

Weekly News Review

Issue 98, March 22 - 28, 2023



**The messages conveyed
through the photos or
the fear of the junta chief**

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Introduction

It was on 27 March. The words of coup leader Senior General Min Aung Hlaing were heard at the 78th Armed Forces Day ceremony. The senior general said he would take decisive action against the People's Defense Forces (PDF) and the Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations (EROs), including the National Unity Government (NUG), which support them.

Political and military analysts have criticized the military chief's message as unrealistic and implausible, viewing it merely as a propaganda message aimed at persuading pro-military groups and allies.

This issue of Burma News International (BNI) - Myanmar Peace Monitor (MPM) Weekly News Review looks at Myanmar's junta chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing's speech and the messages deciphered from the significant photographs.

Documentation of the speech

Scenes of the meeting between the Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and former military leaders such as U Thein Sein and U

Tin Aye at the 78th Armed Forces Day event held in Nay Pyi Taw on 27 March have been decoded as important messages, apart from those showing Ming Aung Hlaing giving his speech and military parades.

The senior general's speech covered topics such as dialog with ten EROs, the NUG, the PDF and other EROs helping them, international governments and organizations, martial law and elections, and the electoral system that will be used in the upcoming election. The speech highlighted the difficulties they face during the military coup, but it clearly sends a more propagandistic tone toward pro-junta supporters.

Despite the fact that the junta leader said, "We are controlling the main townships by extending the martial law. I would like to emphasize here that this is not to control and restrict the population, but to effectively stop the actions of terrorists that harm the interests of the population," his words are disconnected from the actual situation on the ground. The reality is that the military council's troops are carrying out arson attacks from one village to another and arbitrarily killing local civilians.

The coup leader's promise that "after implementing the emergency provisions, they will again hold free and fair democratic multiparty elections in accordance with the 2008 Constitution and hand over power to the winners according to democratic standards" is only a superficial and bare assertion he has made since the beginning of the military coup, and instead he has since extended the state of emergency at will.

Also, his warning to the EROs supporting the PDF, including the NUG, that decisive action will be taken rather shows his detachment from the reality on the ground.

It is questionable whether the senior general even knows that the military parade training ground was attacked with unguided rockets at about 7:30 pm on 26 March, Ko Zeyar Thaw's birthday.

The messages conveyed through the unusual photos

The senior general's photos circulating on social media sites send several messages to the public. As mentioned earlier, the junta chief does not seem to lose sight of the reality on the ground, but the public has the impression that he is giving false hope to pro-junta groups and allies by trying to obscure the reality.



The general's eyes in the above photo reveal his fear or apprehension of something unforeseeable. Although he is spouting intimidating words and warnings against the forces of the Spring Revolution, his facial expression shows his inner fear. Those attending the military parade and clapping during the junta chief's speech might not recognize this particular facial expression in the above photo.



This photo shows the junta leader paying respect to U Thein Sein by touching his feet with his head as a sign of respect. The look with which he pays respect to the former president is very submissive, but it shows the insecurity and fear of the entire military dictatorship, which subtly calls to gather.

The Chairman of the military council (officially State Administration Council) and his wife paid respect to 19 retired military officers and seven of their wives, including former President U Thein Sein and former head of the Union Election Commission U Tin Aye. After paying his respects, Lt. Gen. Tun Kyi (retired) and U Thein Sein gave advice on behalf of the others.

The coup leader may have taken advantage of the image of the former military officers, hoping to exert some influence on the public and pro-military groups at a time when public support for the military regime, which has usurped state power by defying the popular vote, has reached the lowest point and faces widespread opposition throughout the country.

It appears that the junta leader still views the international community's support for former President U Thein Sein, who had a chance to speak on the United Nations stage, as a strength to withstand international pressure.



The above photo shows a meeting between coup leader Min Aung Hlaing and the family of former military dictator General Ne Win. The scene is one of the pieces of evidence that the military leader, whose public support is diminishing, maintains good relations with all individuals and groups associated with the military. In addition, the regime has often used the image of individuals who are in some way associated with the NLD to gain public support.

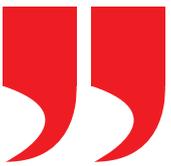
In particular, NLD patron former General U Tin Oo, and former President U Htin Kyaw have also been used to "pose for photos" for the interests of Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and the military regime.

Review

In the Armed Forces Day speech, the junta leader uttered words that are neither realistic nor plausible, but at the same time he also indicated that he would continue until his goals are achieved. It may be unrealistic or implausible for him to say that he will act decisively against NUG, PDF, and EROs, but he has



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shown signs that the military regime is taking its time preparing for the election and will let it take place no matter what.

The regime had let the people know that it would use a mixture of First Past The Post (FPTP) and Proportional Representation (PR), and then came the announcement of the dissolution of 40 political parties, including the NLD, on 28 March.

While the military regime consistently works to impose a military-sponsored democracy that helps it revive its military dictatorship, the above photos convey a clear message that the coup leader is concerned about the resistance of the Spring Revolution forces, international pressure, and widespread public opposition. More than that, the regime leader seems to be concerned and alarmed about the possibility of growing disunity within the military regime.

Whether or not the messages conveyed through the Senor General Min Aung Hlaing's photos or the fear of the junta chief could become an impetus for the forces of the Spring Revolution will depend on the approach of each force.

Weekly HighLight News



Thantlang bombardment kills eight civilians including two children

30 March 2023

Eight civilians including two children aged 10 were killed and around 20 wounded in the junta's bombardment in Khuafo village in Thantlang Township of Chin State on the morning of 30 March, Salai Htet Ni, Spokesperson of the Chin National Front (CNF) said.

The military council bombarded Khuafo village located about three miles from Thantlang at around 10 am without any battles on the ground, with jet fighters and Mi-35.

Salai Htet Ni told the Khonumthung Media Group: "The military council dropped bombs nine times with jet fighters and Mi-35. The military council carried out bombardments although there were no ground battles."

Among those killed in the bombardment are two children aged six and nine and five women. Among those wounded are two children aged nine and ten.

"The military council usually burns and attacks the villages and IDP camps citing that the PDFs and the EROs are present. There is no CNF and the PDFs in the small village. It is not a good place for us to station below Thantlang. This is the military council's targeted attack on civilians," Salai Htet Ni said.

This bombardment on a village in Thantlang Township where the CNF headquarters is located after Junta leader Senior General Min Aung Hlaing threatened in his speech given on 78th Anniversary Armed Forces Day which falls on 27 March that decisive action shall be taken against the EAOs which helps the National Unity Government (NUG) and the People's Defense Forces (PDFs).

The military council has conducted more airstrikes rather than the ground offensive in Chin State. From January to February, the military council conducted more than 100 airstrikes.

