

# Weekly News Review

Issue 104, 10 - 16 May 2023

## Regime's True Colors Amidst Cyclone Mocha



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## Introduction

Cyclone Mocha, which originated in the Bay of Bengal, made landfall in Arakan State at 12:30 pm on 14 May, accompanied by powerful winds ranging from 120 to 155 mph. The cyclonic storm with wind speeds exceeding 120 mph was felt in Chin State and Magway Region around 6:30 pm on the same day and persisted until 6:30 pm on 15 May. Subsequently, the storm gradually moved towards Sagaing Region and Kachin State, albeit with reduced wind speeds. Mocha also impacted various regions, including Ayeyarwady Region, Yangon, Bago, Mandalay, and northern Shan State, albeit to varying degrees. The greatest damage and loss of life caused by Cyclone Mocha occurred in Myanmar's western state of Arakan, followed to varying extents by Chin, Magway, and Sagaing.

This issue of Burma News International (BNI) - Myanmar Peace Monitor (MPM) Weekly News Review takes a look at the inhumane response or true colors of the Myanmar's military council amidst the catastrophic Cyclone Mocha.

## Preparations ahead of Mocha's landfall

Prior warnings about Cyclone Mocha had been disseminated among the forces of the Spring Revolution, which have been resisting the Myanmar military's attempted coup for over two years. In Arakan State, namely Sittwe, Kyaukphyu, Maungdaw, Rathedaung, Myebon, Pauktaw, and Manaung Townships, the danger level was raised to the highest red category. Consequently, local civil society groups and the United League of Arakan/Arakan Army (ULA/AA) efficiently evacuated the residents to safety before the cyclonic storm made landfall.



In the days leading up to the landfall of the cyclonic storm, ULA/AA's spokesperson U Khaing Thukka said "more than 100,000 people had been evacuated". <sup>1</sup> In addition, the military council-appointed Kyaukphyu Township administrator also said they had set up ten cyclone shelters in downtown areas where about 20,000 people taking shelter from the incoming storm. <sup>2</sup> World Food

1 Thousands of Muslim refugees from Hnget and Sin Tet Maw IDP camps in Pauktaw take shelter in Kyine Ni Pyin <http://rb.gy/8gpp5>

2 Ten relief centers opened in Kyaukpyu, sheltering up to 20,000 people <http://rb.gy/pausz>

Program (WFP) also issued an announcement on 13 May that it had made arrangement for one month's food rations for 400,000 people in Arakan State and bordering areas.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) announced on 11 May that it was prepared to provide emergency response assistance to the Mocha disaster. The Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management of National Unity Government (NUG) also announced on 13 May that it had made preparations in conjunction with local civil society groups in order to reduce the risk of the incoming storm in Arakan State, Chin State, Yangon Region, Ayeyarwady Region, Bago Region, Magway Region, Sagaing Region, and Tanintharyi Region, which were forecasted to be hardest hit. The Myanmar's parallel government further said in the announcement that special preparations for disaster prevention and rescue operations were underway together with locally based Arakan Heritage Foundation.



In a sense, it can be said that the people of Arakan State and other vulnerable states and regions were well prepared until the arrival of Cyclone Mocha, including the flow of information. However, the inhumane actions of the Myanmar military council proved to be far worse than Mocha itself.

## Regime's inhumane true colours revealed

On 14 May -the day Cyclone Mocha made landfall in Arakan State-the Myanmar military regime conducted airstrikes on the Na Bu Lel area in Yaybyu Township, Dawei District, Tanintharyi Region, where the Dawei Special Economic Zone (SEZ) is located. Without any fighting on the ground, the military council carried out the bombing of the area with fighter jets. <sup>3</sup>

Also in western Khin-U Township, Sagaing Region, more than 3,000 people from Innpat, Chantharkone, and Konethar villages had to be evacuated to safety in the heavy rains of Mocha at around 6:30 am on 14 May, when junta troops advanced into the villages for no apparent reason. Indiscriminate artillery fire and gunfire from regime troops wounded a 4-year-old child in Inpat village. <sup>4</sup>



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3 Regime carries out airstrikes in Na Bu Le area near Dawei SEZ  
<http://rb.gy/7alyi>

4 Junta's advance forces 30000 residents to flee in rain in western Khin-U  
<http://rb.gy/vxty1>

After Cyclone Mocha passed, the Myanmar army advanced with four military columns into the rural administrative area of Htankone in Kanbalu District, Sagaing Region, on 17 May, forcing more than 30,000 residents from 30 villages to flee to safety. In the morning of that day, more than 300 soldiers from Light Infantry Battalions 361 and 368 and members of the pro-militant Pyu Saw Htee militia entered the area, the Kyunhla Activists Group told Mizzima News.<sup>5</sup>

The people of Myanmar faced the inhumane actions of the military regime and the threat of natural disasters simultaneously.

