



# ON-THE-GROUND IN BURMA

A DIGITAL BRIEFER

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## MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

- On May 18, it was [reported](#) that Cyclone Mocha struck Matupi Township, Chin state and damaged at least 887 structures.
- 10,000 IDPs from 12 Shwegu Township villages have been [hiding](#) in the hills, fields, and mountains of their township since a junta campaign in March destroyed over 1,000 homes.
- On [May 7](#), a fire erupted in a Muslim refugee camp in Pauktaw Township, Rakhine state, leaving almost 200 homes destroyed and 3,000 people homeless.
- In Kantbalu Township, at least [20,000 residents](#) living in around 20 villages were forced to flee during military raids.
- In early May, junta airstrikes [damaged](#) over 300 homes in four villages across Pinlaung Township.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

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

# ANALYSIS

## Cyclone Mocha: How Refugees, IDPs, and civilians struggle to rebuild

On May 14th, a category 5 storm named Cyclone Mocha passed through western Burma and Bangladesh, affecting Chin State, Sagaing Region, Magway Region, Kachin State, and Rakhine State. At least 460 Rohingya villagers in Rakhine were killed during the storm. Cyclone Mocha has contaminated freshwater sources in Rakhine State and caused shortages of construction materials to rebuild houses, causing many to worry about having adequate shelter in preparation for the arrival of monsoon season in June. The junta is attempting to block aid from reaching those affected by the cyclone by restricting the access of humanitarian workers to the most devastated regions. This may cause additional preventable deaths among Rohingya survivors and other vulnerable internally displaced people in Rakhine.

### Latest Statistics



Over **90%** of Rakhine State's 11 townships have been destroyed



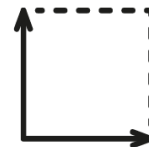
**\$333 million** needed to help victims of the cyclone



~**1,136 homes** destroyed in Chin state



At least **460 Rohingya** killed in Rakhine state



More than **56,000 acres** of rice destroyed

“ We don't even have tarpaulins to make shelters. The villagers have to get their water from the mountains, far from their villages... Those who lost their homes due to the storm are now living with anxiety in monasteries and other places. Wannisara, Buddhist monk in Rathedaung | The Public's Radio ”

On May 14<sup>th</sup>, a [category 5](#) storm named Cyclone Mocha passed through western Burma and Bangladesh with winds gusting at 175 miles per hour. Although the cyclone affected Chin State, Sagaing Region, Magway Region and Kachin State, Rakhine State saw the most destruction as over [90 percent](#) of all eleven townships were destroyed. According to the [Arakan Army](#), more than 200,000 buildings were damaged and 150,000 people were impacted in Rakhine State. In [Chin State](#), about 1,136 houses in seven townships were destroyed by the cyclone.

At least 460 Rohingya villagers in Rakhine were killed during the storm. These were [preventable deaths](#) because the villagers were not properly informed of the cyclone and thus were not able to seek adequate shelter. About 130,000 Rohingya lived in internally displaced person camps in Sittwe, Rakhine and many were not allowed to evacuate. Some who were informed of the storm were left to fend for themselves as all emergency shelter centers were at full capacity.

Cyclone Mocha did not make landfall at the Rohingya refugee camp in [Cox's Bazar](#), Bangladesh, but still destroyed more than 1,300 makeshift shelters, 16 mosques and learning centers. Because the Bangladesh government prohibits Rohingya refugees from leaving the camps nor building permanent structures, hundreds took shelter in bamboo structures with tarpaulin roofs.

The UN said it urgently [needs](#) \$333 million in funding to assist 1.6 million people in Chin, Sagaing, Magway, Kachin, and Rakhine, areas in Burma most affected by the cyclone. Another \$42 million is needed for cyclone victims in Bangladesh. These funds will provide food, medicine, and other necessary relief supplies. According to the [World Food Programme](#), those in Rakhine are at risk of “extreme hunger without swift assistance” as they are already internally displaced people without many resources.

Similarly, four in ten Rohingya children in Cox’s Bazar are “chronically malnourished” and half are anemic. The WFP has cut monthly food vouchers to Rohingya refugees in March from \$12 to \$10 per person and will be forced to reduce these vouchers to \$8 in June – less than 10 cents per meal – without urgent assistance.

Additional factors are also exacerbating the disastrous effects of the storm for vulnerable people. Cyclone Mocha has [contaminated](#) freshwater sources in Rakhine State, forcing many locals to boil “dirty water” to drink. In other parts of the state, at least 5000 locals from nine villages are suffering from drinking water shortage. Both food and material [shortages](#) are barriers in the way of rescue and recovery of cyclone victims. The shortages of construction materials to rebuild houses, such as metal roofs, tarpaulins and nails combined with price gouging are causing many to worry about having adequate shelter in preparation for the arrival of monsoon season in June. According to state media, the cyclone also destroyed more than [56,000 acres](#) of spring rice, spring sesame and green bean from Magway Region and more than 530,000 livestock in Rakhine State. In the future, this destruction of crops and livestock will result in food shortages and price inflation across the country and will disproportionately affect cyclone victims.

