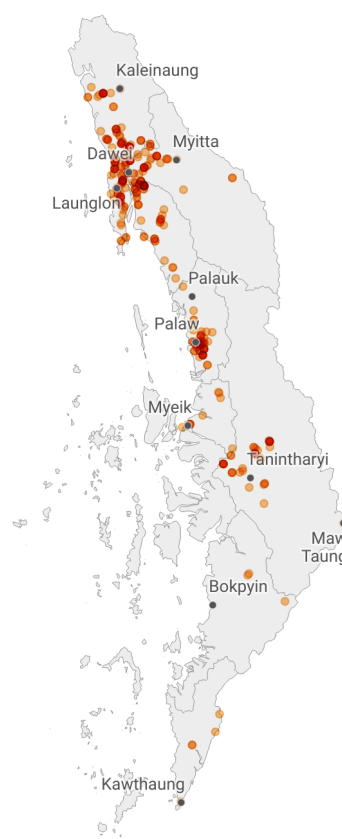


*This regular update, covering non-violent movements, conflict trends, human rights violations, and humanitarian developments up to 31 August is produced by Southern Monitor, a local research group. The next monthly situation update will be issued in September 2022.*

### HIGHLIGHTS & KEY MESSAGES

- A total of 12 armed clashes erupted in Tanintharyi Region in August 2022. The majority of clashes were between Tatmadaw forces and the local people's defense forces in Dawei, Tanintharyi and Palaw Townships.
- Displacement fluctuated considerably from the previous month's figures, from 17,415 IDPs to an estimated 4,632 IDPs in August 2022 due to the return of the displaced populations in Thayetchaung and Launglon Townships as of 27 August 2022.
- Tatmadaw forces extended their search and raid operations in several villages in Yebyu Township where additional displacement were reported.
- A total of 29 incidents involving attacks targeting civilians were reported in August.
- Tanintharyi Region saw a sustained presence of non-violent actions, with the majority of women-led protests as part of "Rose Color Movement" in Launglon and Thayetchaung Townships.
- Urban settings in Tanintharyi Region, Myeik and Dawei town saw a relatively more tightened security control and measures by Tatmadaw forces in response to a recent anti-regime operation by local PDFs across many townships in the region.

### Incident Map: Violent Incidents in Tanintharyi Region



*The incidents include armed clashes, remote violence and attacks targeting to civilians that occurred between February 2021 to August 2022.*

Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

### KEY FIGURES<sup>1</sup>

**3515**

Nonviolent actions mobilized by activist groups between February 2021 and August 2022

**555**

Violent incidents occurred in the region between February 2021 and August 2022

**244**

People killed by conflict actors between February 2021 and August 2022

**4.6K**

People currently displaced by clashes and insecurity since February 2021

<sup>1</sup> Displacement figures fluctuate during any given month. These figures represent the number of people currently displaced. Cumulative numbers for returns and displacement are not always available.

## WHO WE ARE

Southern Monitor is an independent research group that monitors socio-economic, peace, and human rights issues in Tanintharyi Region of Myanmar. This report is based on primary data collection from the field, and secondary data sources which include news from mainstream and local media. We also monitor social media pages of strike committees, student unions, civil society organizations, humanitarian support groups, and local people's defense forces operating in the region. This report is prepared by a technical team, in consultation with local partners and field monitors.

## BACKGROUND

Tanintharyi Region is located in Southeastern Myanmar, bounded by Mon State to the north, Thailand to the east and south, and the Andaman Sea to the west. Tanintharyi Region, formerly known as Tenasserim Division, is a long and narrow strip of land along Myanmar's coastline and has a distinct positioning among the regions in Myanmar due to its proximity to the border with Thailand. The region was previously divided into three districts: Dawei (Tavoy), Myeik, and Kawthoung. Dawei and Myeik are the significant economic, political, and social hubs of the region.

According to government statistics, Tanintharyi Region has a population of 1,426,426, with 76% of the population living in rural areas.<sup>2</sup> The region is sparsely populated given that the land consists of mountainous terrain. Most rural populations live near the coast, or along one of the rivers and tributaries. The fishery sector is a main livelihood of the region, alongside rubber and palm oil plantations, and tourism. Despite the absence of frequent armed clashes in Tanintharyi Region, local populations have endured several decades of displacement, as a result of military operations, land confiscation, and commercial investment projects. Land confiscation and arbitrary taxation allegedly carried out by both the Tatmadaw and the KNU were the major drivers of displacement in Tanintharyi Region. Despite the relative stability compared to other regions in Southeastern Myanmar, the large-scale rubber and oil plantations have prevented segments of the local population from residing in their desired locations.

A vast area of Tanintharyi Region is considered as Mergui-Tavoy (Myeik-Dawei) District, under the administration of KNU Brigade 4, although the map of the area endorsed by the KNU does not correspond directly with official government boundaries<sup>3</sup>. The KNU's territorial control has been historically scattered along areas bordering Thailand. The New Mon State Party (NMSP)'s operational area is limited to the northern parts of the region in Yebyu Township near the official border with Mon State. The Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and the Karen National Defense Organisation (KNDO) are strategically significant, especially after the military coup on February 1, 2021. KNLA and KNDO territories have provided: refuge for political dissidents, a home for the influx of resistance groups, and safe passage for displaced populations.

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<sup>2</sup> The 2019 Inter-censal Survey: The Union Report.

[https://www.dop.gov.mm/sites/dop.gov.mm/files/publication\\_docs/ics\\_report\\_eng\\_7012021.pdf](https://www.dop.gov.mm/sites/dop.gov.mm/files/publication_docs/ics_report_eng_7012021.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> This refers to the official government boundaries recognized by the NLD government. The administrative divisions of Tanintharyi Region (Tenasserim Region) of the state government are made of Dawei District, Myeik District, and Kawthoung District. The State Administration Council designated Bokpyin to be a district after the coup.

