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The Resistance and Resilience of Civilians in Southeastern Burma

*Human Rights Violations
from January to June 2023*



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Introduction

While there has been much suffering in Burma since the attempted coup on 1 February 2021, there have also been unmatched strategies of resistance used by civilians who have overwhelmingly rejected the junta's illegal and unsuccessful conquest. The Spring Revolution is rooted in pro-democracy principles, established by people of all ethnicities and backgrounds. The Burma Army has threatened to silence these efforts with their brutality and acts of warfare. However, an unwavering commitment of spirited resistance has remained to ensure that at the very least, the next generation does not have to live under military rule.

The Burma Army has responded to the widespread opposition with acts of terror because they fear accountability for their actions, and they most certainly are concerned about a future that adheres to international law and human rights principles. Further, the junta is aware of the power of the Spring Revolution and the determination of the people who refuse to live under a dictatorship. They know this because they are losing the war they have been fueling for the last seventy years.



Photo: *The former Chairman of the Dawei Student's Union, Ko Myo Min Oo, who was arrested twice after the military coup, was sentenced to 10 years in prison.*

Unfortunately, the international community has failed to challenge the junta's dictatorship. Global and regional actors, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), have moral and diplomatic obligations to support the people's calls and work towards an inclusive future in Burma that is free from military rule and where everyone can live with their rights protected.

The Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) has closely monitored the daily challenges and acts of resistance across our target areas of Southeastern Burma, including Karen State, Mon State, and Tanintharyi region. This briefing paper, researched and produced by HURFOM, will provide a comprehensive overview of the human rights situation in Southeastern Burma from January to June 2023. It will also cover how different communities have responded to the junta through various protest and resilience-based strategies.

Women and ethnic people have faced widespread and systematic abuse by the military for decades. They have joined forces with ethnic revolution organizations (EROs) and community-based groups to actively lead, initiate momentum, and ensure the world does not look away from the multitude of crises in Burma. Those leading the revolution are not only those on the front-lines armed with ammunition but also religious and community leaders, students, various affiliates within the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), and others working for progressive and inclusive solutions in Burma, such as supporting local governance infrastructure.

Despite their immense challenges, the people's adversity is grounded in their ongoing contributions to human rights work and advocacy. This report will conclude with calls and recommendations to the international community.

Fieldworkers Note

HURFOM has fieldworkers in Mon State, Karen State, and Tanintharyi Region, and human rights networks. Three reporters are working from Mon and Karen State in areas controlled by ethnic revolution organizations.

Our field workers continue to document human rights violations as best as they can, given the extreme risks they face daily. The growing threats to their safety only speak to the society of fear the junta has created. HURFOM's documentation and data are sourced from our network of field staff reporting on the ground. The restrictions imposed by the junta have made it much more challenging to access our target areas freely and without repercussions.

HURFOM field staff are facing severe risks to their physical and digital security. Secure methods of communication have been adopted, such as encrypted technology. However, there are still many challenges to ensure that the Burma Army does not infiltrate the work and documentation of HURFOM.

The Burma Army is known for intimidating and harassing fieldworkers documenting human rights violations. Soldiers often threaten survivors who share their stories with rights groups as well. Currently, HURFOM can safely work in ceasefire areas and armed controlled territories of the Karen National Union and the New Mon State Party. Recording events and testimonies are extremely high-risk outside of these areas.

The movement restrictions enforced by the military limit the documentation possible. The information outlined in this short briefing paper includes HURFOM data from the ground. Given the challenges we face collecting these data, many of our estimates are likely significantly higher. Our team is immensely grateful to those who shared their fears and hopes for the future with HURFOM.

Situation Overview in Southeastern Burma

Fighting across Southeastern Burma has seriously threatened the safety and security of civilians. Daily horrors are perpetrated against unarmed people as the junta attempts to cement its rule. There is widespread devastation as civilians are constantly forced to flee their homes due to indiscriminate firing. Local people are routinely arbitrarily arrested and often tortured in military custody.

January - December 2022

1,155 arrested and detained

500 injured

145 killed

January - June 2023

840 arrested and detained

315 injured

146 killed

Between January and June 2023, HURFOM documented that 840 civilians had been arrested and detained, 315 injured, and 146 killed. These numbers are particularly worrying given that by the end of 2022, HURFOM reported that at least 1,155 innocent people had been arrested and detained, 146 killed, including 26 women and children, and nearly 500 injured, of which 120 were women and children. At the current rate, these numbers are set to match those at the end of 2022 or risk being even higher as the junta has shown no signs of easing its military operations. As resistance to the attempted coup intensifies, the Burma Army responds with warfare tactics that attempt to isolate and terrorize those caught amid the conflict.

