



MYANMAR: Tanintharyi Region

Monthly Situation Update

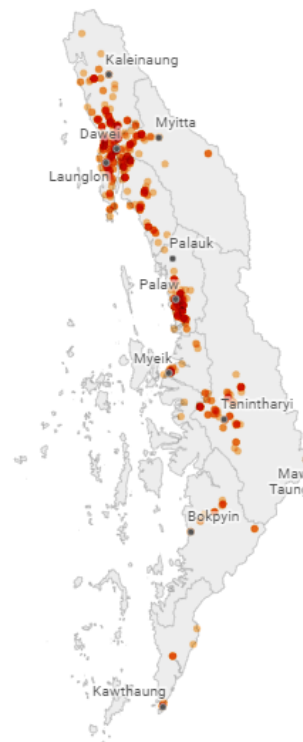
31 December 2022

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

HIGHLIGHTS & KEY MESSAGES

- In December 2022, a total of 46 armed clashes erupted across all districts in Tanintharyi Region, showing an increasing trend in armed conflict.
- A total of 31 casualties (18 deaths and 13 injured) due to attacks targeting civilians were reported in December 2022.
- More than 60 civilians' houses were burned down by junta forces following the armed clashes in Palaw Township.
- More than 17,000 people displaced in Tanintharyi Region: Increased displacement figures were reported in Palaw township; and new displacement in Bokpyin town.
- 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 adequate shelter and warm clothing.
- The junta forces conducted an increasing number of violent household inspections, arrests, arbitrary detentions, as well as increased troop deployments across all districts in the region.

Incident Map: Violent Incidents in Tanintharyi Region



The incidents include armed clashes, remote violence and attacks targeting to civilians that occurred between February 2021 to December 2022.
Source: Southern Monitor - Created with Databwrapper

KEY FIGURES¹

3626

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

851

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

335

People killed by conflict actors between February 2021 and December 2022

17K

People currently displaced by clashes and insecurity since February 2021

¹ 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.² 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 boundaries³. 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.

² The 2019 Inter-censal Survey: The Union Report.

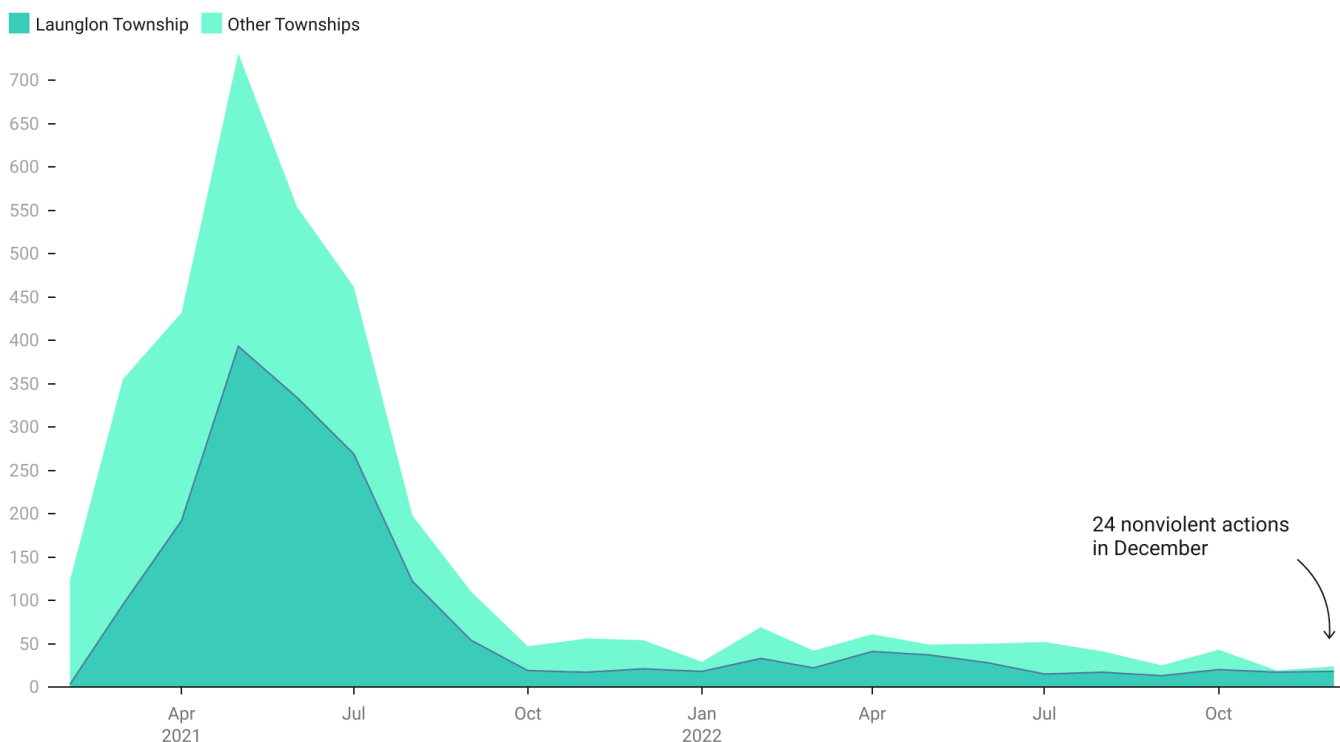
https://www.dop.gov.mm/sites/dop.gov.mm/files/publication_docs/ics_report_eng_7012021.pdf

³ 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 December 2022)



Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

Non-violent Movements in December 2022

The number of non-violent movements reported in November and December 2022 has been reduced compared to previous months. A total of 24 non-violent movements were reported mostly in Launglon Township in December 2022.