The junta is attempting to [block aid](#) from reaching those affected by the cyclone by restricting the access of humanitarian workers to the most devastated regions. Aid works need travel authorization to access Rakhine, but they have yet to gain their authorization. In enforcing these elaborate rules, the junta wants to display its political influence in the region by forcing the distribution of humanitarian aid under their management. This may cause additional preventable deaths among Rohingya survivors and other vulnerable internally displaced people in Rakhine.

## **VOICE OF A RESETTLED REFUGEE**

I arrived in the US as a refugee with my family in 2016. My family has since left Myanmar, the nation where I was born, as a result of the military's removal of my father's citizenship. We have no choice but to leave because he is not permitted to live in Myanmar.

I am at a loss for words when it comes to witnessing such a brutal incident involving innocent citizens. It was the worst incident involving Myanmar that I have ever heard of. Even though I am aware that my people are suffering as a result of the military coup, I feel more helpless than ever. No one had the right to protest or speak their mind; everyone lived in terror.



*Thantlang, Chin state has been reduced to a ghost town since it was first attacked by the Burmese military in September 2021.  
Photo: HRW*

I very distinctly recall watching an interview with journalist Clarissa Ward from the United States who had been dispatched to Myanmar following the Burma Junta's coup. No one was permitted to speak to her, and the military was concealing the truth because it didn't want the public to know what was really going on in Burma.



*CNN's Clarissa Ward speaking with an individual at an outdoor market. 11 people were arrested by the Burmese military shortly after speaking to Ms. Ward.  
Photo Cred: CNN*

I've heard that there is no longer any possibility to receive an education because all public schools are no longer run properly. Some students must miss class level; they should continue due to their age, not their level of expertise. Because children are the country's future, this is significantly harming its prospects. There aren't many jobs available, and food prices are all higher. It's more difficult for those who don't have someone to turn to for assistance, such as family members who don't live in the United States.

I believe that in order to show our support for the Military Junta's victims, we always pause for a moment of silence. Additionally, we raise money through selling food at the beginning of the year and during a celebration of culture that is popular among the communities.

I wish that my people in Myanmar could have normal lives with access to food to satiate their stomachs and shelter to dwell in. The best house isn't necessary.

***“I simply want them to have the same level of liberty, life, and freedom that we do in America.”***



# **AN OVERVIEW OF BURMA**

## **CHIN**

Since the second week of April, [armed conflict](#) between the Burmese military and the Chin Defense Joint Forces [displaced](#) around 2,171 people. More than 9000 IDPs are now living in camps across remote villages. The fighting has [prevented](#) food and rice supplies from reaching Chin State, causing severe shortages. On 2 May, Ma Ciin Hua Vung from Tedim, and U Lian Za Thawn, from Hakha [disappeared](#) while traveling from Falam to Hakha. They were last seen near the junta's temporary camp along the Thipo travel route. After junta troops left the camp base on 22 May, their charred remains were discovered. On 18 May, The Interim Chin National Consultative Council [reported](#) that Cyclone Mocha struck Matupi Township and damaged at least 887 structures. Unreliable phone services created difficulties for humanitarian aid to reach affected communities. On 21 May, junta troops [raided](#) Agape Hospital in Hakha and arrested a doctor and four nurses. Later at night, soldiers conducted checks of overnight guest lists in several wards of Hakha and further arrested 20 locals.

## **KACHIN**

On May 8, junta forces [shot](#) and killed three civilians during a battle with the KIA near Waingmaw Township. Armed conflict on May 14 in Hpakant Township, displaced 600 people across three villages. Junta soldiers [raided](#) jade mining sites in Hpakant Township and arrested 20+ people on May 27. Another raid on May 29 led to the [arrest](#) of at least another 50 people. The soldiers seized vehicles from jade brokers and are ransoming the vehicles for 5 million Kyat each. Locals suspect the junta is conducting these raids because it believes the jade companies are supporting resistance groups. 10,000 IDPs from 12 Shwegu Township villages have been [hiding](#) in the hills, fields, and mountains of their township ever since a junta campaign in March destroyed over 1,000 homes. The IDPs are now preparing to return soon before the rainy season starts. However, they're lacking essential building supplies to rebuild their homes, such as zinc and thatch roofing.