## Related news

About 90 percent of Sittwe - the capital of Arakan State - was devastated by Cyclone Mocha and the local population is in urgent need of assistance. For this reason, ULA /AA formed an emergency relief and resettlement committee for the storm-affected people in Arakan State on 17 May.

"The People's Government of Rakhine is trying to mobilize all resources to the best of its ability, but this is still not enough to cover the devastation caused by the disaster. I would like to especially ask non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international NGOs and local social organizations to work closely with the Rakhine People's Government to provide the necessary assistance," said Major General Twan Mrat Naing, Chairman of the United League of Arakan and Military Chief of the Arakan Army.

The National Unity Government donated 100 million kyats, Kachin Independence Organization donated 300 million kyats and Myanmar National Truth and Justice Party/Myanmar National

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<sup>5</sup> Regime's advance forces over 30000 people to flee homes after storm

<http://rb.gy/ihts9>


Democratic Alliance Army (MNTJP/MNDAA) donated 100 million kyats respectively, for emergency humanitarian relief efforts.

The NUG said on 17 May that it had allocated more than 640 million kyats for storm-affected people in Arakan State, Chin State, Magway Region, Sagaing Region, Yangon Region, and refugee camps in Cox's Baza in Bangladesh. The parallel government stated that Cyclone Mocha claimed the lives of 455 people in seven states and regions, while the military council stated in its 18 May statement that only 47 residents, including members of the record, died during the catastrophic disaster.<sup>6</sup>

The discrepancy in the figures is due to the fact that the NUG had included the death toll in refugee camps in Sittwe Township, while it had been overlooked in the regime's report.



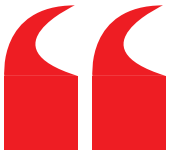
The Republic of Union of Myanmar  
National Unity Government  
Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and  
Disaster Management  
mohadm@nugmyanmar.org



**Number of Mortalities by State and Region  
(as of 17th May 2023)**

Sr.No	State & Region	Number of People	Remark
1.	Rakhine	431	Detailed information needs to be verified.
2.	Sagaing	4	
3.	Magway	15	
4.	Yangon	1	
5.	Ayeyarwady	1	
6.	Mandalay	1	
7.	Shan	2	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>455</b>	

<sup>6</sup> NUG: Mocha claim 455 lives in seven states and regions; regime's 16 May statement says only 47 people died <http://rb.gy/f3by7>



The regime's relentless advance into villages and continued aerial bombardment, undeterred by the storm, is a clear testimony to its inhumane true colours.



## Review

The coup leader said he would visit Sittwe after Cyclone Mocha and provide seven billion kyats. Additionally, he said they had received more than 13 billion kyats from donors and is open to offers of international aid. <sup>7</sup>

Local civil society groups said the Myanmar regime did not make any significant efforts during the storm and had not conducted any rescue operations until 15 May.

Hence, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing's rhetoric proved to be disconnected from the regime's actual actions on the ground. The actions taken by the junta revealed a deliberate dissemination of propaganda within and outside the military, as well as among civil servants, in an unethical attempt to cling to the power they had seized through the coup.

This is because the military junta has burned more than 60,000 civilians' homes and buildings in its arson attacks on villages in areas throughout the country that it no longer controls. In addition, the regime has carried out hundreds of airstrikes on civilians and millions of people have been forced to flee their homes due to indiscriminate small arms and heavy weapons fire.

Analysts have blamed junta leader Min Aung Hlaing and his associates of being unwilling to help the cyclone-affected people, despite the fact that the regime has spent billions of dollars to acquire weapons that can be used to kill its own people. In addition, the regime has kept international humanitarian organisations waiting for government permission to provide emergency aid to people affected by Cyclone Mocha.

It can be concluded that the Myanmar regime's relentless advance into villages and continued aerial bombardment, undeterred by the storm, is a clear testimony to its inhumane true colours.

<sup>7</sup> Junta chief arrive in storm-affected Sittwe, provide supplies worth 7 billion kyats  
<http://rb.gy/ccq3t>



# Weekly HighLight News



## Military council arrests over 40 villagers as human shields in Hpakant

18 May 2023

The military council arrested over 40 locals from Nantyar, Yaykartar and Khintaung villages in Hpakant Township of Kachin State as human shields, according to locals.

On the morning of 17 May, a military column of around 200 soldiers arrested locals from Nantyar, Khintaung and Yaykartar villages as human shield when they left Nantyar for Karmaing, a man from Lawah village told the Kachin News Group (KNG).

