



MYANMAR: Tanintharyi Region

Monthly Situation Update

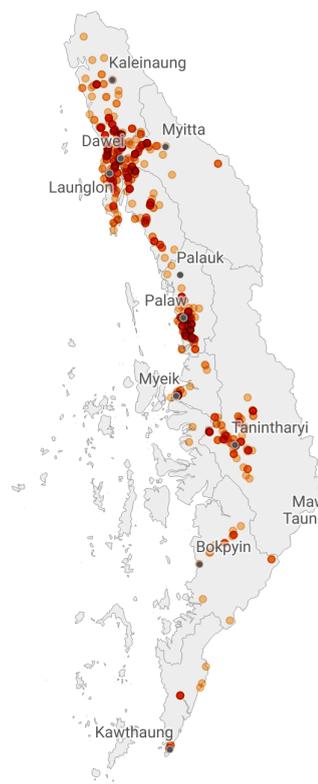
28 February 2023

This regular update, covering non-violent movements, conflict trends, human rights violations, and humanitarian developments up to 28 February is produced by Southern Monitor, a local research group.

HIGHLIGHTS & KEY MESSAGES

- On 2 February 2023, the State Administration Council (SAC) declared martial law in Palaw and Tanintharyi townships and increased military presence in the area.
- In February 2023, a total of 37 armed clashes erupted across all districts in Tanintharyi Region, showing an increase in armed conflict.
- A total of 34 deaths and 10 injuries due to attacks targeting civilians were reported in February 2023.
- More than 200 civilians' houses were burned down by junta forces in Palaw Township.
- Displacement figures significantly rose to more than 28,000 people due to increased offensives of the junta forces, burning down of houses, and arrests
- The number of non-violent movements in Tanintharyi Region increased as protesters staged "silent strikes" and other forms of non-violent movements across the region.
- Local Karen CSOs urged the Karen Nation Union (KNU) and the Kaw Thoo Lei Army to cease fighting.

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 February 2023.
Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper*

KEY FIGURES¹

3701

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

998

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

394

People killed by conflict actors between February 2021 and February 2023

28K

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.

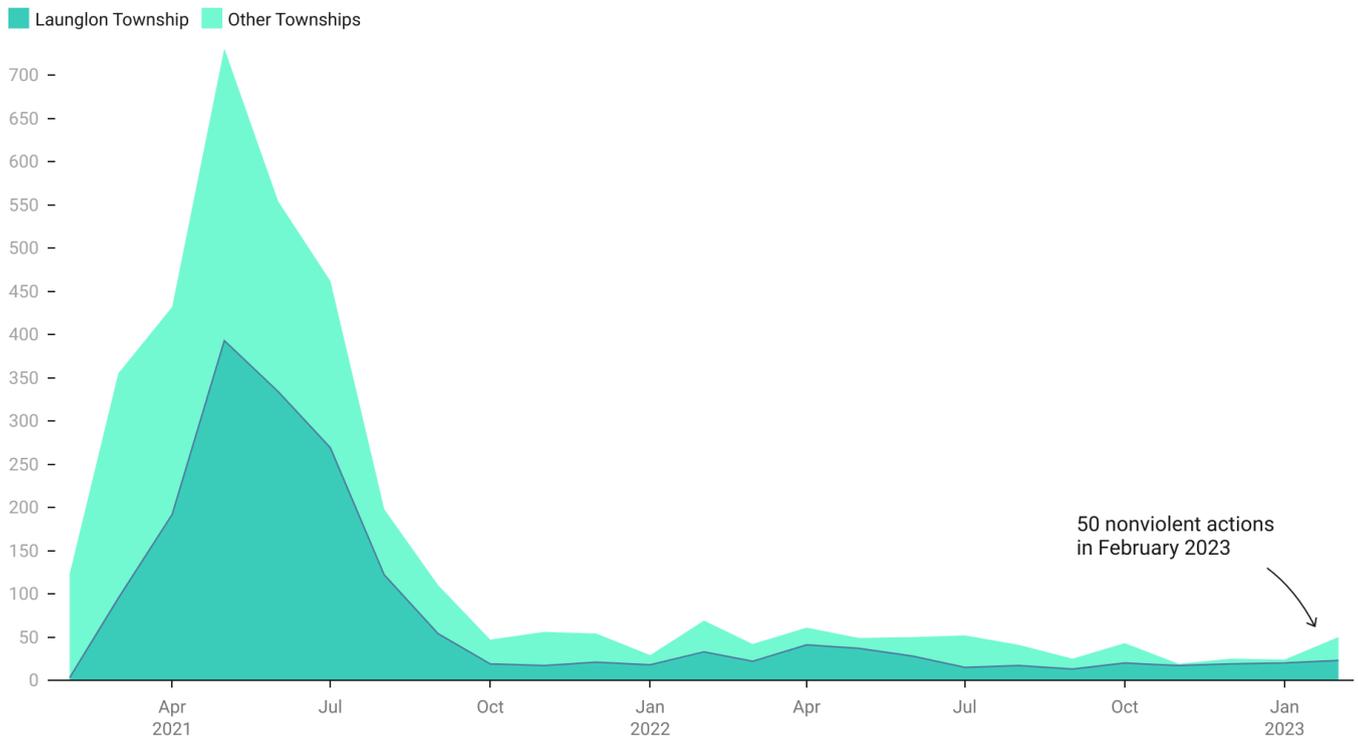
https://www.dop.gov.mm/sites/dop.gov.mm/files/publication_docs/ics_report_eng_7012021.pdf

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 February 2023)



Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

Non-violent Movements in February 2023

Tanintharyi Region has continued to be one of the strongholds for non-violent movements, marking two years of military rule with “silent strikes” across all districts in the region on 1 February 2023. Meanwhile, the SAC extended the state of emergency in Myanmar and announced martial law in a total of 37 townships across the country, including Palaw and Tanintharyi Townships of Tanintharyi Region.