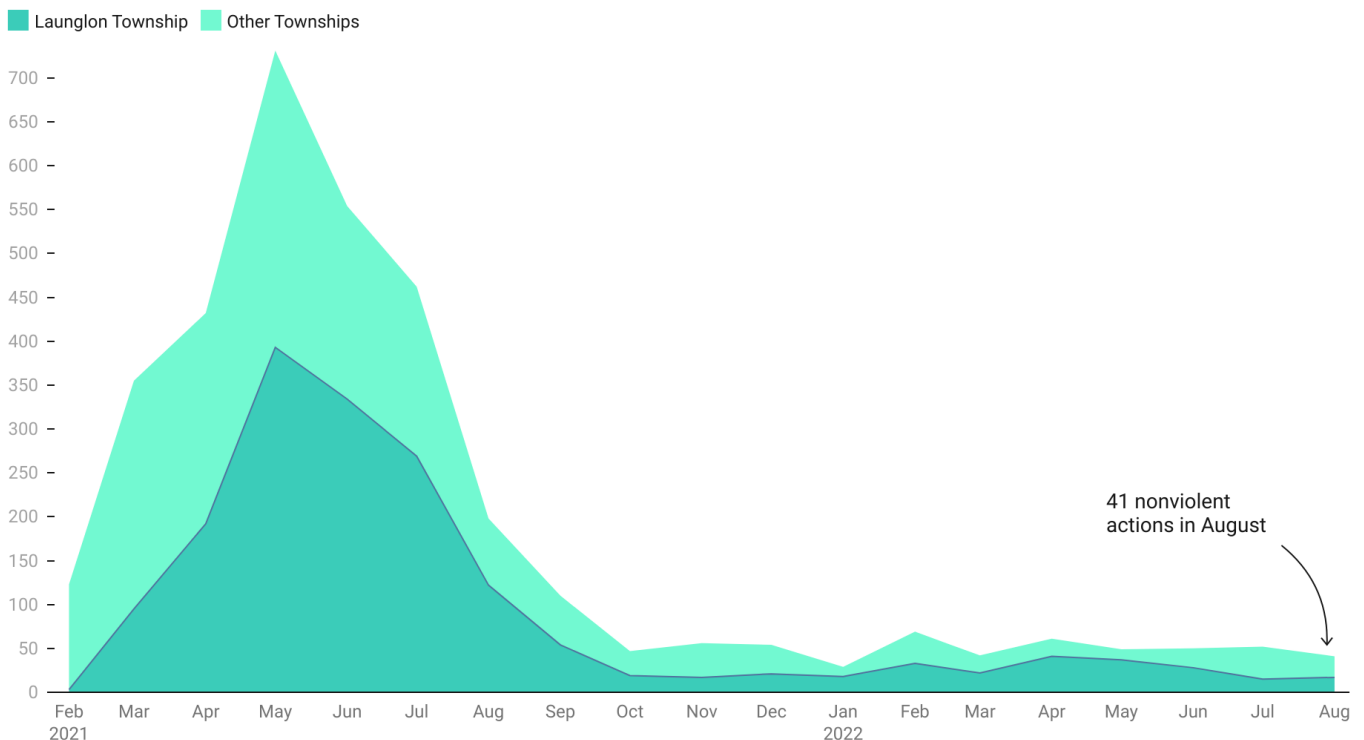
## NON-VIOLENT MOVEMENTS IN TANINTHARYI REGION

The mass demonstrations kicked off in major towns in the region: Dawei city, Myeik to Kawthoung since the first week of February 2021, following the coup staged by the Tatmadaw (Myanmar Armed Forces). Subsequently, non-violent resistance in the forms of street demonstrations took place both in urban and rural settings on a daily basis across Tanintharyi Region. Hundreds of thousands of protesters joined the demonstrations in 2021. Towards the end of February 2021, Tatmadaw security forces started arresting protesters and using lethal force to force the dispersal of the demonstrations in Myeik, Dawei, and Kawthoung towns, leading to casualties and injuries.

The general trends of non-violent resistance in many towns across the country suggest that due to the Tatmadaw's blatant repression of the anti-coup resistance, and its enforcement of COVID-19 related restrictions to weaken public participation in mass demonstrations, the number of non-violent movements has significantly dropped from June 2021 onwards. As non-violent resistance weakened, youth relocated to peripheral borderland areas of the country, commonly termed as "liberated areas" and subsequently joined the people's defense forces (PDFs) to join the armed resistance. With the commencement of fighting between Tatmadaw forces and PDFs, a relatively weakened presence of non-violent movements has been reported in many towns across the country after June 2021. However, Tanintharyi Region, especially some townships in Dawei District saw a sustained presence of non-violent resistance with street demonstrations occurring almost daily. The formation of strike committees, as well as the persistence of the anti-coup protesters in the district, maintained the momentum of the non-violent resistance. However, the average number of protesters in the protests has significantly dropped. Tatmadaw forces have specifically targeted local populations in townships in Dawei District: Launglon, Thayetchaung and Yebyu, arresting the protest organizers and violently cracking down on protesters.

### Number of Nonviolent Actions in Tanintharyi Region

(February 2021 to August 2022)



Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

## Non-violent Movements in August 2022

The non-violent movements were sustained in August 2022, with the majority of protests and demonstrations reported in Launglon, Thayetchaung, and Palaw Townships. A total of 41 non-violent actions were reported in August 2022. Some of the protests and street demonstrations were prompted by the public outrage towards the junta's executions of four democracy activists on 23 July 2022. Despite the ongoing repression of non-violent movement and increased presence of Tatmadaw forces across the townships in the region, the defiance against military rule via non-violent movements persisted throughout August 2022.

The coup opponents kicked off the month with a women-led protest organized by the "Rose Color Movement" on 1 August 2022. Protesters held pictures of women political prisoners facing the death penalty.<sup>4</sup> Additional women-led protests organized as part of the movement were also held on 5 and 21 August 2022 in Launglon Township.<sup>5</sup> The movement involved a series of women-led demonstrations which were first held on 28 August, 2021 in Launglon Township, with the participation of women, members of the LGBTQ community, and students. These demonstrations were organized to promote women's participation in the non-violent resistance and to eliminate gender discrimination. Tatmadaw forces have increased their presence in many townships including Palaw, increasing the likelihood of an immediate and violent crackdown. Despite the ongoing repression and use of tactics in the region, protesters held an anti-coup rally in Palaw Township on 1 August 2022. An alliance of resistance groups, including KPDF, escorted the protesters during the rally.<sup>6</sup>

Dawei District, which has been home to a myriad of anti-coup strike committees, has continued to be a stronghold of non-violent movements in Tanintharyi Region. Tatmadaw forces have tightened security control with the use of security checks and increased presence of troops in both urban and rural settings in Dawei District, at a seemingly larger scale ahead of the anniversary of the "8888 uprising".<sup>7</sup> However, in defiance of this repression, locals staged protests marking the anniversary of the uprising and pro-democracy protests in Launglon and Yebyu Townships. Furthermore, many townships in Dawei District have been home to some of the most active students' unions and strike committees in the region, including township chapters of the Basic Education Students' Union (BESU). The BESU Launglon chapter organized the anti-coup protests on 6 and 10 August 2022.

In Thayetchaung and Launglon townships, a combined group of students, women, and members of the LGBT community staged a series of anti-coup protests during 13-25 August 2022. Protesters staged a demonstration in the Kanbawk area in Yebyu township on 28 August 2022, marking the death anniversary of four protesters during a violent crackdown on a major strike column in Dawei District.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The Tanintharyi Times. 1 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/108506238223647/posts/180921644315439>

<sup>5</sup> Democracy Movement Strike Committee-Dawei. <https://www.facebook.com/101846808678327/posts/404599215069750>

<sup>6</sup> Dawei Information Center. 1 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/404294038464720>

<sup>7</sup> Field monitor. 5 August 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Democracy Movement Strike Committee-Dawei. 27 August 2022.

<https://www.facebook.com/101846808678327/posts/419643390231999>

## CONFLICT TRENDS

According to data collected by Southern Monitor, there are more than 35 local people's defense groups, and dozens of anti-coup resistance groups that have emerged in the region. Under the guidance of the National Unity Government (NUG), People's Administrations and People's Defense Forces were established in almost all townships of Tanintharyi Region.<sup>9</sup>

August 2022 marked one year since Tanintharyi Region saw intensified armed fighting between local resistance groups (People's Defense Forces) and Tatmadaw forces, with the majority of clashes reported in Launglon, Palaw, and Thayetchaung Townships. The local PDFs' main tactics targeted at Tatmadaw soldiers and police forces included the use of remote-detonated explosives and assassinations of alleged members of pro-regime militias, Pyu Saw Htee, and its sub-groups.<sup>10</sup> In this month, as part of "Operation Nan Htike Aung"<sup>11</sup>, local PDFs sought to gain greater momentum in the armed resistance by launching remote violence attacks against Tatmadaw convoys, as well as assassinations against alleged members of pro-regime militias in urban and rural settings in Myeik, Palaw, and Kawthoung Townships. The local PDFs and an ethnic armed organization, the Karen National Defense Organization (KNDO), also launched joint attacks on Tatmadaw forces in Palaw Township.

Notably, some of the areas in Dawei and Myeik Districts remained the main flashpoints of the conflict, as frequent clashes broke out in those areas. The increased tension between Tatmadaw forces and local resistance groups has persisted. In Taungpyauk area in Thayetchaung Township, there have been frequent offensives and an increased presence of Tatmadaw forces since the last quarter of 2021. Another area of conflict is the Dawei-Hteekhee Road, where remote violence by the local PDFs broke out, leading to the Tatmadaw's search and arrest operations and more armed clashes between the local PDFs. The Tatmadaw forces use the road, which connects to Myitta town and Htee Khee gate, a major border trading point on the Thai-Myanmar border, for transporting supplies and troop reinforcements. Frequent clashes and remote violence between Tatmadaw forces and local PDFs (or a combined force of local PDFs and the Karen National Defense Organization (KNDO) erupt on the road. Consequently, villages along the road disproportionately bear the brunt of the Tatmadaw's search and raid operations following the violent incidents. Additional flashpoints of conflict in the region are: Ah Shey Taw area in Dawei Township, Kyaung Neint Area in Palaw Township, and Taku-Tha Ra Bwin area in Tanintharyi Township. Tatmadaw forces have shifted deployment of troops and reinforcements from one area of operation to another, then launched offensives, primarily artillery shelling, specifically within the bounds of the aforementioned areas in Tanintharyi Region each month. In the month of August 2022, Tatmadaw forces have particularly expanded the coverage of their search and raid operations to several villages in Yebyu Township and committed killings and other abuses including arrest and detention of civilians and using civilians as human shields.