“Some locals from Nantyar village have fled the village in recent days. Now the military arrested the people left in the village. The detainees are from Nantyar and Yaykartar villages. The

military arrested the people from Nantyar village when they went to the market in the early morning," he said.

Khintaung and Yaykartar villages are located between Nantyar and Karmaing and about five miles from Nantyar village.

"The military council arrested the people from Yaykartar village at around 9 am as they encountered the military column," the man said.

That military column arrived in Karmaing at 3 pm today. The military has not released the detainees yet.

Among over 40 detainees are men, women and children.

"This is a replacement. It is common. The military usually arrests and uses civilians as human shields," said a local man from Hpakant who is engaging in the revolution.

On 14 May, a military column of over 100 soldiers advanced Battalion-44 of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) in Nanttain. The military council withdrew as it suffered heavy losses following the KIA's ambush in Nanttain.

The military council arrested over 30 people from Malanyan and Dwanban villages on 2 May and some people from Malanyan village on 4 May.

BNI - MPM

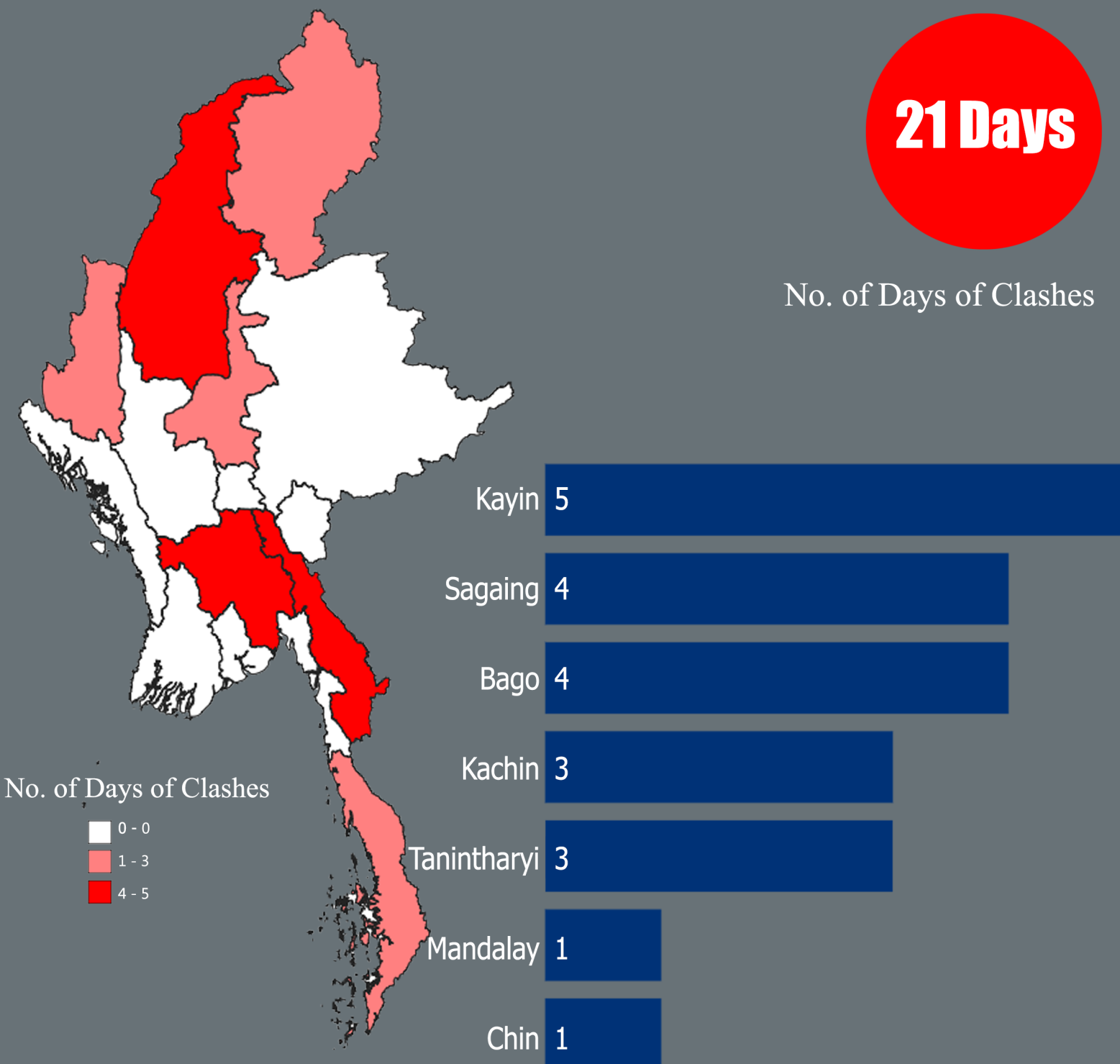
# Part II

## What Happened this Week

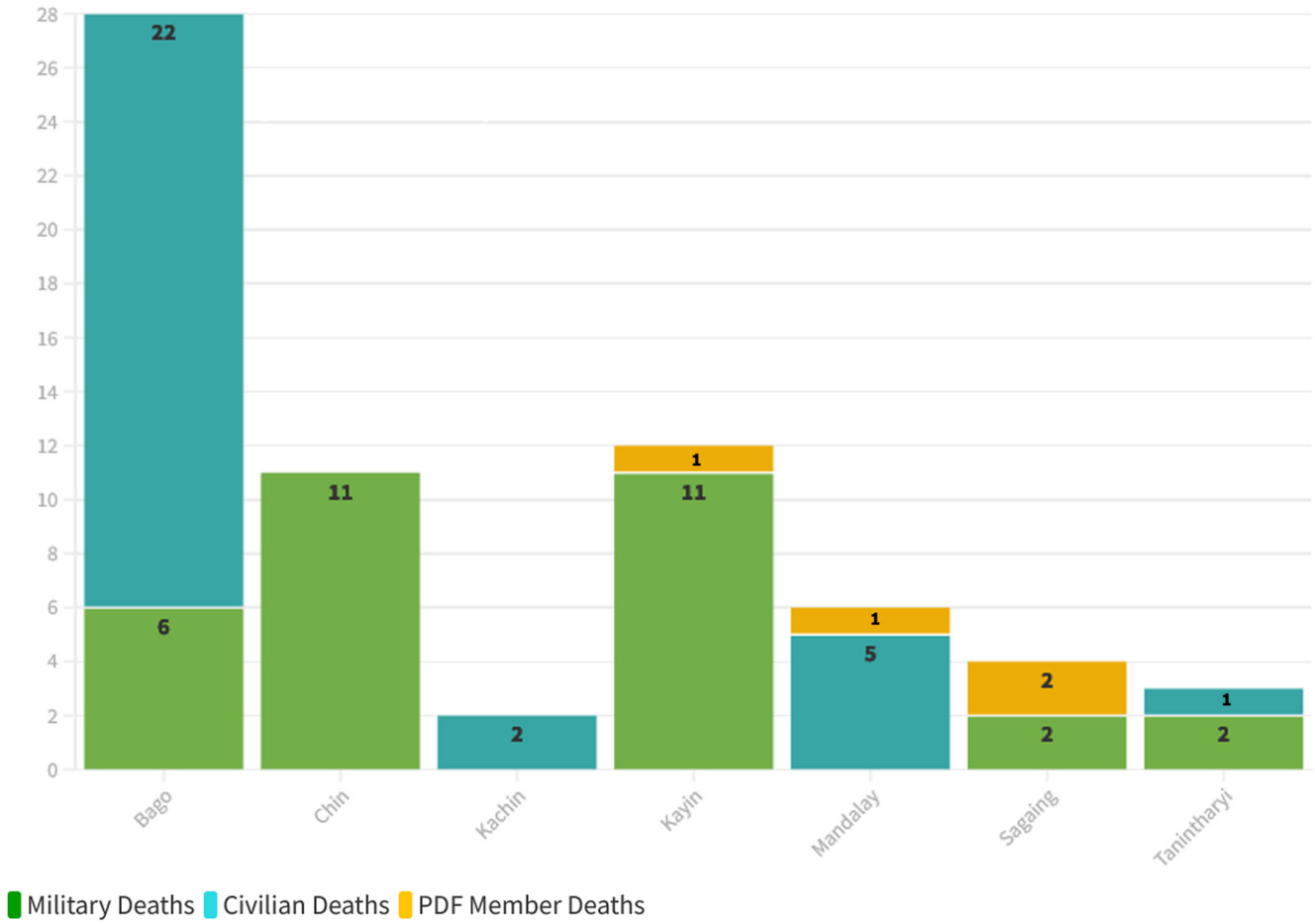
According to the record by the BNI-Myanmar Peace Monitor, 21 days of clashes were recorded between the military council troops and People's Defense Force (PDFs), Local Defense Forces (LDFs) and Ethnic Resistance Organizations (EROs) from May 10 to 16. Take a look at the regions and states, Karen State topped the list of clashes, with five days. The total number of clashes may be higher than that as we record the clashes in townships by day.