As a result of the ongoing fighting, civilians face numerous challenges; those living in conflict-affected areas cannot tend to their livelihoods as the presence of the junta threatens their survival. If questioned, they risk being detained, tortured, and killed by the regime forces. In addition, the military frequently plants landmines in and around villages, including farms where most villagers work their land and grow food.



“The use of landmines is cruel and disgusting,” said a local human rights educator from Ye Township.

“[The military] is using these weapons and directly targeting civilians by placing them in plantations, yards, homes, and even roads and bridges. The world must urgently respond to these terrorist forces to stop the use of landmines and to ensure those responsible for war crimes meet justice.”

Violence Against Women and Children

Children constantly forced to flee with their families are denied the opportunity to study and safely access an education. The junta has not hesitated to deploy air and ground strikes on schools. For the over 30,000 displaced in HURFOM target areas, internally displaced people (IDPs) lack reliable access to shelter, medicine, food, and justice pathways.

A social worker who spoke to HURFOM called for immediate assistance to meet the needs on the ground: “There is an urgent need for a scaled-up humanitarian response that provides proper psychosocial and rehabilitative support.”

Aid must be channeled through established community-based organizations founded and led by former refugees as well as ethnic service providers, ethnic revolution organizations, and long-time human rights defenders or departments operating within local governance structures or the National Unity Government.

Gendered violence also persists across the country. Women face ongoing risks as the military junta increases its presence, particularly in areas like Karen State, where opposition to the Burma Army has been fierce and unrelenting. Gendered violence is both targeted and indiscriminate. At the beginning of the year, on 1 January 2023, the junta forces patrolling a local area in Mon State shot two young women riding a motorcycle in the back. The two victims were both severely injured.

Further, indiscriminate firing is increasingly targeting women and children. As many men flee their homes for fear of forced recruitment or to join allied opposition movements, families have become displaced.

In addition, Mon women's groups are warning of an increase in child sexual abuse incidents in villages across Mon State with no action being taken by the authorities. Women's groups cannot assist the victims due to the political crisis and security concerns.

"We've heard many cases of child rape in villages. We're in a difficult situation to help the victims. The rule of law has failed in Burma, and the police haven't handled these cases," said a Mon women's Group Director.

Since the attempted coup, the rights of children have been widely violated. The number of domestic violence and sexual abuse cases has also increased. Due to security concerns, it is difficult to get detailed information on the exact number. Junta-appointed village administrators have blocked the legal trials of cases involving child sexual abuse, making it difficult to pursue justice for the victims. Mon women's groups also mention the junta for freeing convicted child rapists.

Impacts of Martial Law

The impacts of Martial Law on civilians have also made life more difficult. On February 2, 2023, the military junta called a National Defense and Security Council meeting and declared that 'absolute power' was granted to the Commander-in-Chief for six months. As of February 3, 2023, the Burma Army had issued Martial Law in 37 of the 330 townships across the country, including Tanintharyi Region, five townships of Bago Region, Ye Township of Mon State, Kyainseikgyi and Kawkareik townships in Karen State. In Ye, Kyaik Hto, and Bilin Townships of Mon State, Martial Law has been in effect for nearly two and a half years.

"Now, we are living under Martial Law. We have no choice; it is impossible to stop working because we must support our family. We face uncertainty every day," said a resident.

Opposition Forces Targeted

Exiled opposition members who remain on the run are at risk of persecution. Local witnesses reported on the evening of January 12, 2023 that the junta and their backed militia forces burned five homes of National League for Democracy (NLD) supporters in Long Lon Township Dawei. Members of the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) and their family members continue to be targeted by the junta. Arbitrary arrests are ongoing in Palaw, southern Tanintharyi Region, where Martial Law has been



Photo: *Mon women's groups are warning of an increase in child sexual abuse incidents in villages across Mon State with no action being taken by the authorities.*

declared. The junta has arrested CDM school teachers, civil servants from different departments, and former ward administrators.

Out of 20, an estimated 17 school teachers hiding in various neighbourhoods of Pulaw City were arrested in February 2023, according to witnesses. Other sources said that the military came and arrested about three civilians who used to serve as Administrators in the former NLD government term: "They came with Army Lorries and arrested them. Many teachers were included, too. It is unknown why they were arrested. In one case, the father of a CDM teacher was taken because the troops could not find the teacher they wanted," another witness told HURFOM. Some of those arrested were accused of supporting networks of the revolutionary forces.