Young protesters staged a demonstration holding a placard that reads, “ People March for Eliminating Facism” in Launglon Township on 1 December 2022.⁴ On 2 December 2022, youth activists distributed “Blood Money” stickers participating as a part of a collective of Myanmar activists campaigning to stop revenues from reaching the Myanmar military junta regime.⁵ The recent “Blood Money” campaign called for PTT group to stop financing the regime with millions of dollars in monthly gas revenue payments. In addition, on 3 December 2022, the youth activists showed solidarity with the recent wave of demonstrations in China as well as demonstrated against authoritarian rule.⁶ Additionally, on 6 December 2022 in Launglon town, protesters staged a demonstration that showed solidarity with 7 students who have been sentenced to death and other prisoners of conscience. Among the organizers of the demonstration were members of Rose Color Movement Women Union (Dawei), Basic Education Students’ Union (Launglon chapter), Launglon Township Democracy Movement Strike Committee, Dawei District Democracy Strike Committee and members of the LGBT community in Launglon Township.⁷ The protests led by the strike committees and students’ union not only took place in urban settings but also rural villages in Launglon Township. Other forms of non-violent movements involved

⁴ Dawei Information Center. 1 December 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/490895303137926>

⁵ The Tanintharyi Times. 2 December 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100072232759534/posts/213112634439827>

⁶ Dawei Information Center. 3 December 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/492443836316406>

⁷ Mizzima-News in Burmese. 6 December 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/6180000915368095>

distributing pamphlets featuring a short article on “Federalism and The Political Issue” and delivering speeches in public spaces in both urban centers and villages in Launglon township.⁸

Despite the drop in the number of non-violent movements, women’s movements_Rose Color Movement continued to be a prominent feature of sustained non-violent resistance in Tanintharyi Region. Led by the Rose Color Movement Women Union (Dawei), women protesters marched holding a banner, “Woman, Life, Freedom_Stop Violence Against Women” in Launglon town on 4 December 2022.⁹ The organizer of the protest stated that, “Following the military coup in February 2021, women are increasingly facing violence against them. Women are facing not just increased risks of violence from strangers but also domestic violence perpetrated by their family members and spouses.”¹⁰ Members of Rose Color Movement Women Union have also been coordinating with other strike committees and protesters to organize protests in the region.

CONFLICT TRENDS

There was a considerable increase in the number of armed clashes between local resistance groups (People’s Defense Forces)¹¹ and junta forces, with the majority of clashes reported in Palaw and Thayetchaung townships. The local PDFs, especially those based in Dawei and Myeik District in the region attempted to gain greater momentum in the armed resistance movement, through the use of remote violence, ambushes on the junta outposts, and targeted killings. Additionally, assassinations of junta-appointed local administrators and alleged members of pro-regime militias were reported in this month of December 2022. During this month, the majority of clashes between the local PDFs and junta forces erupted following the remote violence attacks and skirmishes on junta outposts launched by the local PDFs.

Junta forces’ offensives and fortified military operations have been reported in Palaw, Dawei, Launglon, Thayetchaung and Bokpyin townships across Tanintharyi Region. Local PDFs have also been increasingly launching skirmishes on junta outposts and use the remote violence tactics to attack against junta convoys across the region. Notably, the local PDFs attacked the Light Infantry Battalion of the junta forces based in Palaw Township with the use of both firearms and remote-detonated explosive devices; the attack was the first of its kind in the township. The majority of the attacks against the junta columns and convoys had subsequently led to intensified armed clashes between the local PDFs and junta forces. Even when the active fighting stopped and the local PDFs withdrew their forces, the junta forces continued to fire incessant rounds of artillery shelling directed towards the villages. Additionally, local PDFs attacked junta-controlled government buildings including a town hall in Palaw town as an attempt to gain a greater momentum in armed resistance and to demonstrate that the town centers are not an exception to the extending operations of the local PDFs.

In December 2022, apart from recurring ambushes targeted against junta convoys and troops, local PDFs, especially Launglone People’s Defense Force (LLPDF) have been involved in targeted killings against the junta-appointed local administrators and alleged members of the pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee group. The alleged members of the Pyu Saw Htee groups have reportedly been levying taxes and doing illegal businesses such as gambling and drug smuggling. Some local businessmen and other civilian allies of the junta regime who have allegedly been receiving permits in exchange for the support to the regime have also been increasingly targeted by the local PDFs. Against the backdrop of attacks and killings targeted at alleged military informants, junta forces have been recruiting civilians

⁸ The Tanintharyi Times. 16 December 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100072232759534/posts/215644107520013>

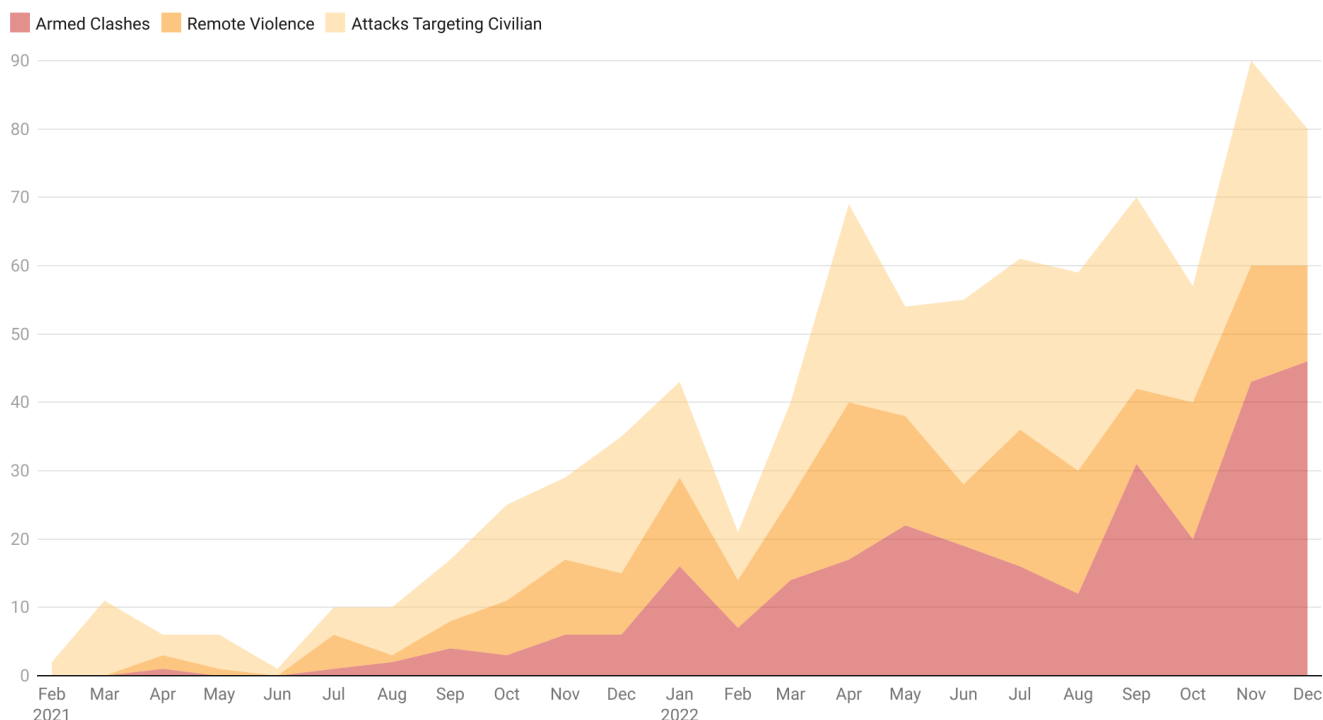
⁹ Mizzima-News in Burmese. 4 December 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/6174160305952156>