BNI – MPM

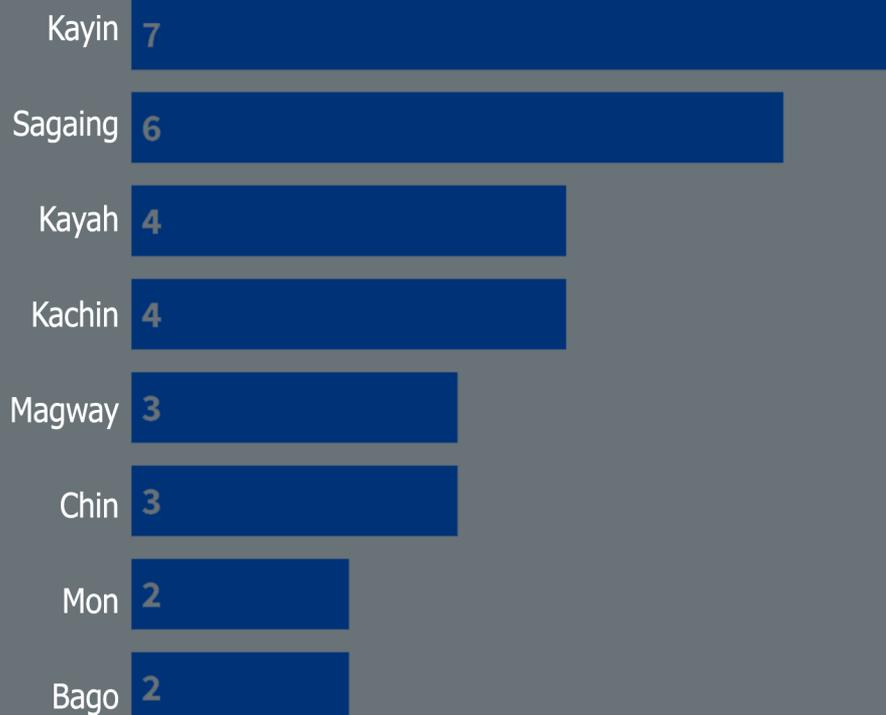
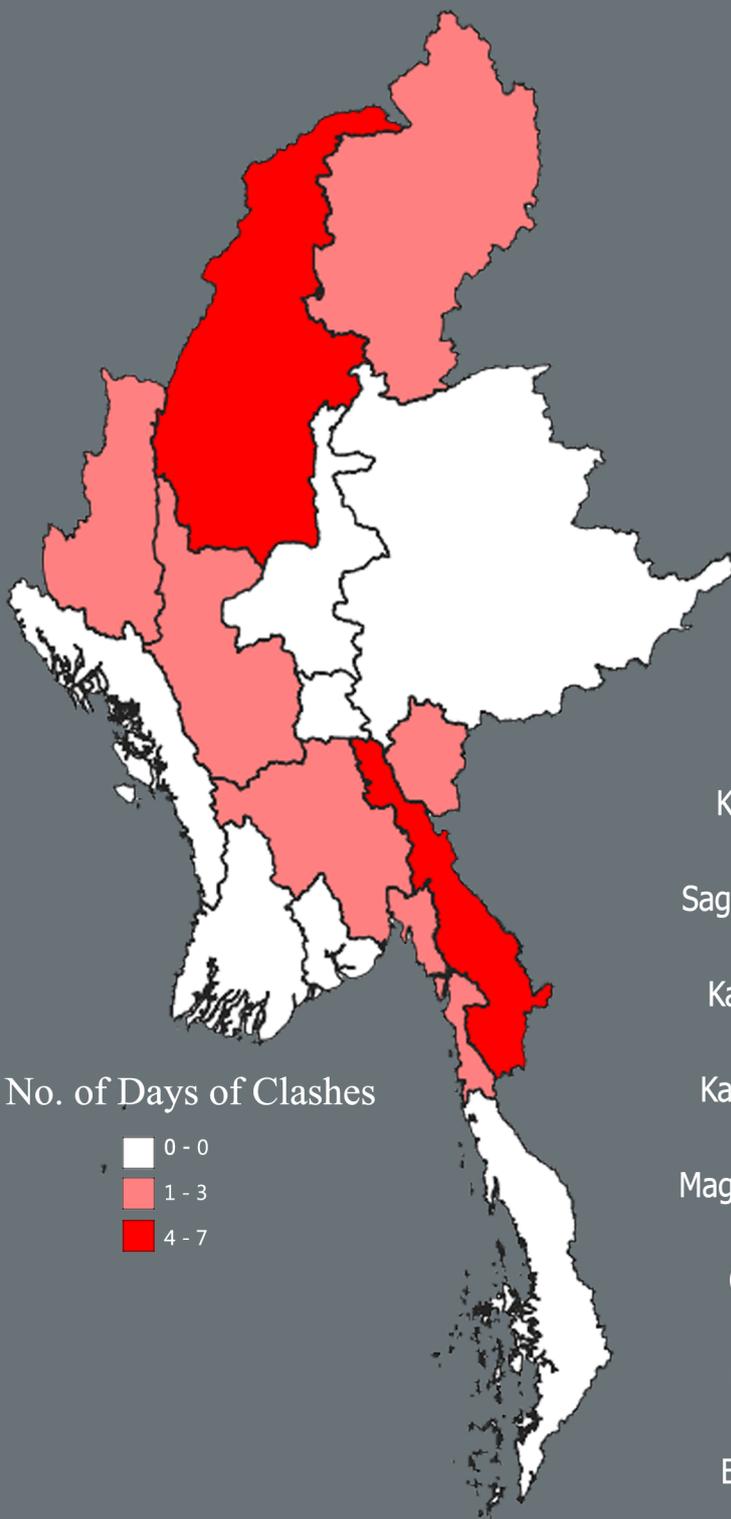
Part II

What Happened this Week

According to data collected by BNI- Myanmar Peace Monitor, there were 31 days of clashes between military council forces, the People's Defense Forces/Local Defense Forces (PDF/LDF), and Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations (EROs) from 22 to 28 March. Broken down by state and region, Karen State topped the list with seven days. BNI-MPM records the situation of fighting in days by township, but the actual number of incidents may be higher given the frequency of clashes.

