



# MYANMAR: Tanintharyi Region

## Monthly Situation Update

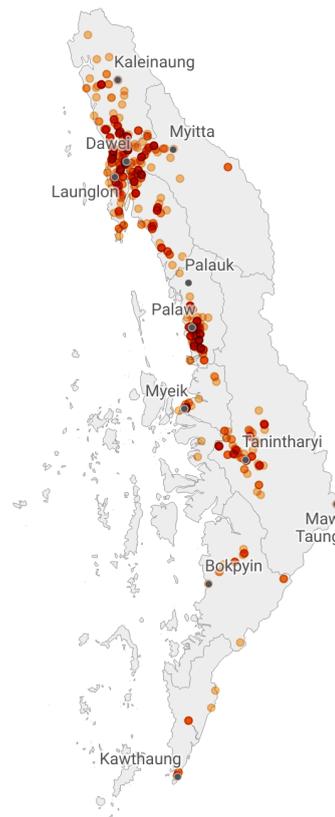
31 January 2023

This regular update, covering non-violent movements, conflict trends, human rights violations, and humanitarian developments up to 31 January is produced by Southern Monitor, a local research group. The next monthly situation update will be issued in February 2023.

### HIGHLIGHTS & KEY MESSAGES

- In January 2023, a total of 33 armed clashes erupted across all districts in Tanintharyi Region, showing an increase in armed conflict.
- A total of 33 casualties (25 deaths and 8 injured) due to attacks targeting civilians were reported in January 2023.
- More than 33 civilians' houses were burned down by junta forces following armed clashes in Palaw and Dawei Townships.
- More than 7,000 people are displaced in Tanintharyi Region.
- Humanitarian assistance has been largely impeded due to access constraints, and a widespread ban on transport of dry rations and medicines. Displaced populations are in dire need of dry rations, adequate shelter and warm clothing.

### 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 January 2023. Source: Southern Monitor - Created with Datawrapper

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

**3651**

Nonviolent actions mobilized by activist groups between February 2021 and January 2023

**922**

Violent incidents occurred in the region between February 2021 and January 2023

**360**

People killed by conflict actors between February 2021 and January 2023

**7K**

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 Myanmar military 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.

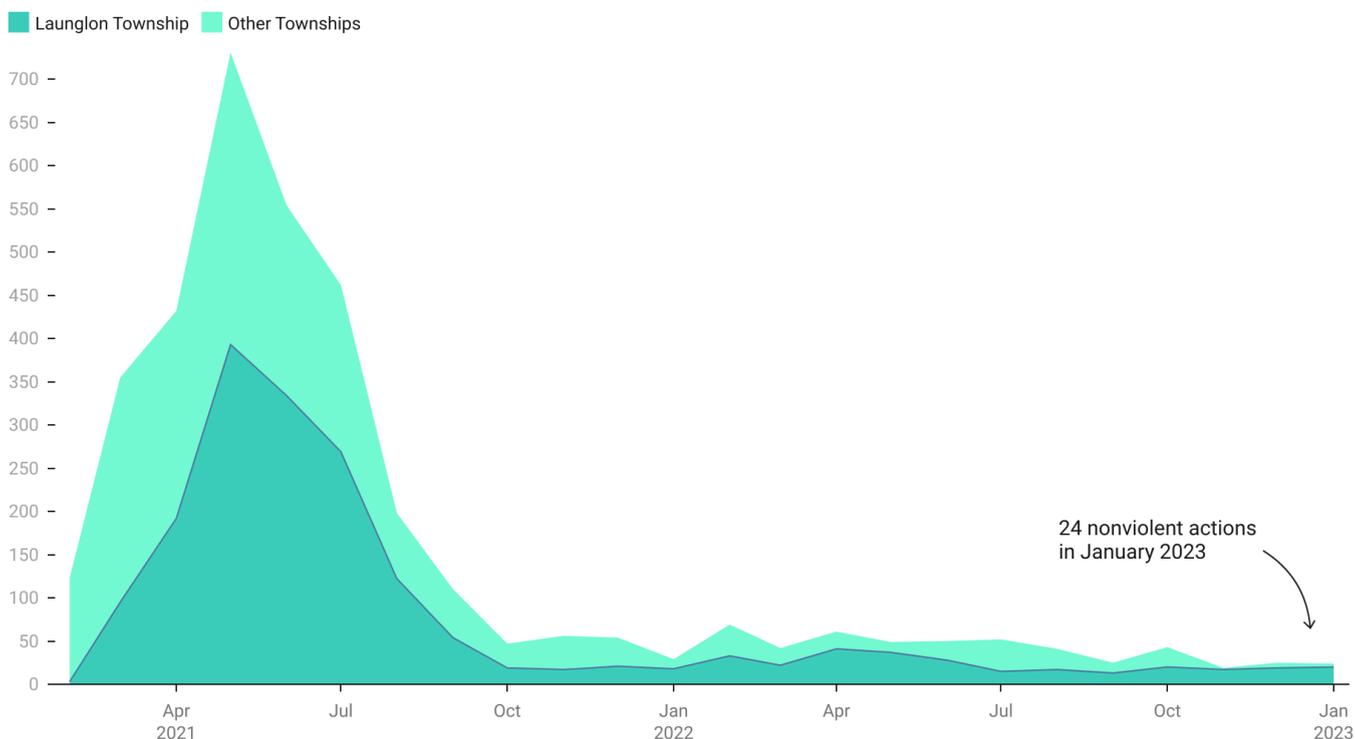
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<sup>3</sup> This refers to the official government boundaries recognized by the NLD government. The administrative divisions of Tanintharyi Region (Tenasserim Region) of the state government are made of Dawei District, Myeik District, and Kawthoung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

## NON-VIOLENT MOVEMENTS IN TANINTHARYI REGION

### Number of Nonviolent Actions in Tanintharyi Region

(February 2021 to January 2023)



Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

### Non-violent Movements in January 2023

The number of non-violent movements reported in January 2023 decreased, compared to previous months. A total of 24 non-violent movements were reported, with the majority in Launglon Township.