In Mon State's capital city of Mawlamyine, families have told HURFOM that they are becoming increasingly concerned with the threat of forced recruitment by the Burma Army. The parents and families claim that the junta, operating under the Southeast Command, based in Mawlamyine, has been forcibly conducting recruitment for their Army from Mon Townships, such as Mudon and Thanbyuzayat, to fight against local anti-junta resistance forces. The confiscation of homes and properties and subsequent looting and deliberate acts of arson remain a part of the junta's strategy to eliminate support for opposition groups.

Female political members are also being targeted. According to villagers, the home of Daw Khin Myo Myint, the state representative of the NLD was sealed off by the junta in Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State. At around 3 PM on June 20th, 2023, the junta troops raided the house of Daw Khin Myo Myint on Banya Ngwet Street, Shin Saw Pu

Ward (3), Kyaikmayaw town. It was sealed off after the arrival of police forces and administrative teams.

Daw Khin Myo Myint is said to be a member of the Committee Representing Mon Hluttaw (CRMH), which has been designated as a terrorist organization by the regime. The military opened a case against her under the anti-terrorism laws and Section 505(a) of the Penal Code. She won both the 2015 and 2020 general elections, and has been on the run since the attempted military coup. On June 13, 2023, the NLD announced that the homes and properties of 333 members of Hluttaw, including members of the NLD, had been sealed and confiscated by the junta.

Freedom of Expression & Journalists Under Attack

The military is continuing to crack down on freedom of expression and making increased efforts to censor information. According to reliable sources, the junta-backed General Administration Department of the Mon State issued instructions to monitor the activities of news and television journalists based in the state.

The source said that the military intends to increase the crackdown with their oppressive laws on the news and social media groups, which are written and distributed in real-time on the Internet, and reports of war crimes committed directly against local people by junta forces in Mon, Karen and Tanintharyi region.

Journalists, informants, and intelligence networks close to the junta military have investigated the reporters and journalists working with the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB), the BBC, Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Asia (RFA), The Irrawaddy, Khit Thit media, and Mizzima. Further, many journalists are often prosecuted under Section 505-A of Sedition and more stringent laws such as electronic and sedition laws. This includes rules that threaten the freedom of the press. The junta has threatened the freedom of the media by sticking to Section 66(d) of the Communications Law and some sections of the Penal Code amended after the coup.

The struggles mentioned above and many additional challenges are a part of the daily lives of civilians. Their calls for peace are from lived experiences and decades of oppression by the junta. And yet, even amidst such dire and debilitating circumstances, civilians have responded with strength and courage.

Impact of the Junta's Attacks on Civilians

In Southeastern Burma and indeed across the country, the Burma Army has committed crimes including murder, torture, sexual assault and rape, arbitrary arrests and destruction of property, and many others. Thousands of people have been killed, while others face a lifetime behind bars on unjust charges. The regime has not held back in replacing judges in their courts with those advancing their militarized agenda. The atrocities perpetrated are ongoing. They are systematic, widespread, and taking place without consequences. Without action, the junta forces are encouraged to continue their campaign of terror.

Civilians have been forced to endure widespread violence deployed systematically against them by the Burma Army. The junta is desperate for power and legitimization. In response to growing disdain, everyone has become a target. The regime's operations, particularly their increased presence in areas where opposition forces are stronger, have resulted in the burning of villages, indiscriminate firing, torture, abductions, arbitrary arrests, forced portering, and more.



Photo: On June 19, 2023, the Junta Force's Artillery Regiment Command No.318, based in Abit village in Mudon Township fired a series of mortar shells of 120 mm into Thakun Taing village, Win Ray Township, injuring at least three villagers at 6:20 PM.

Key Findings

HURFOM's findings are likely much higher, given the limitations in documenting human rights violations safely. However, they confirm a deeply worsening situation that has failed to be met with an urgent response by the international community. Without public infrastructure, people cannot go to work or school. Crippling inflation due to the junta's economic mismanagement has also increased prices on basic goods, such as rice and cooking oil, that remain out of reach of many conflict-affected populations. When even hospitals, schools, churches, and monasteries become unsafe, it is clear that the junta's war on the people is intentional. The attacks are deliberate and ongoing.

