



ON-THE-GROUND IN BURMA

A DIGITAL BRIEFER

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MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

- The UN World Food Programme [slashed](#) food rations from \$12/month to \$8/month for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.
- The UNHCR and the Thai government are expected to [resume](#) a resettlement program with the aim to resettle individuals residing in the nine refugee camps along the Thai-Burma border to the U.S.
- Under [universal jurisdiction](#), an Argentine court heard witnesses share firsthand accounts of war crimes and acts of genocide committed by the junta.
- The military regime [shut down](#) NGO access to Rakhine after Cyclone Mocha.
- Burma CSOs [condemned](#) the meeting between the junta and Thai FM.
- The U.S. [sanctioned](#) the junta's Ministry of Defense and two state-owned financial institutions, which includes Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

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

ANALYSIS

Forced Repatriation: "We will not return to Myanmar to be confined in camps."

The forced repatriation of the Rohingya has been a point of contention since plans first emerged earlier this year. The UNHCR's guidelines for voluntary repatriation are currently being violated as the Burmese junta and the Bangladesh government, mediated by China, work together to implement their pilot program for repatriation. While protests erupted within the refugee camps in Bangladesh demanding for repatriation, many expressed desire to return home, but only if their rights were guaranteed. The very same rights that were systematically removed before the 2017 Rohingya Genocide. In order to ensure a safe and successful repatriation, the following must be met: refugees must have their physical, legal, and material safety secured in their home country as well as a plan for reconciliation, rehabilitation, and reconstruction with the local community and government.

Latest Statistics



1.2+ million refugees in neighboring countries



Almost **1 million** Rohingya in Bangladesh



Only **53% funding** fulfilled of UNHCR goal



\$641.2 million underfunded for Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis Joint Response Plan 2023



WFP cuts food rations to **\$8/month**

“ We are the citizens of Myanmar by birth. We want to go back home with all our rights, including citizenship, free movement, livelihood, safety, and security. We will not return to Myanmar to be confined in camps. ”

Rohingya community leader Mohammad Jashim

The Burmese military has shown no signs of abatement in its ruthless campaign across the country. Instead, the junta has increased its attacks on civilians through daily airstrikes that constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes. Decades long apartheid and persecution resulted in the exodus of over 950,000 Rohingya refugees while the attempted coup forced hundreds of thousands of civilians to seek refuge in neighboring countries under harsh conditions.

For World Refugee Day, the Karen Human Rights Group [listed](#) their recommendations for the future to “consult and include local actors and communities in decision-making regarding humanitarian response and the resolution of the crisis.” This demand may seem obvious and a mirror of the UN’s [statement](#), however such consultation is not being recognized. Refugees and impacted communities have long been left out of the decisions that will directly impact their living conditions. This is exemplified by the WFP’s [recent cut](#) from \$10 to \$8 per month due to lack of funding, done without the input of refugees that will struggle to nourish themselves and their families.

As a whole, Rohingya and other refugee programs from Burma are severely underfunded. Just [26.8%](#) of the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis Joint Response Plan 2023 is funded— a massive \$641.2 million deficit. Meanwhile, in the last year, the United States alone has donated [\\$3.9 billion](#) in humanitarian aid to Ukraine. Without their basic needs met, refugees cannot escape the daily struggle of survival to look towards their future.

From 1978 to today, the Rohingya have witnessed several episodes of brutality and threats, forcing hundreds of thousands in each wave to flee to Bangladesh. In each situation, the host communities and the UN have sponsored [repatriation](#) of nearly all refugees back to unsafe conditions in Burma. With evidence of a horrific history repeating itself, the cycle must be broken by including refugee voices to create a respectful, sustainable, and safe solution.

Under UNHCR [guidelines](#) for voluntary repatriation, refugees must have their physical, legal, and material safety secured in their home

country as well as a plan for reconciliation, rehabilitation, and reconstruction with the local community and government. Currently, this outline is being violated as the Bangladeshi and Burmese military governments have created a [pilot program](#), mediated by China, for the “voluntary” repatriation of Rohingya refugees back to Rakhine State. The junta has tried to make the enterprise legitimate by taking 20 refugees to view the camps, but, in reality, these camps are similar to detention camps that left the Rohingya extremely [dissatisfied](#) and without any answers. CSOs and local organizations have condemned the forced repatriation attempt and the UN has [called for](#) its end until the causes of conflict are addressed.

On June 8th, [protests](#) in Rohingya refugee camps erupted as refugees voiced their demands for repatriation rather than living in camps under deplorable conditions. Rohingya refugees have repeatedly [expressed](#) their desire to return home “but only when their security, access to land and livelihoods, freedom of movement, and citizenship rights can be ensured.” The 1982 Citizenship Law, which denies the Rohingya full rights, has been a point of contention that refugees have fought against for decades. The refugees are also unable to return to their original villages as the junta has burned, [bulldozed](#), sold, and developed much of their land.