Due to the presence of silent strikes, the number of non-violent movements reported in February 2023 increased, compared to previous months. A total of 50 non-violent movements were reported, with the majority in Launglon Township. Streets in cities across Tanintharyi Region were quiet after protesters urged local populations to stay indoors during business hours (9am-5pm). Although the protesters asked businesses to close in the previous silent strike, in most places, they did not ask business owners to do so this time. This was to avoid retaliation by the junta forces against the business and shop owners. The silent strikes were considered as a prominent form of resistance defying the State Administration Council (SAC)’s attempt to ‘normalize’ the situation. Night protests were reported in Launglon Township; members of local PDFs and the local protesters assembled in the township, riding their motorbikes and chanting anti-coup slogans.⁴ Similar protests jointly organized by members of local PDFs and local protesters were reported in Tanintharyi Township on 2 February 2023, marking the second anniversary of the coup.⁵

⁴ Dawei Watch. 1 February 2023. <http://www.daweiwatch.com/2023/02/01/news/50945/>

⁵ Dawei Watch. 2 February 2023. <http://www.daweiwatch.com/2023/02/02/photo/events/50961/>

In addition to the protests staged to mark the anniversary of ‘military rule’, local protesters led by the Dawei District Democracy Movement Strike Committee also organized demonstrations in Launglon Township on subsequent days.⁶ On 7 February 2023, members of the Dawei District Democracy Movement Strike Committee commemorated the 2nd anniversary of the establishment of the strike committee. Local protesters, students, and women took part in the protests marking the anniversary in Launglon Township. The members of the strike committee pledged that they would strive to extend non-violent movements to other parts of the region to gain more momentum among unarmed resistance groups. The strike committee consisted of township chapters, including the Basic Education Students’ Union (BESU) and the Rose Color Women’s Movement committee, among others.⁷ The Rose Color Women’s Movement Committee has been active, not only in collaborating with other local strike committees, but also leading additional protests in Launglon Township on 26 February 2022.⁸ On 28 February 2022, protesters gathered in a high school in Launglon Township to commemorate the 2 year anniversary of four local protesters’ deaths, during the violent crackdown on demonstrations by the junta forces in Dawei District.⁹

CONFLICT TRENDS

The number of armed clashes between local resistance groups (People’s Defense Forces)¹⁰ and junta forces during February 2023 slightly increased, compared to January 2023. A total of 37 clashes erupted across Tanintharyi Region, including Bokpyin Township, where there were very few clashes reported in the previous months. During this month, a significant increase in offensives launched by junta forces, troop reinforcements, and use of heavy weaponry were reported across Tanintharyi Region, especially in Palaw and Tanintharyi Townships. The State Administration Council (SAC) declared martial law in these two townships on 1 February, 2023. Similar to conflict trends reported last month, the majority of the clashes between the local PDFs and junta forces erupted following remote violence attacks on junta outposts. These attacks were launched by the local PDFs. The local PDFs based in Palaw, Dawei, and Launglon Townships continued to gain momentum among the armed resistance, which primarily used remote violence, ambushes on junta outposts, and targeted killings. The junta forces heavily responded to the attacks by launching heavy artillery targeted at residential areas in villages and towns.

The SAC declared martial law in a total of 37 townships across the country, including Palaw and Tanintharyi Townships. As a result, there were increased troop reinforcements and fortified military operations in those townships, resulting in heightened tensions between the junta forces and local resistance groups in Palaw and Tanintharyi Townships. According to local sources, approximately 400 junta troops were deployed to the areas where the clashes were reported. In Palaw town of Palaw Township alone, there were more than 200 junta soldiers deployed during the first week of February 2023.¹¹ In fact, intensified clashes reportedly erupted consecutively from 7-10 February 2023 in Palaw Township. Increased junta troop reinforcements and military operations, as well as movement of ammunition and rations, were also observed by local sources in Palaw, Tanintharyi, and parts of Myeik Townships. The junta forces launched heavy artillery strikes during and after clashes with local PDFs.

⁶ Dawei Watch. 6 February 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/139053342889519/posts/5551815611613238>

⁷ Mizzima-News in Burmese. 7 February 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/6391660504202134>

⁸ Mizzima-News in Burmese. 27 February 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/6455680174466833>

⁹ Dawei Watch. 28 February 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/139053342889519/posts/5623603234434475>

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ The Tanintharyi Times. 11 February 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/100072232759534/posts/226275693123521>

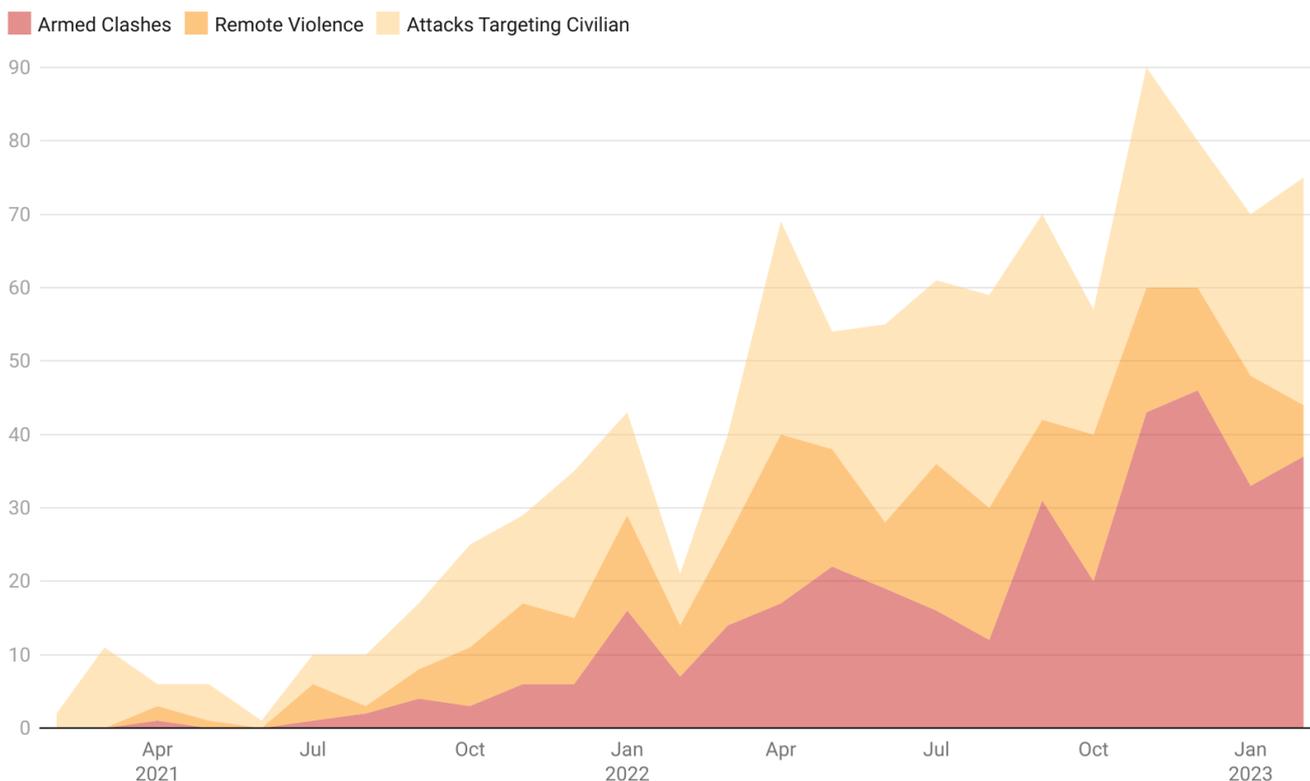
Significantly, the incidence of civilian casualties has continued to rise in Tanintharyi Region. Some casualties were due to the junta forces' targeted killings of members of local resistance groups and any civilians whom they suspected to be involved in, or supporting, the anti-coup movement. Other casualties were the result of targeted killings, committed by local resistance groups, against military-appointed administrators and alleged members of pro-regime militias, Pyu Saw Htee groups. A total of 34 civilians were killed, and another 10 civilians reportedly sustained injuries due to attacks targeting civilians in February 2023. During this month, there were also incidents and attacks in which no particular group claimed responsibility.