Despite the crackdown on local protesters, and some activists receiving long jail sentences, Dawei District remains a stronghold for non-violent movements in Tanintharyi Region. In fact, Launglon Township has seen the highest number of non-violent movements, which were mostly organized by chapters of the Democracy Movement Strike Committee-Dawei, since May 2021. The members of the strike committee were among the local protesters and activists who were arrested. Many of them received hefty prison sentences for their involvement and support of non-violent movements. Min Lwin Oo, Advocacy Officer of the Democracy Movement Strike Committee stated, “Unarmed resistance is important. It is necessary that the people of Myanmar, who do not possess any arms, have the means to participate in non-violent resistance. If not, the people and the revolution will drift apart.” He commented further on the current status of non-violent movements in Tanintharyi Region, “In some villages, the local populations have begun to lack enthusiasm to revolt, as they are unsure by which methods they can contribute to the revolution. However, in those villages where there are frequent non-violent actions, people are going strong and are determined to eliminate military rule.”

Youth-led protests were reported in Launglon and Thayetchaung Townships in Dawei District on 1 January 2023. On 3 January 2023, one day before Myanmar’s Independence Day, youth protesters organized a protest march to demonstrate against the military rule.<sup>4</sup> Also, on Independence Day and

<sup>4</sup> The Tanintharyi Times. 3 January 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/100072232759534/posts/219134850504272>

subsequent days, members of the Basic Education Students' Union (BESU) and youth organized protests in many forms, including protest marches and flash protests.<sup>5</sup> Protesters also distributed pamphlets calling for the general public to boycott all products manufactured by military-owned firms in Launglon Township.<sup>6</sup> The Rose Color Women's Movement committee also participated in this campaign, calling for a widespread boycott of the products and firms which support the military-owned businesses.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, starting on 19 January 2023, local protesters including the members of: BESU chapters, the Rose Color Women's Movement, and LGBT groups organized a series of protests calling for the general public to boycott the junta-controlled elections.<sup>8</sup>

## CONFLICT TRENDS

Despite the slight decrease in the number of armed clashes between local resistance groups (People's Defense Forces)<sup>9</sup> and junta forces during January 2023, the current conflict trajectory suggests an increase in offensives by junta forces, including the use of heavy weaponry. These offensives have occurred even in some areas of the region when there is no active conflict. Current conflict has led to displacement and an overall sense of insecurity in the region. The majority of clashes were reported in Palaw, Tanintharyi, Dawei, and Launglon Townships. Similar to the conflict trends reported last month, the majority of the clashes between the local PDFs and junta forces erupted following remote violence attacks on junta outposts; these attacks were launched by the local PDFs. The local PDFs based in Palaw, Dawei, and Launglon Townships continued to gain momentum in armed resistance, through the use of remote violence, ambushes on junta outposts, and targeted killings. The junta forces heavily responded to the attacks by launching heavy artillery targeted towards residential areas in villages and towns.

Preparation for the military junta's planned 2023 general election will likely further inflame the region's conflict. The State Administration Council (SAC)'s efforts to collect census data prompted attacks and ambushes by the local PDFs in Tanintharyi Region. An alliance of local PDFs fired shots at the junta security forces which were assigned to guard the junta regimes' census data collection team in Ka Myaw Kin Village in Launglon Township on 9 January 2023. Several local PDFs also issued statements warning civil servants who are currently serving the regime and other civilians against involvement in data collection and any other procedures related to the upcoming elections. On the other hand, junta forces have increasingly targeted the members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) and its alleged supporters. This includes varying forms of atrocities such as arrests, torture, and burning down houses. As the military junta is attempting to organize an election during a time of widespread conflict, local resistance groups and anti-coup activists are determined to oppose the planned election.

The incidence of civilian casualties has continued to rise in Tanintharyi Region. Some casualties were due to the junta forces' targeted killings against members of the local resistance groups and any civilians whom they suspected to be involved in, or supporting, the anti-coup movement. The other were the results of targeted killings by the local resistance groups against military-appointed administrators and alleged members of the pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee group. A total of 25 civilians were killed and another 8 civilians sustained injuries due to attacks targeting civilians were reported in January 2023. In January 2023, local PDFs claimed responsibility for targeted killings against the alleged members of pro-regime militias, Pyu Saw Htee groups, in Launglone and Yebyu

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<sup>5</sup> Dawei Information Center. 6 January 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/517796077114515>

<sup>6</sup> Dawei Information Center. 11 January 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/520302040197252>

<sup>7</sup> Mizzima-News in Burmese. 16 January 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/6314478258587026>