¹⁰ People’s Spring. 4 December 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/103536671835794/posts/527016966154427>

¹¹ 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.

to receive military training and become part of the pro-regime militias. Due to economic desperation and lack of livelihood opportunities in the region, some civilians opted for joining the militias and military's search and raid operations for as little as 3000 MMK per day. Local PDFs have continuously warned the local populations against supporting and associating with the junta forces and its militias.

Number of Violent Incidents in Tanintharyi Region



Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

Armed Clashes

From April 2021 to December 2022, there were a total of 286 clashes reported in Tanintharyi Region. A total of 46 armed clashes erupted in Tanintharyi Region in December 2022. The clashes were reported in many townships across all districts in the region: Palaw, Dawei, Thayetchaung, Yebyu and Bokpyin Townships. There were also additional accounts of the arrests of the civilians and the use of “human shields” by the junta forces during and following the armed clashes.

Major Incidents in December 2022

Myeik District

Palaw Township

- On 1 December 2022, a local PDF launched a skirmish on a junta outpost at the entrance of Hta Min Ma Sar village in Palaw Township. The village is 12 miles away from Palaw town. The outpost had been guarded by more than 20 junta soldiers and members of pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee group who regularly conducted security checks at passenger vehicles and trucks passing the village. The skirmish led to an intensified clash between the local PDF and junta soldiers, which caused further displacement in the village.

- A total of 8 gunman fired shots at Myanmar Economic Bank and the township-level Election Commission Office in Palaw town on 12 December 2022. A local PDF claimed responsibility for the incident. No casualties have been reported.¹²
- Additional attacks were reported on 8 December 2022; Battalion (1) of Myeik District PDF ambushed 3 places in Palaw Town including the town hall and the compound of 285th Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) of the junta forces simultaneously. Both firearms and remote-detonated explosive devices were used during the attacks and the ambushes led to clashes between members of the PDF chapter and junta forces. The junta forces also fired heavy artillery towards Lat Kuu village, resulting in injuries of a total of 4 villagers. The attack on the LIB was the first of its kind in Palaw Township and was mentioned as an attempt to gain a greater momentum in the armed resistance in the area.¹³

Additionally, on 8 December, an alliance of KPDF and local PDFs launched attacks at the junta checkpoints and outposts in Ta Maing Taung, Nan Taung and Pa Law Kone villages. That led to clashes between junta forces and the members of the alliance. The junta forces fired rounds of incessant shooting using heavy weaponry even when there were no offensives by the local PDFs or active fighting.

- Local PDFs launched a skirmish on Pa La Police Station in PaLa town on 9 December 2022, leading to a clash between the local PDFs and junta forces. Following the incident, an increased number of junta troops were deployed at the entrances to Pa La town.¹⁴ The junta forces forced the internally displaced populations from Pa La town to return to their homes.
- A local PDF named King Cobra Force ambushed a junta outpost located in the school compound in Mee Laung Chaung village in Palaw Township on 17 December 2022.¹⁵
- An intensified clash between local PDFs and junta forces erupted in PaLa town of Palaw Township on 21 December 2022 following the local PDFs' ambush on a police station in the town. When the exchange of fire stopped, the junta forces also fired incessant rounds of artillery shelling directed towards To village, which is about 1 mile away from Pa La town and resulted in the death of one civilian and five civilians injured, according to a local source. The telecommunications lines were reportedly cut off during the time of the incident.¹⁶

Incident Map: Armed Clashes in Tanintharyi Region

(in December 2022)



Source: Southern Monitor - Created with Datawrapper

¹² Local source. 14 December 2022.

¹³ Mizzima News in Burmese. 8 December 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/6185221168179403>

¹⁴ The Tanintharyi Times. 9 December 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100072232759534/posts/214244107660013>

¹⁵ Dawei Information Center. 21 December 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/506500071577449>

¹⁶ Local source. 23 December 2022.

Dawei Township

- A combined force of local PDFs (including Dawei Guerrilla Revolutionary Force) ambushed a junta column of 100 soldiers near Thin Gan Tone village on Dawei-Hteekhee road on 1 December 2022.¹⁷ The junta column had also reportedly scoured the terrains in the Ah Shey Taw area to uncover the bases of local PDFs before the incident. A total of 7 civilians were arrested to be human shields during the search operations and later released.
- A clash between the combined force of local PDF and a junta convoy of 2 vehicles carrying an estimated number of 100 soldiers erupted near Wa Kone village in Dawei Township on 1 December 2022. The junta forces reportedly looted properties from Wa Kone and Thin Gan Tone village on the same day.
- A combined force of two local PDFs ambushed a junta column of 30 soldiers on Dawei-Hteekhee road near Tha Yet Ngote village on 5 December 2022. At the time of the incident, the junta column was reportedly on route to set up a security checkpoint on the road. Additional reporting stated that junta forces were deployed in large numbers amounting to more than 100 at a time to the Dawei-Htee Khee road ahead of the visit of junta-appointed minister of Tanintharyi Region to a hydropower project site in Dawei Township.¹⁸ The junta forces deployed ahead of and during the visit reportedly looted properties from the villages in Ah Shey Taw area in Dawei Township.
- Local PDFs used 40-mm bombs and rifle grenades to attack a junta checkpoint near Maung Mei Shaung village on 12 December 2022. The junta forces launched heavy artillery in the area.¹⁹

Launglon Township

- A local source stated that a clash between local PDFs and junta forces erupted in Maung Ma Kan village in Launglon Township on 5 December 2022 following the local PDFs' skirmish on a local police station. A combined force of four local resistance groups launched a skirmish on the police station around 8:30 pm on the day and exchanged fire with the junta forces for about an hour. The vehicle carrying junta troop reinforcements was also attacked with the use of a remote-detonated explosive device by a combined force of local PDFs. The junta forces extended their search and raid operations on Dawei-Maungmakan road and in Maung Ma Kan village, where a local tourist attraction beach with the same name is located.²⁰