31 Days

No. of Days of Clashes



Military, PDF Member and Civilian Deaths

March 22 - 28, 2023



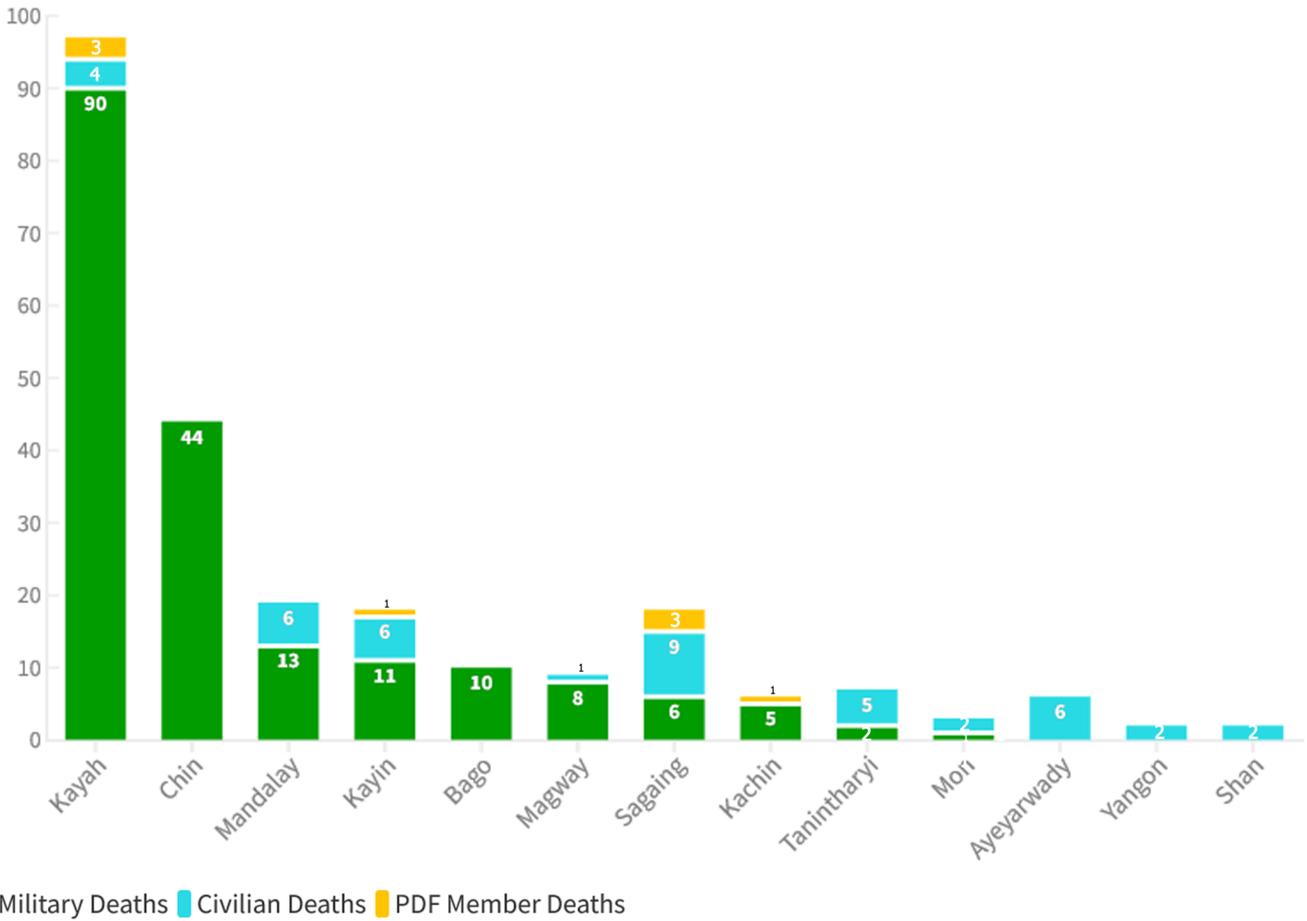
Military Deaths



PDF Member Deaths

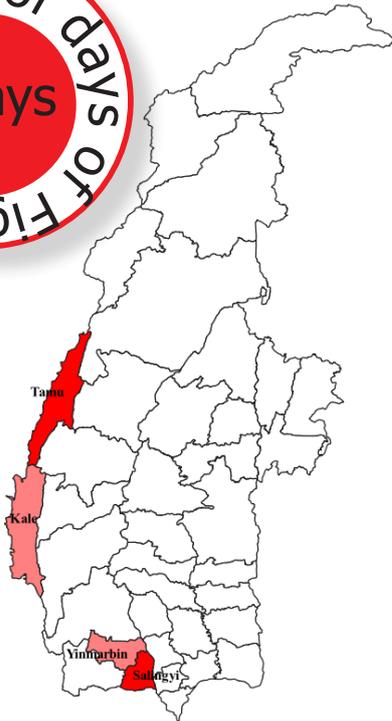


Civilian Deaths

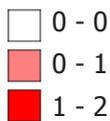


21,000 Total Number of IDPs (March 22 - 28, 2023)





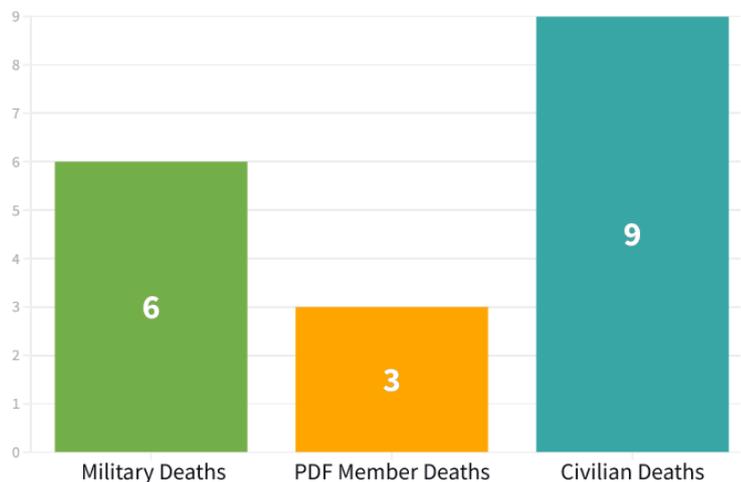
No.of Days of Clashes

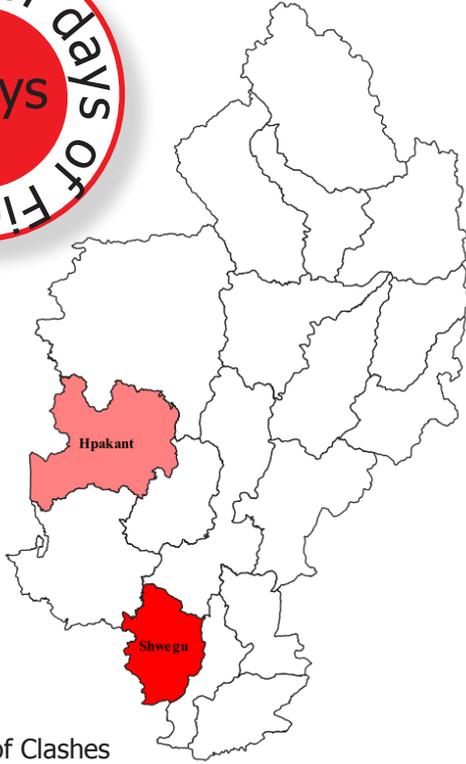


Sagaing Region

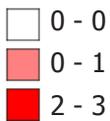
On 25 March, the military council raided Sonekone village located about two miles to the south of Budalin Township. They burned down 175 houses and burned seven older persons to death. Among the victims are two visually impaired women and two paralyzed women. The victims are Daw Khin Myint, 70, Daw Kyi Aung, 71, U Japan Gyi, 73, Daw Pyae, 82, Daw San San Myint, 60, Daw Tin Ei, 83 and Daw Khway, 73. On the morning of 28 March, bomb blasts occurred in two places near the highway bus terminal in Shwebo, wounding 20 civilians (12 men and eight women) including two children. One of 20 victims died upon arrival at the hospital. Social organizations sent them to Shwebo hospital.