At the beginning of 2023, HURFOM was already observing an escalation in crimes committed by the junta compared to the previous year. By the end of January 2023, at least 71 people were arrested, 48 detained, 58 injured, and 24 killed. Over the subsequent six months, the situation intensified. Most people displaced in Burma are women and children seeking refuge in temporary relocation sites and camps. The military junta has not hesitated to deploy attacks in these places of protection.

Heavy weapons fired by the army junta have created fear and uncertainty. Many children and youth have been killed in the crossfire of violence deployed by the military. Emergency support is needed to address the deteriorating well-being of routinely displaced civilians due to circumstances beyond their control. Their only chance to flee their homes is to escape the junta, even if it is a temporary solution—the majority who have left dare not return to their villages.

Families desperate to protect themselves and their loved ones have run deep into the jungle, lacking sufficient access to food, water, shelter, and support. Many of the gaps in service provision are being filled by community-based organizations and social workers who are also limited in capacity and resources, especially funding. It is extremely challenging as grassroots organizations are already incredibly strained as their efforts extend to various causes during this time. They also risk becoming a target themselves.

The scale of the junta's human rights violations is rooted in decades of impunity. The Burma Army has evaded accountability for many years. Their crimes are ongoing because of the lack of consequences they face. The people of Burma have longed for

justice and responsibility for decades. The international community must respond to the multiple crises inside the country which have devastated prospects for genuine and meaningful peace. Domestic legal pathways, especially since the failed coup, are entirely unreliable.

The global community has failed to provide adequate support, including a referral to the International Criminal Court. Doing so would send the junta a strong message that they are neither invincible nor above the law.

Further, the military junta's presence undermines livelihoods and prospects for opportunity. The debilitating state of affairs has resulted in a deeply traumatized population with insufficient access to pro-bono mental health services. For many, their priority is survival and ensuring they are not caught during conflict. As a result of the state-wide violence perpetrated by the junta, nearly two million are displaced across the country.

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Between January and June 2023, HURFOM reported the following key findings in Mon State, Karen State, and Tanintharyi region:



480+ houses burned
68+ villages were destroyed
77+ public infrastructure destroyed, including
8+ churches, 22+ monasteries, 35+ schools,
and 7+ hospitals

The following are also the figures of displacement in Mon State, Karen State, and Tanintharyi region between January and June 2023:

January 2023:	24,700+
February 2023:	16,900+
March 2023:	13,000+
April 2023:	24,500+
May 2023:	27,000 +
June 2023:	20,000+



140+ Airstrikes



8+

Cases of conflict-related sexual violence



600+

Cases of indiscriminate firing, including the number of churches, schools, and hospitals destroyed



180+

Cases of Abductions

151+ Cases of Torture

32 - 35 cases of enforced disappearances

25+ number of politicians targeted, as well as 22+ arrested, detained

Forms of Resistance by the People

The next section of this report will highlight the various forms of resistance to the junta in Burma by civilians. Despite ongoing threats to their existence and survival, HURFOM fieldworkers continue to document and observe how the people remain committed to organizing and localizing efforts to end the dictatorship and long-held military impunity.

Strikes

Between January and June 2023, 50 protests were held in Mon State, Karen State, and Tanintharyi region. While this number is lower than in 2021 and 2022, it powerfully conveys that the people do not and will never accept military rule. It also reflects rising concerns for their safety. On multiple occasions, the regime opened fire on peaceful protesters, not hesitating to drive military vehicles down the road and strike anyone in their paths. Quieter campaign strategies have been adopted, but the message remains clear: the military junta has no place in Burma.

Young activists are among those active in campaigning against militarization. They have continued to organize, lead, and participate in protests, and as a result, some were arrested under the colonial era 505(B) of Burma's Penal Code. They face baseless charges for exercising their democratic rights to protest.

Silent Strikes

On the second anniversary of the failed coup, marked on 1 February 2023, civilians participated in nationwide Silent Strikes to show their disdain and ongoing rejection of the military. Many photographs taken by HURFOM network reporters showed empty main roads in Southeastern Burma, including deserted streets and markets.

Civilians organized silent strikes again during the annual New Year festivities. One of the ways the military has tried to show its legitimacy is by propping up holidays such as Thingyan. Their narrative attempts to distort the current situation as 'normal.' In response, civilians have boycotted their events and participated in 'Silent Strikes' to demonstrate the ongoing rejection of the military.

Flower Strike

To commemorate the 78th birthday of State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, a flower strike was held in Tanintharyi Township, Myeik District, Southern Tanintharyi Region, on 19 June.

