruited for conscription. The consequences depend on how people will handle the situation. No one knows what happens to all these persons who are just taken from their home and sent away to the frontline and killed. Life has no value in Myanmar. If you refuse to join the army, you will face serious consequences. Families try to bribe the officers in order to avoid conscription of their children but it is uncertain how long you can avoid conscription in this way. It is difficult for the junta to recruit because those they want to recruit are running out of the country; every day, thousands of people are running away from Myanmar.
30. As regards the consequences of desertion, military officers who have surrendered to opposition groups have been hanged.

International humanitarian organisation, 26 June 2024

Freedom of movement

1. In many aspects, persons from ethnic minority groups cannot move freely across Myanmar but of course it differs with regard to which ethnic minority group a person belongs to. Rohingyas, Kaman, Maramargyi and other ethnic minority groups who are not among the 135 officially recognised groups in Myanmar, which are listed in an annex to the constitution, face obstacles and cannot move around freely. Persons of mixed descent also face many more obstacles than persons who are not from the ethnic minorities.
2. When the source speaks about the term ethnic minorities, he refers to groups that are not listed in this annex to the constitution among the 135 recognised groups. Numerically, another group may be a minority but they are not enjoying bad status. The question is whether the group belongs to one of these non-listed ethnic minorities. The challenge they are facing is a lack of citizenship and legal identity documents. Groups who are not eligible for citizenship continue to face obstacles linked to this legal impediment.

3. As an example, travel authorisation is needed for ethnic minorities who do not have citizenship or legal identity documentation for travelling. And obtaining such travel authorisation has become a much more lengthy and cumbersome process due to the lack of functionality of public authorities as a side-effect of the conflict; getting and processing travel authorisation has become much more difficult.
4. As a rule, people who belong to these non-listed groups, such as the Rohingyas, are not allowed to travel. However, it is possible to get a travel authorisation. If people travel and are caught without travel authorisation, they will be arrested and detained and may remain in extended detention. It is possible to apply for travel authorisation but it is a relatively lengthy process where procedural guarantees and good governance guarantees are not observed. At the same time, it is an extortion scheme; bribes need to be paid to get a travel authorisation. Even then, the process is kind of arbitrary and discriminatory; one thus cannot rely on getting a travel authorisation. With the travel authorisation though, it would legally be possible.
5. However, significant changes have happened that make travelling more difficult today than a year ago. Firstly, the fact that EAOs have increased their territorial control means that travel no longer only has to be authorised by the military authorities but also by various ethnic organisations, who control effectively the road, the part of the river etc., to provide guarantees that the person travelling will not be attacked by EAOs. That is surely a substantive obstacle, although not a legal obstacle but a barrier that makes movement much more difficult.
6. Secondly, there are many more road blockages today and there is more scrutiny at these road blockages than one year ago.
7. Thirdly, there are also other economic, factual impediments; currently, with armed conflict, there has been an incredible spike in prices. That means that, for instance, in Rakhine State, the last time the source was there, in May 2024, a litre of gasoline cost 8 USD as opposed to 1 USD in Yangon and maybe 2 USD in Denmark. 8 USD a litre makes it basically impossible for a lot of people to buy fuel to travel. This also affects ethnic Rakhine; it is an obstacle for everybody. Either there is no fuel or people cannot afford it. That makes transportation much more difficult.
8. Fourthly, over the last year, there has been a significant increase in landmines. This is a factor that affects ethnic majorities and recognised ethnic groups just as much as non-recognised minority groups.
9. Finally, the active, ongoing, armed conflict makes it difficult for everybody to travel because there is shelling, there are airstrikes etc. This affects of course the freedom of movement.
10. As regards whether persons from ethnic minority groups can settle outside their home area, the challenges to freedom of movement and transportation are relevant again. There is still the system in place where if you stay outside your village of origin, you need to register the overnight stay with the military authorities. That is based on a law from 2012, which is still in force, The Ward and Village Tract Administration Law. The source does not have information with regard to how functional the implementation of this registration

and reporting system still is. In some areas of the country, the source's organisation have seen basically a collapse of government control, parts of the country are controlled by EAOs; hence in these areas, the registration and reporting system cannot be implemented anymore by the current de facto authorities. However, there are still thousands of junta-controlled areas; the risk of arbitrary detention if some person tries to move somewhere else or to settle somewhere is thus still high.

11. Moreover, extortion is very widespread all over the country. Therefore, if a person wanted to resettle somewhere else, he or she would thus certainly have to pay informal fees.
12. In addition, there are the so-called household lists; these lists constitute another administrative obstacle that makes it relatively difficult for people to resettle individually in another area.
13. A household list or family list is a document that lists all members of a household or family living in the same house. It is possible to apply for this list at the local offices of the central government. Household lists must be updated by the head of the household when the members of a family change, such as after a birth, death, or marriage. Also known as Form 66/6, the Household List was introduced under the 1949 Residents of Myanmar Registration Act. Household lists are also a legal requirement to be able to apply for individual legal identity documentation. Without a functional public administration at the local level, access to household lists is obstructed.
14. Another thing that also keeps people from formalising their status in a new area through contacting public officials and seeking permission for things that need a permission is the activation of the military service law. People are currently even more afraid than before of contacting public authorities because they would then expose themselves of a higher risk of being recruited.
15. Finally, settling outside one's home areas would certainly also require some means to make a living. People's access to livelihoods, access to labour market or any kind of job opportunity is of course very limited in the current situation. This is even more true for ethnic minorities. The whole country is experiencing an economic downturn. The high expenses that would be related to resettling and the high costs of transport, then resettling and then having a livelihood will probably also be prohibitive for most people. There is thus relatively little resettlement within the country.