Additionally, in both urban and rural settings, the junta forces continued to enforce draconian laws and stringent regulations on a wide scale, making local populations even more vulnerable. Enforcement of these regulations has led to more indiscriminate shooting, arrests, detention, confiscation of motorbikes, and fines of both small and large sums. Local sources stated that they observed an increased presence of junta soldiers and police across major towns including Dawei, Myeik, and Kawthoung. As a result, civilians are at high risk of being fined by junta soldiers and traffic police, even when there is no apparent breach of laws and regulations. As grassroots populations in major towns struggle to survive economically, the fines cause an even bigger strain on their finances.

Local Karen ethnic civil society organizations (CSOs) in Tanintharyi Region called for the conflict between the Karen Nation Union (KNU) and its breakaway armed faction, the Kaw Thoo Lei Army (KTLA) to be resolved by meetings between high-ranking leaders of both groups. The local CSOs urged the two groups to remember civilians' suffering due to decades of past conflict. CSO leaders urged the two groups to choose non-violent negotiation strategies to resolve the conflict.¹² The International Karen Organization (IKO), a network of Karen expatriates, also urged KNU Brigade 4 and the Kaw Thoo Lei Army to cease fighting, as tensions between the two groups have heightened in recent months.

¹² Karen Peace Support Network. 9 February 2023.
<https://www.facebook.com/1477906749152928/posts/pfbid02MSnpxiUZU4NQWyxguWiG9kLwKur1xVzRwwPRuMSf8W3fjcQHoh2XN5J1WBvViWGAI/?mibextid=Nif5oz>

Number of Violent Incidents in Tanintharyi Region



Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

Armed Clashes

From April 2021 to February 2023, there were a total of 358 clashes reported in Tanintharyi Region. A total of 33 armed clashes erupted in Tanintharyi Region in February 2023. The clashes were reported in all townships across the region except Kyunsu and Bokpyin townships.

Major Incidents in February 2023

Myeik District

Palaw Township

- A clash between local PDFs and junta forces erupted near the junta-controlled General Administration Department (GAD) building in Palaw town and Tan Shin Village on 3 February 2023. The local PDFs and junta forces exchanged fire for an hour before the local PDFs withdrew their troops. Afterwards, the junta forces continued launching heavy artillery towards Tan Shin and Thin Gan Taw Villages in Palaw Township.¹³ Frequent clashes have erupted in the area since December 2022.

The junta forces' artillery strike after the clash killed a 65-year-old woman and injured a child in Tan Shin Village on 3 February 2023.¹⁴ The junta forces launched artillery shells at the villages in the area, even when there was no active conflict.

¹³ Dawei Watch. 3 February 2023. <http://www.daweiwatch.com/2023/02/03/news/51020/>

¹⁴ The Tanintharyi Times. 4 February 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/100072232759534/posts/224919039925853>

- Another clash was reported in Palaw town on 7 February 2023; two clashes between the local PDFs and junta forces were reported in two residential wards near To Village in Palaw town. The junta forces launched artillery shelling during and after the clashes.¹⁵

- On the following day on 9 February 2023, additional clashes were reported in To, Pi Tat, Mya Daung, and Pa Wut Kone Villages and incidents of junta forces burning down houses were reported.¹⁶ A clash between an alliance of local PDFs led by the Karen National Defense Organization (KNDO) and the junta forces erupted on 9 February 2023. The junta forces' artillery strike towards Pa Wut Kone Village during the clash injured a 15-year-old boy, likely leading to limb amputations.¹⁷

Incident Map: Armed Clashes in Tanintharyi Region

(February 2023)



Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

- Increased troop reinforcements of junta forces led to clashes between the junta forces and the local PDF in Ka De Village in Palaw Township on 15 February 2023. The junta forces' disproportionate manpower and use of heavy weaponry forced the PDFs of Myeik District Battalion (1) to retreat from the village, which has been one of their strongholds in the township.¹⁸ The SAC's Information Team stated that the junta forces rescued a total of 13 civilians detained by the Palaw-based PDFs on 16 February 2023. According to the statement, a veteran, a teacher, and other civil servants were among the 13 civilians detained by the local PDFs.¹⁹

The junta soldiers burned down civilians' houses on 16 February 2023: almost all civilians' houses in the village were destroyed in the fire. The junta forces withdrew their forces from Ka De Village to Thin Gan Taw Village. However, the junta forces continued to launch heavy artillery in the area. According to a local source, civilians were not in the village at the time of the incident. They had fled their homes in fear of frequent clashes and tensions between local PDFs and junta forces in the village and nearby areas. Local PDFs also warned the local populations to leave their homes and seek refuge in relatively safer areas of the region, prior to the development of armed clashes in the area.²⁰

- On 19 February 2023, fighting between local PDFs and junta forces resumed in Nan Taung Village of Palaw Township, where there has been no active conflict for the past 5 months. Junta forces fired rounds of heavy weaponry towards Nan Taung Village. Nan Taung is one of the

¹⁵ Dawei Watch. 7 February 2023. <http://www.daweiwatch.com/2023/02/07/news/51216/>

¹⁶ Mizzima-News in Burmese. 9 February 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/6395861653782019>

¹⁷ Myanmar Pressphoto Agency. 10 February 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/874334009274294/posts/8820783364629279>

¹⁸ Mizzima-News in Burmese. 16 February 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/6419348531433331>

¹⁹ Eleven Media. 19 February 2023. <https://news-eleven.com/article/244637>

²⁰ Dawei Watch. 16 February 2023. <http://www.daweiwatch.com/2023/02/16/news/51593/>

villages in the eastern part of Palaw Township, where the junta forces have restricted the transportation of rations for more than a year.

