



# Patterns of Military Oppression

In 2023-24

**Assistance Association for Political Prisoners**

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# List of Abbreviations

<b>AAPP</b>	Assistance Association for Political Prisoners
<b>AA</b>	Arakan Army
<b>ASEAN</b>	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
<b>CDM</b>	Civil Disobedience Movement
<b>EAO</b>	Ethnic Armed Organization
<b>ICC</b>	International Criminal Court
<b>ICJ</b>	International Court of Justice
<b>IIMM</b>	Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar
<b>KIO</b>	Kachin Independence Organisation
<b>MNDAA</b>	Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army
<b>NLD</b>	National League for Democracy
<b>OHCHR</b>	The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>TNLA</b>	Ta'ang National Liberation Army
<b>UN</b>	United Nations



Since its coup in February 2021, the military have perpetrated a more than three-year long terror campaign, resulting in widespread and systematic human rights violations committed against the civilian population. The military has failed to consolidate power and territorial control in the aftermath of its February 2021 coup and has reacted to calls for democracy and rule of law with violent tactics that recall Burma's decades-long history of military-perpetrated violence and repression. According to observations by our organization, the so-called armed forces both disregard the existence of human rights norms, and relish in dehumanizing a civilian population.

The scope and scale of the atrocities committed by the military junta make their documentation a challenging one, but consequentially, all the more necessary. In this report, AAPP looks to examine the range of military tools and tactics inflicted between January 1, 2023 to July 29, 2024, that has resulted in patterns of military oppression, violence and human rights violations perpetrated across the country in a widespread and systematic manner. Whilst these tools and tactics have been used by the military throughout its history, in this reporting period, these patterns of violence have been re-applied in a distinct and increasingly brutal ways, in a desperate attempt to exert control over a country in which, the military are increasingly losing control.

The report comes at a critical moment in the long arc of resistance against the military junta, which as a result of such resistance efforts, has been considerably weakened. The past year and a half has seen a fundamental undermining of the junta's strength, due in part to the concerted offensives launched by armed resistance groups, namely Operation 1027 in October 2023 and the consequential successes across the country throughout the first seven months of 2024. Ethnic groups have joined forces in achieving a shared common goal – ending the military junta's rule and with it an end to the human rights violations and likely war crimes and crimes against humanity it has and continues to commit throughout its history.



## INTRODUCTION

As will be detailed in this report however, the success of these offensives by the resistance within the reporting period, has seen the military junta respond in an increasingly brutal and punitive way against the civilian population. As the junta's retaliations against civilians becomes more desperate and indiscriminate, so does its blatant disregard for international humanitarian, criminal and human rights law become more glaring.

The military junta responded to the peaceful demonstrations against its unlawful seizure of power in 2021 with violence, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and labelling those participating as “terrorists”. It seems that this instinctual and historical tendency to resort to violence, has only intensified within this reporting period, through impunity granted by the international community, combined with desperation in the face of defections and territorial losses against the resistance movement.

In the period 2023-24, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) has reported numerous human rights violations by the junta, through its strategies and mechanisms that impact civilians across society. On the individual level, this repression takes the form of arbitrary arrests and detention, property seizure, physical and sexual violence, torture, extrajudicial killings and beheadings, among others. These oppressive actions are executed through its ‘Four Cuts’ military strategy, targeting civilian infrastructure, including houses, farms and crops, blocking humanitarian aid, damaging roads, and cutting internet; as well as seemingly punitive attacks on the civilian population for alleged support for armed resistance groups. These attacks are brutally meted out through airstrikes, arson attacks and artillery shells. Oppression is also imposed through the junta's manipulation of the rule of law to establish a façade of legitimacy and a favourable legal environment in which it can operate freely and continue to perpetrate gross human rights violations uninhibited. This is evidenced by amendments it has made to legislation and using the judiciary as an extension of its regime. The military posits itself as the only entity capable of governance, all the while attempting to fabricate a sense of international legitimacy for its illegitimate rule.

**W**hilst groups continue to resist and increasingly gain control on their own terms within Burma, the continued lack of action by international bodies and regional groups allows the military to commit continued patterns of oppression across the country.

Henceforth, AAPP reiterates its call for international actors – including, but not limited to, United Nations (UN) Member States, intergovernmental organizations, and nongovernmental organizations – to take immediate and decisive action in pursuit of accountability for the junta’s crimes, as well as the immediate release of all political prisoners, and to provide justice and support for the people of Burma. AAPP’s recommendations are as follows:

- AAPP calls on UN and ASEAN Member States to demand the immediate release of all political prisoners including State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and President U Win Myint.
- AAPP calls on UN and ASEAN Member States to recognise the military junta as the root cause of the current human rights and humanitarian crisis, and refrain from offering any form of legitimacy to the junta, through meetings, memorandums of understanding and so on.
- AAPP calls on international actors to impose the immediate ban on the export of jet fuel to the military in Myanmar and targeted sanctions against the individuals and entities involved in the military’s jet fuel supply chain.
- AAPP calls on the UN Security Council to refer Myanmar to the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of mass atrocities.
- AAPP calls on UN Member States to support and provide resources to accountability mechanisms, specifically the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM).
- AAPP calls on UN Member States to invest funding into local civil society and non-governmental organizations who are carrying out vital fact-finding and evidence gathering, imperative for accountability in the future.
- AAPP calls on UN Member States to support and invest in community-based mental health and psychosocial support for survivors of these human rights violations committed in Burma.



## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

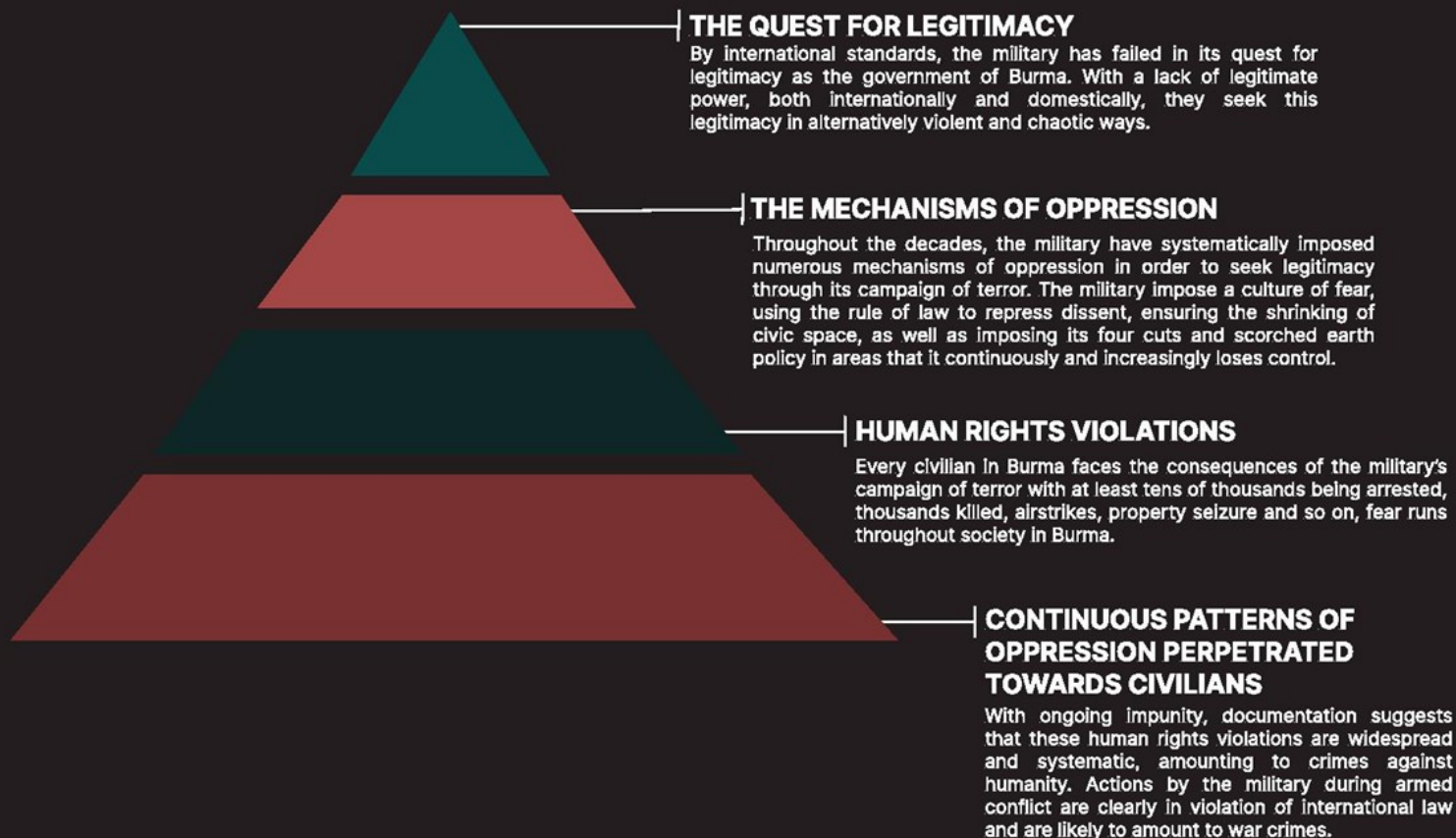


The present report provides and analyses the patterns of military oppression committed by the junta upon the people of/in Burma, as documented by AAPP staff from 30 semi-structured interviews held with survivors, witnesses, and families of victims of human rights violations in Burma.

AAPP conducted both in-person and virtual semi-structured interviews based on context-sensitive interview guidelines developed according to best practice for human rights reporting and documentation. We prioritized the personal security of the interviewees, by applying a strict confidentiality policy and ensuring the omission of each interviewee's personal identity. The interview team followed ethical standards throughout the interview process, respecting the rights, safety and privacy of the interviewees as the first priority. In this regard, AAPP used a consent form, explaining to each interviewee what the interview is about, where the information provided by the interviewee will be used and their right to freely and voluntarily give, withdraw or deny consent. AAPP only conducted an interview with prior written or oral consent.

AAPP securely stores collected data and intends to utilize the data obtained from interviews and other confidential sources for the purposes of transitional justice, unless the data providers (e.g., the interviewees) request the data to be destroyed.

The report includes evidence documented by AAPP as well as other credible sources between January 1, 2023 and July 29, 2024. Referenced data from AAPP interviews and documentation has been cross-checked and verified in accordance with AAPP policy. For human rights abuses for which AAPP evidence is partial, secondary sources, including local media sources and organisations on the ground, as well as of the documentation from UN bodies, are cross-checked and presented as evidence. Numbers of arrests, killings, and other human rights statistics are presented up until July 29, 2024.