Clashes occurred between military council troops and PDF in Salingyi, Yinmabin, Tamu, and Kalay townships, killing five junta soldiers and three PDF fighters. On 22 March, two regime soldiers were shot while on their way to get groceries, killing one of them. In Khin-U and Budalin townships, eight civilians were shot and killed by junta soldiers. On 28 March, a bomb explosion at the Shwebo Bus Terminal wounded 19 people and killed one man. In Kanbalu and Budalin townships, more than 15,000 people were forced to flee their homes as military council troops advanced and carried out arson attacks on the villages.





No.of Days of Clashes

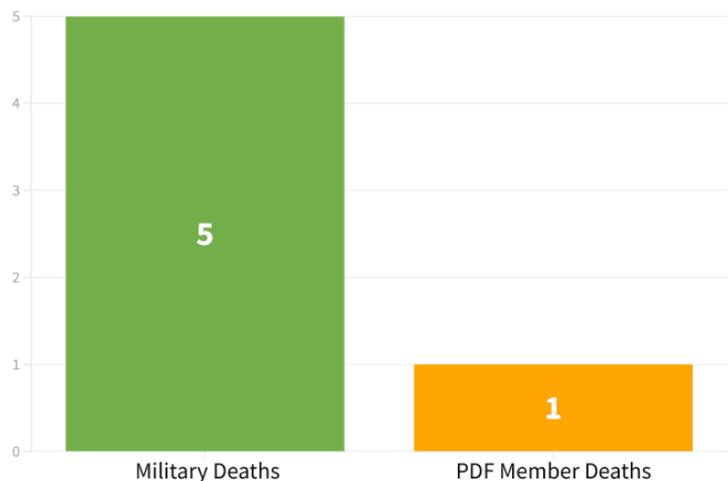


Kachin State

On 23 and 24 March, the military council was constantly carrying out airstrikes and artillery shelling in the eastern part of Nanmar in Mohnyin Township. On 24 March, a military column of the military council conducted military operations in Nanmar, Nansawlaw villages in Mohnyin Township and arrested six farmers including Ko Naing Soe and Ko Aung Kyaw Htwe as human shields.

Thousands of locals from eight villages have fled to safer places as fighting is taking place between the military council and a combined force of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the People's Defense Force (PDF) in the eastern part of Shwegu Township. Fighting took place as a military column of around 200 soldiers was conducting military operations in Manwon and Naunglatgyi villages as of 23 March. Locals from Sanmulay, Manwaing, Naunglatgyi, Hnattadar, Sithar, Sithaw, Namlan and Winwa villages are displaced by the fighting. The military council's bombardment destroyed civilian houses and killed animals.

Clashes occurred between military council troops and KIA-PDF joint forces in Hpakant and Shwegu, killing four regime soldiers and one PDF fighter. On 26 March, a junta military intelligence officer was shot and killed in Mohnyin Township. Fighting between military council troops and KIA-PDF joint forces in eastern Shwegu Township displaced thousands of people from eight villages.



Total no of days of Fighting
3Days

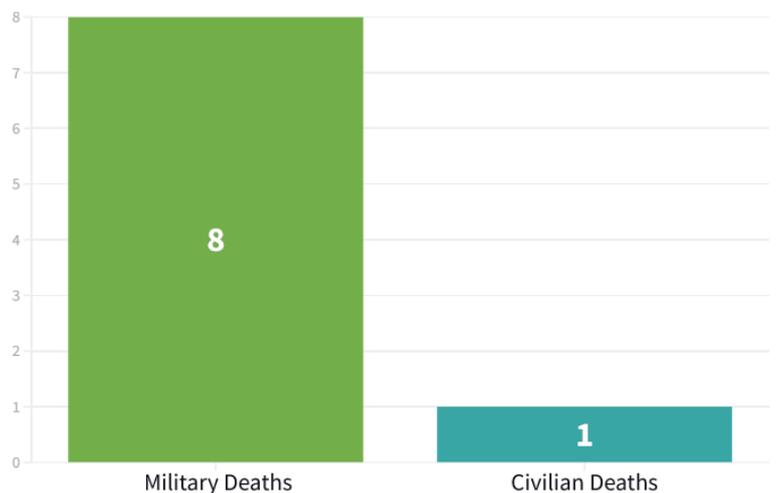


Magway Region

Junta soldiers arrived in Thayetkwa village in Myaing Township on 22 March and abducted three local women on 23 March. The detainees are two women from Karyarkaungtaetike and a woman from Mingan village who dug pebbles. The remaining 12 pebble diggers went missing. Around 1,000 locals from Mingan and Myaynu villages fled to safer places as the military council troops stormed the villages. They are in urgent need of emergency humanitarian aid.

On 28 March, Ko Kyaw Lin, 26, who was working in farming died from the explosion of a 40-mm grenade launcher in a Shwedwintutaw between Kyuthar village and Kanthar village in Htilin Township.

Clashes occurred between military council troops and the PDF in the Pauk and Yaesagyo townships, killing eight regime soldiers. On 28 March, a man named Ko Kyaw Lin was killed when an unexploded 40 mm shell exploded while he was working on a hillside farm between Kyuthar and Kanthar villages in Htiliin Township. On 23 March, the regime's advance forced more than 1,000 residents into Myaing Township.



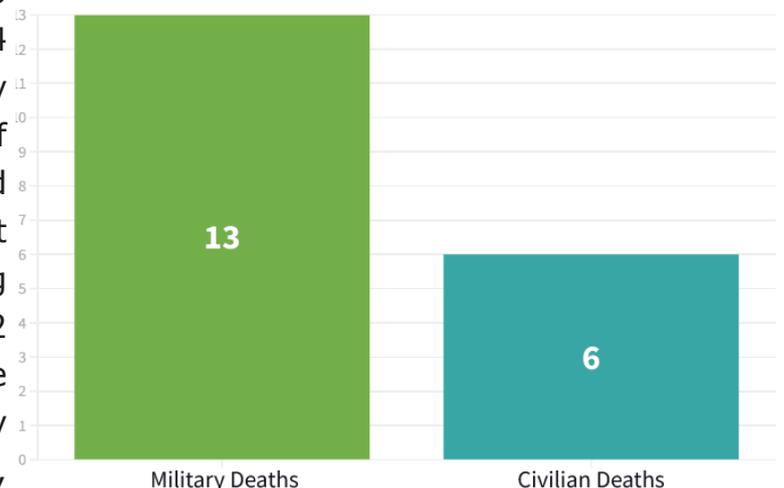
Mandalay Region

On the morning of 23 March, the military council abducted a civilian from Kyauksaelay village in Madaya Township and cut off his head. Then, he was burned to death. There was an exchange of gunfire as the military column which conducted the military operations in Kyaukselay village encountered four PDF members. The PDF members managed to escape. However, the military council arrested four locals from the village for no apparent reason. The body of the victim who was burned to death was found in a hut in a mango plantation at the entry of Kyaukselay village after the military column left the village. The victim is Ko Win Htway from Kyaukselay village. Locals found his head on the road in the east of the village.