Thayetchaung Township

- Local PDFs launched a skirmish on a junta outpost guarded by junta soldiers and alleged members of pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee group in Pe Det village on 14 December 2022. The local PDFs seized the outpost and detained some of the members of the Pyu Saw Htee group. Additional junta troop reinforcements were sent to Pa Det village and were attacked by the local PDFs with the use of remote-detonated explosive devices.
- On the same day, junta forces destroyed the residential houses and shops and confiscated properties including cash and mobile phones in Thein Kone village in Thayetchaung Township.²¹
- A clash between a local PDF and junta forces erupted in Pa Dauk Gyi village in Thayetchaung Township on 18 December 2022. Local sources stated that the junta forces burned down a total of 7 civilian houses and 2 motorbikes in the village following the clash. The junta forces went

¹⁷ Dawei Information Center. 3 December 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/492495979644525>

¹⁸ Local source. 6 December 2022.

¹⁹ Dawei Information Center. 12 December 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/499052015655588>

²⁰ Local source. 6 December 2022.

²¹ The Tanintharyi Times. 16 December 2022.

into the jungle in the area in an attempt to eliminate any bases of local PDFs.²² Reportedly, a civilian man was shot and killed by the junta forces on the same day.

Yebyu Township

- A local PDF skirmishes a residential house of a Police Lieutenant in Kaleinaung town, Yebyu Township on 10 December 2022. Junta forces reportedly stationed at the house at the time of the incident and fired back at the members of the local PDF.²³ To common knowledge of the local residents in Kaleinaung town, the police lieutenant has been involved in dealing drugs and levying taxes from gambling sites in the area.
- Local PDFs launched a skirmish on junta security outposts in the designated Dawei Economic Zone in Na Bu Lel area in Yebyu Township on 24 December 2022. Junta troop reinforcements were sent from junta forces based in Yebyu town, leading to the new displacement of local populations from a total of 4 villages: Wat Chaung, Kha Maung Chaung, Hteing Gyi and Le Shaung villages.²⁴

Kawthoung District

- Local PDFs based in Kawthoung and Bokpyin Townships launched a remote violence attack at a junta convoy on Kawthoung-Bokpyin road on 6 December 2022. As the junta forces deployed additional troops, the situation developed into a clash between local PDF and junta soldiers.²⁵ The junta convoys were increasingly seen to be traveling on the road to transport supplies and troop reinforcements.

Remote Violence

Local people's defense forces (PDFs) employed the tactic of remote violence to attack at the convoys of junta forces, troop columns, office buildings, and the commercial facilities of the military regime and its associates. During April 2021 to December 2022, there were a total of 221 remote violence incidents, with more than half of the attacks targeted at the junta convoys, police force, and pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee. The remainder of the total number 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 residential houses of policemen, local administrators and alleged informants were attacked. There were some accounts of collateral damage involving young children and women due to explosions.

During December 2022, a total of 14 remote violence attacks were reported across Palaw, Dawei, Thayetchaung and Launglon Townships. Palaw Township has the highest number of remote violence reported, with a total of 59 remote violence 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 with the use of remote-detonated explosive device. (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.

²² Local source. 22 December 2022.

²³ Dawei Watch. 11 December 2022. <http://www.daweivatch.com/2022/12/11/news/48179/>

²⁴ Dawei Watch. 24 December 2022. <http://www.daweivatch.com/2022/12/24/news/48832/>

²⁵ Dawei Information Center. 7 December 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/495601949333928>

Major Incidents in December 2022

Dawei District

Dawei Township

- A mine blasted near Ka Myaw Kinn bridge in Dawei town on 4 December 2022, resulting in the injuries of two local women. Prior to the incident, junta forces were often seen to conduct security checks at the bridge located at the entrance to Dawei town.²⁶
- A combined force of local PDFs attacked a junta convoy of 100 soldiers with the use of a remote-detonated explosive device near Ah Nyar Hpyar village in Dawei Township on 12 December 2022.²⁷ The junta soldiers on the vehicles were reportedly involved in looting properties from civilians' houses in nearby villages in Ah Shey Taw area. The junta soldiers also arrested civilians and used them as "human shields" to protect themselves from further attacks by the local PDFs.

Thayatchaung Township

- A combined force of local PDFs attacked a junta convoy of 100 soldiers with the use of remote-detonated explosive devices near Wea Yit village on Thayetchaung-Palaw road on 14 December 2022.²⁸
- A local PDF used a remote violence tactic to ambush junta soldiers on Dawei-Thayetchaung road on 17 December 2022. The explosive device was remotely detonated when the junta soldiers came to the area to erase a caricature of the coup leader Min Aung Hlaing which was drawn by the local protesters.²⁹
- A vehicle carrying junta soldiers was attacked with the use of a remote-detonated explosive device near The Chaung Gyi village in Thayetchaung Township on 20 December 2022. No organization has claimed responsibility for the incident.³⁰

Launglon Township

- Additional remote violence attacks were reported in Launglon Township. Two vehicles carrying junta soldiers were attacked with the use of remote-detonated explosive devices on the road connecting Launglon town to Nyin Maw village on 23 December 2022. Shortly after the incident, junta troops were increasingly deployed to the area and raided several civilians' homes in Nyin Maw village. A 17 years old male from Nyin Maw village was also shot by the junta forces and sustained injuries.³¹ Additional troops reinforcements were witnessed near the palm oil plantation.³² The local sources stated that based on their past experiences, the junta regime may have been preparing its troops to conduct large scale search and raid operations in Launglon Township. The junta forces and pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee forces have been reportedly conducting search and raid operations along the terrain.