The General Strike Coordination Body (GSCB) in southern Burma called on the public to participate in honour of the detained State Counsellor and other political prisoners. Flower strikes have been used to mark her two previous birthdays since after the 2021 attempted coup:

“If the junta sees the masses and strikes like this, they will shoot. No matter how much they try to silence the people’s voices, I am inspired to see that there are courageous young people,” a 55-year-old former political prisoner from the area expressed.

Even so, the junta arrested nine residents for participating in the strike in Mon State. The junta-backed police groups arrested nine flower buyers, including the shop owner and staff, who were distributing free Aung Tha Pyay flowers and roses at the Orchid Princess nursery shop in Shwe Myain Thiri Ward, Mawlamyine. After that, the junta military’s police officers took the nine individuals to the Zeya Thiri Police Station after posting a sealed note that the Orchid Princess nursery shop had been confiscated.



Photo: According to local residents, at 7PM on 20 June, four women between the ages of 40 and 50 were arrested by the Mawrawaddy Navy of the junta council in Phaung Taw village, Kanbauk area, Yehyu Township.

According to data from independent groups, at least 140 birthday-wishes, including those holding, wearing, and offering flowers, were arrested nationwide on Aung San Suu Kyi's birthday flower strike. In the days that followed the Flower Strike, four women between the ages of 40 and 50 were arrested by the Irrawaddy Navy of the junta in Phaung Taw village, Kanbawk area, Yehyu Township.

The villagers stated that the junta troops arrived in Phaung Taw village, abducted the four women, and left around 10:00 PM. The detainees are Daw Su Wai, Daw Hnin Myint, and her sisters, Daw Mee Cho and Daw Mee Lay.

“The military came and arrested them with the pictures posted online during the flower strike on June 19,” said a woman from Phaung Taw village. Among the four arrested, Daw Su Wai was the one who was released months after the military coup, along with her sister, after being summoned and interrogated by the junta.

Ma Ohmma Aung, the owner of a private nursery school in Kanbawk village, and her husband, who was abducted by the junta on June 19, were also from Phaung Taw village. Between 19 and 20 June 2023, six people were arrested and interrogated in Kanbawk village and Phaung Taw village.

Establishment of Local Governance and Federalist Infrastructure

Following the attempted coup, Mon people also joined the protests. Political parties that were democratically elected in the 2020 national elections initially chose not to engage, but when the military forces began shooting peaceful protesters, a new approach was adopted.

Political parties such as the Mon Unity Party (MUP) have opted to cooperate with the junta, which has caused divisions among civil society organizations and civilians who largely reject the dictatorship. Support is fractured for the regime, including political allies of the junta, those engaging under the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, and those fighting on political and military fronts.

The goal of the people in Mon State is achieving federal democracy. The aim is not centralization but a decentralised Council to meet actual representation for the Mon people and to stand and develop a solid state-federal unit of 11 groups. The MSFC has ten departments, which includes education, health, information, and humanitarian response.

The local governance body urges the Mon people to join and fight against military dictatorship and tyranny. MSFC is calling for the right to self-determination

and a federal union. The announcement was made after its first conference on January 22, 2023. After the failed military coup, the MSICC was formed to fight against all tyranny, including the military dictatorship. Under the current political situation, MSICC was transformed into MSFC due to the need for a state-federal unit organization representing Mon State's people.

Those active include civil society organizations, women, youth, representatives from the Civil Disobedience Movement, political parties, and strike committees. The MSFC has three central committees: executive, legislative, and judicial. Ten departments have been formed under the executive committee. MSFC has been focusing more on civil protection issues: emergency response activities and humanitarian works for conflict-affected communities in Mon territory. By collaborating with NUCC and NUG, MSFC is conducting more awareness about the Federal Democratic Charter and information dissemination to the civilians in Mon State.

In this interim, the working committees of the MSFC are closely working with the Central Committee for Local People's Administration. The MSFC publicly announced that the fake election and political talk could not bring genuine self-determination and urged other organizations to participate in the revolution.

Federalism is an essential tool of resistance being used by the people. The 2008 military-drafted Constitution fails to recognize any possibility of federalism. Thus, the efforts to pursue it from a grassroots and localized perspective is another way people work together toward democracy in Burma.