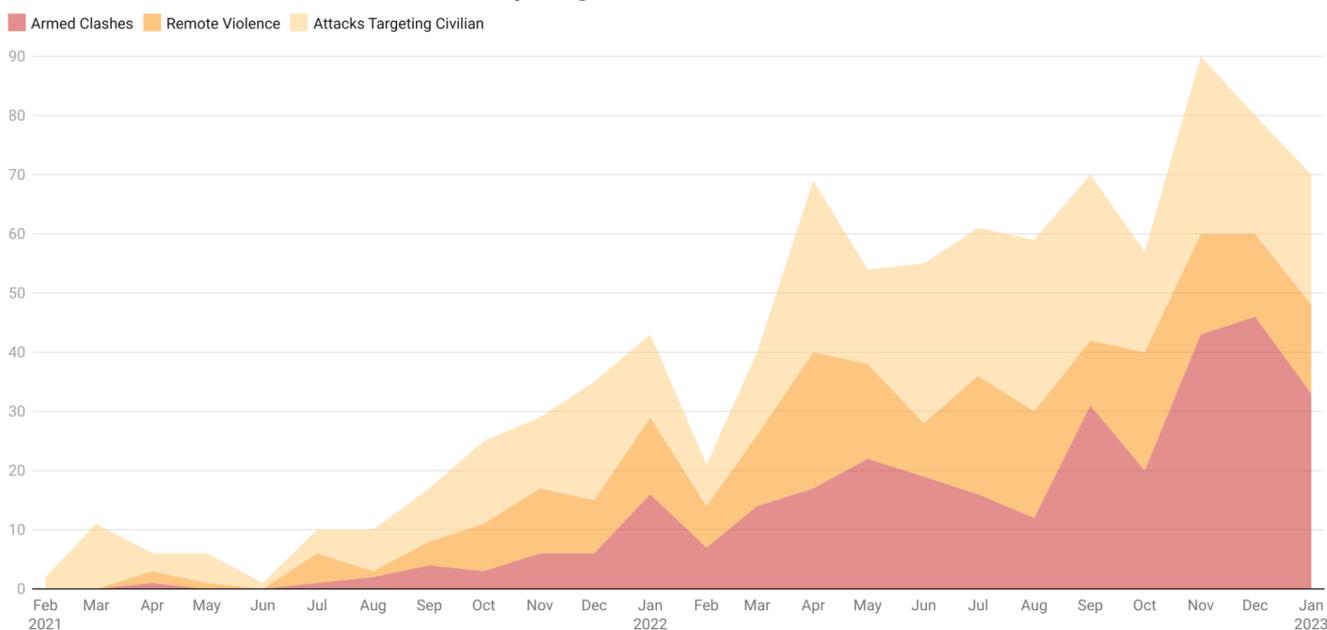
<sup>8</sup> The Irrawaddy-Burmese. 19 January 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/121507374560090/posts/6407923299251768>

<sup>9</sup> 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.

townships. The alleged members of the Pyu Saw Htee groups have reportedly been providing tip-offs to the junta forces, levying taxes and doing illegal business, such as gambling and drug smuggling. Local PDFs have continuously warned local communities against supporting, or associating with, the junta forces and its allied militias.

Additionally, in both urban and rural settings, the junta forces continued to enforce draconian laws and stringent regulations on a wide scale, making local populations even more vulnerable. Enforcement of these regulations has led to more indiscriminate shooting, arrests, detention, confiscation of motorbikes, and fines of both small and large sums. Local sources stated that they observed an increased presence of junta soldiers and police across major towns including Dawei, Myeik, and Kawthoung. As a result, civilians are at high risk of being fined by junta soldiers and traffic police, even when there is no apparent breach of laws and regulations. During this month in Myeik town, there were accounts of young women motorbike riders being physically assaulted by police, after they were stopped and demanded to pay fines.

### Number of Violent Incidents in Tanintharyi Region



Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

### Armed Clashes

From April 2021 to January 2023, there were a total of 320 clashes reported in Tanintharyi Region. A total of 33 armed clashes erupted in Tanintharyi Region in January 2023. The clashes were reported in many townships across all districts in the region: Palaw, Tanintharyi, Dawei, and Launglon Townships.

## Major Incidents in January 2023

### Myeik District

#### Palaw Township

- The intensified clashes which erupted in the last week of December 2022 continued for the first few days of January 2023. The clashes were reported in several villages in Palaw Township including To, Tan Shin, and Thin Gan Taw Villages. Additional clashes were reported in Ka De Village in Palaw Township. Furthermore, the junta forces used the routes through the farmlands of the area, and there were additional reports of looting of civilians' properties.<sup>10</sup>
- Additional clashes were reported in the villages alongside Myeik-Palaw road, largely affecting the passengers and other vehicles carrying goods to and from Palaw to Myeik, and other nearby towns. On 2 January 2023, clashes between local PDFs and junta forces were reported in Mee Laung Chaung and Za Yat Seik Villages in Pa La town of Palaw Township.<sup>11</sup> The junta forces set ablaze a total of 6 houses in Ta Po and Za Yat Seik Villages in Palaw Township, following the clashes.
- On 8 January 2023, an alliance of local PDFs led by the Karen National Defense Organization (KNDO) ambushed a junta outpost in Mee Laung Chaung village in Palaw Township. In To Village, the junta troop reinforcements also engaged in an armed clash with local PDFs, on the same day.<sup>12</sup>
- A clash between Myeik-based People's Defense Forces and junta forces was reported in Shat Pon village in Palaw Township on 16 January 2023. The village administrator, who was alleged to be a member of a pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee group, was among those who were killed during the clash. The deceased and other alleged members of the militia have reportedly been armed by the junta forces and also been involved in drug dealing in the area. The clash was the first confrontation between the local resistance groups and junta forces in Shat Pon village, which is home to more than 2,000 households. Shat Pon village is also accessible by waterways, an alternative travel route mostly used by the junta forces.<sup>13</sup>

### Incident Map: Armed Clashes in Tanintharyi Region

(January 2023)



Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

<sup>10</sup> Dawei Watch. 1 January 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/139053342889519/posts/5446339252160875>

<sup>11</sup> Dawei Watch. 2 January 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/139053342889519/posts/5449015531893247>

<sup>12</sup> Myanmar Pressphoto Agency. 9 January 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/874334009274294/posts/8649359128438371>

<sup>13</sup> Local Source. 20 January 2023.