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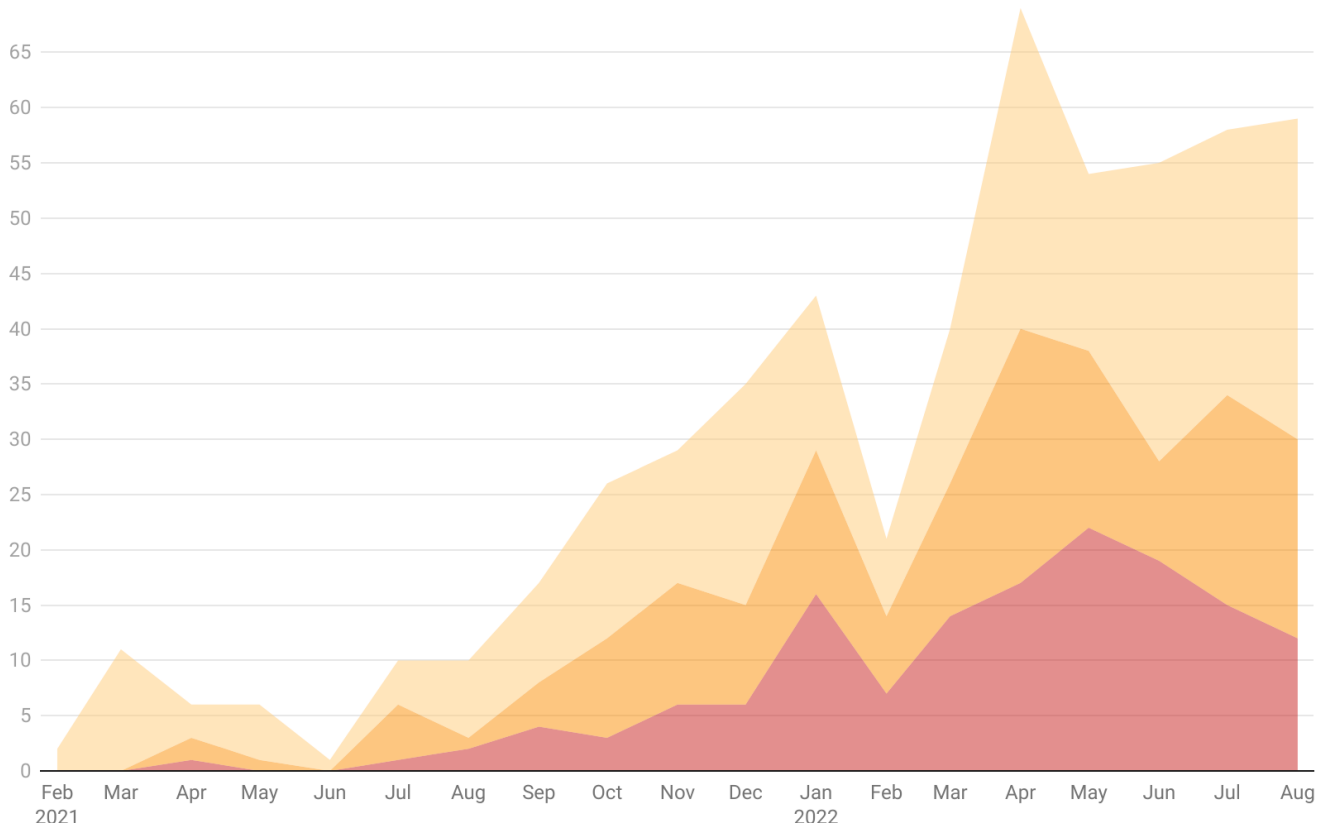
<sup>9</sup> Interviews with local sources

<sup>10</sup> The pro-regime Pyu Saw Htee collective, made up of military veterans, informants and other pro-regime supporters, to the common knowledge of local populations, have been involved in killings, threats, and intimidation targeted at the perceived opponents of the military regime. This includes (but is not limited to) the following groups: members and alleged supporters of the National League for Democracy (NLD), members of local PDFs and their family members, and protest organizations.

<sup>11</sup> Operation Nan Htike Aung is a recent anti-regime operation launched by local resistance groups under the military command of the National Unity Government (NUG). The Operation first started off as a series of urban guerillas and deadly attacks on junta security forces and junta-appointed local administrators in Yangon Region.

## Number of Violent Incidents in Tanintharyi Region

Armed Clashes Remote Violence Attacks Targeting Civilian



Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

Furthermore, in both urban and rural settings, the junta tightened security by amending and enforcing draconian laws and regulations that made local populations even more vulnerable to being shot, arrested, and fined by Tatmadaw security forces. The junta imposed new “motorbike restrictions” that ban two men from riding a motorbike together, to limit the movements of civil resistance fighters. That led to several accounts of extortion, civilians getting shot and killed, and tortured, by Tatmadaw security forces that increased their presence across the region. In August 2022, Tatmadaw forces shot and killed civilians for reportedly breaching the motorbike restrictions in Myeik township. Additionally, Tatmadaw security forces resumed checking “overnight guest registration”, leading to arbitrary raids of civilians’ houses, who they sought to arrest, based on suspicions of ties to the local PDFs, or involvement in anti-coup movements. Also, the junta handed down hefty punishments to detained members of local PDFs and alleged supporters of the National Unity Government (NUG) and the Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH).

### Armed Clashes

From April 2021 to August 2022, there were a total of 146 clashes reported. A total of 12 armed clashes erupted in Tanintharyi Region in August 2022. The clashes were reported in many townships in Dawei and Myeik District: Dawei, Yebyu, Tanintharyi and Palaw townships.

The tensions between the local PDFs and the Tatmadaw forces heightened across Palaw and Dawei Townships. In August 2022 as the former engaged in increased number of skirmishes and remote violence targeted at the Tatmadaw forces

Tatmadaw forces continued to either increase its offensives and troop reinforcements or engage in armed clashes with the local PDFs in the flashpoints previously mentioned in the Southern Monitor's Monthly Situation Update issued in July 2022. The flashpoints included Dawei-Hteekhee road, Taung Pyauk area of Thayetchaung Townships and some parts of Palaw and Tanintharyi Township. In this month, Tatmadaw forces have noticeably increased its presence and offensives, mostly in the form of search and raid operations in villages (Ae Ka Ni, Kha Maung Chaung, and Wat Chaung) nearby Dawei Special Economic Zone (Dawei SEZ) and several villages across Yebyu township.

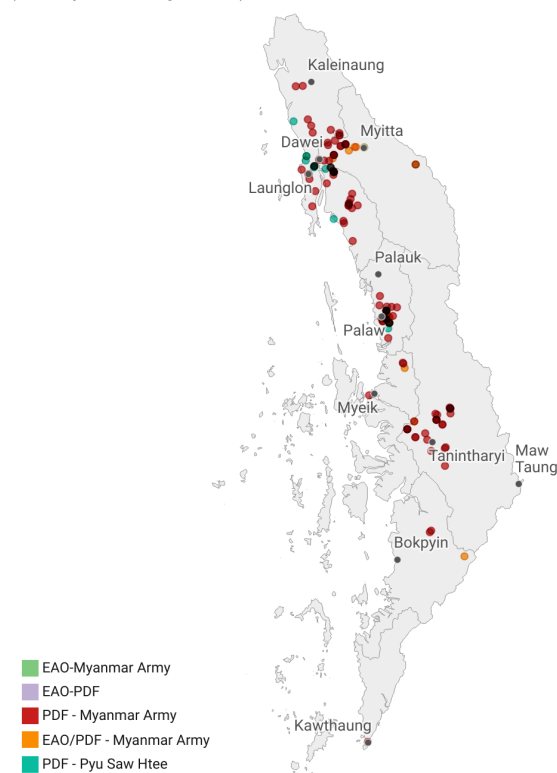
## Major Incidents in August 2022

### Dawei Township

- Clashes between an unidentified armed group and Tatmadaw forces broke out near Pa Kar Ri village police station on the evening of 17 August 2022. Consequently, Tatmadaw forces launched artillery shelling in the area, causing damage to residents' houses in Pa Kar Ri village. No casualties were reported, and the villagers fled their homes for safety.<sup>12</sup>
- Tavoy People Liberation Force (TPLF) stated that on 26 August 2022, the local PDF and Tatmadaw forces exchanged fire between Thin Gan Tone and Wa Kone villages on Dawei-Hteekhee road following its skirmish against a vanguard unit of Tatmadaw 17-vehicle convoy on their way to transport supplies to the troops stationed in areas near Myitta and Htee Khee town.<sup>13</sup> The Tavoy People Liberation Force (TPLF) also launched a skirmish, a vehicle reportedly carrying a second-lieutenant of the police force, and alleged members of Pyu Saw Htee group on 20 August 2022.<sup>14</sup>

### Incident Map: Armed Clashes in Tanintharyi Region

(February 2021 to August 2022)



Source: Southern Monitor - Created with Datawrapper

### Yebyu Township

- During 30 July to 1 August 2022, Tatmadaw forces launched major offensives and sent troop reinforcements in villages near Dawei Special Economic Zone (Dawei SEZ) including Ae Ka Ni, Kha Maung Chaung, and Wat Chaung villages in Yebyu Township. Tatmadaw columns entered the villages and arrested dozens of civilians in the villages. In Ae Ka Ni village, Tatmadaw forces arrested around 30 civilians on 30 July, and later released them. The Tatmadaw forces also reportedly looted civilians' properties including 20 motorbikes and other valuable possessions

<sup>12</sup> Dawei Information Center. 18 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/415265064034284>

<sup>13</sup> Tavoy People Liberation Force (TPLF). 26 August 2022.

