



# ON-THE-GROUND IN BURMA

A DIGITAL BRIEFER

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## MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

- Drone footage captured live [beheading](#) of resistance committed by a Burmese soldier.
- Karen Human Rights Group [released](#) a new briefing paper - “Burning Karen State: Retaliatory burning of houses and property against rural civilian communities of Southeast Burma (2021 and 2022)”
- 413 [CSOs](#) called on Timor-Leste to retract the invitation to the Burmese junta for an international workshop on “Strengthening Democracy, Peace and Stability in State Building.”
- On April 8, Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the UN, H.E. Mr. Kyaw Moe Tun [addressed](#) the Secretary-General H.E. Mr. Antonio Gueterres on the devastating situation in Burma.
- 546 [CSOs](#) called on the UNSC to lead firm measures against the Burmese junta.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Hold the Junta accountable by taking tangible actions, including, but not limited to: imposing immediate targeted sanctions on Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise and the Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank;
2. Provide immediate cross-border assistance directly to local civil society organizations;
3. Recognize and engage with the National Unity Government (NUG) as the legitimate government of Burma instead of the illegal military junta;
4. Exert all possible pressure through every available means, including multilateral, regional, and bilateral engagement, to ensure that the military allows humanitarian assistance in impacted areas, immediately stops offensives throughout the country, and unconditionally releases all arbitrarily detained protesters and political prisoners.

# ANALYSIS

## Genocide & International Human Rights Crimes: The Junta's Violent Strategies

Since the start of the genocide against the Rohingya, the junta has continued to commit other international human rights violations as an attempt to stay in power at all costs. The junta uses the four cuts policy to reduce civilian access to food, funding, information, and recruits for resistance forces. The junta will close down roads, creating shortages that cause massive price increases for basic goods. Soldiers will not hesitate to shoot random villagers before confirming if they are armed resistance fighters, arbitrarily arrest individuals, and indiscriminately bomb villages. Genocide is no longer just a goal for the junta. Instead, has proven itself to be but the first stepping stone of the military's overall strategy. We must continue raising awareness of the 2017 Rohingya genocide and the brutal tactics the junta is currently employing so that we can stop further genocide of other ethnic communities.

### Latest Statistics



**21,800+** arrested since the start of the coup



**3,452+** killed by the junta since the start of the coup



**~1.3 million** Rohingya refugees need humanitarian aid



**~1,376,000** displaced since the start of the coup



**55,484** homes burned by the military since the start of the coup

“

They used machetes, arrows, and guns... They set fire to our houses and then attacked people when they fled the burning buildings.

Kamal Ahmad, Rohingya | *Nothing Called Freedom*, HRW

”

The Burmese junta's 2017 Rohingya genocide and the February 1st, 2021 attempted coup sparked massive international shock and outrage, further ravaged Rakhine state, and increased the vulnerability of the country's other ethnic groups. Since the start of the genocide against the Rohingya, the junta has continued to commit other international human rights violations as an attempt to stay in power at all costs.



*Rohingya refugees on the second anniversary of their exodus out of Burma (REUTERS/Rafiqur Rahman)*

Many might assume that resistance forces perhaps have an advantage against the junta: they can enlist civilian support and hide discreetly among the general population, preventing their enemy from bombing them for fear of killing innocent people. However, this could not be further from the truth. The junta has never prioritized civilian protection or hesitated to harm innocents. It is also unlikely that civilians will help resistance forces; the junta commonly arrests random individuals and accuses them of supporting anti-coup efforts. The junta has cracked any power that resistance forces might have held by actively committing [war crimes](#).

One of the junta's main strategies is the [four cuts policy](#). First used to fight the Karen in the [1960s](#), this tactic involves reducing access to food, funding, information, and recruits for resistance forces. The junta will close down roads, creating shortages that cause massive price increases for

basic goods. In Sagaing Region's Nanyun Township, one of the 37 townships where the junta declared martial law on February 2nd, villagers are [struggling](#) to obtain food and medicine. If civilians want to travel outside the township for medical treatment, they need several permission letters from various government departments. By blocking civilian access to humanitarian aid, the junta's actions amount to [crimes against humanity](#) and showcase that this violent regime will not stop even after committing genocide.