## *Tanintharyi Township*

Local PDFs launched attacks on an artillery battalion and a junta checkpoint located in Tanintharyi Township on the morning of 1 January 2023. Following the incident, the junta forces incessantly fired rounds of artillery shells towards Nyaung Pin Kwin and Ban Law Villages. Similar incidents also occurred in the evening on New Year's Eve in Ka De Leik Village. The junta forces responded heavy-handedly by firing rounds of shots in the area, using heavy weaponry.<sup>14</sup>

The junta forces extended its military operations to more villages in Tanintharyi Township, leading to clashes between the junta forces and local PDFs in Tha Mee Hla and Ban Kyoke villages in the township on 3 January 2023. Following the clashes, the junta forces fired heavy weaponry towards the village, which in turn led to additional displacement in the area. Even when there was no exchange of fire between the junta forces and the local PDFs, the junta forces continued to use heavy weaponry both day and night in the area. As a result, displaced populations were unable to return to their respective homes.

On 5 January 2023, junta security forces at Tanintharyi-based 306th artillery battalion in Maw Tone Village were attacked with remote-detonated explosive devices. The junta forces heavy-handedly responded to the attack by launching heavy artillery shelling towards the village.<sup>15</sup>

## *Dawei District*

### *Dawei Township*

- Local PDFs have launched at least 3 attacks against the junta forces in villages along Dawei-Hteekhee road during 5-7 January 2023. The attacks involved local PDFs' ambush on a police station in Pa Kar Ri village, a remote violence attack against a junta convoy near Tha Yet Ngote Village, and a skirmish against a junta outpost near Wa Kone village. In response to the consecutive attacks by the local PDFs, the junta sent troop reinforcements to Dawei-Hteekhee. The resistance groups had also warned the local populations against the use of Dawei-Htee Khee road and further suggested the locals to temporarily seek refuge in safer areas.<sup>16</sup>

### *Launglon Township*

- An alliance of local PDFs fired shots at the junta security forces which were assigned to guard the junta regimes' census data collection in Ka Myaw Kin village in Launglon Township on 9 January 2023. One of the local PDFs, Launglon People's Defense Force (LLPDF) involved in the attack stated that the shots were targeted at the junta soldiers and further action will be taken against the civil servants working for the junta regime's data collection if they continue to participate in either the data collection or mobilization for the elections. The junta forces temporarily closed the Ka Myaw Kin gate, a major gateway to enter Launglon township from Dawei and other townships.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Field Monitor. 1 January 2023

<sup>15</sup> Dawei Information Center. 5 January 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/517185893842200>

<sup>16</sup> Dawei Information Center. 8 January 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/519085603652229>

<sup>17</sup> Field Monitor. 10 January 2023.

## Remote Violence

Local people's defense forces (PDFs) employed the tactic of remote violence to attack convoys of junta forces, troop columns, office buildings, and the commercial facilities of the military regime and its associates. During April 2021 to January 2023, there were a total of 236 remote violence incidents, with more than half of the attacks targeted at the junta convoys, police force, and pro-regime militias (Pyu Saw Htee). The remainder of remote violence incidents involved attacks targeted at the office buildings of the military junta: the telecommunication towers, and showrooms of military-owned Mytel, and prisons. In addition, there were more than 9 incidents in which the 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.

During January 2023, a total of 15 remote violence attacks were reported across Palaw, Dawei, Thayetchaung and Launglon Townships. The highest number of remote violence attacks were reported in Palaw Township, with a total of 59 remote violence incidents during April 2021 - December 2022. In Palaw Township, the exchange of fire between local PDFs and the junta forces subsequently followed the local PDFs' attacks against junta columns and convoys, using remote-detonated explosive devices. (See **Armed Clashes**) Despite the fact that local PDFs and some news sources stated that the attacks against the junta security forces and pro-regime militias resulted in varying numbers of casualties, it is difficult to independently verify the exact figures.

### Major Incidents in January 2023

#### *Palaw Township*

- Palaw-based local PDF, namely K-PDF, launched a remote violence attack against a junta convoy on its way from Palaw to Myeik near Ta Po village in Palaw Township on 2 January 2023.<sup>18</sup>

#### *Yebyu Township*

- A bomb blasted near a marketplace in Yebyu town on 4 January, the Independence Day of Myanmar. The place of the incident is in close proximity to the junta-controlled administrative buildings. Another bomb blast was also reported on the road connecting Yebyu town to Pa Gaw Zun on the same day. Following the bomb blasts, the junta forces incessantly fired rounds of shots in the places of the incidents. As additional explosives were found in Yebyu town on the following days, the junta forces ramped up search operations and temporarily blocked the use of major roads and bridges in Yebyu town.<sup>19</sup>
- An explosive device blasted at a wedding reception in Nat Twin Village in Yebyu Township on 12 January 2023; a total of four civilians sustained injuries due to the incident. No organizations have claimed responsibility for the incident. Similar incident took place in Wai Di village in Launglon Township. Local PDFs, including Launglon People's Defense Force (LL PDF), condemned the attack and posit that such actions were deliberately undertaken to cause misunderstanding between the local resistance groups and the general public. The local PDFs subsequently warned the public against gathering in large groups on occasions such as donation ceremonies and weddings.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Mizzima-News in Burmese. 2 January 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/6274027309298788>

<sup>19</sup> Dawei Watch. 5 January 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/139053342889519/posts/5455801484547985>

<sup>20</sup> Dawei Watch. 12 January 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/139053342889519/posts/5475906689204131>