<https://www.facebook.com/110968191682720/posts/pfbid032u69SoDrNhKws5TDzpGx9SsW1Nn7VBeQEeH9AGEaDsjbbzbkN23N6VELs4gHPshI/?d=n>

<sup>14</sup> Tavoy People Liberation Force (TPLF). 20 August 2022. <https://fb.watch/fgCwdkxTUq/>

from the civilians' homes. The increased presence of Tatmadaw troops resulted in new displacement in the area. The newly displaced populations are in dire need of food and humanitarian assistance. The Tatmadaw forces are also stationed in Pu Gaw Zun village, where a total of 5 civilians disappeared following the increased presence of the Tatmadaw forces.<sup>15</sup>

- According to a local source, Tatmadaw forces sent additional troop reinforcements in the areas near Ka Lone Htar village in Yebyu Township. Ka Lone Htar village is in close proximity to the area controlled by Brigade 4 of the Karen Nation Union (KNU). The junta's forces suspect that the KNU is harboring members of local people's defense forces. It has a population of 780 residents. As of 14 August 2022, about 200 Tatmadaw forces are stationed in Ka Lone Htar village. The Tatmadaw forces also reportedly launched artillery strikes in the village. An unidentified man was found dead with sustained gunshot wounds in the village on 16 August 2022. The dead body was later identified as a 19 year old villager from Ka Lone Htar village. He was shot and killed by the Tatmadaw forces which continued to station at the school. The local source stated that the Tatmadaw forces fired arms on the premises of the village monastery, and accused villagers in Ka Lone Htar village of harboring some of the local resistance groups. Under the pretext of this accusation, Tatmadaw forces interrogated monks and civilians at the monastery and raided multiple villagers' houses. Some houses in the village were also reportedly looted by members of the Tatmadaw forces. As of 18 August 2022, Tatmadaw forces have been present in Ka Lone Htar village. The majority of the villagers from Ka Lone Htar village fled their homes on 14 August 2022.<sup>16</sup> The majority of the affected populations remained displaced as of 28 August and have been facing ration shortages.

### *Tanintharyi Township*

- Clashes between Tatmadaw forces and a local PDF erupted in Koe Inn village, Taku village tract in Tanintharyi Township on 7 August 2022. The Tatmadaw forces stationed in Koe Inn village monastery and launched artillery shelling in the area. The villagers fled homes due to the clashes.<sup>17</sup> The Tatmadaw forces arrested about 100 villagers from Kaw Taw village in the same village tract to use as human shields and later released them when they reached Tha Mee Hla village.<sup>18</sup>
- Intensified clashes between Tatmadaw forces and an alliance of local PDFs erupted during 19-22 August in Kawt Ma Pyin village in Tanintharyi Township. Tatmadaw forces continued to use the village as an operational foothold, and also launched artillery shelling in nearby areas. There were reported casualties on both sides. Two civilians were also decapitated and killed by Tatmadaw forces. More civilians were arrested, and used as human shields. The armed clashes, and continued presence of Tatmadaw forces, led to the displacement of more than 500 civilians from not only Kawt Ma Pyin but also other villages-- including Ban Pyayt, Yay Phyu, and Thin Baw Nan to the plantation and other villages.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Dawei Watch. 1 August 2022. <http://www.daweiwatch.com/2022/08/01/news/42370/>

<sup>16</sup> Field Monitor. 18 August 2022.

<sup>17</sup> The Tanintharyi Times. 7 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/108506238223647/posts/182027947538142>

<sup>18</sup> Mizzima-News in Burmese. 9 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/5822555961112594>

<sup>19</sup> Mizzima-News in Burmese. 22 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/5860677500633773>



## Palaw Township

- On 1 August 2022, Karen National Defense Organization (KNDO) and its allies of local people's defense forces pledged to eliminate the military regime during a ceremony in memory of four slain democracy activists. With the pledge, a member of a local PDF stated that armed clashes are to be expected in the near future as they endeavor to put the junta's rule to an end.<sup>20</sup>
- Tatmadaw's Light Infantry Battalion 285 launched multiple artillery strikes on 13 August 2022, leading to severe damage of a few residential houses in Kyaung Neint and Mhaw Mi villages in Palaw Township. No civilian casualties were reported during the incident.<sup>21</sup>
- As part of "Operation Nan Htike Aung", local PDF under the military command of National Unity Government's Ministry of Defense launched a skirmish on a Tatmadaw troop in Pu Law Kone village in Palaw Township on 24 August 2022.<sup>22</sup>



## Remote Violence

Local people's defense forces (PDFs) employed the tactic of remote violence to attack at the convoys of Tatmadaw forces, troop columns, office buildings, and the commercial facilities of the military regime and its associates. During April 2021 to June 2022, there were a total of 141 remote violence incidents, with about half of the attacks were targeted at the Tatmadaw convoys, police forces, and pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee. Despite the fact that local PDFs and some news sources stated that the attacks against the Tatmadaw security forces and pro-regime militias resulted in varying numbers of casualties, it is difficult to independently verify the exact figures.

The remaining half of the total number of remote violence incidents involved attacks targeted at the office buildings of the military regime, the telecommunication towers and showrooms of military-owned Mytel, and prisons. In addition, there were more than 9 incidents in which the residential houses of policemen, local administrators and alleged informants were attacked. There were some accounts of collateral damage involving young children and women due to explosions.

## Number of Remote Violence by Target in Tanintharyi Region

(February 2021 to August 2022)

Target	Number of Incidents
1 Myanmar Army	75
2 SAC's Offices	14
3 Mytel Tower/Showroom	12
4 Gambling Site	9
5 House of Pro-SAC Groups	9
6 School	7
7 Myanmar Police Force	6
8 Pyu Saw Htee	5
9 MOGE-PTTEP	4
10 Unspecified	4
11 Civilians	3
12 NLD Office	3
13 Pro-military Group	3
14 Crony's Business	2
15 Bridges	1
16 Bus	1
17 Prison	1
18 SAC's Ceremony	1
Total	160

Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

<sup>20</sup> Myanmar Pressphoto Agency. 1 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/874334009274294/posts/7867994913241467>

<sup>21</sup> Field Monitor. 18 August 2022.

<sup>22</sup> Tanintharyi Region command. 26 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/107736585173414/posts/162025399744532>

## *Yebyu Township*

- Dawei Guerilla Revolution Forces (DGRF) released a statement claiming responsibility for an incident of remote violence in which a Tatmadaw convoy was attacked between Nyin Htwe and Zee Kya villages on Yebyu-Dawei Road in Yebyu Township on 30 July 2022.<sup>23</sup> Tatmadaw forces regularly use the road for troop reinforcements/movements and transportation of supplies. Incidents of remote violence occur almost daily in the township.
- It was reported on 2 August 2022 that an alliance of three local PDFs (Dawei Guerilla Revolutionary Force (DGRF), Launglone People's Defence Force (LLPDF) and Thayetchaung PDF (T-PDF) launched two attacks on Tatmadaw convoy using remote-detonated explosives devices on 31 July and 1 August 2022. At the time of the remote violence incident on 31 July 2022, the Tatmadaw convoy was on their way from Ae Ka Ni and Kha Maung Chaung villages where they burned down a total of 5 civilian houses.<sup>24</sup>

## *Myeik Township*

- A Myeik-based people's defense force and its allies launched a remote violence attack on a vehicle of a pro-regime militia on the Airport Road in Myeik town on the morning of 16 August 2022. This attack was part of a series of operations, commonly referred to as "Operation Nan Htike Aung" across various towns in Myanmar.<sup>25</sup> According to a local source, the members of the local fire department were among those people in the vehicle, which carried a total of 15 men at the time of the incident. Those men were believed to be on the way to a junta-sponsored military training. A member of the local fire department based in Yay Pone ward in Myeik town died on the spot, and two more people were seriously injured.<sup>26</sup> The junta's State Administrative Council (SAC) mobilized members of local fire departments to receive military training and join a "public security force" from early 2022. The remote violence incident led to even tighter security by Tatmadaw forces.
- A Tatmadaw convoy was attacked with a remote-detonated explosive device near Maung Mei Shaung village on Yebyu-Dawei road on 17 August 2022. No organizations claimed responsibility for the remote violence incident.<sup>27</sup> Frequent incidents of remote violence take place on the highway roads in Yebyu, Dawei, Thayetchaung and Palaw Townships. According to local sources, Tatmadaw forces deployed reinforcement troops in the areas where remote violence occurred previously, leading to its increased insecurity in the villages along the highways.