On 24 March, Daw Nyunt Nyunt Swe, 59-year-old female 100-hold head from Pyigyidagun Township was shot dead by two unknown men on a motorbike in front of her house.



On 22 March, a bomb explosion occurred in front of the Amarapura District Court in Hman Tan District, Amarapura Township, killing one policeman. On 23 March, military council soldiers arrested a resident of Kyaukselay village in Madaya Township and beheaded and burned him. On 24 March, PDF members attacked a convoy carrying the Mandalay regional chief minister's vehicle at the corner of 64th and 25th streets near the regional government office in Aungmyaythazan Township, killing two senior administration officials and 12 junta soldiers. In addition, three 100-household heads were shot dead by unidentified gunmen in Aungmyaythazan, Mahlaing, and Pyigyidagun townships.





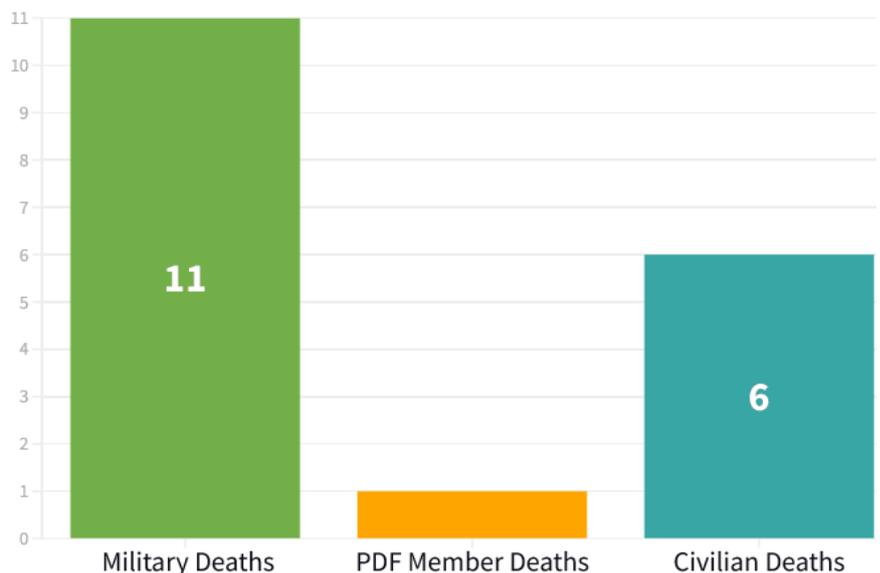
Karen State

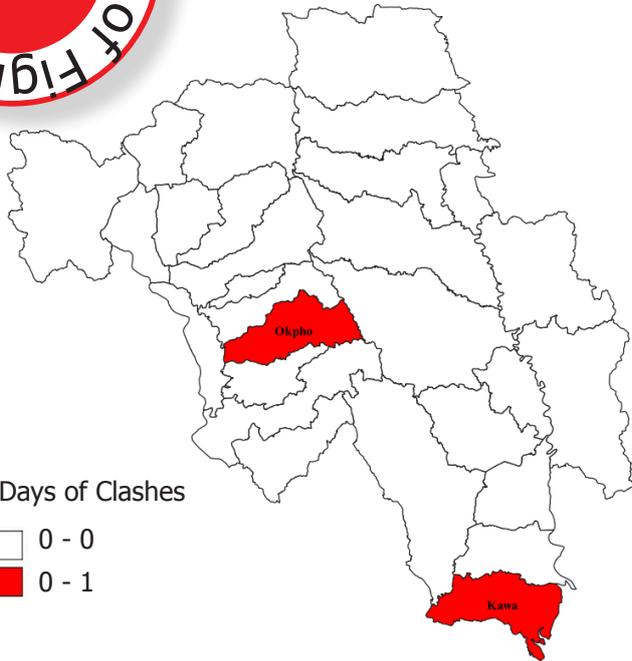
Four people including a nine-year-old girl were wounded by the military council's indiscriminate artillery shelling from Kawkareik-based Infantry Battalion-97 in Kyaungsharkone village in Kawkareik Township on 23 March. The wounded victims are U Tun Kyaing (aka) Pharpae, 50, Naw Phaw Baw, 50, Saw Min Htike, 18 and Naw Ta Kyo Phaw, 9.

On 25 March, there was intense fighting between a combined force led by the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and the military council in Kyonedoe town of Kawkareik Township, burning down 33 civilian houses, vehicles and many other properties. On 26 March, the heavy shells fired by the military council hit two locals and killed one.



Clashes occurred between regime troops and KNLA-PDF joint forces in Kawkareik, Myawaddy and Hpapun Townships, killing 11 regime soldiers and one resistance fighter. Six civilians were killed and 33 houses, four vehicles and three motorcycles were burned down in the fighting between the two sides in Kyondoe, Kawkareik Township. In addition, indiscriminate artillery fire by regime forces sent thousands of residents fleeing in Kyondoe.





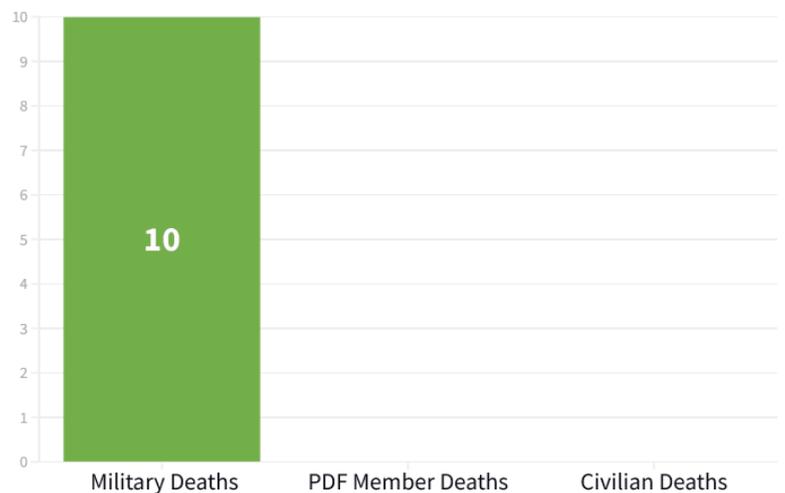
No.of Days of Clashes

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Bago Region

The military council arrested seven Rohingya men at Kyeepin inspection gate in Padaung Township on 26 March. The detainees are from Minbya and Sittwe Townships of Arakan State. They were taken to Ohnchitpin police station. Locals face livelihood difficulties as the military council allows the people from the villages on the upstream of Taungnyo Dam in Nattalin Township to buy and carry two pyi of rice per household. There are around 13 villages including Kwinkyal, Thanpayarkhone, Sinsweywama, Yonekone, Kyatmanet and Kwaygyi villages on the upstream of Taungnyo Dam. Locals from Nyaunglebin, Kwaygyi and Kyaukpyoke villages have fled for safety.