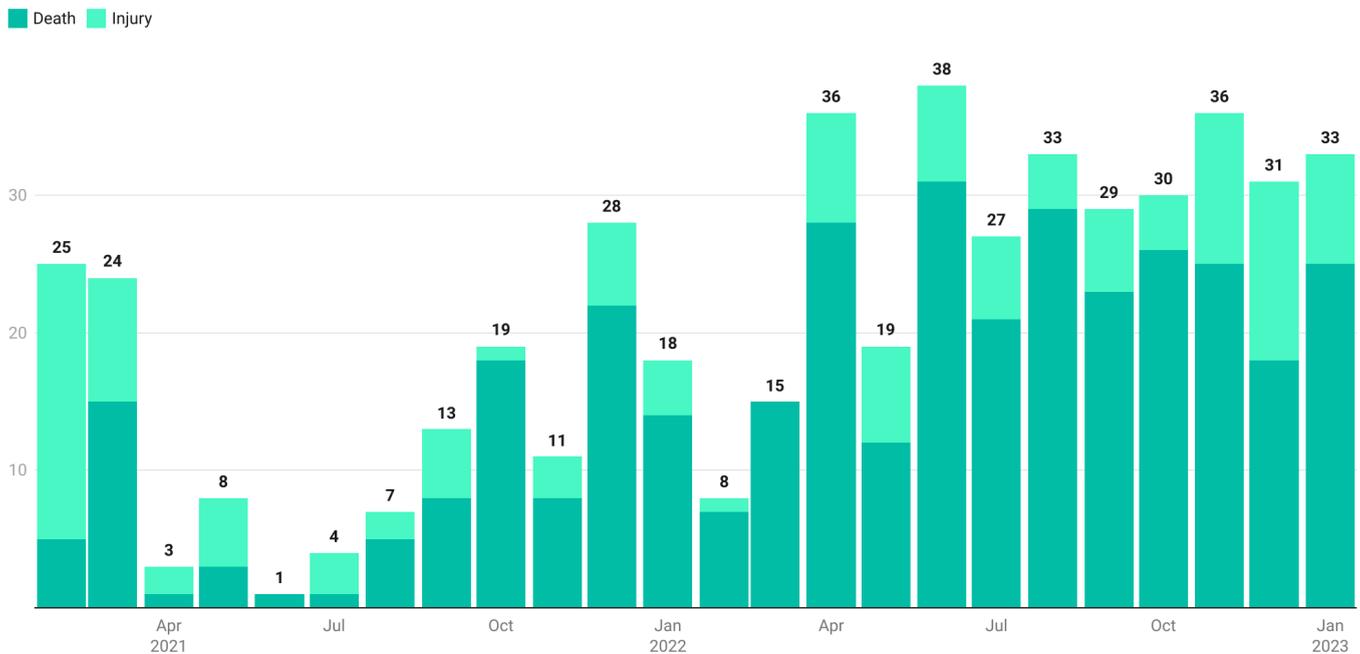
## Thayetchaung Township

An improvised mine exploded on a road in Win Ka Hpaw Village in Thayetchaung Township, causing an elderly woman and a child to sustain injuries on 19 January 2022. According to the local sources, the road had not been used by most of the local populations due to the fact that the junta forces stationed their troops and frequently maintained a concealed position to ambush local resistance groups in the area.<sup>21</sup>

### Attacks targeting civilians

There were a total of 33 casualties (25 deaths and 8 injured) due to attacks targeting civilians in January 2023. Some civilian casualties and injuries were the results of targeted killings allegedly committed by a joint force of junta soldiers and pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee group. Local PDFs have also increasingly targeted alleged military informants, members of a Pyu Saw Htee network, and junta-appointed local administrators. Local PDFs, in most cases, claimed responsibility for the incidents.

### Number of Civilian Casualties in Tanintharyi Region



Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

<sup>21</sup> The Tanintharyi Times. 19 January 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/100072232759534/posts/221963806888043>

## Number of Civilian Casualties in Tanintharyi Region

Type	Township	Men	Women	Girl	Boy	Unknown	Grand Total
Death	Launglon	80	15	2	2		99
	Yebyu	59	5		1		65
	Thayetchaung	38	4				42
	Palaw	36	5			1	42
	Dawei	33	5		1		39
	Tanintharyi	20	3	3			26
	Myeik	19	2				21
	Bokpyin	12	1		1		14
	Kawthoung	11					11
	Kyunsu	1					1
<b>Death Total</b>		<b>309</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>360</b>
Injury	Dawei	14	2			20	36
	Launglon	12	14	1	1		28
	Palaw	17	3				20
	Thayetchaung	9	4			4	17
	Yebyu	12	1		1		14
	Myeik	3				6	9
	Tanintharyi	1				5	6
	Kawthoung	3	1				4
	Bokpyin	1	1				2
<b>Injury Total</b>		<b>72</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>381</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>496</b>

Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

### Major Incidents in January 2023

#### *Yebyu Township*

- Two men were found dead on the road near Tha Byay Zun village in Yebyu Township on 11 January 2023. The dead bodies were found with hands tied behind backs and blindfolded. The local sources stated that the two men are not from nearby ThaByay Zun village and the identities of the deceased are still unknown.

#### *Bokpyin Township*

- A local source stated that a total of 8 civilians were found dead in Bokpyin Township on 15 January 2023. An executive committee member of the National League for Democracy (NLD) chapter of Bokpyin Township verified that one of the deceased, Aung Pe was a former member of village administration committee under the NLD government and the other two men have also recently been involved in assistance for the internally displaced populations in the township.