²⁶ Dawei Watch. 4 December 2022. <http://www.daweivatch.com/2022/12/04/news/47757/>

²⁷ Dawei Information Center. 12 December 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/500271468866976>

²⁸ Dawei Information Center. 15 December 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/114803668557265/posts/5865432056827702>

²⁹ Mizzima News in Burmese. 18 December 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/6226298200738366>

³⁰ Dawei Information Center. 20 December 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/506045198289603>

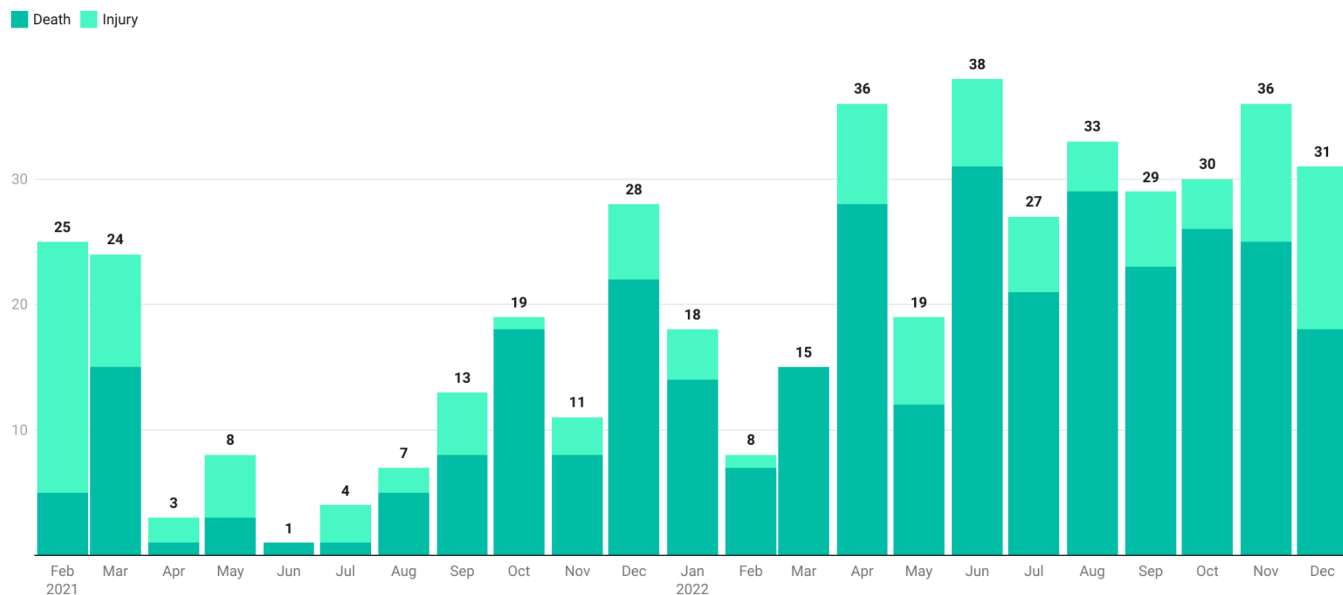
³¹ Dawei Watch. 23 December 2022. <http://www.daweivatch.com/2022/12/23/news/48754/>

³² Dawei Watch. 23 December 2022. <http://www.daweivatch.com/2022/12/23/news/48748/>

Attacks targeting civilians

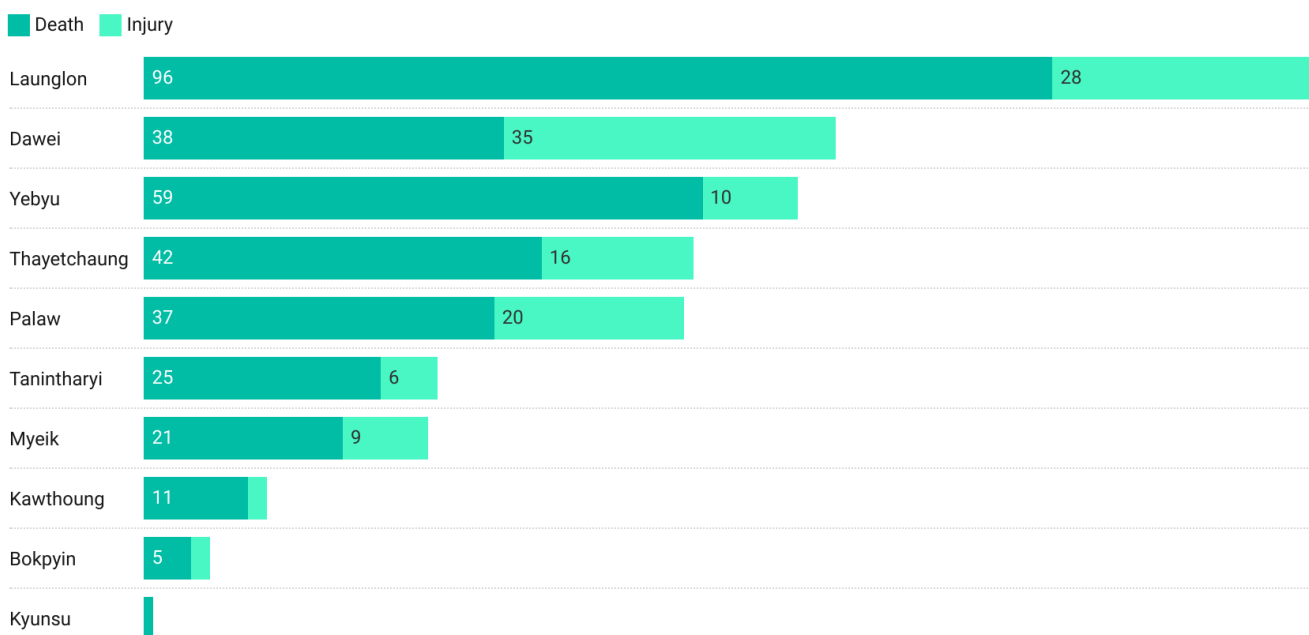
There were a total of 31 casualties (18 deaths and 13 injured) due to attacks targeting civilians in December 2022. Some civilian casualties and injuries were the results of targeted killings allegedly committed by a joint force of junta soldiers and pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee group. Local PDFs have also increasingly targeted alleged military informants, members of 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