Meanwhile, the "information" portion of the four cuts involves blocking internet and cell phone services. This disrupts communication between EAO units. However, this also has deadly consequences because it prevents civilians from communicating with their families or accessing the news. Without internet access, word of mouth may not be quick enough for villagers to flee before armed conflict reaches their location. Everything the junta does to attack EAOs directly affects the lives of innocent villagers too, but the junta is willing to sacrifice anything for even the slightest advantage.



*Military border police in Tin May Village, Rakhine State (Ester Htusan/AP Photo)*

A typical government might hesitate to bomb resistance forces hiding among civilians. Meanwhile, the junta goes out of its way to bomb civilians as retaliation whenever they lose a battle. After the Chin National Defense Force [occupied](#) a village in Chin State's Falam Township on April 10th this year, the military responded by bombing

other nearby villages. This airstrike killed nine, injured several others, and destroyed five homes.

Beyond this, soldiers will not hesitate to shoot random villagers before confirming if they are armed resistance fighters. On April 5th, soldiers shot and [killed](#) a man who was hunting on his plantation nearby a military base in Mon State's Ye Township. When two other men came up to help, the soldiers killed them too. Villagers in Mon State frequently hunt animals using makeshift rifles. However, the junta kills first and then asks questions later.

The junta takes indiscriminate killings a step further by even abusing the relationship between civilians and EAOs. By torturing villagers, the junta often extracts information such as the locations of resistance forces or activist leaders. In May 2021, junta forces in Yangon Region's Kawhmu Township [arrested](#) 400 villagers after one of their convoys was attacked. Soldiers beat the villagers during their interrogation and then made them sign a pledge to provide information about the local PDF before releasing them. Even after getting what they want, soldiers will still employ efforts to continue exploiting civilians.

Genocide is no longer just a goal for the junta. Instead, has proven itself to be but the first stepping stone of the military's overall strategy. The junta will respond with deadly force to anyone who opposes them, armed or unarmed, unabashedly violating international human rights law. By treating civilians as enemies, the junta highlights its cruelty and offers ample evidence for war crimes and crimes against humanity. We must continue raising awareness of the 2017 Rohingya genocide and the brutal tactics the junta is currently employing so that we can stop further genocide of other ethnic communities. By cutting off the junta's supply of fuel, the international community can decrease deadly airstrikes and make it difficult for the junta to enforce its travel restrictions. Through arms embargoes, we can limit the tools the junta has at their disposal.

A rightful government's duty is to the people, but the junta's actions indicate that they only have themselves in mind, not the people of Burma. This only makes it more important that them junta is taken down as swiftly as possible. Only then can the people be the country's first priority once again.



*Protestors in a march against the military coup  
(Unsplash/Pyae Sone Htun)*



## VOICE FROM COX'S BAZAR

My name is Md Jamal. I am also known as [Md Jamal Photography](#). My family fled from our homes along with 30,000 Rohingya to Bangladesh in 1991. They registered as refugees with UNHCR in Bangladesh in 1992 and have been living in refugee camps ever since.



*Rohingya refugee camp at Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh.*

*Photo Cred: [MD Jamal](#)*

I was born and raised in Kotupalong Refugee Camp. I had hoped to become a journalist from a young age, but as a refugee, I wasn't able to become a journalist. I thought of doing journalism in Bangladesh and started to take pictures with my friend's mobile phone and posted them on social media.

One day, someone sent me a message on Twitter saying that he wanted to use my picture, and I agreed. He gave me some money as a gift. With that money, I bought a smart phone from a neighbor and started taking photographs daily with my own second hand smart phone.

The situation in our current refugee camp is very difficult, because we are deprived of the opportunities that we should have as refugees. We have no education. So, teenagers indulge in

various bad activities. We have no safe passage. We cannot go outside the refugee camp. Even the government harassed us in many ways in the refugee camps. The government does not give us good treatment here.