## *Thayetchaung Township*

- An alliance of local PDFs launched a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) at a Tatmadaw convoy of 14 vehicles near Yae Nge village in Thayetchaung Township on 10 August 2022.<sup>28</sup> According to a local source, some civilians in the nearby area fled their homes in fear of being subjected to arrests and detention by Tatmadaw forces.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> The Tanintharyi Times. 1 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/108506238223647/posts/180998060974464>

<sup>24</sup> Dawei Information Center. 2 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/404803438413780>

<sup>25</sup> Dawei Information Center. 16 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/413967360830721>

<sup>26</sup> Field Monitor. 16 August 2022.

<sup>27</sup> The Tanintharyi Times. 18 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/108506238223647/posts/183795867361350>

<sup>28</sup> Dawei Information Center. 11 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/410766554484135>

<sup>29</sup> Field Monitor. 12 August 2022.

## *Kawthoung Township*

- A local PDF also launched a skirmish on a Tatmadaw convoy patrolling around the district court mainly with the use of remote-detonated explosive devices in Kawthoung town on 26 August 2022, as part of “Operation Nan Htike Aung”.<sup>30</sup> A day earlier on 25 August 2022, unidentified gunmen also fired shots at a police station in Kawthoung town. According to a local source, in response to the attacks targeted at the Tatmadaw and police forces, the junta’s forces reportedly threatened the local civilians that they risk getting shot if seen to be riding a motorbike together. Previously, the motorbike restrictions applied to two or more men riding on the same motorbike together, however, the ban now prohibits two (or more) men and two (or more) women from riding on the same bike.<sup>31</sup>

### **Attacks targeting civilians**

Some civilian casualties reported were as a result of the disproportionate use of force by Tatmadaw troops and columns during raid and arrest operations in many townships across the region. Some were due to gunshots fired by the Tatmadaw personnel deployed at the security checkpoints within major towns and on the roads connecting different townships. Also, the Tatmadaw forces often fired shots at civilians who were present at scenes of the remote violence, resulting in civilian casualties. In August 2022, there were several violent incidents in which Tatmadaw forces fired shots at civilians for reportedly breaching the motorbike restriction in Myeik, Dawei and Palaw Townships.

Pro-regime militias, such as Pyu Saw Htee network and its sub-groups such as Thway Thout, Kite Force group also committed extrajudicial killings targeting members and alleged supporters of the National League for Democracy (NLD) and supporters of the people’s defense forces.

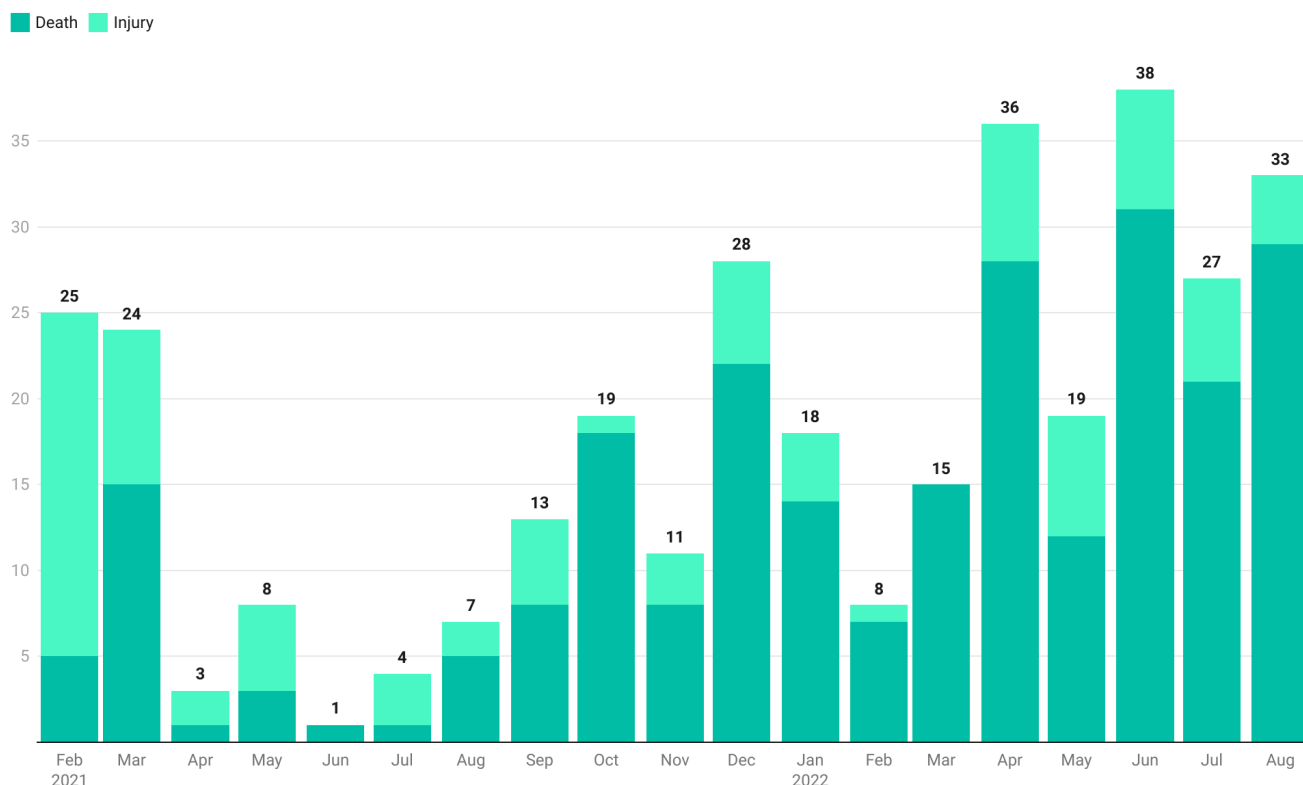
Local PDFs have also increasingly targeted alleged military informants, members of pro-regime Pyu Saw Htee network, Tatmadaw veterans, members of the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), members of the junta’s local State Administration Council (SAC). Local PDFs usually claimed responsibility for the incidents. In this month, a number of junta-appointed local administrators and alleged members of pro-regime militia Pyu Saw Htee group have been subjected to attacks and killings by the local resistance groups in urban settings in Myeik town; some of the incidents were mentioned to be part of “Operation Nan Htike Aung” of local PDFs under the command of National Unity Government (NUG). There were some incidents in which no organizations claimed responsibility; the perpetrators cannot be identified.

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<sup>30</sup> Tanintharyi people’s defense force. 27 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/107736585173414/posts/162446219702450>

<sup>31</sup> Local source. 28 August 2022.

## Number of Civilian Casualties in Tanintharyi Region



Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

## Major Incidents in August 2022

### Dawei Township

- A civilian was arrested by Tatmadaw forces on the night of 4 August 2022 and was found dead with gunshot wounds near Tha Byay Chaung village the next day.<sup>32</sup> A local source stated that plain clothed men first came to the victim's house and asked him to follow them for a brief interrogation. Then, a Tatmadaw vehicle and pro-regime forces entered the street of the victim's house and abducted him. His dead body was found blindfolded with gunshot wounds near Tha Byay Chaung village on the next day, 5 August, and his family members were informed to collect his dead body at Dawei Hospital. The victim was an ordinary civilian from Kanet Thiri village in Thayetchaung Township. He came to live in Bon Maw ward, Dawei township with his family shortly after he was released from the junta's detention in 2021.