## PATTERNS OF MILITARY OPPRESSION

**T**hough the grave destruction, death, injury, pain and loss inflicted by the military junta in the years since the 2021 coup is undeniable and at present still incalculable, there has been a distinctive shift in the dynamics of the conflict since the end of October, due to coordinated offensives by ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) that has resulted in the military losing greater scores of territory than ever seen before.

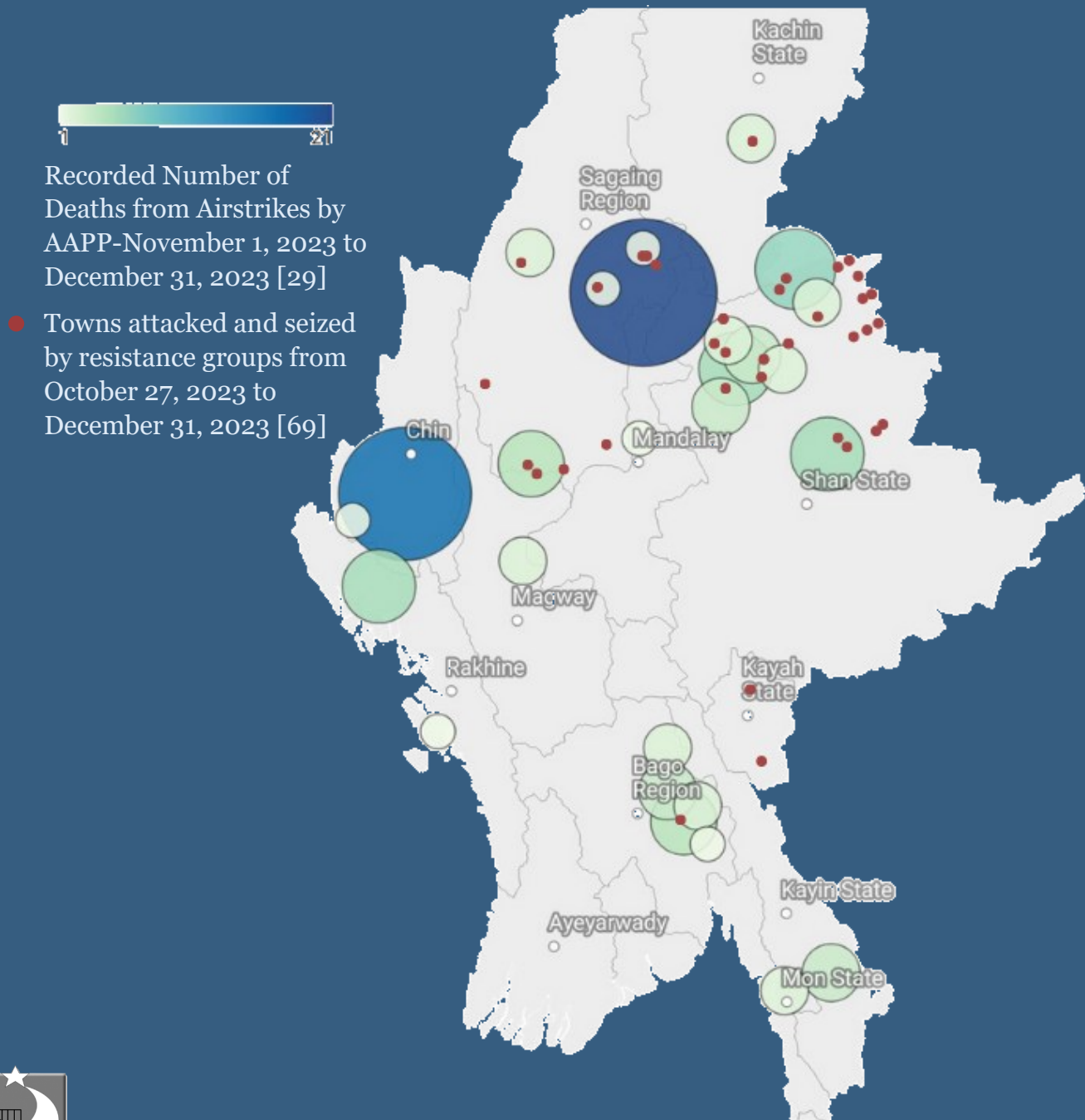
On 27 October 2023, the Three Brotherhood Alliance – comprised of the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), and the Arakan Army (AA) – launched coordinated attacks known as Operation 1027 in northern Shan, causing losses of an unprecedented extent for the junta. Consequently, coordinated attacks by other Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) followed suit across the country in the ensuing months, spreading the junta’s defensive capabilities even thinner. With this, the military lost large areas of administrative control. The opening of multiple fronts led to the junta forces being stretched beyond capacity and has directly contributed to large numbers of soldiers either defecting or surrendering, greatly deflating morale and impacting combat ability.<sup>[1]</sup>



## BACKGROUND



Such territorial losses have seen the junta increasingly targeting urban areas and civilian homes and infrastructure through its 'Four Cuts' strategy, using retaliatory airstrikes in areas that they lost control, conveying both a punitive intent and blatant disregard for the crucial distinguishing between military and civilian targets.[2] The map below portrays the consequences of territorial loss by the military and consequent action directly towards civilians. Such personnel losses also led the military junta to enact a mandatory conscription law on 10 February 2024, the 2010 People's Military Service Act, taking effect in mid-April, provoking mass exodus of civilians to neighbouring countries for fear of conscription.[3] The newly introduced conscription law is one new and desperate attempt out of the mechanisms that have continuously been used by the military to seek legitimacy and maintain control of a country that fundamentally oppose their control.