**21 Days**

No. of Days of Clashes



**Military, PDF Member and Civilian Deaths**  
10 - 16 May 2023



**32200 Total Number of IDPs (10 - 16 May 2023)**



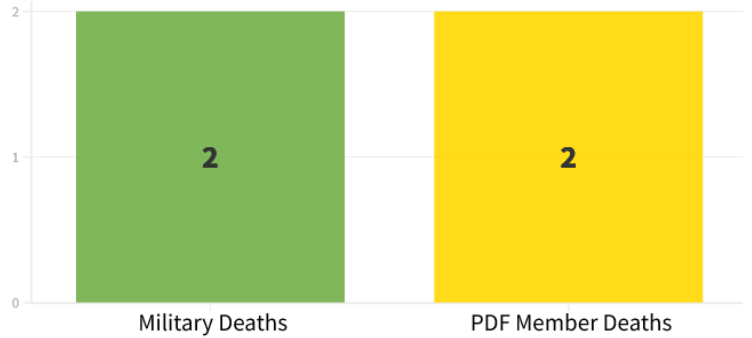
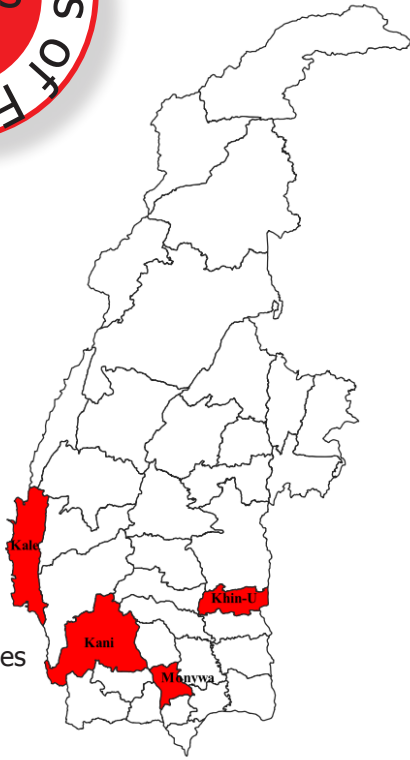


### Sagaing Region

There were battles between the military council troops and the PDFs in KhinU, Kalay, Kani and Monywa Townships, killing two military council soldiers and two PDF members. Over 16,000 locals from KhinU and Kani Township fled to safer places due to the military council's offensives.

No.of Days of Clashes

- 0 - 0
- 0 - 1

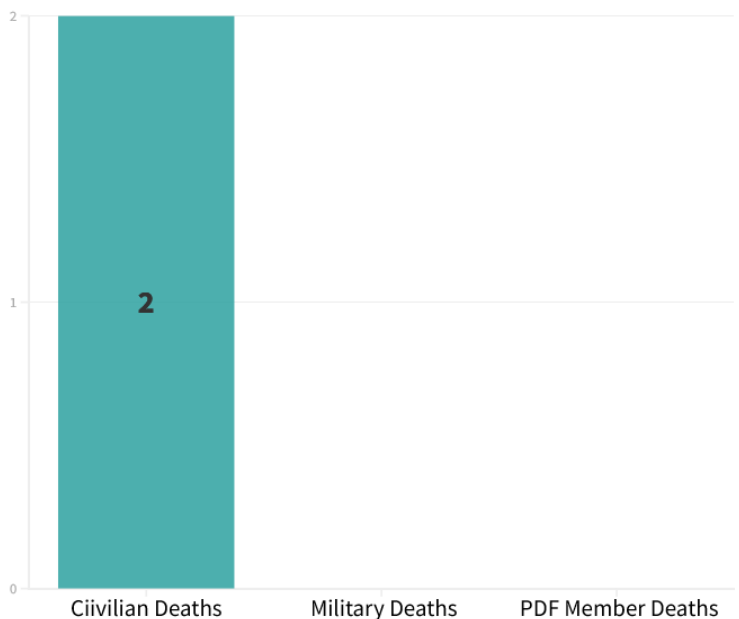


### Kachin State

Since 13 May, fighting took place between the military council troops and the KIA in Hpakant Township. On 12 May, a captain from the KIA and two hotel staff were shot dead in front of Shin Yin Hotel in Hsaingtaung village in Hpakant Township. Over 1,200 locals from Mohnyin and Hpakant Townships fled to safer places following the military council's offensives.