Tanintharyi Township

- A local PDF under the command of Kaw Thoo Lei Army (KTLA) ambushed a junta convoy of 5 vehicles at the intersection of Mawtaung-Kawthoung in between Yay Phyu and Hton Khar Village in Tanintharyi Township on 13 February 2023. The junta forces exchanged fire with the members of the local PDFs and fired rounds of heavy weaponry.²¹ The SAC has increased troop reinforcements and military operations in Tanintharyi Township, one of the 37 townships where martial law was declared by the SAC.
- On 18 February 2023, a clash between local PDFs and junta forces erupted in Ban Law Village of Tanintharyi Township. Since the junta forces had been firing rounds of heavy artillery in the area one day prior to the clash, the civilians fled their homes on 17 February 2023.²² In the areas of Tanintharyi Township affected by conflict and forced displacement, most displaced populations often return to their homes when they observe relative (temporary) stability in their villages. The artillery strike damaged school buildings and residential homes in Ban Law Village, likely depriving some local populations of adequate shelter upon their return to the village.

Myeik Township

- Following an attack launched by a local PDF on a junta outpost in Tone Byaw Village on 17 February 2023, the junta forces fired rounds of heavy explosive weapons targeted towards the village.²³ Although Tone Byaw Village falls within the bounds of Myeik Township, it is in close proximity to Tanintharyi Township, where martial law was declared by the SAC this month.

Dawei District

Dawei Township

- An alliance of local PDFs and Kaw Thoo Lei Army (KTLA) launched an attack on a local police station in Pa Kar Ri Village in Dawei Township on 10 February 2023. The local PDF and junta forces exchanged fire for about 1.5 hours. The junta forces responded by firing rounds of heavy artillery towards Pa Kar Ri Village. The majority of residents dug bomb shelters in the vicinity of their houses in the village.²⁴
- Following a remote violence attack on a junta convoy near Thet Kel Kwat Village on Ye-Dawei Road on 12 February 2023, the road was blocked by the junta forces, causing trucks and passengers on the road to be stranded for a few hours.²⁵
- Additional clashes between local PDFs and junta forces were reported in Wa Kone Village in the eastern part of Dawei Township (Ah Shey Taw area) on 17 February 2023.²⁶ A local source stated that civilians in Wa Kone Village fled their homes on 14 February in fear of increased military operations and troop reinforcements in the area. Although there were alleged accounts of junta forces burning down houses in the village, it has not been independently verified.

²¹ The Tanintharyi Times. 14 February 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/100072232759534/posts/226778733073217>

²² Dawei Watch. 18 February 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/139053342889519/posts/5591148374346628>

²³ Dawei Watch. 17 February 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/139053342889519/posts/5586376914823774>

²⁴ Dawei Watch. 10 February 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/139053342889519/posts/5564708600323939>

²⁵ DVB TV news. 13 February 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/191574990881009/posts/6328199323885181>

²⁶ Dawei Watch. 17 February 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/139053342889519/posts/5588038217990977>

Launglon Township

- A local PDF, namely Launglon People's Defense Force (LLPDF) and junta forces exchanged fire in a residential ward in Launglon Township on 4 February 2023. This was following an incident in which the local PDF set the township-level forestry department ablaze. The clash erupted in an urban setting in Launglon Township, which was just 0.5 mile away from a local police station and a junta-controlled General Administration Department (GAD) building, where junta forces are currently stationed.²⁷ Launglon Township has become one of the major hotbeds for both armed resistance and non-violent movements.

Yebyu Township

- An alliance of Yebyu-based PDFs attacked junta forces stationed at the construction site of an above-ground military bunker at a deep sea port in Na Bu Lel area in Yebyu Township on 6 February 2023. The local PDFs and junta forces exchanged fire at the site which is at the entrance of the Dawei Special Economic Zone (Dawei SEZ). Given that the navy and army bases of the junta regime are located in close proximity to the area, troop reinforcements of junta soldiers were sent to the area quickly.²⁸ That was not the first time the local PDFs attacked a junta outpost near the deep sea port; a similar incident was reported in December 2022.

Kawthoung Township

- A clash between a local PDF and junta forces erupted in Wine Dinn village, Kha Mauk Gyi town in Kawthoung Township on 21 February 2023, causing a displacement of 100 people from the village. The displaced people fled their homes and crossed the Thailand-Myanmar border to a palm oil plantation in Ranong District of Thailand. The Thai authorities reportedly provided humanitarian assistance to the displaced population.²⁹

Remote Violence

Local people's defense forces (PDFs) employed the tactic of remote violence to attack convoys of junta forces, troop columns, office buildings, and the commercial facilities of the military regime and its associates. During April 2021 to February 2023, there were a total of 243 remote violence incidents, with more than half of the attacks targeted at the junta convoys, police force, and pro-regime militias (Pyu Saw Htee). The remainder of remote violence incidents involved attacks targeted at the office buildings of the military junta: the telecommunication towers, and showrooms of military-owned Mytel, and prisons. In addition, there were more than 9 incidents in which the houses of policemen, local administrators, and alleged informants were attacked. There were some accounts of collateral damage involving young children and women due to explosions.

During February 2023, a total of 7 remote violence attacks were reported across Palaw, Dawei, Thayetchaung and Launglon Townships. The highest number of remote violence attacks were reported in Palaw Township, with a total of 59 remote violence incidents during April 2021 - December 2022. On 6 February 2023, a local PDF attacked a passenger vehicle with the remote-detonated explosive device, resulting in the deaths of a Buddhist monk and a female passenger on the vehicle. The local PDF, Yebyu People's Defense Force (YPDF), issued an apology letter on 8 February stating that they

²⁷ Dawei Watch. 4 February 2023. <http://www.daweivatch.com/2023/02/04/news/51061/>

²⁸ The Tanintharyi Times. 6 February 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/100072232759534/posts/225306106553813>

²⁹ Dawei Watch. 22 February 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/139053342889519/posts/5603514796443319>

had mistakenly targeted the passenger vehicle for another passenger vehicle allegedly carrying the members of junta forces in plain clothes.

Major Incidents in February 2023

Myeik District

Palaw Township

- Palaw-based KPDF stated that on 9 February 2023, the local PDF attacked the junta outposts in Pa Wut Kone and Nan Taung Village using drones, for a total of 5 times.³⁰ The KPDF had often attacked the junta outposts in Palaw Township using drones.