Clashes occurred between military council troops and the PDF in Okpho and Kawa townships, killing seven Junta soldiers. On 27 March, a KNLA-PDF joint force attacked the regime's Taungoo air base with four unguided rockets, killing three junta soldiers.



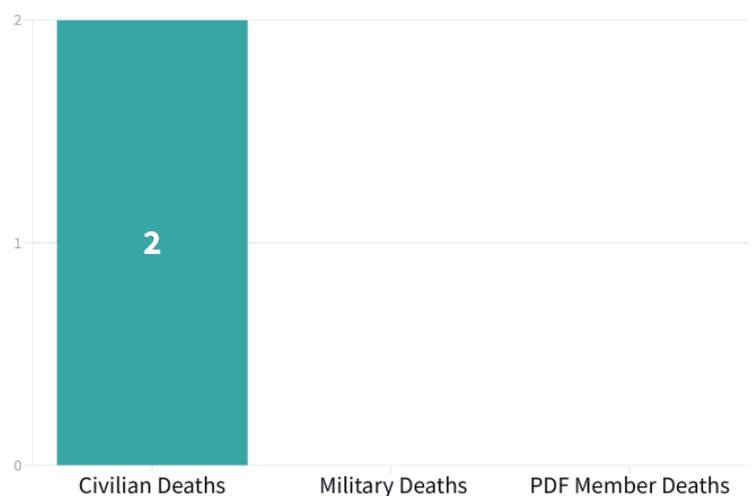
Shan State

On 23 March, the explosion of heavy weapon Khonesone village (Konesone village) in Narsauk village-tract in Lashio Township, killing two villagers and seriously wounding two others. Locals from Khonesone village found an unexploded weapon near the mound near the plantation located about one mile from the village. The heavy weapon exploded while the people were carrying it to a farm.

A combined force of the PDFs could rescue 15 locals stranded in the village when the military council troops arrived at the monastery and pagoda in Taungsalone village in Pinlaung Township, according to the statement released by the National Unity Government (NUG) on 22 March. They were sent to the IDP camps where the families are taking shelter. The Pa-O National Defense Force (PNDF) provided MMK-20,000 per IDP and MMK-30,000 for social organization.



On 23 March, two villagers were killed when an artillery shell exploded in Konehson village in Narsauk Village, Lashio Township.





No.of Days of Clashes

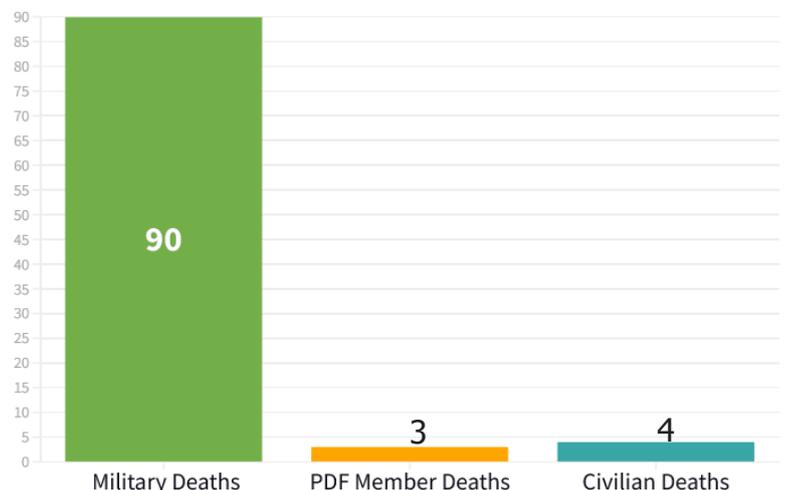
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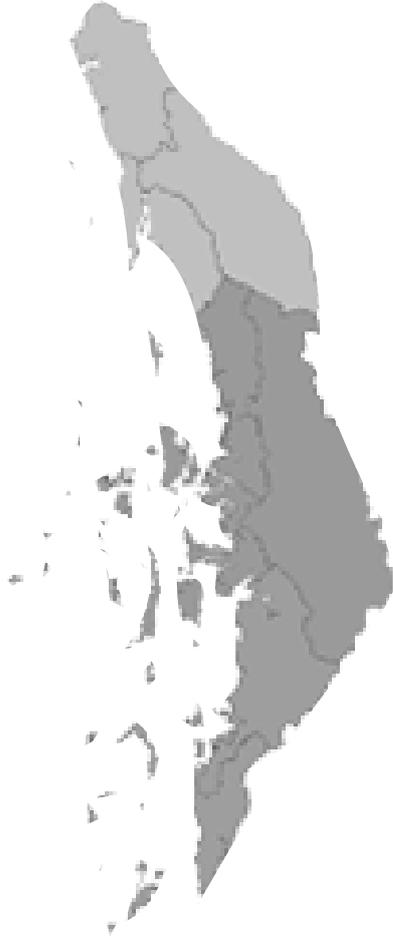
Kayah (Karenni) State

On 23 March, the military council conducted the airstrikes which hit eight workers from the timber extraction industry near Wanbala village in Bawlakhe Township by jet fighters five times. The airstrikes killed three workers and seriously wounded five others. It also burned down the houses of workers and vehicles.

On 28 March, one man was killed and three wounded as the military council attacked the place near Dawyaukkhu IDP camp in the western part of Demoso Township where there is no fighting. Around 5,000 people are taking shelter in Dawyaukkhu IDP camp. The IDPs are from downtown Demoso and nearby villages.

From 20-23 March, fighting broke out between military council troops and local Karenni defense forces in Dawtamagyi village in Demoso Township, killing 90 junta soldiers and three resistance fighters. Regime airstrikes killed four locals in Bawlakhe and Demoso Townships.



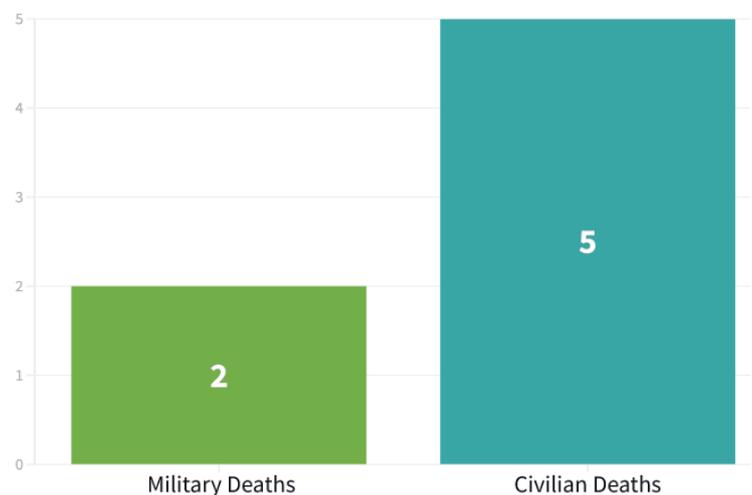


Tanintharyi Region

Four locals were shot dead by the military council soldiers in Palaw and Tanintharyi Townships. On 25 March, the military council soldiers shot two men on a motorcycle as they refused to stop the motorcycle at an inspection camp in Kamaline village in Tanintharyi Township. One man died on the spot. The rest died when he arrived at the rural hospital. The victims are cousins. They moved to Tanintharyi Township from Kyunsu Township to do farming.