No.of Days of Clashes

- 0 - 0
- 0 - 3

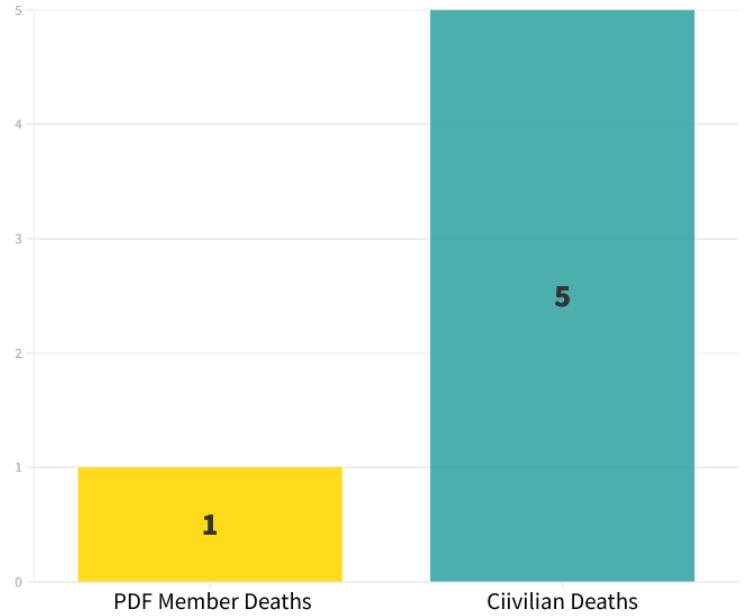
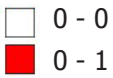




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No. of Days of Clashes

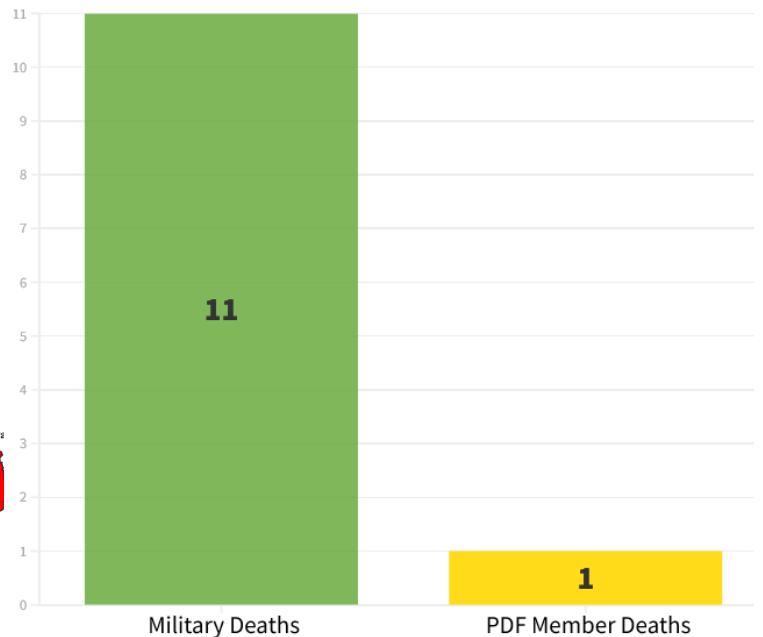
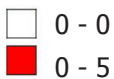


### Mandalay Region

On 10 May, a combined force of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the PDF attacked the military council soldiers who were stationed at the police station and a monastery in the western part of Mogoke. On 11 April, the PDF from Shwepuakpin village in Myaung Township on the other bank of Ayeyarwaddy River arrested Ko Tu Tu, 30 from Manswal Tiger Force while he was preparing for mine production in Zeegone island. Later, he was found dead in Ayeyarwaddy River. Four locals from Madaya and Sintgaing Townships were killed in the military council's shootings. On 15 May, a female doctor from Palake Township was shot dead by an unknown armed group while she was at the clinic. On 15 May, over 7,000 locals from Singu Township fled to safer places due to the military council's artillery shelling.