Number of Civilian Casualties in Tanintharyi Region



Source: Southern Monitor · Created with Datawrapper

Number of Civilian Casualties in Tanintharyi Region

| Type | Township | Men | Women | Girl | Boy | Unknown | Grand Total |
|---------------------|--------------|------------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|-------------|
| Death | Launglon | 79 | 13 | 2 | 2 | | 96 |
| | Yebyu | 53 | 5 | | 1 | | 59 |
| | Thayetchaung | 38 | 4 | | | | 42 |
| | Dawei | 32 | 5 | | 1 | | 38 |
| | Palaw | 31 | 5 | | | 1 | 37 |
| | Tanintharyi | 19 | 3 | 3 | | | 25 |
| | Myeik | 19 | 2 | | | | 21 |
| | Kawthoung | 11 | | | | | 11 |
| | Bokpyin | 3 | 1 | | 1 | | 5 |
| | Kyunsu | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Death Total | | 286 | 38 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 335 |
| Injury | Dawei | 13 | 2 | | | 20 | 35 |
| | Launglon | 12 | 14 | 1 | 1 | | 28 |
| | Palaw | 17 | 3 | | | | 20 |
| | Thayetchaung | 8 | 4 | | | 4 | 16 |
| | Yebyu | 9 | 1 | | | | 10 |
| | Myeik | 3 | | | | 6 | 9 |
| | Tanintharyi | 1 | | | | 5 | 6 |
| | Kawthoung | 2 | | | | | 2 |
| | Bokpyin | 1 | 1 | | | | 2 |
| Injury Total | | 66 | 25 | 1 | 1 | 35 | 128 |
| Grand Total | | 352 | 63 | 6 | 6 | 36 | 463 |

Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

Major Incidents in December 2022

- A dead body of a 27 years old man from Tone Byaw village was found in a plantation on 29 November 2022, two weeks after the man was tortured and arrested by the junta forces.³³ In November 2022, Tone Byaw village saw an intensified clash between local PDFs and junta forces in which a junta-appointed local administrator was killed.
- Junta forces tortured and shot a civilian passenger at a security bridge at the entrance to Palaw town on 19 December 2022. The junta soldiers interrogated the civilian and one of them fired a shot at the civilian with a pistol. Unverified sources stated that the civilian was on his way to migrate to Thailand along with other passengers in the vehicle. The remaining passengers on the same vehicle were also arrested and detained at Palaw police station as of 21 December 2022.³⁴

³³ Local source. 2 December 2022.

³⁴ Mizzima-News in Burmese. 21 December 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/6235501703151349>

- A man on a motorbike was shot by members of the junta forces in plain clothes in Dawei town on 17 December 2022. During the time of the incident, the junta forces were reportedly conducting security checks at the intersections in downtown Dawei.³⁵

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

Dawei District

Dawei Township

- A former village administrator was shot and killed by junta forces in Thin Gan Taw village on 6 December 2022. A local source stated that the administrator had just returned to his house in Thin Gan Taw village and shortly was killed by junta soldiers stationed at a school compound in the village. Many former village administrators who served under the civilian government evaded the homes in fear of the arrests and persecution by the junta regime since last year.³⁶
- A civilian was shot and killed by unidentified gunmen in Wa Kone village in Dawei Township on 11 December 2022.

Launglon Township

- A junta-appointed local administrator of Chaung Hpyar Gyi village in Launglon Township was shot and killed by a group of 6 unidentified gunmen on 5 December 2022.³⁷
- Launglon-based PDF, namely Launglone Peoples' Defense Force (LLPDF) claimed that its members shot and killed two alleged members of pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee group on 10 and 12 December 2022 respectively.
- LLPDF also claimed responsibility for the targeted killings of two alleged members of pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee group in Launglon Township on 16 December 2022. The two men were allegedly been armed by the junta regime and have been involved in crimes and abuses against local populations in the area.³⁸

Yebyu Township

- A combined force of local PDFs shot and killed a junta-appointed local administrator and alleged informant in Pa Gaw Zun village in Yebyu Township on 12 December 2022.³⁹

Arbitrary Arrests and Detention

Local sources stated that the junta forces arrested more than 10 villagers from Oke Tu and Tha Yet Hnit Khwa in Thayetchaung Township on 19 December 2022. Most of the villagers are plantation workers in nearby rubber and betel nut plantations in the area. Women and children were also among those arrested by the junta soldiers.⁴⁰ The villagers except one man were released as of 20 December 2022. The Junta forces have also launched a large-scale search and raid operations in the area and more than 300 soldiers were deployed. In fear of intensified clashes and arbitrary arrests by the junta forces, local populations from Oke Tu village fled to other villages and towns.

³⁵ Dawei Watch. 17 December 2022. <http://www.daweivatch.com/2022/12/17/news/dawei/48534/>

³⁶ Local source. 13 December 2022.

³⁷ Network Media Group. 11 December 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100063695375267/posts/596669165799591>

³⁸ Dawei Information Center. 20 December 2022.

³⁹ Dawei Information Center. 14 December 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/500954168798706>

⁴⁰ Local source. 20 December 2022

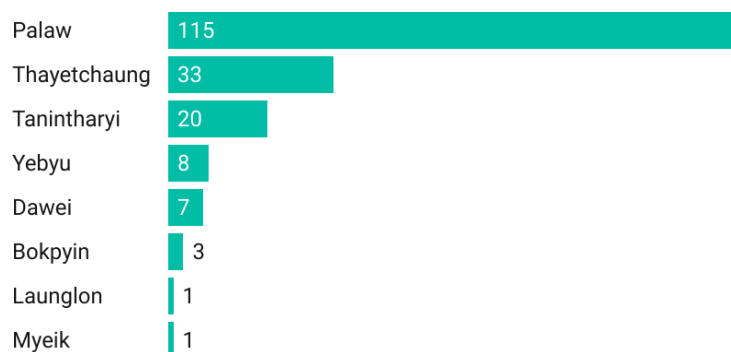
In addition, a total of 6 civilians (4 women and 2 men) were arrested in Launglon town on the night of 22 December 2022.⁴¹ Junta forces have also been conducting search and raid operations along the terrain in Launglon township on 22 December 2022. Following a remote violence attack against the junta convoy near Nyin Maw village in Launglon Township, junta forces launched extended search and raid operations in the village and nearby areas. Additionally, a young man from Thauk Kyar Pyin village in Launglon Township was arrested and his motorbike was confiscated on 24 December 2022.⁴²

The members of the local aid organizations have also been targeted by the junta regime's arrests and detention. On 27 December 2022, Aung Naing Oo, the secretary of Dawei Funeral Service Organization and his wife were arrested by the junta forces from their homes in Kyet Sar Pyin ward in Dawei town. They were later released on 29 December 2022. Other members of the local organizations in Dawei and Palaw townships which assist the local populations with ambulance and funeral services have also been interrogated by the junta police force and often faced threat and intimidation.