Dawei District

Yebyu Township

- An explosive device exploded at the residential house of the Head of the township-level Education Department within the government housing compound on 6 February 2023.³¹
- A passenger vehicle was attacked by a local PDF using a remote-detonated explosive device on 6 February 2023. The passenger vehicle was carrying a Buddhist monk and an additional 7 civilians at the time of the incident. The monk and a female passenger were killed due to the attack. The remaining 6 civilians also sustained injuries.³² The local PDF, Yebyu People's Defense Force (YPDF), issued an apology letter on 8 February stating that they had mistakenly targeted the passenger vehicle for another passenger vehicle allegedly carrying the members of junta forces in plain clothes.

Kawthoung District

Bokpyin Township

- A passenger vehicle was attacked using a remote-detonated explosive device near Han Ka Pyu Village in Bokpyin Township on 31 January 2023. The vehicle was reportedly carrying military officers and the incident took place near a military base in the township. No groups claimed responsibility for the incident.³³

Kawthoung Township

- A junta convoy of two vehicles, carrying a total of 60 junta soldiers, was attacked by a local PDF using remote-detonated explosive devices in Kha Mauk Gyi town on 2 February 2023.³⁴

³⁰ The Tanintharyi Times. 16 February 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/100072232759534/posts/227175496366874>

³¹ Dawei Information Center. 6 February 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/537672505126872>

³² Dawei Watch. 9 February 2023. <http://www.daweivatch.com/2023/02/09/news/51264/>

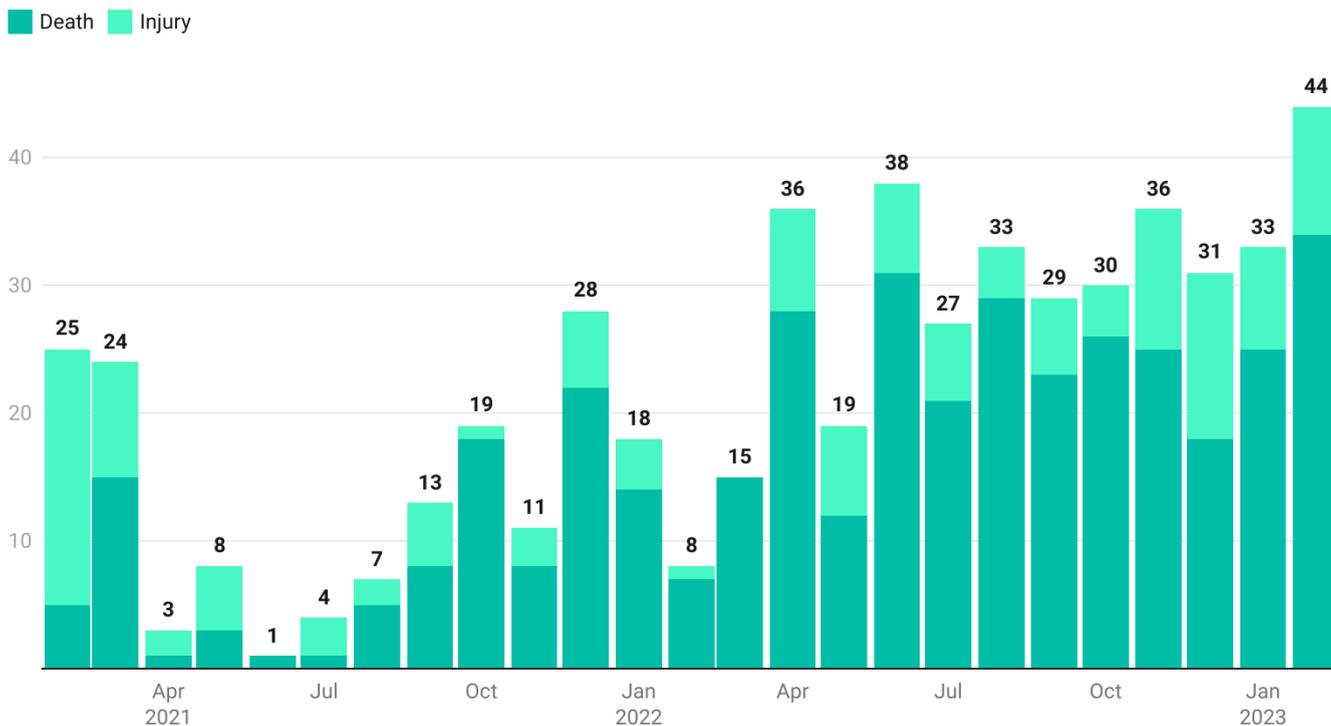
³³ Dawei Watch. 1 February 2023. <http://www.daweivatch.com/2023/02/01/news/50932/>

³⁴ Dawei Watch. 2 February 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/534826595411463>

Attacks targeting civilians

A total of 34 civilians were killed and another 10 civilians sustained injuries due to attacks targeting civilians were reported in February 2023. Among the casualties and injuries, there were 2 civilian deaths and 10 injuries due to junta forces' artillery shelling using heavy weaponry in Palaw, Dawei and Tanintharyi townships. Local PDFs have also increasingly targeted alleged military informants, members of a Pyu Saw Htee network, and junta-appointed local administrators. Local PDFs, in most cases, claimed responsibility for the incidents. In this month, there were killings against civilians including five children and no groups had claimed responsibility for the incident.

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	87	16	2	2		107
	Yebyu	59	5		1		65
	Palaw	39	8	1	4	1	53
	Thayetchaung	44	4				48
	Dawei	33	5		1		39
	Tanintharyi	23	3	3			29
	Myeik	19	2				21
	Bokpyin	13	2		2		17
	Kawthoung	13	1				14
	Kyunsu	1					1
Death Total		331	46	6	10	1	394
Injury	Dawei	15	2	1		20	38
	Launglon	12	15	1	1		29
	Palaw	19	4			2	25
	Thayetchaung	9	4			4	17
	Yebyu	12	1		1		14
	Myeik	3				6	9
	Tanintharyi	2	1			5	8
	Kawthoung	3	1				4
	Bokpyin	1	1				2
	Injury Total		76	29	2	2	37
Grand Total		407	75	8	12	38	540

Source: Southern Monitor · Created with Datawrapper

Major Incidents in February 2023

Palaw Township

- A total of 7 family members of a junta-appointed local administrator, including five children (the youngest of whom was 2 years old) were shot and killed in Nyaung Shin Kone Village, Kyauk Lone Gyi Village Tract, Palaw town on the night of 11 February 2023. No group claimed responsibility for the incident. Myeik District People's Defense Force also denied the allegations that local PDFs committed the brutal murder. A local source stated that the local PDFs do not usually conduct their operations in that part of Palauk town of Palaw Township, and there were no previous records of killings targeting military informers, or members of pro-regime militias in the village. The same source further speculated that the incident may be the junta forces' attempt to frame the local PDFs for the brutal murder.