Return

16. So far, there is very little information about voluntary, individual returns to Myanmar. Human rights organisations currently do not encourage people to return to Myanmar because there is no conducive framework for return – for voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return.
17. Some people were deported, for instance, from India – cases of refoulement or people who at least had spent some time in immigration detention in India before being returned to Myanmar. As far as the source's organisation know, people who were forcibly repatriated to Myanmar are now in detention. The organisation do not have access to these people so they cannot say anything about the prison conditions but given the overall

conditions in the country, the overall lack of rule of law compliance, it is a safe guess to say that prison conditions are not very human rights compliant.

18. Apart from the few deportation cases, which the source's organisation are aware of, they do not have data on the few spontaneous returns and what happened to these people upon return. Generally, it is a very limited number who have returned.
19. The type of document that returnees carry with them will probably play a role as to how these returnees are treated by the military authorities upon return; as long as they have not violated any immigration rules, they are on the safe side. For instance, the source's organisation have seen people who, when the conscription law was activated, first brought their 16, 17, 18-year-old children to Thailand but then, when they saw that things were not as bad as expected, they brought them back to Myanmar. As long as the children have all the travel documents, documentation, the new electronic universal ID number (UID) – i.e. when people meet all the requirements – they would normally not face any adverse consequences. However, of course, most people who return after having been in some other country for an extended period, would not have this kind of documentation. Stateless Rohingyas would not have a passport to travel internationally etc.
20. As regards whether members of certain groups would more frequently be subject to negative attention from the military authorities upon return, the source's information is that all ethnic minorities who live along the border and do sometimes cross borders would face particular difficulties. There is a lot of negative stereotyping, i.e. ethnic minority groups could be suspected of being involved with EAOs or of being supporters of the independence movement. They thus definitely run a higher risk than others. Finally, again, the Rohingyas are generally more exposed to mistrust, discrimination and negative pressure from the military authorities.
21. People who have joined an opposition group and return to Myanmar would be exposed to arrest, detention, human rights abuses, extortion, torture, enforced disappearance, and probably killing.
22. If an individual returning has a family member who is detained, the returnee would be under strict surveillance by the military authorities; they would probably be frequently interrogated, questioned, i.e. there would be a light form of harassment but maybe not more than that. However, even that can escalate and pose a certain risk.
23. The source's organisation's impression is that it does not make a difference whether a person returns to Myanmar from a neighbouring country, e.g. Thailand, or from Europe, in regards to treatment by the military authorities upon return. However, the source's organisation do not have more than anecdotal data on this. If the returnees are perceived as if there is something wrong with them, e.g. if they are from the wrong ethnic group, they would face adverse consequences.
24. It also does not make a difference whether a person returns voluntarily or is forcefully returned. However, the source's organisation lacks sufficient data to make a strong statement about this; they are not aware of any distinction and thus cannot say that a person who voluntarily returns is welcome, for example.

25. There are cross-border movements by the local population living near the border. Especially in the areas bordering India, China and Thailand, there is still probably a lot of irregular movement. Myanmar is kind of striking down on these irregular cross-border movements by introducing the universal identity number, UID. The UID is a new thing that started around two months ago. The military authorities are still in the process of rolling it out. It requires reregistration with the military authorities to get this number. It used to be legal for certain ethnic minority groups to go to the neighbouring village across the border on a daily basis but now they will need this UID; as long as they do not all have it, it is really much more difficult for them to cross the borders, at least regularly. So there is still cross-border traffic happening. With Bangladesh, it is becoming more and more restricted though. With Thailand, it differs but the source thinks that there is still movement. People need UID to cross the border to India and China; however, for people living in Kachin State, the borders are no longer under the control of the military authorities.
26. The source's organisation do not have sufficient information as to what is happening at the border. There is probably still irregular cross-border movements but not necessarily regular, documented movement, which is kind of something that you can rely upon. There is thus less regular cross-border movement today than previously.
27. UID is basically just another database where biometric data of everyone is stored. The source thinks that for the military authorities, the UID is also a means to reregister people, control them, make sure that everybody have acquired their legal identification documents properly; they thus use it as a way of controlling the population.

Annex 2: Terms of Reference (ToR)

Security situation in Myanmar

1. Context

2. Security situation

- 2.1. General security situation in Myanmar
- 2.2. Security situation in Shan State
- 2.3. Security situation in Sagaing Region
- 2.4. Security situation in Chin State
- 2.5. Security situation in Karen (Kayin) State
- 2.6. Security situation in Kachin State
- 2.7. Security situation in Rakhine State
- 2.8. Security situation in Yangon Region
- 2.9. Security situation in Mandalay Region

3. Government treatment of selected groups

- 3.1. Ethnic minority groups
- 3.2. Persons of actual or perceived association with anti-government activities
- 3.3. Freedom of movement

4. Return

- 4.1. Conditions upon return
- 4.2. Treatment of persons of actual or perceived association with association with the resistance movements upon return

5. Military service

- 5.1. Military service period
- 5.2. Conscripts' duties during service
- 5.3. Consequences of evasion and desertion (penalty and consequences in practice)
- 5.4. Prison conditions