Following the 2021 coup, the junta attempts to attach false legitimacy to its rule through the claim that its seizure of power was justified by the 2008 Constitution on baseless assertions of voter fraud in the November 2020 election. Such claims find little to no traction however, given that the junta violently and unlawfully seized power through a coup d'état and imprisoned those who had been chosen by the Burmese people through legitimate democratic election, the National League for Democracy (NLD). Even if claims of voter fraud were true, they would not meet the constitutional threshold of a “state of emergency”.[5] Since forcing his way into power, the junta’s leader Senior General Min Aung Hlaing has never stood for election or sought a mandate from the people.[6] Announcements that an election would be held in August 2023 – which has inevitably postponed multiple times and the “state of emergency” extended for a sixth time in January 2024 - represent a shameless attempt by the junta to furnish its rule with a veneer of international legitimacy.[7]

In his announcement extending the state of emergency on 31 January 2024, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing claimed the extension was needed to ensure “peace and stability, the rule of law and the successful holding of multiparty democratic general elections”, falsely implying that these conditions exist and or could be achieved under the junta’s rule, notwithstanding its long record of violations of international human rights, criminal and humanitarian law, and violent repression of the people’s will. Even if the military were to run an election, the prospects of it being free and fair are dismal.



## THE QUEST FOR LEGITIMACY

The 2008 Constitution grants military personnel blanket immunity, particularly Article 445 which states,

*‘All policy guidelines, laws, rules, regulations, notifications and declarations of the State Law and Order Restoration Council and the State Peace and Development Council or actions, rights and responsibilities of the State Law and Order Restoration Council and the State Peace and Development Council shall devolve on the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. No proceeding shall be instituted against the said Councils or any member thereof or any member of the Government, in respect of any act done in the execution of their respective duties.’[8]*

Yet, despite its attempts, the junta does not hold effective power or control that ensures their legitimacy as government of Burma. This would require,

**Control over the greater part of Myanmar territory;**

**Habitual obedience of the mass of the population;**

**A seasonable prospect of permanence, and;**

**Compliance with obligations under international law;[9]**

Within this reporting period, the military has lost control of a considerable amount of territory, whilst the population fundamentally oppose them.[10] As will be elaborated on in this report, the junta consequently attempts to hide this illegitimacy through misleading announcements about prisoner releases and pardons, its justification through a constitution that facilitates their own impunity, whilst forging ahead in its campaign of terror, in its failed attempts to silence dissent and gain control.



In the five decades of military rule prior to Burma’s return to democracy in 2011, and in the ensuing years in its repression of ethnic minorities, the military has established a repository of tools and tactics, intended to control and divide the population.

The junta’s baseless justifications are corroborated with its construction of fear among civilians across the country, through its strategic use of political violence.[11] In this particular period of fragility for the junta, we once again see its reliance on the military’s long-favoured tools and tactics of oppression – exerting a campaign of terror through rule of law, its ‘Four Cuts’ strategy and scorched earth policy and imposing it in an increasingly intense and brutal manner.

The junta has repeatedly blamed the Burmese people for their own suffering, suffering inflicted on them by the junta itself. The ongoing rhetoric claims that the people of Burma and specifically those part of the resistance – often referred to as “terrorists” - have a “destructive mindset”, are undermining his regime’s efforts to build a “true democracy” and that the country’s dire economic condition that has significantly deteriorated in the last year, is due to the Burmese peoples’ laziness and not working hard enough.[12]

The following pages show just a few of the mechanisms that have been imposed throughout society in Burma in 2023 and 2024 and during the decades of military rule before that.

# THE MECHANISMS OF OPPRESSION



**Detained State Counselor Aung Sun Suu Kyi (L) and President Win Myint (C) appear in military controlled court in Myanmar’s capital Naypyidaw, May 24, 2021. Photo courtesy of Myanmar Ministry of Information via AFP.**

**B**urma’s judiciary has regressed to a system of undue and unfair trials more akin to kangaroo courts. As a part of the 2008 Constitution, the military exploits its judiciary system to justify the arrest and oppression of those that oppose them.[13] The military exploits this system by passing vague and overly broad laws, whilst appointing judges who do the bidding for the junta.[14]

The junta controls the judiciary system and uses it as an extension of its oppressive machinery. It conducts unfair trials, where defendants aren’t represented by legal counsel, their lawyers cannot introduce evidence on their behalf, and in certain circumstances, cannot communicate confidentially with their clients.[15] Individuals are charged under new and spurious charges, using vague and broad laws, including Penal Code 505A and the Counter-Terrorism Law, to imprison all those who oppose the junta. They issue disproportionately long sentences in the absence of credible incriminating evidence and/or on the basis of torture-forced confessions or false evidence. Trials occur behind closed doors in special courts inside prisons, usually without legal representation for the defendant.

## **RULE OF LAW AND SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE**

Information leaks from legal sources to media and civil society have confirmed that the junta-controlled courts systematically continue to violate core principles of independence and impartiality in 2023 and 2024.[16] Lawyers defending political cases would indicate that the evidence in question is not in line with the Burma Evidence Act, yet judges who do the bidding for the junta, disregard or refuse to admit exculpatory evidence, and sentences tend to increase if lawyers attempt to dispute the charges against their client or the decisions of the judge.[17]

Under this system, the military continue to weaponize the rule of law in this reporting period, utilizing and amending it to arrest those who oppose them. Despite the junta's continuous promise and cancellation of multi-party democratic elections, including its supposed commitment to elections in 2025, opposing parties continue to be detained, imprisoned and labelled as "terrorists" under an unjust system of law.[18] Since resistance groups increasingly gain a stronghold, evidence shows that the military are increasingly targeting those deemed to be associated with anti-military groups and their families, as opposed to searching for protest leaders, as was previously the case.