The military council soldiers abducted three men in Palawkone and Nantaung villages in Palaw Township when the military column entered the villages. Then, two detainees were found dead with gunshot wounds.

Military council soldiers shot dead four men in Palaw and Tanintharyi townships on 25 March. On 27 March, U Aye Lwin, assistant supervisor at the Department of Rural Development, was shot and killed by an unidentified group of gunmen. On the same day, PDF members shot dead two men known to be the leader and deputy leader of a (pro-junta) militia in Warkyunkan village, Karathuri Township, Kawthaung district.





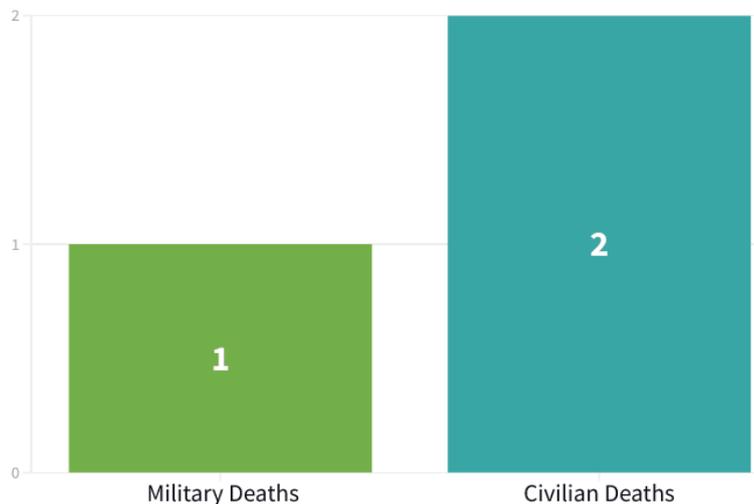
No.of Days of Clashes
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Mon State

Ko Khin Maung Htway, a 25-year-old porter died as he stepped on a landmine. He went to the forest near Myasein mountain on Kyaiktiyo mountain ranges in Kyaikto Township to pick vegetables. The body of Ko Khin Maung Htway was found on the evening of 22 March.

Junta soldiers from No.8 Infantry Battalion shot two civilians to death near Daukyat village beside Thaton-Bilin highway for no apparent reason and seized cash and mobile phones from two other locals. On 24 March, Saw Nga Pyu and Saw Ye Naing Win, who returned to Daukyat village in Bilin Township by foot, were shot dead. The junta soldiers seized MMK-500,000 from U Myat Thu and U Ba Maung from Shweindone village.

Clashes between military council troops and KNLA-PDF joint forces occurred in Kyaikto and Ye townships, killing one person on the regime side. Regime troops shelled villages in Bilin Township with artillery almost every night until late evening on 23 March, forcing more than 3,000 residents to flee to safer locations. On 24 March, junta soldiers arbitrarily shot two young men, Saw Ngapyu and Saw Ye Naing Win, as they walked from Bilin back to Daukyat village.-



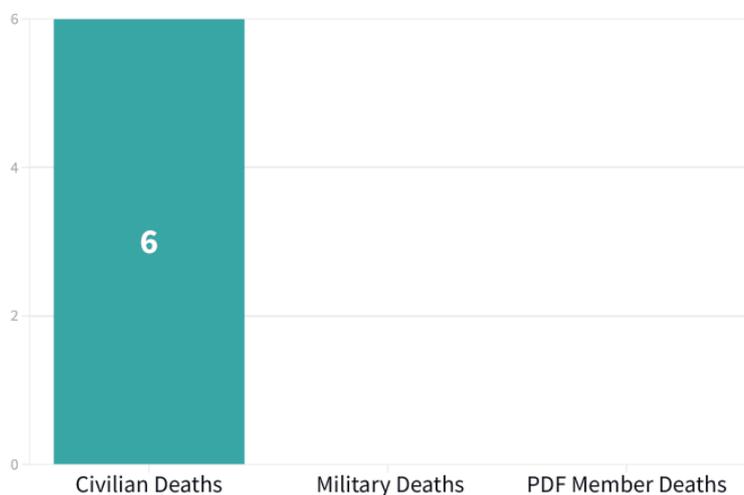


Ayeyawaddy Region

U Tun San, Inphyar village administrator from Kyonpyaw Township was shot dead by two unknown gunmen. He died on the spot with wounds to his chest and back. At around 6 pm on 22 March, U Tun San returned home from the ward/village chair football tournament. He was shot dead by two unknown men on a motorbike when he arrived in front of the middle level school in Inphyar village. The military council inspected the villages near Inphyar village following the incident.

In March, five Rohingya people died as prison staff beat jailed Rohingya people from Pathein prison, and they did not get sufficient food. In the third week of March, a Rohingya man died as prison staff brutally beat him, citing he caught and ate a cat. The remaining four Rohingya people died due to the prison condition and lack of access to desired food and proper medical treatment. Prison authorities did not allow funeral services for the victims according to their tradition, according to Ayeyarwaddy Myanmar-Muslim Network. The Muslim social organizations have no access to the information about the health condition of detained Rohingyas and deaths and are not allowed to provide aid for them.

Five Rohingya reportedly died due to torture and lack of proper meals in Pathein Prison. On 22 March, the administrator of Innhpyar village, U Tun Sann, was gunned down by unidentified gunmen in Kyonpyaw township.



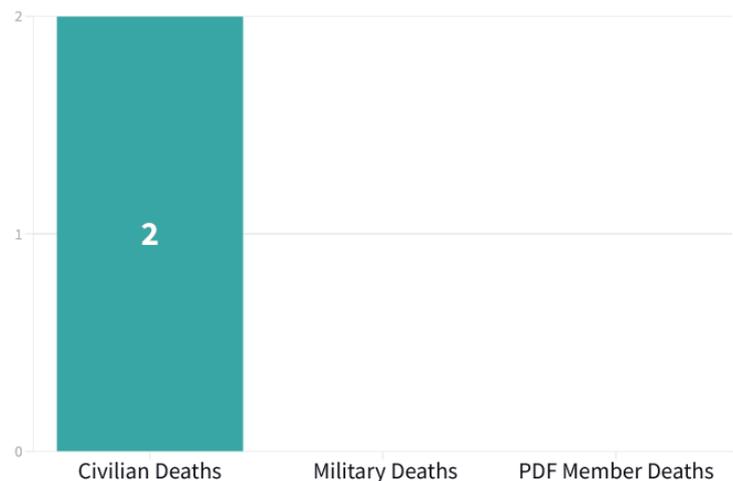


Yangon Region

At night on 23 March, the military council and members of the ward administrator office arrested two men from No.1 and No.2 ward in North Okkalapa Township. The military council arrested a 20-year-old pianist who is a member of Myanmar Music Association from Thumaketar Street at No.1 ward for alleged link to the National Unity Government (NUG) and a 30-year-old man from Thumarlar street at No.2 ward for sharing anti-dictatorship movements via his social media. Junta soldiers raided their homes with the use of excessive force and arrested them after pro-military supporters shared the information about their home addresses and occupations via Telegram Channel.