Launglon Township

- The junta forces fired gunshots when they entered the village on the night of 3 February 2023. A local source stated that junta forces shot and killed a 50-year-old man in Min Yat Village in

Launglon Township on 4 February 2023. The local source further stated that the victim was not known to be involved in politics or the anti-coup movement. The reason behind the killing remains unclear.³⁵

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

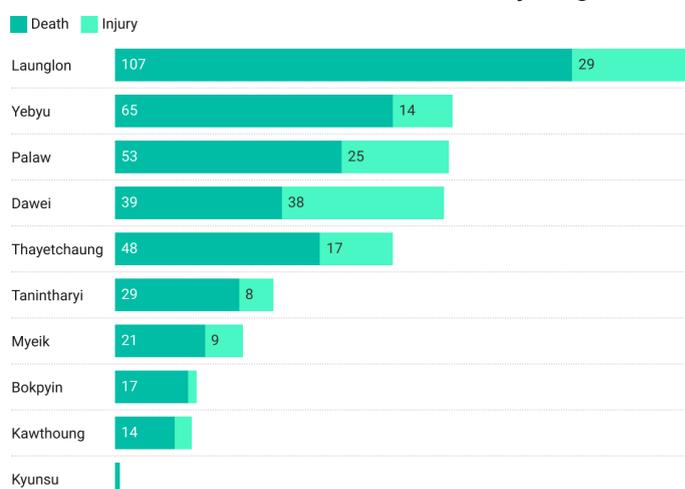
Dawei District

Thayetchaung Township

- An alleged member of a pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee, and local administrator of Pein Taw Village in Thayet Chaung Township was shot and killed on 1 February 2023. The local PDFs in Thayetchaung Township warned the alleged members of pro-regime militias and military supporters to refrain from supporting the SAC's endeavors to collect data and conduct activities related to the upcoming elections.³⁶

- Another alleged member of a pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee group, was shot and killed in Nyaung Zin Village in Thayetchaung Township on 3 February 2023. The deceased was a 50-year-old man, who was alleged to be a member of a pro-regime militia and a close associate of ultranationalist Buddhist monks in the region. On the same day, the junta forces entered Nyaung Zin Village and reportedly burned down the high school building in the village. The high school had been closed for months since teachers and students refused to attend the high school. The junta forces also launched a heavy artillery strike in the village.³⁷

Number of Civilian Casualties in Tanintharyi Region



Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

Kawthoung Township

- An alleged member of a pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee group, was shot and killed by a local PDF in Kha Mauk Gyi town in Kawthoung Township on 1 February 2023.³⁸

³⁵ Dawei Watch. 4 February 2023. <http://www.daweiwatch.com/2023/02/04/news/dawei/51049/>

³⁶ Dawei Information Center. 1 February 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/100066523820714/posts/534338898793566>

³⁷ Dawei Watch. 3 February 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/139053342889519/posts/5543072292487570>

³⁸ Mizzima-News in Burmese. 2 February 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/216265185075061/posts/6370879312946920>

Arbitrary Arrests and Detentions

In February 2023, junta forces arrested a total of 11 women in Yebyu and Launglon townships of Dawei District. Two women were arrested during a night raid at their houses in Kanbauk area in Yebyu Township on 3 February 2023. Additionally, a total of five female civilians, who were known to be relatives and associates of the detainees in Kanbauk area who were detained and later released by the junta forces, were arrested by the junta forces on 10 February 2022. They were also reportedly taken to the interrogation center in the compound of Mawyawaddy Navy Base in Kanbauk area and are currently being detained there. A total of 23 civilians were arrested by the junta forces since after the incident where a junta-appointed local administrator in the area was shot and killed on 25 January 2023. As of 11 February 2023, 15 out of 23 detainees have been released and the rest are reportedly being detained in the interrogation center.³⁹ In addition, a total of four women were arrested during the junta forces' raid in a residential ward in Launglon Township 17 February 2023. Prior to the day, an alleged member of pro-regime militia, Pyu Saw Htee was shot and killed by unidentified gunmen in the same ward. Junta forces have been arresting young men and women on suspicions of being a member of or supporting the local resistance groups in Launglon Township. That led many young men and women to leave their homes in the township to other relatively safer towns or to Thailand for safety and employment opportunities.⁴⁰

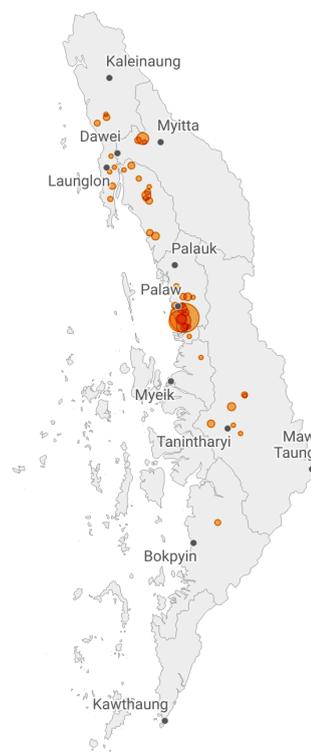
The junta forces had also extended their search and arrest operations in Kawthoung and Myeik Districts, resulting in enforced disappearances and arrests of more than 30 civilians in the districts. During 14-15 February 2023, a junta column of 100 soldiers entered Shan Koe village and nearby areas and arrested a total of 16 civilians from the area. As of 21 February 2023, the location of where the civilians were taken is not known. According to local sources, the junta forces conducted search and arrest operations to specifically arrest the members of National League for Democracy (NLD), striking civil servants and other civilians whom they suspect to be supporting the anti-coup movement.⁴¹ Furthermore, in Palaw Township of Myeik District, the 285th Light Infantry Battalion of junta forces conducted search and arrest operations and arrested more than 20 civilians; the majority of the detainees were striking teachers. The operations specifically targeted striking teachers, members and alleged supporters of the National League for Democracy (NLD) and other civilians whom they suspect to be part of or supporting to the local resistance groups.