Whilst previously charging individuals, most often, under the Penal Code, the military have increasingly made use of the Counter-Terrorism Law in 2023 and 2024, with its vague terms that allow for arbitrary application.[19] According to AAPP data, in 2023, 1,511 political prisoners were sentenced under the Counter-Terrorism Law, whilst in 2024, 274 have been sentenced under this charge.

Under SAC Law No.5/2021, the junta continue to use section 505A, the vagueness of which makes it easily manipulable to criminalize the exercise of freedom of opinion and expression.[20] 314 political prisoners have been charged under Section 505A in 2023, whilst 31 so far, in 2024, as of July 31.

The new legal provision of 505A allows for the prosecution of individuals who; "(a) causes or intends to cause fear to a group of citizens or to the public, (b) causes or intends to spread false news, knowing or believing that it is untrue, (c) causes or intends to commit or to agitate directly or indirectly criminal offence against a government employee.[21]

The law directly criminalizes legitimate expression, for example, by claiming that the posting and sharing of Facebook videos of police violence is creating public fear and spreading false news, meanwhile, the military use it with a disproportionate use of force. Violation of section 505A is punishable by up to three years in prison.

The introduction of the Organisation Registration Law on 28 October 2022 only served to shrink and restrict civic space even further throughout 2023 and 2024, severely inhibiting the exercise of the right to freedom of association. The legislation made compulsory the registration of any national, international non-governmental organization or association, and failure to do so entails criminal penalties for organizations and prison sentences up to five years. Of particular concern is the impact this legislation has and will continue to have on local and grassroots groups who are filling the gap left by the junta's restrictions on humanitarian aid delivery.[22]



## **RULE OF LAW AND SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE**

# 21,012

Houses burned down between Jan 1-July 31, 2024

**“If it is true that some villages are financing them (resistance groups), then we need to teach them a lesson. We will erase those villages from the map of Myanmar. This is something we need to uproot”**



The military junta have increasingly relied on the ‘Four Cuts’ Strategy in this reporting period, previously deployed against ethnic resistance groups during the country’s decades of military rule until 2011. ‘Four Cuts’ is its overarching counter-insurgency strategy, used throughout Burma’s history and employed from the 1960s to cut off ethnic resistance organizations access to food, finances, intelligence, and recruits. At a 1968 Tatmadaw conference, it was agreed that the arbitrary arrest of insurgents was crucial, accurate intelligence was vital, and absolute annihilation was essential.[23] In order to cut off resources, it relies on eliminating the perceived support and resources of the insurgents - meaning the civilian population, its infrastructure, livelihoods and ways of life are unwittingly prey to the junta’s military strategy and targeted by design.

The military's 'Four Cuts' Strategy drives incessant human rights violations towards anyone who is perceived as a threat to the military. As a part of this strategy, junta soldiers move from village to village, including civilian areas where there is no active fighting, and loot property before burning them down. It also uses this strategy to target resources such as food crops, food storage facilities and livestock to ensure the total devastation of livelihoods and communities, contributing to the wider agenda of absolute repression.

In the last year, the military have intensified their 'Four Cuts' Strategy in response to gains made by armed resistance forces. The military immediately respond to territorial loss with the intentional destruction of cities and villages that support revolutionary forces, as well as civilians crops and farms, through arson attacks and airstrikes reportedly using cluster munitions, the use of which constitutes a war crime.[24] In 2024, arson attacks have significantly increased in areas including Sagaing, Magway, Mandalay and Chin State.

Kawlin Town was overtaken by resistance groups during Operation 1027 in November 2023.[25] Three months following the military retaking the town, some 80% of the town was destroyed by military troops in February 2024,[26] as well as 40 of the surrounding villages.[27] At least 5,200 homes were burned to the ground and caused the displacement of approximately 30,000 residents.[28]

According to Data for Myanmar, the junta burned down 21,012 homes in 362 separate incidents between January 1, 2024 and July 31, 2024 alone, making up 20% of the 101,460 houses burned down since the 2021 military coup.[29] The locations of these incidents evince that the junta and its allies are actively targeting and burning down houses in areas of resistance stronghold.[30] From January 1 to July 31, 2024, 72% houses burned down by the junta were located in Sagaing Region, an area of significant resistance control.[31]

This incentive is represented in public speeches made by military officials. In one case in 2024, Bago Junta spokesperson Tin Oo, also minister of economic affairs, threatened forced military recruitment and to 'burn down villages' that don't comply. [32] In another case, the ultranationalist Buddhist U Warthawa, who campaigns for militia groups, threatened to 'erase' villages that supposedly support the resistance stating, "If it is true that some villages are financing them [resistance groups], then we need to teach them a lesson. We will erase those villages from the map of Myanmar. This is something we need to uproot." [33]

The repeated attacks on areas where there is strong resistance leave already vulnerable communities extremely insecure, not only through the loss of lives and destruction of their homes and property, but also creating a loss of livelihood when farms and crops are targeted and destroyed. It is another tactic to collectively and brutally punish the population for their supposed opposition to military rule. In many cases, ground raids are preceded by artillery fire or airstrikes, forcing villagers to flee and contributing to the mass displacement of people in Burma.[34]