### Yebyu Township

- Tatmadaw forces entered Ae Ka Ni village in Yebyu Township on 30 July 2021 and continued to station in the village for the consecutive days. Tatmadaw forces shot and killed a civilian and arrested a monk. There were also accounts of Tatmadaw forces looting villagers' property. On 31 July 2021, Tatmadaw forces entered Pu Gaw Zun village and murdered an elderly man.<sup>33</sup> Tatmadaw forces reportedly fired shots at random in the villages, resulting in the displacement of more than 1,000 people in the township.

<sup>32</sup> Dawei Information Center. 5 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/406718964888894>

<sup>33</sup> Dawei Information Center. 1 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/404332015127589>

- On 2 August 2022, a total of 3 men from Pu Gaw Zun village in Yebyu Township were found dead; they had sustained gunshot and stab wounds. They were found in a rubber plantation behind the village monastery. One of the victims was an alleged supporter of the National League for Democracy (NLD).<sup>34</sup>
- A local plantation worker was shot by Tatmadaw forces during the Tatmadaw's search and raid operations in plantations in Kanbauk area, Yebyu Township on 30 August 2022.<sup>35</sup>

### *Tanintharyi Township*

- Following a clash in Koe Inn village, Taku village tract in Tanintharyi Township, Tatmadaw forces fired shots in Kaw Taw village and arrested some villagers. The villagers fled their homes in fear of being arrested by Tatmadaw forces. Tatmadaw forces fired shots at the villagers, and a villager was injured during the action. Tatmadaw forces later released the arrested villagers, then stated that they were just following their superior's orders.<sup>36</sup>

### *Launglon Township*

- Local sources stated that Tatmadaw forces and pro-regime militias fired shots at random at night across many villages in Launglon Township. On 22 August 2022, a passenger vehicle was reportedly shot by the Tatmadaw forces near the entrance gate to Launglon town. The Tatmadaw forces patrolled on the way to Sit Pyea village and fired multiple shots along the way. The shots were often heard by the villagers after 8pm. Such targeted night-time shootings also occurred in some areas of Thayetchaung Township, including Thae Chaung Gyi village where Tatmadaw forces continued to station for an extended period of time.

### *Myeik Township*

- Tatmadaw forces increased their presence across Myeik town following a series of incidents in which local PDFs targeted junta-appointed local administrators and alleged members of pro-regime militia Pyu Saw Htee groups. A total of 4 civilians were killed by the Tatmadaw forces during 20-24 August 2022. A Tatmadaw vehicle hit and killed a 38 year old man, who had been identified as a member of a local funeral service group on 20 August 2022. In addition, Tatmadaw forces fired gunshots targeting 3 civilians who reportedly violated the motorbike restriction by riding on a motorbike together on their way back from work around 6:00pm on 24 August 2022. One of the three men was shot and killed.<sup>37</sup> The bullets fired by the Tatmadaw forces also hit and killed two passersby, near Seik Nge bridge in Myeik Town. The aforementioned incidents occurred before the nightly curfew. The junta's forces have been exposing civilians to increased risks of getting shot any time of the day.

### *Palaw Township*

- On 18 August 2022, Tatmadaw forces shot at two civilians on the grounds of violating the motorbike restriction, which bans two men from riding on a motorbike together. The two men in their 30s and 40s sustained serious injuries, and they are currently receiving medical treatment in Palaw General Hospital.<sup>38</sup> According to local sources in Palaw Township, the risk of men being shot by Tatmadaw forces for breaching the motorbike regulation have become more

<sup>34</sup> Mizzima News in Burmese. 3 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/5806366549398202>

<sup>35</sup> DVB TV news. 30 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/191574990881009/posts/5823106957727756>

<sup>36</sup> Dawei Information Center. 9 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/409378001289657>

<sup>37</sup> Field Monitor. 24 August 2022.

<sup>38</sup> The Tanintharyi Times. 18 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/108506238223647/posts/183882200686050>

severe since the Tatmadaw forces are stationed across Palaw town. At security checkpoints, Tatmadaw forces have a tendency to fire gunshots without any warning. A similar incident was reported in Kawthoung Township earlier on 7 August 2022.

### *Kawthoung Township*

- On 7 August 2022, Tatmadaw forces shot and killed a 24 year old man in Kawthoung town on the grounds of violating the motorbike restriction, which bans two men from riding on a motorbike together. According to a local source both men worked on fishing boats, and they may not have been aware of the restriction. The victim was reportedly from Kanet Thiri village in Thayetchaung Township.<sup>39</sup>

## **Attacks targeting alleged members of pro-regime militias and military informants**

Thayetchaung, Launglone and Yebyu Townships have continued to see an increasing number of attacks targeting alleged members of pro-regime militias and military informants. The majority of them were noted to have received warnings from local PDFs prior to the incident. Furthermore, there has been an increase in the numbers of attacks and assassinations targeted at local administrators and alleged members of the pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee group in Myeik town.

### *Yebyu Township*

- A former village administrator was killed in Mu Du village, Na Bu Lel area in Yebyu township on 1 August 2022. The victim was alleged to be working alongside a military-appointed village administrator, and also supporting Tatmadaw forces with supplies. No organizations have claimed responsibility for the incident.<sup>40</sup> In July 2022, an alleged member of a Pyu Saw Htee group and a military informant were killed in Na Bu Lel area.
- A 50-year old alleged military informant was shot and killed in Na Bu Lel area in Yebyu Township on 15 August 2022. No organizations have claimed responsibility for the incident.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, on the same day, an alleged member of Pyu Saw Htee group was shot and killed in Thin Baw Seik village in Launglone Township. According to local sources, the two men reportedly received multiple warnings from the local resistance groups to stop supporting (and associating with) Tatmadaw forces and pro-regime militias, before they were targeted and attacked.<sup>42</sup>
- Two alleged members of pro-regime militia Pyu Saw Htee group were shot and killed in Ya Nge and Ya Laing villages in Yebyu Township on 24 August 2022. The local sources noted that the two men received multiple warnings from the local PDFs to quit associating with the Pyu Saw Htee group and Tatmadaw forces prior to the incident.<sup>43</sup> On 27 August 2022, two alleged military informants were shot and killed in Pu Gaw Zun village in Yebyu Township.<sup>44</sup> By 28 August 2022, a total of 5 alleged military informants have been shot and killed in Yebyu Township alone.

### *Launglone Township*

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<sup>39</sup> The Tanintharyi Times. 10 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/108506238223647/posts/182522907488646>

<sup>40</sup> The Tanintharyi Times. 1 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/108506238223647/posts/180971380977132>

<sup>41</sup> The Tanintharyi Times.

<sup>42</sup> Mizzima News in Burmese. 16 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/5842960842405439>

<sup>43</sup> Network Media Group. 27 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/382181045736248/posts/1136619006959111>

<sup>44</sup> Mizzima News in Burmese. 28 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/5877943838907139>

- Launglon People's Defence Force (LLPDF) claimed responsibility for an incident in which an alleged member of a pro-regime militia, who reportedly received military training from Pyu Saw Htee group, was shot and killed on 9 August 2022.<sup>45</sup>

### *Thayetchaung Township*

- An alleged military informant was killed in Yay Cho Chaung village in Thayetchaung Township on 5 August 2022.<sup>46</sup> Two alleged military informants were shot and killed in Thayetchaung on 4 and 5 August 2022. No organizations have claimed responsibility for the incidents.<sup>47</sup>
- A 50 year old man was shot and killed in Maw Shee Ku village in Thayetchaung Township on 11 August. Local sources alleged that the man had been guiding the Tatmadaw forces during security operations and supporting them with the supplies.<sup>48</sup> Earlier in this month, two alleged military informants were shot and killed in Thayetchaung Township.