Moving forward, more community-based and local organizations [must be engaged](#) as they can better coordinate, facilitate, and build trust with refugees on the ground. Refugees have experienced severe trauma and understand their struggles more than anyone else, therefore, when included and given support, refugees can champion their causes effectively. Many refugees yearn for an [education](#) so they can represent themselves internationally and achieve justice and accountability from the junta. One refugee-led community based group, [Shanti Mohila](#), or Peace Women, has brought awareness of women’s rights to the camps and raised their voices to demand justice. Shanti Mohila has organized over 500 Rohingya women to participate in the [cases](#) against the junta at the ICJ, ICC, and foreign courts. This is just one example of refugees’ power to create solutions. Refugees have always had a voice; now is the time to listen.

VOICE OF A KARENNI IDP

Interview provided by the Karenni Human Rights Group

At the moment, a few families who had to flee from the war have opened up shops to support their livelihoods. The WWF has also supported married couples by providing each of them with a pig to raise as livestock, and a budget to do so. Even though some families wanted to continue upland farming, there is no longer enough land for all of them to farm. A few families are able to farm, but only about 1 out of 5 households can properly farm upland. Most households are facing a shortage of rice, oil, and drinking water to sustain themselves. Instead, families are having to borrow or buy food and water from others who still have it.



*One of the many IDP shelters in Karenni state.
Photo credit: Karenni Human Rights Group*

In June, classes started again for primary and secondary schools. However, due to the country's situation, there are still challenges in providing a full and proper educational experience. There are not enough teachers to oversee all the students and schools are trying to hire more. At the moment, there are only 4 teachers. School enrollment has also dropped this year. Last time schools tried to

reopen, there were some donors who provided supplies but there have not been any donations this month. Schools are mainly in need of teaching materials. Students currently do not have enough textbooks, making it difficult for them to learn.



*Karenni IDPs in the camps.
Photo Credit: Karenni Human Rights Group*

KSCC opened the current clinic in the village. There are 4 doctors working there who open regularly from Monday to Friday. Since the monsoon has started, more people are coming down with the seasonal flu. There are also those suffering from chronic pain and high blood pressure. Heavy drinking has also caused stomach and intestinal diseases. These patients have had to be transferred to bigger hospitals for treatment.

Up until now, we have not been targeted by heavy shelling or airstrikes. We have noticed planes flying overhead, though. People from the middle regions and states of the country have come to live with us, including PDF members. PDF started delivering a 2 month training to recruits. However, we heard that the junta was planning to bomb the training and it had to close with just 2 weeks left. Due to the news, IDPs in the village even relocated out of fear. It has been about 5 months since those from Central Burma moved here. The population here used to be small but has grown a lot over time.

People want to learn to sew for their livelihoods, and have opportunities to farm again. We also want to receive training and awareness on human rights and children's rights.

The U.S. Campaign for Burma is dedicated to promoting freedom, democracy, and human rights in Burma.
Email: info@uscampaignforburma.org, Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/uscampaignforburma>, Twitter: @uscb

AN OVERVIEW OF BURMA

CHIN

At the beginning of June following Cyclone Mocha, the [UN's failure](#) to address the dire situation in Chin State, where half a million marginalized people suffer from repression and lack of aid, highlights their passivity and complicity with the junta. On June 3, [airstrikes](#) were launched near Hakha after clashes with resistance forces, leading to an ongoing struggle for control. On June 8, the [Chin National Front](#) barred outsiders and warned against transporting military reinforcements to ensure territorial security. On June 12, the Burma regime troops [seized a resistance camp](#), resulting in casualties and ongoing clashes. Meanwhile, over 50,000 refugees from Chin State and Sagaing Region have sought shelter in India, necessitating a reconsideration of India's stance to address the [worsening humanitarian situation](#) while protecting its interests.

KACHIN

Some villagers from Hpakant Township are [fleeing](#) their villages due to the Military Council arresting them and using them as human shields. In Hmaw Bone village, 90% of villagers have fled to IDP camps and relatives' homes nearby. Kazu village of Waingmaw Township is facing a [shortage](#) of teachers, and, because there is no [school](#) in Mali Sut Yang village, families with children are returning to Myitkyina's Si Tar Pu IDP camp. There has been a temporary [suspension](#) of border passes on the Burma-China border, causing people to pay brokers 100,000-500,000 kyats for passes. On June 7, two unidentified dead bodies were found in Hpakant Township. Since the beginning of the year, 20 unidentified bodies have been found in the area, leaving residents frightened. [Pregnant women](#) in Shwegu Township are in need of healthcare services to give birth to their children. It is difficult to find vaccinations and healthcare centers near their villages. Villagers who were unable to escape when the junta invaded Indaw Township were [beaten and tortured](#) and forced to spend the night in monasteries, as the junta forbade them from returning to their homes.