## **KARENNI**

The KNDF has issued a public appeal advising locals against returning to their villages due to the ongoing battles. KNDF Tactical Commander Khu Ree Du [shared](#) that in Demoso and Loikaw Townships, the main junta columns involved are Infantry Battalions 287 and 513, and Light Infantry Battalion 517; heading from Bawlakhe to Dawngaykhu and Dawtamagyi are Light Infantry Battalion 516, 515, and Infantry Battalions 12, 14, and 80. The fighting has [increased](#) the number of IDPs and made the transportation of life-saving aid challenging. From May 14-24, intense fighting [occurred](#). The junta indiscriminately launched at least 60 aerial [attacks](#) on active combat zones and areas not engaged in any fighting. On 23 May, the Karenni National Women's Organization held a training [course](#) in an IDP camp in Demoso Township to teach displaced women how to cope with post-traumatic stress. The Kayan Women's Organization [reported](#) that domestic physical and psychological abuse had significantly increased in villages and IDP camps.

## **MON**

The price of [salt](#) has recently decreased from 160 kyats per viss to 100 in Mon State. It has become more difficult for salt farmers to maintain their livelihoods, due to the increase in salt production costs and decrease in market price. The [decline](#) in yield of durians, rambutans, and mangosteens has doubled the price of the fruits. Despite the rise in price, farmers are unable to turn a profit due to the increase in the price of fertilizers and shortage of workers. On [May 21](#), 3 people were injured when a truck hit a landmine in Thaton Township. All 3 passengers were quickly transported to the hospital, but 1 is suffering from critical neck injuries. It is still unknown which organization was responsible for the planting of the landmine.

## KAREN

In Karen State, a bombing by the military junta that consisted of [two heavy artillery shells](#) left five civilians totally injured - ages ranged from 13-29. The attack is thought to have been provoked by a prior ambush on junta supply lines. The junta has been accused of planting landmines along Bilin-Kyaikhto roads with the aim to blame PDF members. On May 25, junta forces also [killed a child](#) and injured another near Kyaikdon of Kyansiekgyi Township. In Kyrarin Seikgyi Township, the junta also shot [mortars](#) onto the police station, reportedly damaging buildings. In both Hpa-An and Myawaddy townships, residents have observed that junta control of private hospitals is increasing. Patients from surrounding villagers grow increasingly concerned about interrogation and arrest, which narrows [medical care access](#) for patients. Reports that the military junta pressures civilian organizations for blood donations to treat injured soldiers have also risen.

## SHAN

A junta-affiliated militia group [attacked](#) an ASEAN convoy of seven diplomats working to deliver humanitarian aid in Hsi Hseng Township on May 7. The junta is [closing](#) the Kutkai and Monekoe IDP camps, but IDPs still can't return home safely because of armed conflict. IDPs are unsure what to do now because many can't afford to purchase land for resettlement. Besides that, they're struggling with low job opportunities and high prices for goods. Conflict between resistance and junta forces at the border between Pekon Township and Pinlaung Township continues to be fierce. In early May, junta airstrikes [damaged](#) over 300 homes in four villages across Pinlaung Township. On May 22, junta soldiers in the town Moebye randomly [fired](#) at a driving truck, killing one and injuring another. The next day, the junta [shelled](#) IDP camps in Pekon Township, destroying two buildings. Junta forces randomly [fired](#) artillery shells at a village in Pinlaung Township on May 28, killing a boy and injuring four civilians.

## RAKHINE

[IDPs](#) of Buthidaung Township are asking for assistance to repair their camps in preparation for the rainy season. Residents of the camps are in need of building materials, but no help has been provided in a year. On May 3, a [4 year-old](#) boy died when a bomb exploded in Maungdaw Township's Mro village, which raised concerns for other undiscovered bombs. 20 officials from [Bangladesh](#) visited Maungdaw on May 5 in order to assess the junta's preparedness for repatriation of the Rohingyas. Many refugees were skeptical of the effectiveness of the visit. On [May 7](#), a fire erupted in a Muslim refugee camp in Pauktaw Township, leaving almost 200 homes destroyed and 3,000 people homeless. [Sittwe](#) prison is undergoing a shortage of medication, making it harder for prisoners to recover, and even resulting in some dying from injuries sustained during the junta's brutal torture and interrogation tactics. The [Arakan Army](#) evacuated 10,000 Arakanese people from 21 villages as a result of Cyclone Mocha. They distributed food items and medicines to the residents as well.

## CENTRAL BURMA

On May 6, at least [seven civilians](#) and another 15 injured were killed during an airstrike in Mingin Township of Sagaing Region. In Kantbalu Township, at least [20,000 residents](#) living in around 20 villages were forced to flee during military raids. Since late April, over 171 houses in nearly seven villages have been set on fire. Villagers in Kantbalu and Kyun Hla townships have also been forced into military training by the junta-affiliated Pyu Saw Htee. Residents were selected via a lottery, and houses without adult males are being forced to pay a [monthly fine](#) of 100,000 kyat. Three civilians and five resistance members were beheaded by junta forces after 80 troops raided a [Chaun U People's Defense Force](#) training camp. There was also a [clash](#) between resistance and junta forces at a junta police station in Ngazun Township of Mandalay Region that killed five officers and injured four more.