Ongoing Participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM)

The Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) was formed by individuals mainly from the labor and social sectors who quit their healthcare, banking, and labor jobs to ensure their contributions did not benefit the junta in any way. Those who joined and continue participating in the CDM have made enormous sacrifices. It has become increasingly challenging for them to survive without an income, and they must constantly flee to avoid being caught by the junta. Military custody for anyone seen funding or participating in the CDM could mean a sham trial, jail time, and even death.

The CDM has been a fundamental pillar of the Spring Revolution. It has brought together people from urban and rural backgrounds with the same spirited commitment to toppling the junta forces. It is also layered with various levels of expertise utilized to support pro-revolutionary forces. For example, those with medical training have assisted those severely wounded by the military's firing.

Likewise, those with backgrounds in education and engineering have also filled gaps where there is a need. The junta continued to target people from the CDM, including doctors and teachers.

In February 2023, family members reported that the Mon State junta forces had opened a case under Penal Code 505 against a CDM school teacher named Ma Phyu Phyu Win, age 40, who was abducted by the junta's Military Intelligence troops in mid-January 2023. Ma Phyu Phyu Win was a teacher with 15 years of experience. She lived and served as a teacher in the PeinNe-Teik ward, Mudon Township:

“Including Ma Phyu Phyu Win, about thirteen CDM teachers were arrested in the whole Mudon township because of their activism, political beliefs, and for standing up for the Spring Revolution,” said a lawyer.

A total of fifteen civilians and five CDM activists from Kaw Bane village, a Mon village located in Kawkareik, Karen, fled to the area under the control of the New Mon State Party and the KNU. They ran away between February and May 2023. They came in three groups in total.

After they fled, the military made various threats against the family members left behind. Therefore, some of the teenagers from the family members had to enter Thailand illegally. Civil society organizations, including HURFOM, supported these civilians and CDMs in ERO-controlled areas. Now, some of them are contributing by teaching children in the IDP villages where they currently reside. Some are helping local villagers with food production during these difficult times.



“As the revolution goes on, we CDMers are being forgotten. We know the military is unjust, so we are still fighting against the military dictatorship, according to our political beliefs. I will survive where I am. The people will benefit from our efforts. We will work for the local community wherever we are. One day, we all must be able to return to a federal, democratic, and independent state,” said a local involved in the CDM.

“Our resistance is still strong, although we are still in jeopardy. We still face and overcome various difficulties to live. We received much support from social organizations, revolutionary comrades, EROs, and local communities. As for me, I am preparing to improve my mental strength to have higher resistance. We continue to help each other,” a 30-year-old former physician said.

It has been more than two years since she came to this area. She is now in charge of one of the ethnic health organizations’ frontline health teams.

Social Media Campaigns

Young people are predominantly active online and have led and developed campaigns. The young people in HURFOM-targeted documentation areas have continued to resist the many repressions of the junta for more than two years. The movements of the young activists in Karen State, Mon State, and Tanintharyi Region have slowed down due to repression, but how they do things has changed; for example, they have chosen digital resistance rather than ground movements. If we look at the digital campaign activities, we can divide them into three parts.

- **Digital Resistance**
- **Online Fundraising**
- **Digital Risk Prevention and Protection**

Civilians from all over our targeted areas have demonstrated various protests against the Junta coup group. In Mon State, online anti-dictatorship activities and campaigns are usually organized from the social media pages of Lagon Eain Bulletin, Rehmonya FM channel, and other Township-based youth networks. Starting from February 2021, these activities were carried out in various ways or another on all significant days, and from January to June this year, they could do at least three campaigns.

This includes calls for the public not to recognize and participate in celebrations held by the junta to commemorate Independence Day on January 4, 2023. As a paper strike, the youth-led campaigns organized campaigns with the following messages: “We must free ourselves from military slavery,” “No more false freedom,” “Root out the fascist regime,” and “Let’s Escape.”

In April 2023, young people led a digital media campaign calling for the people to reject the junta’s Thingyan (Burmese New Year). The slogan “Revolutionary Thingyan” was intended to debunk the junta’s propaganda attempts to portray the country’s affairs as usual despite the ongoing conflict. Under the organization of the nationwide General Strike Coordination Body, the youth-run social platforms regularly organize online campaigns and protests.

Transitional Justice and Truth Seeking for Victims of Rights Violations

Colonial-era draconian laws are used against civilians to silence their calls for reform. Local community-based organizations like HURFOM have well-documented the experiences of targeted rights defenders in their reporting on Burma.