Burning Civilian Houses

An increasing number of civilians' houses were burned down by the junta forces. These incidents were reported in Launglon, Dawei and Palaw Townships in Tanintharyi Region and ultimately led to additional displacement and an overall heightened sense of insecurity in the affected

Location of Houses Burned Down by Myanmar Military

(September 2021 to February 2023)



Source: Southern Monitor - Created with Datawrapper

³⁹ Dawei Watch. 11 February 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/139053342889519/posts/5567969699997829>

⁴⁰ Than Lwin Times. 18 February 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/163055077152350/posts/4574989082625572>

⁴¹ Local source. 24 February 2023.

areas. In Palaw Township alone, more than 200 houses were burned down this month. According to local sources, the houses of civil servants who joined the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), and houses of the members of local PDFs (or supporters of the anti-coup movement) have often been specifically targeted during junta forces' arson attacks.

- More than 60 houses were burned down by the junta forces in To Village of Palaw town in Palaw Township during 8-12 February 2023, according to a local source. Following a clash between local PDFs and junta forces on 8 February 2023, junta soldiers burned down a total of 3 houses in To Village. Despite the absence of clashes between the local PDFs and junta forces in the subsequent days, the junta forces continued to station themselves in villages in Pala town. Additionally, they continued burning down more houses in To Village.⁴² The continued presence of junta troops led to difficulties in assessing and verifying the number of burnt houses.
- Furthermore, the junta forces burned down houses in Wa Kone Village in Dawei Township on 14 February 2023. The number of houses damaged in the arson attacks has not been verified since the local populations only witnessed the fire from afar.⁴³ Frequent clashes, arson attacks, and heavy artillery shelling by the junta forces have forced local villagers in Wa Kone Village to flee their homes and seek refuge in (relatively) safer areas in other villages. The junta troops burned down more than 15 houses and a plantation in Wa Kone and Thin Gan Taw Villages in Dawei Township. Then, junta troops stole property from civilians' houses.
- According to local sources, on 16-17 February 2023, junta soldiers burned down a total of 165 civilians' houses in Ka De Village, following junta forces' occupation of Ka De Village. The village was formerly known as a stronghold for one of the local PDFs in Palaw Township. Other infrastructures and property damaged during the arson attack included: a monastery, a high school, motorbikes, cars, and community-owned ambulances.

Number of Burned Houses by Township

Township	Number of Burned Houses
Palaw	328
Thayetchaung	40
Dawei	26
Tanintharyi	20
Launglon	9
Yebyu	8
Bokpyin	3
Myeik	1
Total	435

Source: Southern Monitor • Created with Datawrapper

IMPACTS OF VIOLENT CONFLICT

Current Situation of Internally Displaced People (IDPs)

Due to intensified armed clashes and fortified presence of junta forces in Tanintharyi Region in February 2023, the figures of displacement in the region have been estimated to be around 28,000 people. Increased numbers of displacement have been reported in Palaw and Tanintharyi townships, which included among the total of 37 townships where the junta forces declared martial law starting this month. The junta forces continued to heighten offensives and indiscriminate shooting with the use of

⁴² Local source. 16 February 2023.

⁴³ Local source. 16 February 2023.

heavy weaponry even when there was no presence of active fighting between the junta forces and the local resistance groups.

The displaced populations in Palaw Township have been estimated to be around 25,000 people, according to Dawna Tanintharyi, a local aid group. There are a total of more than 2600 internally displaced people seeking refuge in camp-like settings in Palaw Township. The entire population of a total of 6 villages, namely Ka De, Pa Wut Kone, Let Kuu, To and Ta Ku villages fled their homes to safety due to increased offensives, arrests and enforced disappearances, and burning down of houses by the junta forces.⁴⁴ Many fled to seek shelters in Myeik town. While some are able to seek temporary refuge in their relatives' homes or rent houses in Myeik town. The remaining populations do not have access to such shelter, often having no choice but to flee to the jungle and reside in their own makeshift shelters. Recent incidents of arson attacks on civilians' houses in To, Tan Shin, Thin Gan Taw, Shat Pon and Ka De villages caused additional displacements as well as unabled the displaced populations to return to their homes.

Similarly, in Tanintharyi Township, due to indiscriminate shooting by the junta forces using heavy weaponry, more than 3000 people from Maw Tone and nearby villages in the township have fled their homes to seek shelter in relatively safer areas in the township and Myeik town. According to a local source, some of the displaced populations returned to their homes given relatives and temporary stability in the affected areas of Tanintharyi Township. However, there remained difficulties in accessing precise figures.

Additional displacement has been reported in Kawthoung in Kawthoung District in February 2023. Due to the junta forces' search and arrest operations as well as intensified fighting between an alliance of local PDFs and junta forces forced the displacement of more than 100 people from Shan Koe village in Kawthoung Township. The junta forces' restrictions on rations had also been extended to include many parts of Kawthoung and Bokpyin township as the tensions between local PDFs and junta forces had recently heightened. Recent displacements were also reported in Bokpyin Township and the populations have not been able to return to their homes. An internally displaced person stated that the displaced populations are in dire need of adequate rations, safe drinking water, and healthcare services. Young children and elderly are at higher risk of malnutrition, skin diseases and preventable diseases like diarrhea. Numbers of displacement may fluctuate due to uncertain situations and difficulties in accessing precise figures.

Socio-economic impacts of the 2021 coup in Tanintharyi Region

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

⁴⁴ Dawna Tanintharyi. 4 March 2023.

<https://www.facebook.com/100069156914883/posts/pfbid02mVxoMBGcmwkjPbY19CP6XMBZXvRVRuC8AzBFkkrVPMBC22V8LFDvYp2ncCHsTBml/?mibextid=Nif5oz>

forces occupied schools used them as barracks for soldiers. This increases the risks of violations against children and interferes with education.

Junta's fortified presence and restrictions on medical supplies have significantly strained access to healthcare services in Tanintharyi Region. Aid workers face severe shortages of medical supplies they urgently need to provide treatment to local populations and internally displaced populations in camp-like settings. Junta forces sought to arrest individuals who they suspect to be providing medical treatment and supplies to the local PDFs. Those carrying or transporting the bulk of medicines, food, and clothing have been interrogated and intimidated by the junta forces at the checkpoints along major highway roads. The junta forces continued to enforce the ban on transporting bulks of dry rations (rice, instant noodle, etc) and medicines and other medical items (anticoagulant drugs, gauze, bandages, etc.). A local aid worker also reported that both the junta forces and local PDFs have increasingly intimidated and threatened the aid workers who are involved in transporting patients in Palaw Township. The local PDFs had also targeted the ambulances and the aid workers on suspicions of helping the junta soldiers and fired gunshots at the ambulances.⁴⁵ The restrictions set by both the junta forces and the local PDFs on the use of the major roads along Myeik-Palaw and Dawei-Hteekhee road had considerably disrupted the healthcare and funeral services provided by the local aid organizations.