KARENNI

On June 6, [Starlink satellite](#) internet service availability was announced in Karenni State, but accessibility hurdles remain. The Interim Executive Council of Karenni State was [established](#) on June 12 to develop the state into a federal unit and a democratic union. On June 13, [coordinated attacks](#) by anti-regime forces led to weapon captures, junta troop retreat, airstrikes, and the displacement of 3,000 civilians. The Karenni National People's Liberation Front also [joined forces](#) with other resistance groups, escalating fighting and displacing many to Thailand. On June 23, a junta plane conducted an [airstrike](#) on Li Khu Pa Yar and Do Yaw villages, resulting in the death of one and injuries to two children. The Dawnoeku Karenni IDP camp on the Thai-Burma faces a [food shortage](#) as a result of these events.

MON

On June 1, the joint forces of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and People's Defence Forces (PDF) [raided](#) a checkpoint and security bunkers controlled by the Burmese junta. This caused a battle to break out and led to the closure of the Thaton to Hpa-an road for over 3 hours. On June 10, the Burmese junta forcefully [removed](#) houses and shops that had been residing on the Mawlamyine Railway land plot for over 10 years. On June 5 and 6, two local men accidentally [stepped](#) on planted landmines and suffered extreme injuries. On June 13, the Shwe La Wonn gold shop was [robbed](#), and locals in the area shared that theft, home burglaries, and robberies have been occurring almost every day since the start of the coup. On June 16, 3 mortar shells [exploded](#) in Theinzayat Town, killing 1 local and injuring 4 people. While junta-controlled media outlets reported that the joint forces of the KNLA and PDF were responsible for the casualties, residents in the area have disputed this claim, sharing that the junta's artillery unit based in the area has frequently fired heavy weapons targeting the village.

KAREN

At the beginning of the month, the Karen Education and Culture Department [reported](#) that a total of 17 schools have been destroyed by military airstrikes between 2021 and 2023. The week following, 3 female students were [killed](#) after the junta bombed Hto Lwee Wah High School and [intentionally fired](#) artillery rounds into Ywarlaykwatthit village, killing three civilians. On June 19, military soldiers [arrested and detained](#) 15 individuals in Kawkareik for purchasing flowers, accusing them of participating in the ongoing “Flower Strike” organized in light of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s birthday. In Karen state as a whole, arrest estimates in similar situations as the Flower Strike are reported to exceed 150 people. The Back Pack Health Worker Team [emphasized](#) the need for caution when providing IDPs with humanitarian aid, given that forests and rivers pose challenges to effective deliveries.

SHAN

The Shan State Progressive Party and Army have been [forcibly recruiting](#) locals via abduction in northern Shan State. The five people who have been taken already had their hands tied around their backs and were beaten. A [report](#) by the Shan Women’s Action Network has revealed an increasing number of sexual violence cases in the state. Because the Burmese junta plans to [dismantle](#) several IDP camps, about 150 families are worried about the costs of moving. These families are struggling to find the money to purchase land, build a house, and move into the house. No organization has helped them with this process. On June 11, the Kachin Independence Army and Military Council forces [clashed](#) in Kutkai Township, causing a house nearby to explode from an artillery shell. The villagers there are worried that the fighting will interrupt the education of the children of the village.

RAKHINE

Throughout June, communities in Rakhine State continued to struggle with the impacts of Cyclone Mocha, which hit on May 14. The United League of Arakan/Arakan Army (ULA/AA) [disclosed](#) that the Cyclone destroyed at least 216,681 structures and left about 1,156,796 residents in need of assistance. In Mrauk U Township, where all the houses of the Tain Nyo IDP camp were destroyed, IDPs are still desperately [seeking](#) new shelter, food, and medical supplies. Since the Cyclone damaged power infrastructure and caused an electric shutdown, electricity was finally [restored](#) in Sittwe and Ponnagyun Townships on June 7 and in Mrauk U and [Minbya Townships](#) on June 23. On June 12, junta troops [halted](#) 8 vehicles carrying relief supplies from Yangon to Rakhine State at the Mrauk-U entry checkpoint and confiscated the materials. They also detained a driver, an aid worker, and a monk who were in the cars.

CENTRAL BURMA

On June 18, the junta began a [three-day attack](#) on multiple regions in the Sagaing Region, leaving five dead and capturing two villagers. Later in the week, the military killed a total of 18 people after [ambushing](#) the village base of the Peoples’ Defense Force in Ngazun Township and continued to fire indiscriminately in Sagaing Region’s Pale Township in an [airstrike](#) that left 10 civilians dead and multiple homes destroyed. After garment factory workers unionized for increased wages, at least 10 individuals, mostly women in their early 20s, were [arrested](#) and have remained missing for more than a week. In a neighboring factory in Hlaing Tharyar Township, some 60 workers have [gone into hiding](#). The military has conducted arson attacks [six days in a row](#) in Nyaung Pin Gyi village, Sagaing Region, burning an estimated 200 houses and killing one civilian.