Under the current situation, human rights defenders are in a position that requires an immediate emergency response as Special Branches of the Burma Army increase their presence in ethnic areas. As mentioned above, they are at risk of unjust arrest and detainment for any activities related to publicly condemning the military coup. This happens through the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law, which, despite recent forms, is still used by the Burma Army to punish those protesting peacefully outside of officially designated areas (Article 19).

The Penal Code is also used against protesters to silence them and discourage others from joining causes the military deems threatening. Activists rarely see a fair process in a court of law as the judiciary needs more independence. They need more access to reliable legal redress mechanisms as the system is corrupt from the top down. This only further exacerbates the risks to human rights defenders.

Intimidation against those working for democracy and the looming prospect of reprisals is very real for those inside Burma. This has reinforced the need for digital security tools to curb surveillance, psychological warfare, and greater access to materials that accommodate working in remote areas.

As a member organization of the Network for Human Rights Documentation - Burma (ND-Burma), HURFOM ensures that advocating for transitional justice is crucial for the democratic movement to succeed in Burma. The four pillars of transitional justice are truth, justice, reparations, and non-recurrence (institutional reform). Even before the coup, the military denied pathways to justice mechanisms for those affected by junta violence. This, unfortunately, remains ongoing.

For the people on the ground, the concept and scope of transitional justice require more understanding and awareness in local communities. There is a need for more information on reparations and what these entail and, further, what options are available to ensure justice is enshrined in establishing new local governance systems and federal Constitutions.

It is imperative to continue a regional dialogue at the township and district levels to discuss the future of human rights in Burma and transitional justice. Reliable data and documentation will ensure due process for crimes committed by all armed actors and for working towards reliable support mechanisms for survivors. Reparations must not only come in the current conflict situation, but for the many years before in which thousands have suffered widespread inhumanity.

Civilians are extremely frustrated by the lack of accountability the soldiers of the Burma Army face as they routinely evade punishment or even international acknowledgment of their war crimes and crimes against humanity. Victims and survivors have been dealing with the terrors perpetrated by the Burma Army for decades. Since the attempted coup, they have been emboldened to act with even more violence. Now, the circumstances are some of the worst in Burma's history of war.

Most civilians across Southeastern Burma whom the violence has impacted have said that the crimes being committed by Min Aung Hlaing's regime cannot be forgiven.

Conclusion

It is clear that widespread resistance has not eased or slowed since the failed coup on 1 February 2021. Quite the contrary, the people remain even more determined to ensure an end to military rule once and for all. The Burma Army is clearly threatened by the widespread opposition and has thus increased its attacks, only to be losing bases on the ground as well. For decades, the people have made immense sacrifices to ensure the success of the pro-democracy movement. The Spring Revolution is no exception.

The international community must not look away from the suffering of the people. They have a choice to stand firmly with those standing up to the mass injustices. However, in recent months, the United Nations, in particular, has increased its engagement with the regime. This is deeply problematic because it also risks the regime's legitimization on a global scale. Local organizations have advocated for more visibility of their causes as the situation worsens. The meetings with the junta do a sincere disservice to these efforts, which are done at severe risk to their lives. The Burma Army soldiers repeatedly target human rights defenders.