### *Myeik Township*

- An alliance of Myeik-based people's defense forces and other local resistance groups launched a series of attacks at Tatmadaw forces and pro-regime militias, as part of "Operation Nan Htike Aung". On 17 August 2019, a local junta-appointed administrator who had also reportedly received training from a local pro-regime militia Pyu Saw Htee chapter was shot and killed by the alliance in Myeik town.<sup>49</sup> Local sources stated that following the incident, Tatmadaw forces began conducting more security checks at the major intersections, and within specific residential wards across Myeik Town. Tatmadaw forces fired shots at male civilians who were riding a motorbike together. Another junta-appointed local administrator was also shot and killed on 23 August in Ka Lwin village in Myeik Township. For this particular incident, no organizations have claimed responsibility, and it is unclear whether it is also part of the local resistance groups' attacks against the junta's appointed administrator. A Myeik-based PDF released a statement calling for the junta-appointed local administrators, members of pro-regime militia Pyu Saw Htee group, and military informants to join the "people's side". The Myeik-based PDF claimed that it had gathered information on the names and whereabouts of the individuals mentioned above. The statement was meant to be the final warning, demanding the individuals to resign from their positions, or stop associating with the Tatmadaw forces by 31 August 2022. Furthermore, it warned these individuals that failing to comply with the order would result in clearance operations of the Myeik PDF.<sup>50</sup>

## **Arbitrary Arrests and Detention**

During 20-31 July 2022, a total of 18 civilians (9 from Maung Ma Kan, 3 from Auk Yay Phyu village, 3 from Tha Byay Shaung and 3 from Hin Cho Taw) were arrested by Tatmadaw forces in Launglon Township, according to the Democracy Movement Strike Committee-Dawei. In Maung Ma Kan village, 9 civilians were arrested following an incident in which a local PDF killed an alleged military informant on 26 July 2022. Civilians in Auk Yay Phyu, Tha Byay Shaung, and Hin Cho Taw villages were allegedly arrested on accusations of supporting the local PDFs. The majority of detainees remained in

<sup>45</sup> Mizzima News in Burmese. 9 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/5825436457491211>

<sup>46</sup> Dawei Information Center. 5 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/406890054871785>

<sup>47</sup> Dawei Information Center. 5 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/406986854862105>

<sup>48</sup> Network Media Group. 11 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/382181045736248/posts/1126282591326086>

<sup>49</sup> Dawei Information Center. 18 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/415182170709240>

<sup>50</sup> Myeik People's Defense Force. 20 August 2022.

custody in the local police stations. Three civilians from Auk Yay Phyu were sent from a local police station to the Dawei detention center.<sup>51</sup>

Following the assassination of a junta-appointed local administrator in Myeik in July 2022, the military regime tightened security more than the previous month, including increasing the frequency of security checks and extended hours of nightly curfews. Across Myeik and Dawei towns, Tatmadaw forces mostly conducted security checks on passengers traveling in motor vehicles, and those people riding motorbikes. A number of young people were also arrested during the security checks and reportedly taken to the local interrogation centers. Although the nightly curfews between 10:00pm-04:00am were previously enforced, in some areas of Myeik town, the curfew hours were extended from 8:00pm-04:00am. Specifically, on 3 August 2022, at an intersection in downtown Myeik, 10 young men were arrested for reportedly breaking the motorbike restriction. A total of 5 motorbikes were also confiscated. Similar cases were also reported along the major roads in Myeik town in the first week of August 2022.

Additional arrests during the Tatmadaw forces' arbitrary "household inspections" were also reported in Myeik and Dawei Town in the first week of August. Local sources speculated that via the heightened security measures and arrests, Tatmadaw forces intended to prevent local PDFs and other anti-coup movements from marking the anniversary of the "8888 uprising".<sup>52</sup> In the final week of August 2022, local sources reported that Tatmadaw forces continued to intensify crackdowns on the civil disobedience movement. The striking teachers and other civil servants were reportedly asked by the local administrators to avoid their homes to evade arrests by the Tatmadaw forces in Myeik town. A local source stated that the local PDFs' attacks and assassinations as part of the "Operation Nan Htike Aung" prompted arrests and detentions targeted at young men throughout August 2022.<sup>53</sup> Tatmadaw forces have arbitrarily arrested and detained dozens of civilians across many townships in Tanintharyi Region during the Tatmadaw's operations in affected areas of the townships, and following the activities of the local PDFs. Some civilians were arrested following the Tatmadaw forces' 'search and raid' operations in both urban and rural settings of the township. The exact figures of the arrests, detentions, and release of detainees during August 2022 cannot yet be verified.

The Dawei Political Prisoners Network (DPPN) released a list of male political prisoners who have been handed down prison sentences; two inmates were recently sentenced to life imprisonment. There are a total of 201 male and 42 inmates who had been handed down prison sentences in Dawei Prison. Under the pretext of a rapid surge in basic commodity prices, the prison authorities cut costs, including the food provided to inmates. The DPPN acknowledged that more than 400 political prisoners remained in Dawei Prison.

## **IMPACTS OF VIOLENT CONFLICT**

### **Current Situation of Internally Displaced People (IDPs)**

In August 2022, the figures of displacement increased significantly in Yebyu, Tanintharyi, and Dawei townships due to Tatmadaw forces' artillery shelling and increased presence. IDP figures fluctuate over time, depending on the changing conflict dynamics on the ground.

The figures of displacement fluctuated significantly with new displacements in Yebyu and Dawei township and return. Due to the Tatmadaw's continuous use of artillery shelling and extension of the

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<sup>51</sup> RFA Burmese. 1 August 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/39218993127/posts/10161967238628128>

<sup>52</sup> Field Monitor. 3 August 2022.

<sup>53</sup> Field Monitor. 23 August 2022



coverage of its search and raid operations, the figures of new displacement of populations from several villages in Yebyu Township, and the villages along the Dawei-Hteekhee road, have been reported in August 2022. More than 1,000 people are newly displaced in Dawei District. About 150 people from Myay Kan Ti and Thit Ka Toe villages are displaced in Dawei Township. A total of 1,157 displaced people are from Ae Ka Ni, Wat Chaung, Kha Maung Chaung, and Ka Lone Htar villages in Yebyu Township where Tatmadaw's search and raid operations have been reported. As of 27 August 2022, the figures of displacement in Thayetchaung and Launglon Townships have significantly dropped, since the majority of the displaced populations reportedly returned to their villages of origin given a relative and temporary stability in the affected areas of the townships. It is difficult to estimate the figures of displacement, as many of the displaced populations from Thayetchaung and Launglon Townships are rather scattered in nearby plantations, villages and towns, rather than seeking refuge in a camp setting.

Due to the Tatmadaw's restrictions on the transport of food and medical items to the villages severely affected in Palaw Township, displaced populations are facing threats of food shortages and are denied access to basic healthcare. An estimated 3,325 Significantly, displaced populations are in dire need of medicine to treat malaria and cholera. According to a local source, despite aid workers' attempts to secure assistance from the civilians in other towns, the Tatmadaw's restrictions have largely hindered the transportation of aid items including bags of rice and anti-malarial medicines. A local source further reported that procurement and transportation of aid items in urban settings have also been fraught with several challenges, such as shortages of supplies and interrogation by members of the Tatmadaw forces, on suspicion of supporting local PDFs.

### Number of IDPs in Tanintharyi Region

(as of 31 August 2022)

	Township	Number of IDPs
1	Palaw	3,325
2	Yebyu	1,157
3	Dawei	150
	Total	4,632

Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

### Socio-economic impacts of the 2021 coup in Tanintharyi Region

Formal schooling has excluded the majority of children in rural areas across Tanintharyi Region. While the Basic Education public schools, especially those in Myeik and Dawei towns have been running their classrooms as usual, the public schools in the areas severely affected by increased Tatmadaw offensives, and overall heightened sense of insecurity, have not been reopened for this academic year. The alternatives to formal schooling have also been disrupted by the regime authorities' actions, including but not limited to, arresting the organizers and teachers running online schools affiliated with (or recognized by) the National Unity Government (NUG). Such actions have prevented some monasteries from running classes for school-aged children in areas where access to formal schooling remained scant. As the junta's operation to crackdown on the civil disobedience movement (CDM), largely composed of former government teachers, is speculated to be undertaken across the region, many CDM teachers evaded arrests. Once again, many CDM teachers relocated to locations different from their original home addresses during this month. Due to the ongoing repression of alternatives to junta-run formal schooling, and heightened sense of insecurity in the region, children have been denied their right to access basic education.