## FOUR CUTS' STRATEGY

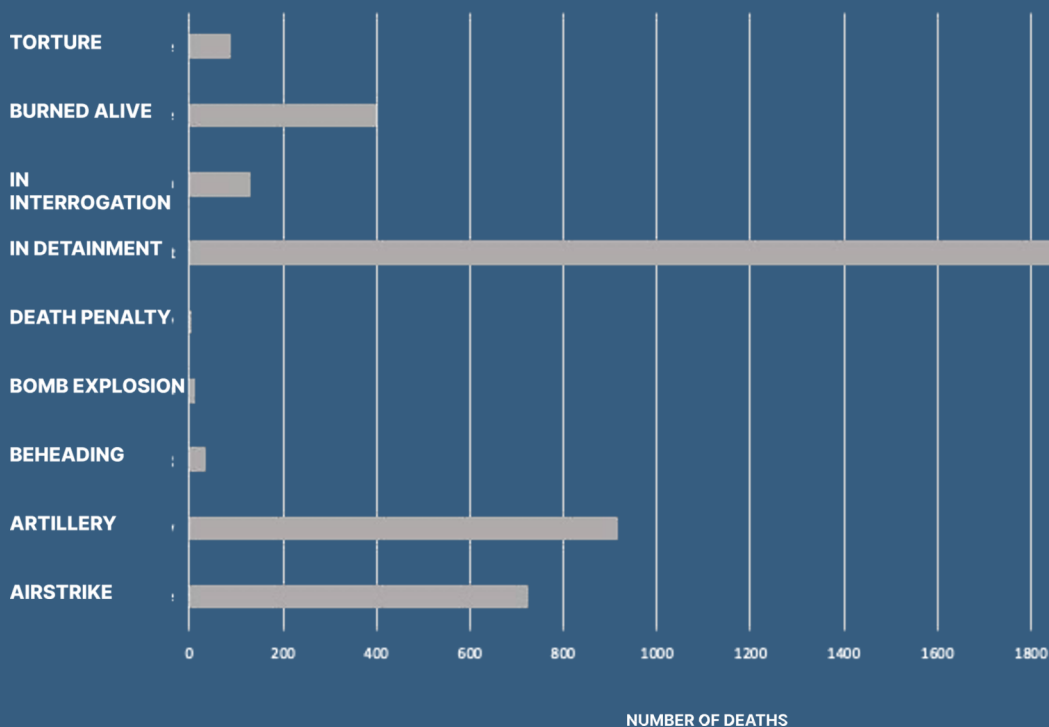


Through these mechanisms, evidence demonstrates that the military have perpetrated widespread and systematic human rights violations across the country since the coup and within 2023 and 2024. AAPP has recorded tens of thousands who have been arrested, not only pro-democracy protestors but also their families. Thousands have been killed as a result of the military's actions. Just some of these human rights violations are as follows.