Increased presence of junta forces, security checks and their restrictions on food items have also continued to strain the livelihoods of the local populations across Tanintharyi Region. After the martial law was declared, the junta forces began to increasingly enforce the transport of dry rations and oil to Palaw Township with an intent to curb the local resistance groups' access to essential items. The disruption of the flow of goods and services have become protracted and prevent the local populations from having adequate livelihoods. In addition, in Palaw, Tanintharyi and Dawei Township, several villages have been abandoned due to intensified clashes in the area; the livelihoods of the local populations have been largely disrupted. As the junta forces established checkpoints to conduct security checks at the vehicles and passengers and often demand money in a form of arbitrary taxation, the local businessmen and traders are unable to make profits for their goods.

ANALYSIS

Despite the strong presence of junta troops in Tanintharyi Region, there was an increase in non-violent movements in February 2023. Local communities kicked off the month with 'silent strikes' and other forms of non-violent movements across different townships in Tanintharyi Region. As local protesters marked the 2 year anniversary of the region's prominent Dawei District Democracy Movement Strike Committee, they pledged to sustain non-violent resistance and extend the movement further to townships in other districts in the region. Meanwhile, the SAC extended the state of emergency in Myanmar and announced martial law in a total of 37 townships across the country, including Palaw and Tanintharyi Townships of Tanintharyi Region. This announcement led to increased offensives, troop reinforcements, and fortified military operations in Palaw and Tanintharyi Townships. Similar activities were also observed in other townships, with tensions rising in Dawei Township of Dawei District, and Kawthoung and Bokpyin Townships of Kawthoung District. As a result of the increased presence of junta troops across the region, anti-coup protesters face a higher risk of brutal crackdown, arrest, detention, and torture. However, due to the determination of local strike committees, women, and youth-led movements, non-violent resistance movements in Tanintharyi Region will most likely be sustained.

During February 2023, Tanintharyi Region saw a slight increase in the number of armed clashes compared to the numbers reported in January 2023. Furthermore, the tensions between the junta

⁴⁵ Local source. 20 February 2023.

forces and local resistance groups showed no signs of abating. Particularly, in Palaw and Tanintharyi Townships, where the SAC declared martial law at the beginning of the month, local resistance groups engaged in fighting with junta troops. These clashes occurred despite the junta forces' disproportionate use of ammunition and manpower. Incessant artillery shelling into villages in conflict-torn areas was reported, even when there was no active conflict between the junta and other armed groups in Palaw and Tanintharyi Townships. As a result, the number of civilian deaths and injuries increased in those townships. Junta forces' heavy-handed response to the resistance caused considerable collateral damage. Significantly, the junta forces continued to fail to distinguish between combatants and noncombatants. As such, they treated civilians as their perceived opponents on the battlefield.

However, both armed resistance and non-violent resistance necessitate strong and sustained support from the general public. Resistance groups now face a looming threat of losing adequate support. As the state of emergency was extended, the severity of the socio-economic impacts on the general population are unprecedented. Local populations have borne the brunt of severe socio-economic impacts of the 2021 coup, and there is an ever-increasing sense of insecurity. Local communities consistently experience atrocities, threats, and intimidation by the junta forces. The effects of the economic crisis and soaring rates of unemployment will likely weaken local populations' support for the revolution. Socio-economic impacts of the coup, such as lack of access to education and healthcare, must be addressed. In fact, lack of access to formal education and alternative methods of schooling have become protracted, and there is little hope for a solution in the short term. Moreover, the protection of vulnerable groups, including women, children, and internally displaced communities must be prioritized.

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

As the SAC prepares for the planned 2023 general elections, the military junta has also ramped up its efforts to gain greater control over Tanintharyi Region, mostly through increased presence and fortified 'search and raid' operations. These tactics are intended to crush any forms of resistance. In February 2023, the junta forces arrested more than 30 civilians, including some civil servants who joined the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) and refused to return to the workforce in Palaw Township. According to local sources, the junta forces also searched the residences of striking civil servants during their military operations across the region. Recently in Bokpyin Township, during the junta forces' search and raid operations, civil servants' residences were searched in an effort to arrest and detain them. As a result, most civil servants in the township vacated their residences to seek shelter in relatively safer areas. The junta forces have increasingly targeted civil servants, alleged members and supporters of local resistance groups, and other anti-coup activists. In fact, according to local sources, during arson attacks in Palaw Township, the houses known to belong to these groups were specifically targeted by the junta forces.

The current conflict trajectory features intensified armed clashes, civilian houses burnt down, the displacement of thousands of people, and the loss of economic development and income. Accordingly, the SAC's efforts to purport an image of Tanintharyi Region as a stable and prosperous region have

failed. 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 proceed with the upcoming junta-controlled general elections. Additionally, given the widespread locations of armed clashes and rise in displacement figures, there is increasing uncertainty about whether voting can indeed take place in designated constituencies in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

State Administrative Council (SAC)

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

National Unity Government (NUG)

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

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

- PDFs and other local resistance groups should refrain from committing human rights abuses, including killing of detainees, and attacks on civilians and civilian property. They must also refrain from targeting schools and medical facilities.

International Community

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

United Nations

- In collaboration with local organizations, humanitarian partners should provide critical life-saving assistance to the most vulnerable people in conflict affected villages, despite challenges accessing these areas, and limited funding.
- Humanitarian partners should implement programs facilitating the delivery of cross-border aid to reach displaced populations in the region.
- Humanitarian partners should coordinate with ethnic armed organizations' respective departments to ensure the swift and effective provision of humanitarian assistance.
- International organizations should strengthen the capacity of local community-based organizations and civil society organizations in aid delivery, including data collection and monitoring.

Local Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and International Non-governmental Organizations (INGOs)

- Local non-governmental organizations and international organizations should support the implementation of activities regarding mine risk reduction education, as well as first-aid training, and supplies to local communities.
- Local non-governmental organizations and international organizations should support implementation of activities regarding safe migration knowledge and practices to local communities, especially targeting young people.

Local Media

- Local media should be aware of the local context and minimize the impact of rumors and misinformation, to mitigate triggering violence in the region.

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