Burning civilian houses

Junta forces burned down more than 69 civilian houses in 3 villages in Palaw township (To, Tan Shin and Thin Gan Taw villages) on 30 December 2022. The figures of civilian houses burned down may be higher since in some parts of the villages, the local populations fled the villages prior to the incident and have not had the knowledge of the exact figures. The junta forces' offensives and increased troop reinforcements prompted local PDFs to use counteroffensive tactics with the use of remote-detonated explosive devices and drones to attack junta convoys. The majority of the local populations in the three villages (approximately more than 700 households) fled their homes before and on the date of the clashes. A local source verified that following the intensified clashes between local PDFs and junta forces which led to unprecedented casualties of the junta soldiers, the junta forces burned down more than 30 civilian houses in the three villages which are about 1.6km away from each other.⁴³ The local source further stated that the junta forces threatened the villagers that they would burn down the entire villages. On the contrary, the military regime spokesperson, Zaw Min Tun, denied that the junta forces set ablaze civilian houses during the military operations. The incumbent spokesperson of the junta-controlled administration of Tanintharyi Region also refuted that the junta forces deliberately burned down the houses by stating that the civilian houses were engulfed in flames due to crossfire between the local PDFs and the military forces. He further stated that financial aid grants of 200000-300000 Myanmar Kyat (90-140 USD approx.) will be provided to victims.⁴⁴

Number of Burned Houses by Township



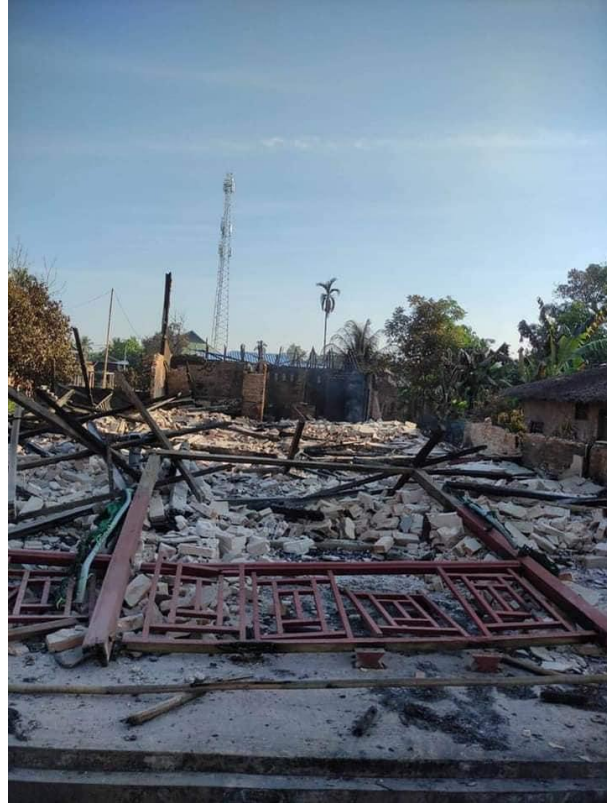
Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

⁴¹ Dawei Watch. 23 December 2022. <http://www.daweivatch.com/2022/12/23/news/48765/>

⁴² Dawei Watch. 26 December 2022. <http://www.daweivatch.com/2022/12/26/news/48925/>

⁴³ Local source. 31 December 2022.

⁴⁴ RFA Burmese. 31 December 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/39218993127/posts/10162337221763128>



Burned houses in Palaw Township, Photo: CJ

IMPACTS OF VIOLENT CONFLICT

Current Situation of Internally Displaced People (IDPs)

Due to intensified armed clashes and fortified presence of junta troops in December 2022, the figures of displacement in Tanintharyi Region were estimated to be more than 17,000 people. Increased number of displacements were reported in Palaw and Bokpyin townships of Tanintharyi Region. Among the displaced populations, more than 3,000 people are seeking refuge in camp-like settings in Palaw and Thayetchaung Townships.⁴⁵ The remaining IDP populations sought shelter in plantations and their relatives' homes in other villages and towns which are considered (relatively) safer. Numbers of displacement may fluctuate due to uncertain situations and difficulties in accessing precise figures.

Despite a relative and temporary absence of active armed conflict in Tanintharyi Township of Tanintharyi Region, a significant number of the displaced populations have not been able to return home. More than 2000 people displaced from Lel Thit village have continued to seek refuge in plantations and their relatives' homes in other villages or Myeik town which are considered (relatively safer). While some of the displaced populations from the same village chose to return homes and engage in livelihood activities that involved farming and working on plantation as day laborers, the return was temporary and the instability ensued in the areas towards the end of December 2022 had driven them to flee their homes once again. Similarly, in Nyaung Pin Kwin village, the local populations who returned to their homes have been forced to flee their homes again due to incessant rounds of artillery shelling towards the residential areas of the village even when there were no armed clashes.

More than 20 villages in Palaw Township have been severely affected by intensified clashes between local PDFs and the junta forces as well as the junta regime's fortified military operations and offensives with the use of heavy weaponry. The figures of displacement in Palaw Township was reported to be more than 3000 people in the previous month, with about 2000 people seeking shelter in camp-like

⁴⁵ FE5 Tanintharyi. <https://www.dropbox.com/s/wj0ivsf2qw0es74/FE5%20Sep%20report.pdf?dl=0>

settings. However, the displacement figures in the township have significantly risen to more than 10,000 due to the fortified presence of junta troops and increased tensions between local PDFs and junta forces. The current trajectory of conflict shows no sign of abating and this may likely lead to further displacement and uncertain future for the displaced populations for a safe return. The displaced populations in Palaw Township rely solely on the in-kind donations from the local populations and are in need of clean drinking water and medicines.

A internally displaced person from Thin Gan Taw village, Palaw Township stated⁴⁶,

“ It has been one month since I fled my home. The (SAC) forces raided several homes in my village, fired heavy weaponry and arrested many young villagers. We are scared to continue to live in the village. Almost the entire village population fled the village. Many houses have been burned down by the soldiers.”

Since Palaw Township has continued to see an ongoing and intensifying presence of active armed conflict and increased accounts of abuses and atrocities by the junta forces, the displaced populations face an uncertain future for a safe return.

“Only when the stability has been restored in the village, will we be able to return to the village. We do not dare to cross the border to Thailand either. We are afraid we will be arrested by the Thai police force and sentenced to jail term there.”