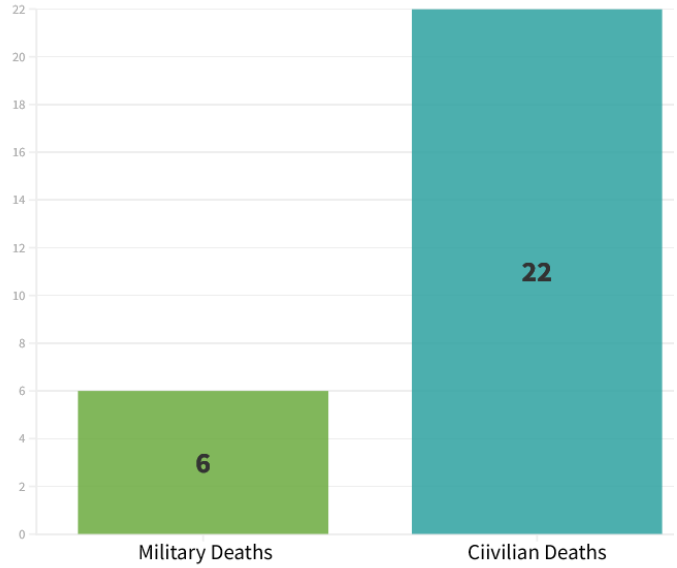
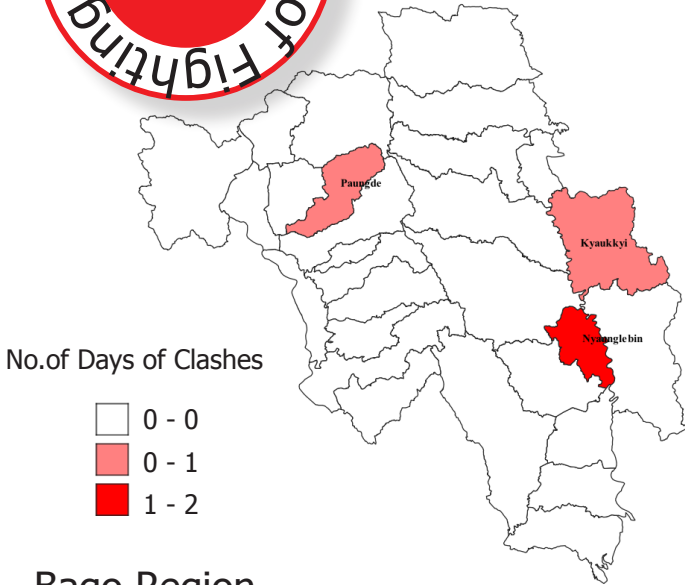


No. of Days of Clashes



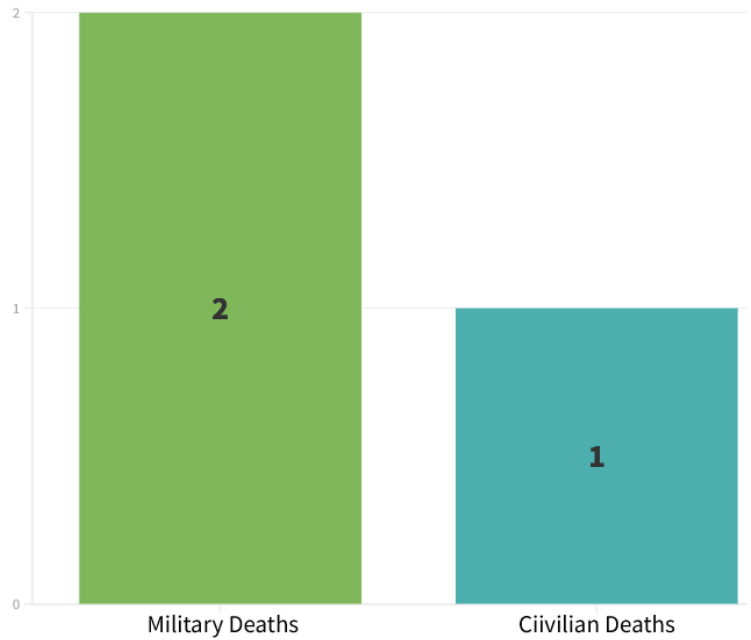
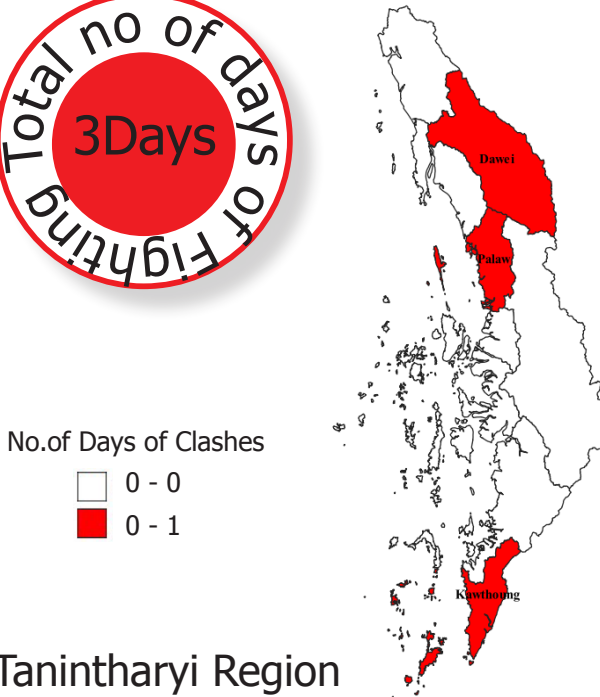
### Karen State

Eleven military council soldiers and one PDF member were killed in the battle between the military council troops and a combined force of the KNLA and the PDF in Myawaddy Township on 11 May.