The SAC had spread disinformation purporting that the local PDFs slain the 8 civilians on suspicions of being military informants.<sup>22</sup>

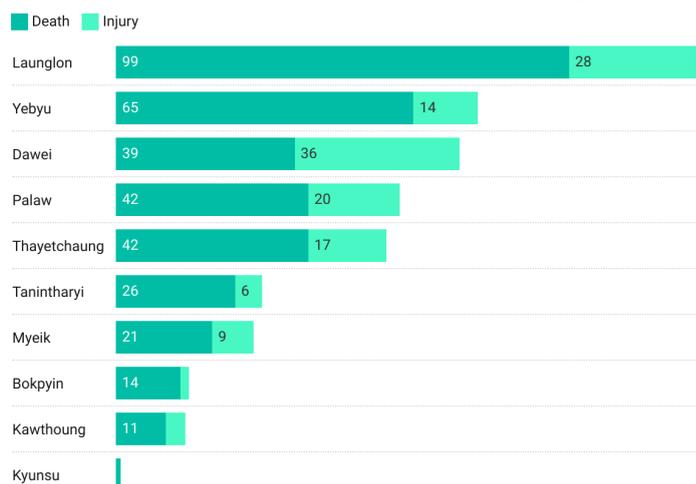
## Attacks targeting alleged members of pro-regime militias and military informants

### Dawei District

#### Launglon Township

- Launglone People Defense Force (LLPDF) and Dawei Guerilla Revolutionary Force (DGRW) claimed that they shot and killed a 50 year old military veteran in Thin Baw Seik Village in Launglon Township on 9 January.<sup>23</sup> The local PDFs alleged that the veteran was a member of a pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee group, and had continuously been supporting the junta forces' operations in the area, despite several warnings by the local PDFs against associating with the junta forces.

#### Number of Civilian Casualties in Tanintharyi Region



Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

- A 65 year old woman, an alleged member of a pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee group, was shot and killed in Wai Di Village in Launglon Township on 11 January 2023. The woman was allegedly involved in providing tip-offs to the junta forces, threatening the local political activists and demanding arbitrary taxation from the local populations in the village. No organizations had claimed responsibility for the incident.<sup>24</sup>

#### Yebyu Township

- Another alleged member of a pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee group, was shot and killed in Le Shaung village in Yebyu Township on 11 January 2023. T-PDF claimed responsibility for the killing of the man, who was an alleged military informant and received several warnings from the local PDFs to stop supporting the junta forces.<sup>25</sup>
- Yebyu-based local PDF, namely PDF, shot a junta-appointed administrator of Padauk Kone village on 11 January 2023. The administrator and the members of the local PDF exchanged fire and the administrator fled the scenes of the incident. He has also allegedly been involved in the recent census data collection for the upcoming junta-controlled elections.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Local source. 23 January 2023.

<sup>23</sup> Dawei Watch. 9 January 2023. <http://www.daweivatch.com/2023/01/09/news/49776/>

<sup>24</sup> Dawei Information Center. 11 January 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/520808270146629>

<sup>25</sup> Dawei Information Center. 11 January 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/521004073460382>

<sup>26</sup> Dawei Watch. 11 January 2023. <http://www.daweivatch.com/2023/01/11/news/49920/>

## Arbitrary Arrests and Detentions

Junta forces arrested at least 33 civilians in Dawei District during 28 December 2022 - 31 January 2023. An information officer of the regional chapter of the National League for Democracy (NLD), Mya Yadanar Htet and her husband were among the detainees who were arrested by force on that day. Her husband was later released after being detained for two days.<sup>27</sup> In addition, a total of 7 civilians were arrested in Kyet Sar Pyin ward in Dawei town on 2 January. Local sources noted increasing accounts in which the junta forces arrested not only people they suspected to be involved in, or supporting, anti-coup movements, but also their parents and other family members.<sup>28</sup> There were also additional accounts of arrests and confiscation of food items transported from Dawei town to other villages. A total of 3 men were arrested in Thayet Chaung Township during 18-21 January 2023.<sup>29</sup>

Junta forces also arrested a total of 15 civilians in Shat Pon Village during 18-19 January 2023 in which soldiers burned down civilians' houses and fired rounds of heavy artillery shells, despite the absence of armed clashes in the area on 19 January 2023. Following the arrests and burning down of civilian houses, the majority of village residents fled their homes to safety. Junta forces continued stationing in Shat Pon Village, and the remaining residents faced threats of arrests, arson attacks, and artillery shelling. Similar incidents were reported in Kin Shey Village in Thayetchaung Township on 26 January. A total of 20 civilians were arrested by the junta forces during their search for a former village administrator who the junta regime suspected of supporting the local PDFs with rations. According to a local source, the civilians were released on 27 January.<sup>30</sup>

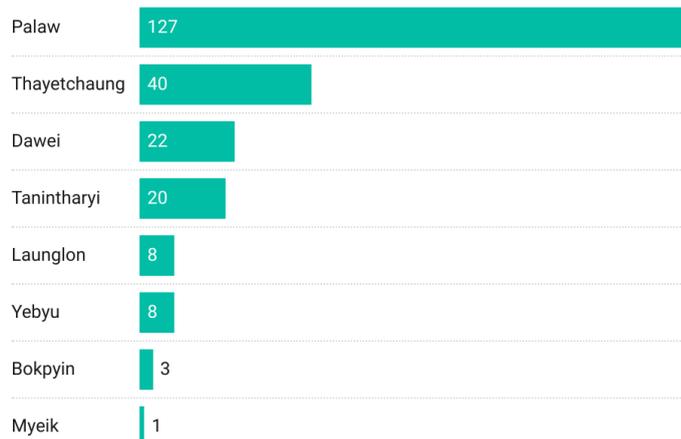
## Burning Civilian Houses

Increasing numbers of civilians' houses burnt down by the junta forces have been reported in Launglon, Dawei and Palaw townships in Tanintharyi Region; the incidents had also led to additional displacement and overall heightened sense of insecurity in the affected areas.