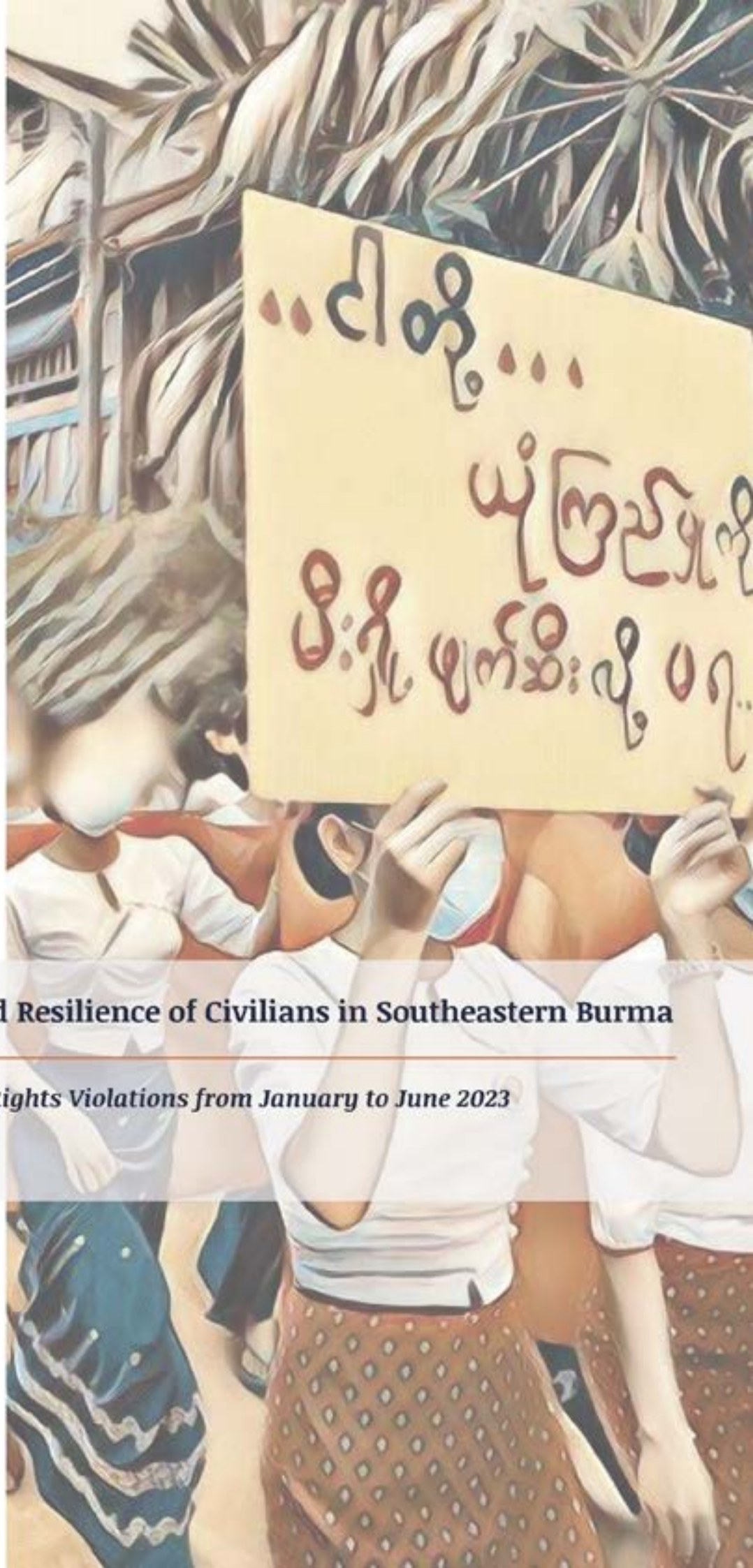
The presence of soldiers in civilian areas threatens their survival and further seeks to worsen their situation. Humanitarian assistance is urgently needed and must be delivered through cross-border aid where long-time, established, and trusted humanitarian responders can safely ensure it reaches those in need. Targeting displaced communities violates internationally binding agreements, laws, and treaties.

HURFOM remains concerned over the escalating human rights situation. Two and half years since the attempted coup have now passed, and the junta has failed to be held to account. Ethnic people have suffered for many years and endured a struggle of pain and discrimination rooted in policies stemming from Burmanization. It is long overdue that the international community and regional actors, including ASEAN, stand with the people of Burma, who remain steadfast in their unwavering commitment to peace and democracy.

Recommendations

The Human Rights Foundation of Monland immediately calls for the following:

1. A referral of the situation on the ground in Burma is to be made immediately by the United Nations Security Council to the International Criminal Court.
2. Concerted and coordinated action by global actors for an urgently mandated international arms embargo that would prevent the free flow of weapons into the hands of the murderous junta.
3. Aviation fuel sanctions put an effective end to the airstrikes in Burma, which have contributed to significant loss of life, particularly among innocent civilians.
4. Targeted sanctions on military junta officials and their families and holds on their financial assets and possessions undercut their ability to conduct corrupt business dealings abroad.
5. Strengthened and renewed protection mechanisms grant civilians who are vulnerable and at risk of assault a position where they can access justice referral and accountability pathways.
6. Renewed and continued funding support for local organizations responding to the needs of their communities on the ground. Cross-border aid pathways must be accessed, and all humanitarian aid must be in the hands of local actors.
7. Foreign investors in Burma must immediately cease their operations and withdraw their involvement from all development projects in the country, including but not limited to airports, seaports, and cement businesses.
8. An abrupt and immediate halt to the use of torture by the military junta, and further, we call for investigations to probe the unlawful deaths of civilians in Burma who have been tortured to death, as well as those who have been forced to endure trauma and long-term injuries as a result.



The Resistance and Resilience of Civilians in Southeastern Burma

Human Rights Violations from January to June 2023