The government wants us to equalize with the refugees who arrived in 2017. The government plans to round us up like the 2017 refugee NID card. The 1992 refugees protested that they will not take a NID card like the 2017 refugees.

We are all pleased with the genocide determination issued by the US government last year, but the Burmese army continues to commit genocide against the Rohingya and other ethnic groups. We are still worried about the ongoing violence. Refugees believe they will be repatriated. But due to international pressure, China and Burma are causing issues with repatriation.



*Before repatriation, Rohingya must be recognized as citizens of Burma with the same rights and freedoms.*

*Photo Cred: [MD Jamal](#)*

**We want to live the same way as everyone else.  
This is what we want from the world.**

## **AN OVERVIEW OF BURMA**

### **CHIN**

In April alone, the military junta executed [47 airstrikes with 80 bombs](#) and killed at least 19 civilians in Chin State, meaning at least two bombs were dropped per day. On April 10, the junta bombed the town of [Waibula](#) in Falam Township which led to the death of nine civilians and injuries of many others. This was in response to a Chin National Defense Force (CNDF) raid. India also closed their borders to Chin State after the murder of [three Indian citizens](#) in the area. This was also done partially in response to the major bombing in Waibula. In Matup Township, the junta's ["four cuts" strategy](#) following their declaration of martial law has also been used to cut ethnic groups' access to food, funds, recruits, and more. Now, many of the people in Matupi are going hungry and even hospitals are out of medicine. A [clash](#) between the CNDF and junta soldiers also resulted in the death of 14 junta soldiers.

### **KACHIN**

The Kachin Baptist Convention is helping resettle IDPs into safe homes and provided 500,000 MMK, rice, cooking oil, salt and onions to each IDP family that returned. However, these families are still in need of financial assistance. On April 7, the Myitkyina Township Court [handed](#) a 6 year sentence to Reverend Dr.Hkalam Samson, former President of the Kachin Baptist Convention. The Myitkyina Court charged him with violation of the Counter Terrorism Act, Unlawful Association Act, and Penal Code Article 505A. On 11 April, 200 junta soldiers raided at least 10 villages, torching over 500 homes, and displacing 10,000+ locals. There are still over 5000 people, including children and elderly, who are hiding in the jungle. Residents report that the junta would also frequently launch airstrikes in the area along with these ground attacks. Airstrikes were [launched](#) on Si Mulay, Si Mugyi, and Si Tha villages on 5 April; Tongkok and Si Thaug villages on 6 April, and Mang Hker and Si Thaug again on 9 April. Locals say that after bombs are dropped from the sky, soldiers enter the villages and destroy any remaining structures.

### **KARENNI**

On April 11, two [emergency relief workers died](#) in an airstrike on the frontline of the state. Since April 16, the junta has been [deploying airstrikes](#) in Demoso township to support ground troops engaged in armed conflict. From April 16-18, three houses in Dawngaykhu were burnt down, and one was entirely destroyed. On April 20, in Demoso Township, the junta set [multiple properties alight](#), which forced residents to flee for safety. When locals returned, they found that homes were destroyed during the armed conflict and numerous unexploded bombs remained in the area. [Six parishes](#) in the Pekhon diocese, which is partially in Kayah state, have been abandoned, while churches have also been attacked. The Pekhon diocese and Loikaw diocese are among the worst affected by the armed conflict.

### **MON**

On April 2, the junta [arrested](#) 130 Rohingya attempting to flee to Malaysia by boat from Mon State. 65 of them were sent to Mawlamyine Prison awaiting trial and would likely be charged with violating immigration law. The junta continued its [artillery attacks](#) on villages in Bee Lin and Thaton despite no armed clashes with resistance forces, injuring three villagers from Chaung Sout village in Thaton Township on April 2. On April 5, three plantation [workers](#) were shot and killed in Mon State's Ye Township by junta soldiers disguised as ordinary villagers to ambush PDF. Four youths from Taung Gyi Village and another four youths from Taung Zun Village in [Bilin Township](#) were detained for allegedly being involved in the explosion of two bombs on 16 April, the eve of New Year. On April 18<sup>th</sup>, junta troops [arrested](#) a 16 year old and a 21 year old for an alleged bombing plot in Pa Nga village, Thanbyuzayat Township. After the interrogation, the soldiers did not press charges on the suspects and killed them instead.