- Following the incident on 6 January in which two police officers were shot by unidentified gunmen in Tha Kyet Taw village in Launglon Township, the junta forces stationed at the local police station fired shots randomly and burned down two civilian houses in the village.<sup>31</sup> Additional reporting stated that some villagers fled to safety, as they were afraid the conflict would escalate in the area.
- Additionally, on 11 January a total of 5 houses were burned down by a group of 20 armed men in plain clothes in Hin Cho Taw Village in Launglon Township.

Local sources reported that the men belonged to a pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee chapter, based in Tha Byay Shaung Village in Launglon Township. The firearms possessed by the group clearly indicated that they belonged to the junta forces. They added that the houses were

### Number of Burned Houses by Township



Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

<sup>27</sup> Mizzima News in Burmese. 3 January 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/6273729019328617>

<sup>28</sup> Local source. 7 January 2023.

<sup>29</sup> Dawei Information Center. 18 January 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/525503623010427>

<sup>30</sup> Field Monitor. 30 January 2023.

<sup>31</sup> Dawei Information Center. 6 January 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/517688120458644>

owned and inhabited by alleged supporters of the National League for Democracy (NLD). They further stated that there were public consultations held by the local PDFs in the village a day prior to the incident, on 10 January 2023.<sup>32</sup>

- Furthermore, the junta troops burned down more than 15 houses and a plantation in Wa Kone and Thin Gan Taw Village in Dawei Township, and also looted properties from civilians' houses. The recent developments in the area led to additional displacement.
- According to local sources, on 19 January, junta soldiers burned down civilians' houses in Shat Pon Village, where a clash between junta forces and people's defense forces erupted three days earlier on 16 January. The exact number of houses affected by the arson have yet to be verified. The burning down of houses led to additional displacement in the village.



*Burned houses in Palaw Township, 19 January 2023, Photo: CJ*

## **IMPACTS OF VIOLENT CONFLICT**

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

Due to intensified armed clashes and fortified presence of junta forces in Tanintharyi Region in January 2023, the figures of displacement in the region have been estimated to be around 7,000 people. Increased numbers of displacement have been reported in Palaw and Tanintharyi townships, where the junta forces heightened offensives and indiscriminate shooting with the use of heavy weaponry even when there was no presence of active fighting between the junta forces and the local resistance

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<sup>32</sup> Dawei Watch. 11 January 2023. <http://www.daweivatch.com/2023/01/11/news/dawei/49853/>

groups. Additional accounts of civilians' houses being burned down by the junta forces have also been reported in Launglon and Palaw townships.

As of 31 January 2023, Palaw and Tanintharyi townships of Myeik District had the highest number of displaced populations in Tanintharyi Region. There are a total of more than 2600 internally displaced people seeking refuge in camp settings in Palaw Township. Recent incidents of arson attacks on civilians' houses in To, Tan Shin, Thin Gan Taw and Shat Pon villages caused additional displacements of 2,000 people to relatively safer places in Myeik town. According to a local source, there were some accounts in which some civilians among the displaced populations were detained by the junta forces en route to the shelters in Myeik town. Also, household inspections and further intimidation by the junta forces in Myeik town were increasingly targeted at the displaced populations who had just recently fled their homes in those affected villages in Palaw Township.

Similarly, in Tanintharyi Township, due to indiscriminate shooting by the junta forces using heavy weaponry, more than 2,000 people from Maw Tone and nearby villages in the township have fled their homes to seek shelter in relatively safer areas in the township and Myeik town. Numbers of displacement may fluctuate due to uncertain situations and difficulties in accessing precise figures. Additional figures of displacement were reported in Dawei and Launglon townships of Dawei District in Tanintharyi Region; displacements were the aftermaths of the junta forces' offensives, burning down of civilians' houses, reported use of civilians as "human shields" during the military operations.

## Number of IDPs in Tanintharyi Region

(as of 31 January 2023)

	Township	Number of IDPs
1	Palaw	4,631
2	Tanintharyi	2,000
3	Dawei	200
4	Launglon	150
	Total	6,981

Source: Dawna Tenasserim - IDP Supply Force • Created with Datawrapper

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

The widespread conflict across Tanintharyi Region as a result of increased junta troop reinforcements and offensives disrupts the local populations' housing conditions, health, security, livelihood and education. Since the junta forces continued to commit some of the most visceral and obscene acts towards children, children are suffering through horrific situations where the security of them is not guaranteed and their basic rights are being denied. Furthermore, the children's rights to education has been put "on hold" as hundreds of thousands of children lack access to formal education and alternative methods of schooling due to the impacts of the 2021 coup. While some children in urban settings with adequate internet access have been able to be part of online learning hubs supported by the National Unity Government (NUG) and other independent organizations, many children, especially those in rural settings and conflict-affected areas remained to be left behind in terms of access to education. Parents are facing a difficult decision to send their children to state-run basic education schools despite their safety concerns for their children. Also, there are several accounts in which junta forces occupied schools used them as barracks for soldiers. This increases the risks of violations against children and interferes with education.