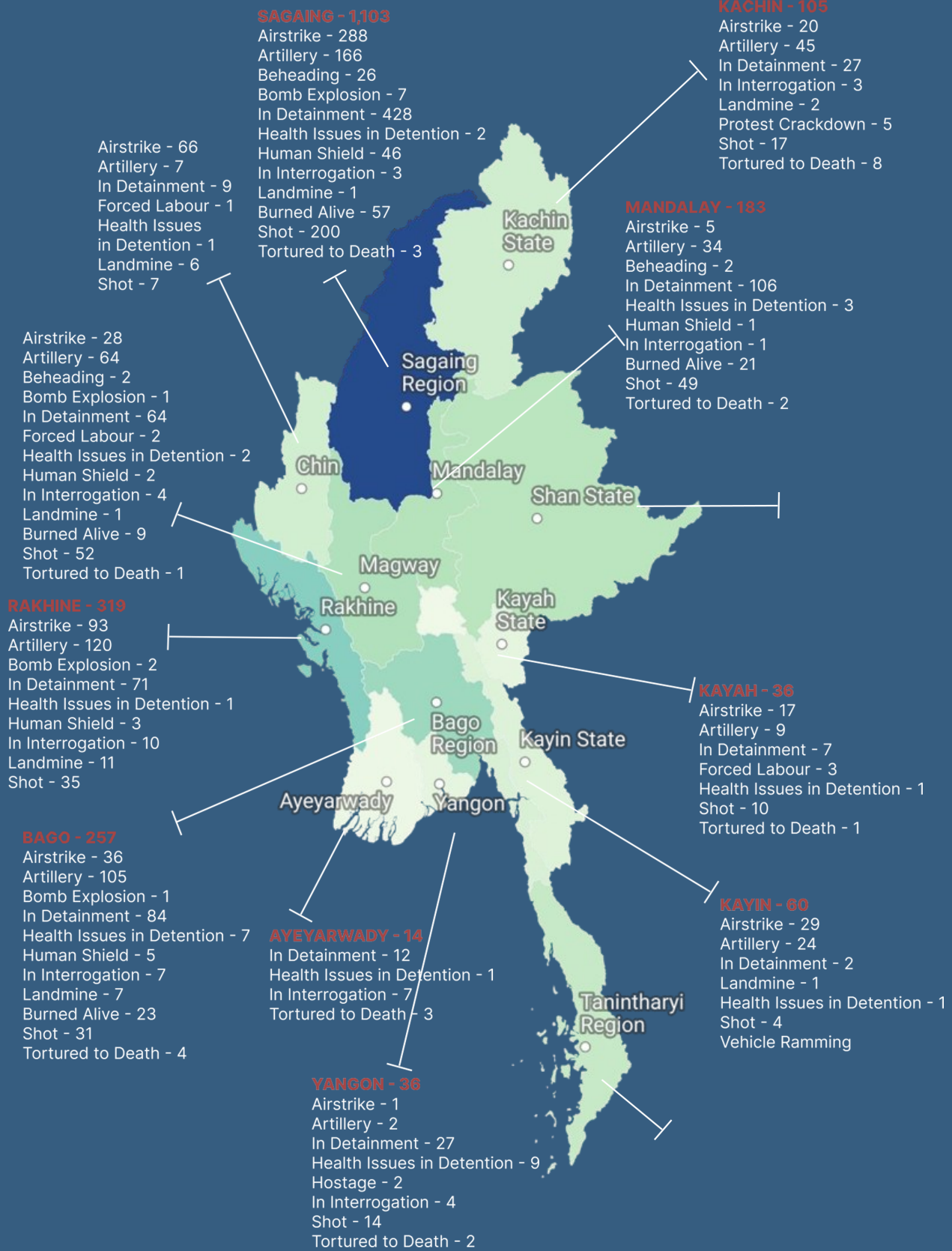
## Killing

According to AAPP data, in 2023 1,635 pro-democracy supporters have been killed by the junta and its supporters and 1,216 in 2024, as of July 29, 2024, whilst the actual figure is likely much higher.

Cause of death Jan 1, 2023– July 29, 2024



# HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS



# NUMBER OF DOCUMENTED KILLING JANUARY 1, 2023 TO JULY 26, 2024



# 419

killed during protests between February 1, 2021 and July 29, 2024

## During Protests

As protests erupted across the country in response to the 2021 coup, high ranking junta officials ordered soldiers and police to shoot protestors, with AAPP's data indicating that this cost the lives of 419 individuals who were killed during these protests. The repression of protests by the military and police included the use of military tactics and the use of lethal weapons, such as semi-automatic rifles and military snipers, to target unarmed protesters. AAPP reports that many protestors were shot directly in the head or chest, indicating the junta's overt intent to kill. According to Special Rapporteur released by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), as of October 2023, the junta continued to perceive pro-democracy activists, former government officials, politicians, amongst others, its political opponents.[35]

Protests have since been violently suppressed by the military, with many taking to armed resistance. In 2023 and 2024, civilians continue to conduct flash protests, with 5 deaths occurring as a result. The killing of unarmed civilians is an attempt to discourage and destroy the resistance. Firing targeted shots at protestors, as well as firing indiscriminately at crowds, creates terror for both the victims and the witnesses. Killing unarmed men, women, and children highlights the military junta's disregard for human life, and their determination to overpower voices of dissent into repression. This has not only been the case since this 2021 coup, but also during other protests such as that in 1988, where thousands of people were killed, as a result of the military crackdown on protests.

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# 113

have been burned alive between January 1, 2023 and July 29, 2024

## Burned Alive

Another heinous act of violence favored by the military junta is burning individuals alive. According to AAPP data, 207 pro-democracy individuals have been burned alive by the military junta between January 1, 2023 and July 29, 2024. As part of its 'Four Cuts' strategy, the military respond to territorial loss, not only burning down villages but also burning civilians alive.



On 10 May 2023, junta groups were fighting with members of the PDF and Karen EAOs near Nyaung Pin Thar Village in Bago Region. Just hours afterwards, according to locals, the junta raided Nyaung Pin Thar village and 19 civilians, including 8 children, were arrested and then burned alive by the junta. These 19 individuals had no clear or direct association to pro-democracy forces but were simply by-standing civilians, evincing the junta's blatant disregard for human life. It is believed that the raid on the village and consequent death of these civilians was in direct retaliation to the fighting between armed groups, earlier that day. The junta's targeting of the village's residents further highlights their determination to repress the resistance movement by terrorizing and traumatizing individuals, families, and entire communities into submission out of fear, no matter whether they are associated with the opposition, or not.

In a more recent example, on July 10, 2024, at approximately 4:45 a.m., junta forces fired 60mm artillery shells ten times and 40mm artillery shells five times into Let Wea Myin Ni Village, Natogyi Township, Mandalay Region, destroying the houses in the village. During the incident, Lone and Pha Aung, who were around the age of 90, Kyaw Aye and Han Nyein, around the age of 80, and Yan Naing Htwe, who was suffering from a stroke, were trapped and burned to death in their respective homes.

# 920

Political prisoners have died in detention  
between Jan 1, 2023– July 29, 2024

## In Detainment

From January 1, 2023 to July 29, 2024, the military junta has killed at least 920 individuals in detainment across the country, this referring to individuals who died in the custody of the junta and its supporters after being arrested, captured, or forcibly taken, with an increase in enforced disappearances too.

The killing of political prisoners in detainment is yet another mechanism of repression deployed by the junta, as killing individuals known to be part of the pro-democracy movement sends a wider message to other political prisoners and the broader population that opposition to the junta comes with fatal consequences, thus ensuring that those who oppose its rule live in constant fear, or relinquish their opposition as a result of such fear.



On December 9, 2023, around 20 police and soldiers arrested Ye Zaw Hein at his home in No. (1) Mile Li Ward, Nyaungshwe Township, Shan State. He was tortured at a Military Affairs Security office in Taunggyi Town. He was transported to Khaing Myitta Hospital in Nyaungshwe Town with injuries consistent with torture. He had injuries from being torched on his back, injuries on his feet, and swelling on one side of his head. He died on December 18 at 6:30 p.m.