In terms of access to healthcare, similar to the situation reported in previous months, the quality of services provided by the public hospitals have deteriorated due to inadequate human resources and shortages of medical supplies. The public hospitals in Dawei and Myeik towns do not admit emergency patients after 6:00 pm and refer to the nearest military-run hospitals. The locals reported that they have to pay a high rate to receive medical treatment at the private hospitals. For smaller towns like Palaw with no private hospital, the locals have no choice but to rely on military hospitals for medical

treatment.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, in the month of August 2022, local sources in Dawei District reported that locals face shortages of anti-malarial medicines, and they are unable to buy the items in the local pharmacies. Also, those people carrying or transporting medicines have also been interrogated by Tatmadaw forces and suspected of supporting the local PDFs, harboring in the jungle with the supplies. There were also accounts of anti-malarial medicines being confiscated by Tatmadaw forces at major checkpoints. Such efforts of the Tatmadaw forces to impede the local PDFs' access to medical supplies also resulted in depriving internally displaced populations from accessing healthcare.

Local sources cited the appallingly weakened status of the Myanmar currency (Kyat) and the higher prices of commodities as the major culprits of their deteriorating access to basic goods and services. A local aid worker noted that due to inflation and higher prices of essential commodities, some small local aid organizations assisting both urban and rural populations in Tanintharyi Region faced difficulties to sustain adequate funds to pay for fuel. As a result, some of them have had to temporarily suspend/scale down their ambulance and funeral services. The prices of most of the medicines which are mostly imported from neighboring Thailand also rose almost two-fold this month. This increase has compounded difficulties, especially for local populations to receive adequate medical treatment.<sup>55</sup> As the national currency (Myanmar Kyat) plummeted and the prices of essential goods have rapidly surged, many people strive to migrate to either Thailand or Malaysia. Although Thailand reopened its border to Myanmar workers, the application processes are cumbersome, and there are high costs associated with migrating with 'documented worker' status. For that reason, many people have resorted to illegal routes, where they become more vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation.

## ANALYSIS

The dire humanitarian situation continues to unfold in Tanintharyi Region, as there are daily reports of the junta's pervasive use of violent tactics against civilians, and grave human rights violations against the backdrop of Myanmar's crippled economy. Armed clashes between Tatmadaw forces and a vast array of local resistance groups have intensified throughout various townships in Tanintharyi Region. Civilian protection has been scant, causing increasing violence and devastating harm to civilians. Tatmadaw forces' attempts to stamp out local resistance groups have continuously failed to distinguish between civilians and combatants. As such, they have launched indiscriminate ground strikes on civilian areas, carried out arbitrary arrests, and detained any perceived opponents. The terrors of the junta's increasing offensives and security operations that involved killings, arrests, and looting of civilians' properties are evident particularly in the rural settings of Yebyu, Launglon, Palaw and Thayetchaung Townships in August 2022. The new flashpoints of heightened conflict include several villages in Yebyu and Tanintharyi Township, where Tatmadaw's search and raid operations, as well as increased offensives, occurred leading to new displacement reported this month. The previously mentioned flashpoints such as Dawei-Hteekhee Road, Taungpyauk area of Thayetchaung Township, and several villages in Palaw Township continued to suffer from frequent armed clashes. Additionally, these areas saw the Tatmadaw's increased presence, random shootings, and use of heavy weaponry against civilians.

Furthermore, urban settings such as the downtown areas in Myeik and Dawei town have been locations where Tatmadaw forces' have sought to crush dissent through violence and fear. The Tatmadaw's operations under the pretext of "security control" have taken a toll on civilians' lives, safety, properties, and access to public services. Ahead of major historic events, such as the anniversary of the "8888 uprising", Tatmadaw forces noticeably tightened security in terms of increased presence and scale of search operations (both day and night) in urban settings. The killings and disappearance of individuals whom the junta's forces suspect to have ties to, or support, local PDFs took place

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<sup>54</sup> Field Monitor, field report on 21 June 2022

<sup>55</sup> Field Monitor.

frequently. This has led to a heightened climate of fear for urban populations. Also, the junta's use of laws and regulations to suit their needs to exert security control, marked a new low. Civilians were shot and killed for reportedly breaching the motorbike ban, which prohibits two men from riding a motorbike together. In addition, following the incidents in which local resistance groups' attacked junta-appointed local administrators of the residential wards in Myeik town in August 2022, the junta's security control was fortified, resulting in increased arrests and detention.

During this month, a total of 12 armed clashes between Tatmadaw forces and the local people's defense forces erupted in Tanintharyi Region. The majority of armed clashes were reported in Tanintharyi, Launglon, Thayetchaung, and Palaw Townships. In response, local resistance groups' mainly used tactics of remote violence on Tatmadaw convoys. In retaliation, Tatmadaw forces along with the alleged members of local pro-regime Pyu Saw Htee chapters, raided villages in close proximity to locations of remote violence incidents. Their combined forces randomly fired shots and attacked civilians who they suspected of having ties to (or supporting) the local PDFs.

This month of August 2022 has seen a noticeable increase in the number of attacks by the local resistance groups against their perceived opponents, including junta-appointed local administrators and alleged members of pro-regime militias. The local PDFs have once again issued warning statements calling for members of the pro-regime militias and junta-appointed local administrator to join the "people's side" and notifying the latter of potential risks of attacks and assassinations if they fail to do so. As the local PDFs scaled up their activities and movements, the need for the local PDFs to be cautious of collateral deaths and damages, as well as to adhere to the Military Code of Conduct stated by the National Unity Government (NUG) for the people's defense forces, loomed large.

Tatmadaw forces continued to block humanitarian access to displaced populations with their widespread ban on transport of relief items, especially rice and medicines to the townships which are most affected by the ongoing conflict in Tanintharyi Region. The recently displaced populations have been facing a looming threat of shortages of food rations and other essential items. Transport routes from town centers to the affected villages have been heavily guarded by Tatmadaw forces. Local aid groups and local individual donors, who are the main supporters of the IDP populations, increasingly reported that they faced threat and intimidation along main roads and the risks of their relief items being confiscated by Tatmadaw and pro-regime forces.

Non-violent resistance has been sustained in Tanintharyi Region, with the majority of women-led protests marking historic events. Some of the protests and demonstrations have been fueled by public outrage against the executions of the four democracy activists on 23 July 2022. The protests led by women and students continued to be a prominent feature of non-violent resistance in Tanintharyi Region. Launglon and Thayetchaung Townships in Dawei District remained the strongholds of non-violent movements, despite Tatmadaw forces' blatant repression and increased presence.

While local populations bear the brunt of increased insecurity in Tanintharyi Region, they also suffer from the fallout of the military coup: lacking access to basic education and health services as well as economic desperation. Due to the ongoing repression of the alternatives to junta-run formal schooling, and the heightened sense of insecurity in the region, children have been denied their right to access basic education. Also, public healthcare services have been reduced in terms of both scale and quality. As a result, the majority of the local population is forced to pay higher prices for medical treatment at private hospitals. The significant depreciation of the national currency, and the rapid surge of commodity prices, has further impeded local populations' ability to access adequate goods and services. Extreme desperation and deepening poverty have driven many people to seek employment opportunities in neighboring countries, primarily Thailand, via illegal channels. This migration trend puts already vulnerable communities at a higher risk of trafficking and exploitation.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***State Administrative Council***

- The Tatmadaw must cease attacks on civilians and must also allow unfettered humanitarian access to displaced populations.

### ***National Unity Government***

- The NUG should ensure that local resistance groups are following its military Code of Conduct.
- PDFs and local resistance groups should refrain from committing human rights abuses, including killing of detainees, and attacks on civilians and civilian property. They must also refrain from targeting schools and medical facilities.

### ***International Community***

- The international community should advocate for the removal of the military's restrictions on the flow of trade and freedom of movement. These restrictions affect not only areas where armed clashes occur, but also surrounding areas. As a result, local communities suffer from significantly increased prices of food and essential medicines.

### ***United Nations and Non-governmental Organization***

- In collaboration with local organizations, humanitarian partners should provide critical life-saving assistance to the most vulnerable people in conflict affected villages, despite challenges accessing these areas, and limited funding.
- Humanitarian partners should implement programs facilitating the delivery of cross-border aid to reach displaced populations in the region.
- Humanitarian partners should coordinate with ethnic armed organizations' respective departments to ensure the swift and effective provision of humanitarian assistance.
- International organizations should strengthen the capacity of local community-based organizations and civil society organizations in aid delivery, including data collection and monitoring.
- Local non-governmental organizations and international organizations should support the implementation of activities regarding mine risk reduction education, as well as first-aid training, and supplies to local communities.
- Local non-governmental organizations and international organizations should support implementation of activities regarding safe migration knowledge and practices to local communities, especially targeting young people.

### ***Local Media***

- Local media should be aware of the local context and minimize the impact of rumors and misinformation as triggers of violence in the region.

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