Junta's fortified presence and restrictions on medical supplies have significantly strained access to healthcare services in Tanintharyi Region. Aid workers face severe shortages of medical supplies they urgently need to provide treatment to local populations and internally displaced populations in

camp-like settings. Junta forces sought to arrest individuals who they suspect to be providing medical treatment and supplies to the local PDFs. Those carrying or transporting the bulk of medicines, food, and clothing have been interrogated and intimidated by the junta forces at the checkpoints along major highway roads. The junta forces continued to enforce the ban on transporting bulks of dry rations (rice, instant noodle, etc) and medicines and other medical items (anticoagulant drugs, gauze, bandages, etc.). A local aid worker also reported that the local PDFs have also interrogated and intimidated the aid workers who were transporting patients and assisting the bereaved families with funeral services in Palaw township.<sup>33</sup> The restrictions set by both the junta forces and the local PDFs on the use of the major roads along Myeik-Palaw and Dawei-Hteekhee road had considerably disrupted the healthcare and funeral services provided by the local aid organizations.

Increased presence of junta forces, security checks and their restrictions on food items have also continued to strain the livelihoods of the local populations across Tanintharyi Region. As the junta forces established checkpoints to conduct security checks at the vehicles and passengers and often demand money in a form of arbitrary taxation, the local businessmen and traders are unable to make profits for their goods. In fact, the farmers and local traders in betel-nut plantation stated that each checkpoints along the roads demand money for transporting the bags of betel nut. Betel nut harvesting in the conflict-affected areas such as Wa Kone and nearby villages in Dawei District have also been abandoned due to intensified clashes in the area. Dawei town has also been guarded heavily by the presence of junta troops at every gateways connecting the town to other towns/townships in the region, disrupting the flow of goods and services to and from the town.<sup>34</sup>

## **ANALYSIS**

Two years since the coup in February 2021, the armed resistance has gained a greater momentum in Tanintharyi Region, despite a strong presence of the military bases of Myanmar armed forces (the Myanmar army, the Myanmar Navy and the Myanmar Air Force) and heavy-handed response by junta forces to eliminate any forms of resistance. In terms of non-violent resistance, Tanintharyi Region has seen sustained movements such as protests and Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), in which hundreds of civil servants refused to return to the workforce in defiance against the military rule. Although the number of non-violent movements had decreased compared to the figures reported in 2021, the presence of strike committees and women and youth-led movements have been the distinctive features of the resistance in the region during the past two years.

During January 2023, despite a decrease in the numbers of both armed clashes and remote violence incidents across Tanintharyi Region compared to the numbers reported in December 2022, the tensions between the junta forces and local resistance groups showed no signs of abating. The junta forces have continued to respond heavy-handedly to the attacks launched by the local PDFs and their alliances, which mainly used tactics including remote violence and attacks on: junta outposts, checkpoints, administrative buildings, and the junta's military bases. Incessant artillery shelling into villages in the conflict-torn areas was reported, even when there was no active conflict between the junta and other armed groups in Palaw and Tanintharyi Township. Junta forces have continuously attempted to eliminate any forms of resistance with disproportionate use of manpower and heavy weaponry as well as simultaneously treated the civilians as their perceived opponents on the battlefield. Youth has also continued to be treated as the enemies of the junta forces and subjected to killings, arrests and detention, and intimidation on a daily basis. Brutal crackdown on anti-coup resistance and atrocities subsequently committed by the junta forces to eliminate the resistance had only fueled people's urge to revolt.

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<sup>33</sup> Local source. 23 January 2023.

<sup>34</sup> Local source. 7 January 2023.

However, both armed resistance and non-violent resistance necessitate strong and sustained support of the general public and are now facing a looming threat of losing adequate support. As the state of emergency lengthened, the severity of the socio-economic impacts surged at unprecedented levels. The local populations have been bearing the brunt of severe socio-economic impacts of the 2021 coup as well as the increasing sense of insecurity featured by atrocities, threats and intimidation by the junta forces. The woes of the economic crisis and soaring rates of unemployment will likely weaken the local populations' support towards the revolution. There remains the need to address the socio-economic impacts of the coup such as lack of access to education and healthcare as well as protection of vulnerable groups, including women, children, and the internally displaced communities. In fact, lack of access to formal education and alternative methods of schooling have become protracted with little hope for a solution.

The junta troops' strong presence, as well as the intensified clashes across the region, resulted in increased displacement of local populations in January 2023. Also, the junta's widespread ban on the transport of relief items across all townships in the region, to curtail all the local PDFs' access to supplies, have deprived displaced populations of adequate food, medicines, and shelter. Local aid organizations' endeavors to fulfill the needs of IDPs and the host communities have been largely and continuously hampered by restrictions and other acts of junta forces that involved confiscation of the bulk of aid items (e.g. medicines, warm clothing, food), interrogation of local aid workers, threats, and intimidation. As the local PDFs have also increasingly placed restrictions on the use of certain roads in the conflict areas, the local aid workers are facing additional threats on this front. Both the SAC and the local PDFs must allow unfettered humanitarian access to displaced populations.

As the current conflict trajectory features intensified armed clashes, civilian houses burnt down, the flight of thousands of people, and loss of economic development and income, the SAC's efforts to purport an image of Tanintharyi Region as a stable and prosperous region have been in vain. Furthermore, the current situation in most parts of Tanintharyi Region suggests that only a handful of urban settings in certain townships may be nominally secure enough to conduct polls in designated constituencies, during the upcoming junta-controlled general elections. As such, given the widespread locations of armed clashes and rise in displacement figures in the past, there is increasing uncertainty about whether voting can indeed take place in the region.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***State Administrative Council (SAC)***

- The State Administrative Council (SAC) must cease attacks on civilians and must also allow unfettered humanitarian access to displaced populations.

### ***National Unity Government (NUG)***

- The NUG should ensure that local resistance groups are following its military Code of Conduct (COC).

### **Local resistance groups (PDFs, Local PDFs, and ethnic armed organizations)**

- PDFs and other 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***

- 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 (NGOs) and International Non-governmental Organizations (INGOs)***

- 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, to mitigate triggering violence in the region.

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