At around 6.30 am on 24 March, a 55-year-old man was found dead by residents on Natmauk lane in Bocho Ward-2 in Bahan Township. The victim is a taxi driver from Kyimyindaing Township. He left home by a Chery QQ, with the number plate- MDY CC 5489 is missing. He was found dead with wounds to his neck and broken skull.

On March 20, PDF members shot and killed a man named Wint Moe Aung, known to be a civilian intelligence member working for the junta and living on Si Sone Street in Sanchaung Township. In addition, PDF members shot and killed U Min Tazar Nyunt Tin in Thanlyin, who was known to help individuals associated with the military regime move their assets abroad.

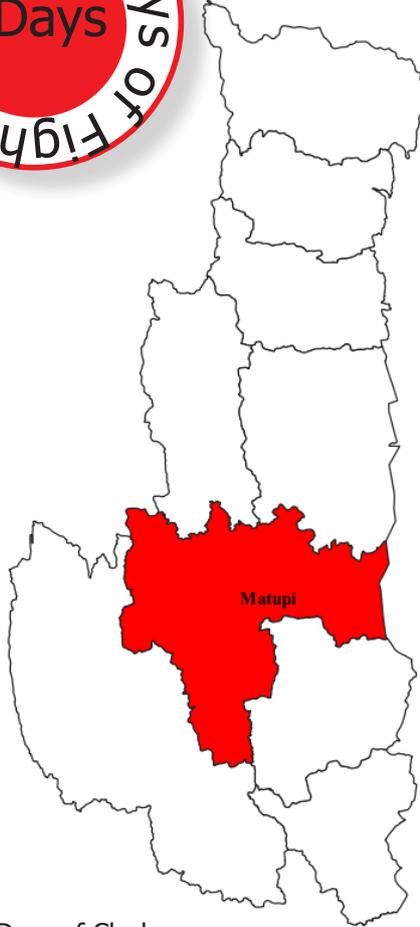




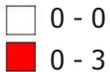
Arakan State

Locals worried that at around 8.30 pm on 27 March, they heard continuous sounds of machine gun from 1st-mile hill inspection gate in Ann Township where the Western Command is located.

Although 23 detained locals from Kyaukphyu have lodged a complaint to the military-appointed Human Rights Commission to scrutinize their cases as the plaintiffs fail to attend the court hearings several times, there is no progress. The military council detained them in 2022 for alleged links to the Arakan Army (AA).



No.of Days of Clashes

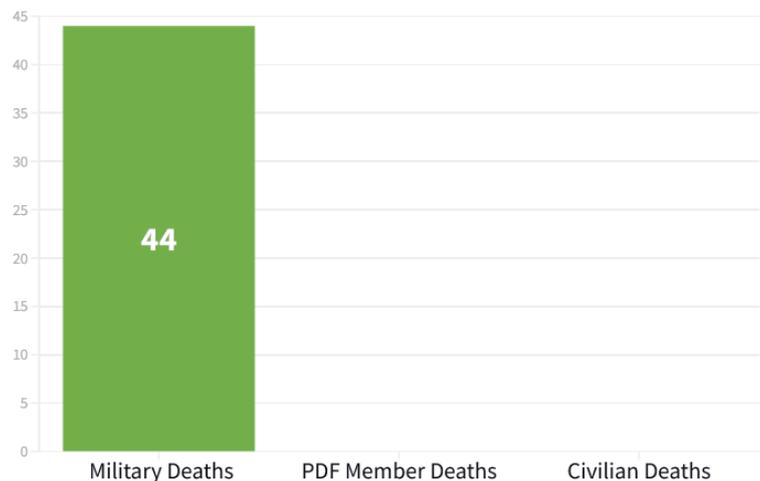


Chin State

Health staff Ko Tin Tun Aung who is serving a two-year jail term, from Paletwa Township was sentenced to one year in prison by Hakha Court, under Section 505 (a) of the Penal Code. On 28 December, 2021, the military council arrested him as he gave an interview to the Arakan-based Western News about the hoisting of a white flag at Paletwa-based Light Infantry Battalion-289.

Hakha Circle Council (HCC) issued a statement on 27 March, warning that it will shoot and arrest those who collect electricity bills in Hakha. The HCC urged the public to avoid cooperation with the Ministry of Electricity and Energy in the collection of electricity bills. The people in Hakha no need to pay any kinds of bills without the HCC's warning.

Fighting broke out between military council troops and Chin defense forces from 20 to 22 March, killing 18 junta soldiers. In addition, 26 regime troops were killed in mine attacks in Falam Township.



International

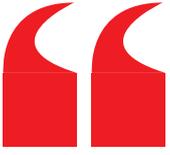


On 24 March, the U.S. government has imposed sanctions against two individuals and six entities that are “connected to Burma’s military and that have enabled the military regime’s continuing atrocities, including through the importation, storage, and distribution of jet fuel to Burma’s military, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced.

Two individuals were also sanctioned: Tun Min Latt, whom the treasury described as a close associate of the military regime’s leader, and Tun Min Latt’s wife.

This sanction will make the military council more difficult to obtain funds for the purchase of weapons. The US is trying to put more pressures on the military council.

On 27 March, the British government announced further sanctions against Myanmar. A new round of UK sanctions targets suppliers to the Myanmar regime of military equipment and other material. Those sanctioned include a company and its director



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who supply the Myanmar Air Forces with aviation fuel and a second individual who is the director of a company which supplies restricted goods and technology through its business.

The Minister of State for the Indo-Pacific, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, said: "the UK condemns the military's increasingly brutal campaign against the Myanmar people."

Myanmar can emerge from conflict if Russia stops supplying weapons to the military junta, stated Counselor of U.S. Department of State Derek Chollet on 22 March.

Chollet stressed that "Moscow is providing support to fuel the regime's war machine, undermining ASEAN's plan to cease violence and conduct national dialogue."

The Norwegian Embassy in Myanmar issued a statement on International Day for the Right to the Truth which falls on 24 March that Norway pays tribute to those who have devoted their lives to, and lost their lives in, the struggle to promote and promote human rights in Myanmar.

Fears have been voiced over the Myanmar junta's preparations to hold "stage-managed" elections, with tensions rising and the danger the conflict in the country will worsen, according to the report released by the International Crisis Group (ICG).

The military regime in Myanmar has started laying the groundwork for elections, passing a new party registration law and updating the voter list. But with most of the country engulfed in civil war, and most citizens opposed to the poll, no regime-run vote can be viewed as credible.

Remark:

References and news sources for the 'What Happened This Week' section are from local and foreign news agencies as well as 15 media organizations of Burma News International - BNI.