### Bago Region

Five military council soldiers were killed in the battles between the military council troops and a combined force of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and the PDFs in Kyaukkyi, Paungde and Nyaunglebin Townships. U Kyaw Swe Oo, a 40-year-old people’s militia force leader from Shasu village in Saipaing village-tract in Yedashe Township was assassinated by the PDF on 15 May. On 14 May, military informant Maung Aye Soe Min from Kyaukpone village in Migyaungai village-tract in Yedashe Township was shot dead by the PDF. The military council’s shootings killed 21 locals from Gyobingauk and Kyaukkyi Township. Due to the military council’s offensive, over 8,000 locals from Nyaunglebin District fled to safer places on 14 May.



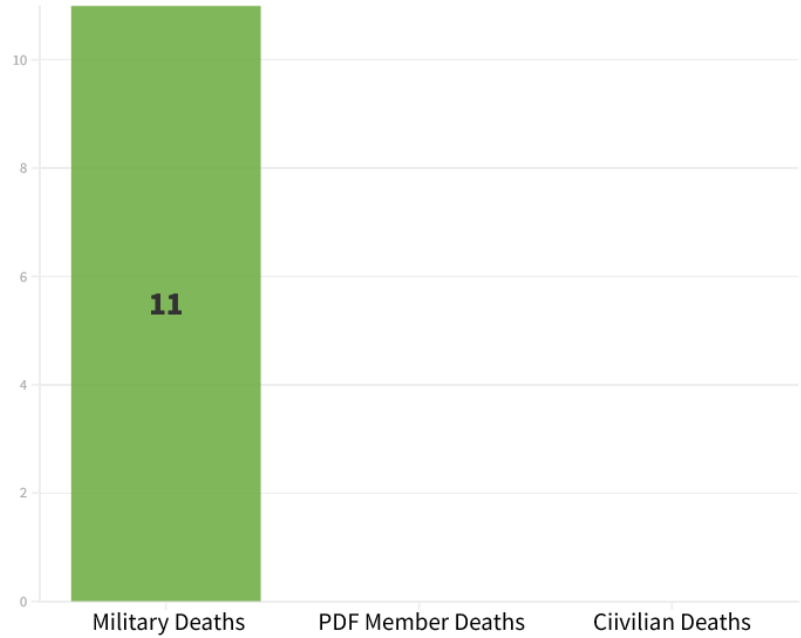
### Tanintharyi Region

Two military council soldiers were killed in the battles between the military council troops and the PDFs in Dawei, Kawthoung and Palaw Townships. On 11 May, the military council troops arrested a local man from Nyaungzin village in Thayetchaung Township and extorted money from him. Then, he was shot dead by the military council soldiers in front of his house.



No. of Days of Clashes

- 0 - 0
- 0 - 1



### Chin State

On 13 May, 11 military council soldiers were killed in three battles between the military council and the Chinland Defense Forces (CDFs) near Zokhwar village in Hakha Township.





Violations of human rights in military-ruled Myanmar cannot be tolerated and violence should be immediately halted and people must be protected, Indonesian President Joko Widodo, current chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) said at the second day session of a Southeast Asian leader's summit held in Labuan Bajo of Indonesia on May 11, 2023.

Indonesia was ready to talk to anyone with a stake in the conflict, adding that engagement did not mean endorsement or recognition, he added.

The president acknowledged that there has not been significant progress on implementation of the Five-Point Consensus (5PC).

Myanmar's armed forces should continue to be pressured to cease violence and implement the Five-Point Consensus (5PC) "swiftly and fully", said Singaporean Foreign Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan.



The MEPs also want the EU to introduce additional targeted sanctions against the Myanmar military.



According to the statement released by the ASEAN summit, the ASEAN continues to adhere to the principle of implementing 5PC which is not working.

The bloc was serious about Myanmar "but it had to come as a force together," Malaysia's foreign minister, Zambry Abdul Kadir, told the media.

The European Parliament adopted three resolutions on the respect for human rights in Algeria, Belarus and Myanmar, on 11 May. The MEPs also want the EU to introduce additional targeted sanctions against the Myanmar military and its business interests. They also called for an end to targeted airstrikes on civilian targets, violence and the handover of power to the civilian government.

At a press conference on 15 May, Pita Limjaroenrat, leader of Move Forward Party which won a landslide victory in the general election of Thailand said he would cooperate with the international community to implement the Burma Act adopted by the US. He said he would work to establish a humanitarian corridor into Myanmar. Pita vowed to provide humanitarian aid to the people in Myanmar with the assistance of the international community and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Thailand will push for the implementation of ASEAN's five-point consensus.

### Remark:

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