## KAREN

On [April 3](#), the Karen National Union Mutraw Daily News reported that 190 clashes took place between the KNLA and the Burmese Junta. The junta conducted airstrikes, forcing [8000](#) of the nearby residents to flee. On [April 6](#), the junta arrested 2 young men in Hpa-an. The young men's families had to pay 500,000 kyats for their release. Due to armed conflict, [10,000](#) residents from Shwe Kokko have fled to Thailand. Thai authorities have provided 15 tents, but many are still in need of basic necessities. Most of the displaced are elderly and children. During [Thingyan](#), the People's Defense Force of Loikaw attacked the Karen State Authorities' Pavilion, saying it was revenge for the massacres and murders of villagers committed by the junta. On [April 21](#), the Burmese Junta invaded a village in Hpakant Township, taking 100 civilians as human shields and beating them. The civilians taken were primarily young or middle-aged, and a few buildings were destroyed during the invasion.

## SHAN

This month, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) continued its [forceful recruitment](#) of men and women to become their soldiers in Mantong Township. TNLA soldiers have also been [extorting](#) money at highway checkpoints and commandeering civilian houses in northern Shan state. On 2 April, vehicles traveling on the roads between Muse and Nam Kham towns were stopped and forced to pay tolls to TNLA troops, ranging from 100,000MMK to 300,000MMK. Additionally, between 5-10 April, the Mandalay People's Defense Force (PDF) itself also [engaged](#) in multiple clashes with the Burma Army (BA) in Nawngkhio Township. Locals [reported](#) that junta troops fired heavy artillery and mortar shells indiscriminately into villages. The fighting [displaced](#) 4,000 residents, and at least 7 people were [killed](#) over the five days, including children. Separate clashes between the BA and PDF in Mongpai, Taunggyi also left more than 10,000 people [displaced](#).

## RAKHINE

Before Min Aung Hlaing's visit to Sittwe, members of the All Arakan Student and Youth Congress organized [campaign](#) dispersing leaflets that condemned the upcoming junta-organized general election as illegitimate. Residents of Rakhine State want the junta to [withdraw](#) its troops who are stationed in the pagoda: to freely observe the Sabbath during Thingyan without restrictions or anxiety. The junta has refused these repeated requests. About 80 households from Myo Oo Gaung IDP camp and 35 households from Lat Kauk Zay IDP camp in Mrauk U Township were [removed](#) from the subsidy list of the World Food Programme because they were not present in the camps during the time of the WFP's visit as they were working outside. This removal has caused hardships for refugees who already find it difficult to survive on NGOs support. Of the 173 prisoners [released](#) from Rakhine State prisons due to the junta's mass amnesty for the Burmese New Year, none were political prisoners nor those imprisoned for their links to the Arakan Army.

## CENTRAL BURMA

On April 11, the Burmese military launched an [aerial strike](#) on Pa Zi Gyi, Sagaing region killing more than 185 civilians, including 40 that were under the age of 18. On [April 18](#), the junta opened fire on a village in Magway Region, using sub-machine guns and rockets. They also conducted a ground attack to target a community-run clinic that staffed many Civil Disobedience Movement members and assisted many civilians. Around 300 people were arrested, and many were patients and health workers. Also on [April 18](#), a member of the Special Task Force-Mandalay died in junta custody less than 2 weeks after he was arrested. No cause was given for his death. On [April 20](#), the Burmese Junta bombed Laungbolay village. Many villagers' homes were burned down, and the displaced are in urgent need of food and water. Over 5000 civilians fled their homes in Magway Region due to the junta's airstrikes and ground attacks.