New displacement was reported this month in Ya Da Nar Pone (Mine) village in Bokpyin Township where more than 400 villagers were forcibly displaced by the junta regime. The village has been home to the private and junta-owned mining operations. The junta regime threatened artillery shelling against the village population on 12 December 2022. While some of the displaced populations sought refuge in a village on the side of Thailand, many remained in the jungle in the periphery areas of Tanintharyi Region. Additionally, the local sources stated that the junta regime has been taking measures to forcibly relocate the displaced populations in Pyi Gyi Man Dine village. To the knowledge of the local populations, this forced relocation has been stated to be an attempt of the junta regime to extend the areas of the 585th Infantry Battalion based in Bokpyin Township.⁴⁷

Socio-economic impacts of the 2021 coup in Tanintharyi Region

Conflict-torn areas were identified to be spreading across Tanintharyi Region as a result of increased junta troop reinforcements and offensives with the use of heavy weaponry. That further 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. 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. Also, due to forced displacement, children, who are supposed to be in school in those areas, have been kept away from classrooms and also lack access to alternatives to formal schooling. Children in rural settings across the region have been falling behind in education for almost 3 years due to COVID-19 pandemic and the impacts of the 2021 coup.

Junta's 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

⁴⁶ Interview with an Internally Displaced Person from Thin Gan Taw village, Palaw Township. 31 December 2022.

⁴⁷ Interview with a local source. 20 December 2022.

forces sought to arrest individuals who they suspect to be providing medical treatment and supplies to the local PDFs. The restrictions on transport and retail of anti-malarial medicines and other medical items used to treat soldiers such as gauze, bandages and anticoagulant drugs have been strictly enforced, leading to inspections of local pharmacies, arrests and confiscations of the bulk of such items. In this month, warm clothing items transported for donation to the internally displaced communities have also been confiscated, according to a local source. 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 forced displacement and overall instability in the final quarter of 2022 had led to increased shortages of labor in plantations and other labor-intensive businesses. Rice fields as well as plantations such as oil palm production and betel nut harvesting have been abandoned since the farmers, laborers and their families fled their homes amidst intensified clashes and fortified presence of junta troops. Unable to harvest in time, the crops have passed their prime and the outputs have become scarce. For the Tanintharyi Region, oil palm farming is a major industry, earning millions of dollars in foreign income every year. The displaced populations which are predominantly made up of farmers and day laborers have been losing their livelihood opportunities and facing an uncertain future to return to their homes. Furthermore, brick kilns in Palaw Township have also been facing labor shortages since more than 20 villages have been affected by displacement due to intensified clashes and the junta regime's artillery shelling. Usually, the brick kilns were the major sources of incomes for many locals in PaLa town of Palaw township following the end of the monsoon season. Since the artillery shells were reported to often explode on the sites of the brick kilns, the laborers are unable to return to the kilns. The displacement has caused further repercussions on the IDPs' ability to contribute to their local economies and earn an income and invest in their socioeconomic development.

ANALYSIS

This month, December 2022, saw a drastic increase in both armed clashes and remote violence across Tanintharyi Region due to fortified presence of junta troops and increased activities of local PDFs. In order to attempt to gain a greater momentum in armed resistance, the local PDFs have mainly used the tactics including remote violence and skirmishes on junta outposts, checkpoints, administrative buildings and the junta's military base. The response by the junta forces, however, have been disproportionate in terms of manpower and the use of heavy weaponry. Incessant artillery shelling towards the villages in the conflict-torn areas were reported even when there was no active conflict. The indiscriminate shooting demonstrated that junta forces had not only caused "collateral damage" but also treated the civilians as their perceived opponents in the battlefield. In addition, dozens of civilians were also arrested and often used as "human shields" during and following the armed clashes, or whenever the junta soldiers felt the need to prevent themselves from attacks of the local PDFs. Furthermore, in this month of December 2022, forced displacement has been reported in Bokpyin township, where there have been relatively fewer violent incidents and where internal displacement had not been reported to have taken place in the previous months. That demonstrated that the displacement has been spreading across all three districts: Dawei, Myeik and Kawthoung Districts of Tanintharyi Region.

Junta forces have been attempting to purport an image of Tanintharyi Region as a stable and prosperous region, however, the current conflict trajectory portrays a very contradicting image featuring intensified armed clashes, burning down of civilian houses, the flight of thousands of local populations, and loss of production and income. The locations which are considerably significant in terms of its economic potential such as Dawei-Hteekhee road, the designated area of Dawei Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Yebyu Township, and parts of Kawthoung Districts have been affected by the ongoing

instability. The junta regime's fortified presence of troops and increased offensives had been unfavorable to its attempts to restore regional stability.

The junta troops' strong presence, as well as the intensified clashes across the region, have increased displacement of local populations in December 2022. 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. Since local communities have been on the run for their safety, they were unable to harvest their crops and engage in any livelihood activities to meet their basic needs. The displacement disrupts the IDPs and the host communities' ability to contribute to their local economies, earn income, buy goods and invest in their socioeconomic development. As the weather has become colder, people are currently in need of adequate shelter and warm clothing. Local aid organizations' endeavors to fulfill the needs of the IDPs and the host communities have been largely and continuously hampered by restrictions and other acts of junta forces that involved confiscation of bulk of aid items (medicines, warm clothing, food), interrogation of the local aid workers, threats and intimidation.

The socio-economic impacts of the 2021 coup have severely taken a toll on the local populations' access to health, security, livelihood and education. In fact, lack of access to formal education and alternative methods of schooling have become protracted with little hope for a solution. Although the National Unity Government (NUG) focused on online platforms for learning, more than 20 months since the coup, the zoom classes and downloadable lessons worked only for the students in urban settings with access to electricity, electronic devices and some financial resources. There remained the need for remote-area learning and support to CDM teachers and local civil society networks to implement in 2023. There are current challenges to implementing the pathway to integrate children to classrooms; that included inadequate funds and learning resources, as well as difficulties related to displacement site locations: some children live outside camp-like settings and in plantations.

In conclusion, the current conflict trajectory suggests that Tanintharyi Region remains mired in chaos and turmoil, as the clashes intensified and the junta regime heightened measures to eliminate the local resistance groups. That brings Tanintharyi Region further from achieving the image of a business-friendly and stable region with economic prospects. 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 the designated constituencies, during the upcoming junta-controlled general elections. However, given the widespread locations of armed clashes and increasing displacement figures in December 2022, the uncertainty has been heightened about whether voting can in fact 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 triggers of violence in the region.

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