In another case, on July 3, 2023, the Sagaing Township Court in Sagaing Region sentenced Htet Yan Naing (aka Htet Htet, aka Nga Htet) to serve four years under Section 52(a) of the Counter-Terrorism Law. He was imprisoned in Male Sleeping Ward No. 3 of Obo Prison in Mandalay City, Mandalay Region. On June 20, 2024, at approximately 7 a.m., he got into an argument with a prisoner appointed as a clerk after he tried to report the sale and purchase of drugs inside the prison. Although he decided to placate due to the intervention of the Convict Officer, the clerk reported him to Head Warder Zayar Aung, the Deputy Ward Officer of Ward No. 3. Instead of investigating the matter, the Head Warder beat Htet Yan Naing (aka Htet Htet, aka Nga Htet) for no apparent reason, prompting him to assert his innocence and request not to be beaten. The Head Warder deemed this as an act of impoliteness and put him in leg shackles before taking him to the Main Jail for punishment, approved by Deputy Superintendent Zaw Tun. There, he was beaten and tortured by Head Warder Zayar Aung, Private Myat Min Thu, Private Moe Min Htet, a prisoner named Phoe Kay, and other prison staff, using bamboo sticks, metal sticks, and tasers. Although Htet Yan Naing (aka Htet Htet, aka Nga Htet) tried to avoid being beaten, he was assaulted again in the plantation of Sleeping Ward No. 5. He sustained injuries to his body and head consistent with torture. Although he was taken to the prison hospital around 10 a.m., tied up in a wheelchair, he did not receive adequate medical care and was instead locked inside a seclusion room for the mentally ill within the hospital compound. The prison authorities transferred him to Mandalay General Hospital around 1 p.m., where he succumbed to his injuries. The prison authorities returned his body to his family on June 22, stating he died from a heart attack.

A widespread number of injuries of those detained have been documented and continue to be consistent with torture and ill-treatment. Survivors of torture state that they face severe beatings, stress positions, starvation and sexual violence whilst in detainment. The junta are relying on torture, particularly in interrogation to extract information from detainees and whilst previously torture was aimed to identify leaders of protests, in 2023 and 2024, it is being used to extract information and confession of association with anti-military groups.



## KILLING

## Beheading

The military junta have deployed beheading as one of its most depraved and gruesome forms of violence, with AAPP confirming 15 cases of beheadings in 2023 and 16 in 2024.[36]



This act of brutal violence typifies the mechanisms of junta repression, by targeting anti-coup individuals, as well as those who are seen as a threat in ethnic areas. At the same time, the public display of these mutilated bodies, intends to spread terror, and fear-mongering the wider civilian population to not participate in the resistance.

One such case occurred on 30 September 2023 in Let Tee Village in Tabayin Township, Sagaing Region when the junta forces conducted raids in the village and captured a local called Linn, reportedly without any evidence, and decapitated him.

The same occurred by the junta forces to Hla Soe Aung on 3 June 2023, however in this case, more than 100 junta personnel conducted the raids and set fire to Na Bae Pin Hla Village, Wetlet Township, Sagaing Region. During the raid on the village, Hla Soe Aung was decapitated before the junta forces then set his body on fire.

# 2822

Political prisoners have been arrested between Jan 1, 2023– July 29, 2024

Throughout 2023-24, the military junta continues to employ arbitrary arrest and detention as a means to suppress civilians exercising their fundamental rights to freedom of expression, assembly, and association to oppose the coup. AAPP has documented a total of 2,384 political prisoners were arrested in 2023 and 438 in 2024 as of July 29, 2024. The actual number is likely to be higher.

In the immediate aftermath of the coup, the military began arbitrarily detaining critics of the regime, members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) and well-known human rights defenders. As demonstrations denouncing the coup persisted, police were ordered to shoot at demonstrators with anti-riot weapons and arrest individuals on the spot without requiring prior approval or arrest warrants.[37] Now, as the junta has repressed mass protests and resistance has become armed, there has been an increase in the number arrested for their association with anti-military and armed opposition groups.

In 2023 and 2024, the highest number of detentions is reported in the Yangon Region, with 602 individuals, followed by Mandalay Region with 447 detentions.

AAPP's interviews and research produced the following findings:

Targets are often politically active individuals who have engaged in peaceful protests or expressed pro-democracy opinions, as well as those supporting the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) or participating in armed resistance movements.

The junta's brutality extends so far as that in situations where they cannot locate the intended arrest target, the junta forces instead resort to detaining family members – including minors - as hostages, as a means of pressuring those they intend to arrest, usually those suspected of being pro-democracy supporters. According to AAPP records, there have been **345** cases of such “hostage taking” since coup.

In cases where the junta detain their intended targets, the families of these individuals aren't spared either, as they are routinely subjected to threats, beatings and unlawful attacks, including the seizure of their property.[41] Such efforts to intimidate and apparently punish the family members of those arbitrarily detained for association with the pro-democracy movement reveal a tactic whereby the impact of the arbitrary arrest reverberates beyond the individual, rendering the lives of family members and dependents as mere collateral damage.

AAPP's interviews with released political prisoners reveal that they were not presented with either arrest warrants or search warrants at the time they were detained and arrested under spurious charges that are indicative that such detainments were politically motivated and a direct response to the pro-democracy movement.[38]

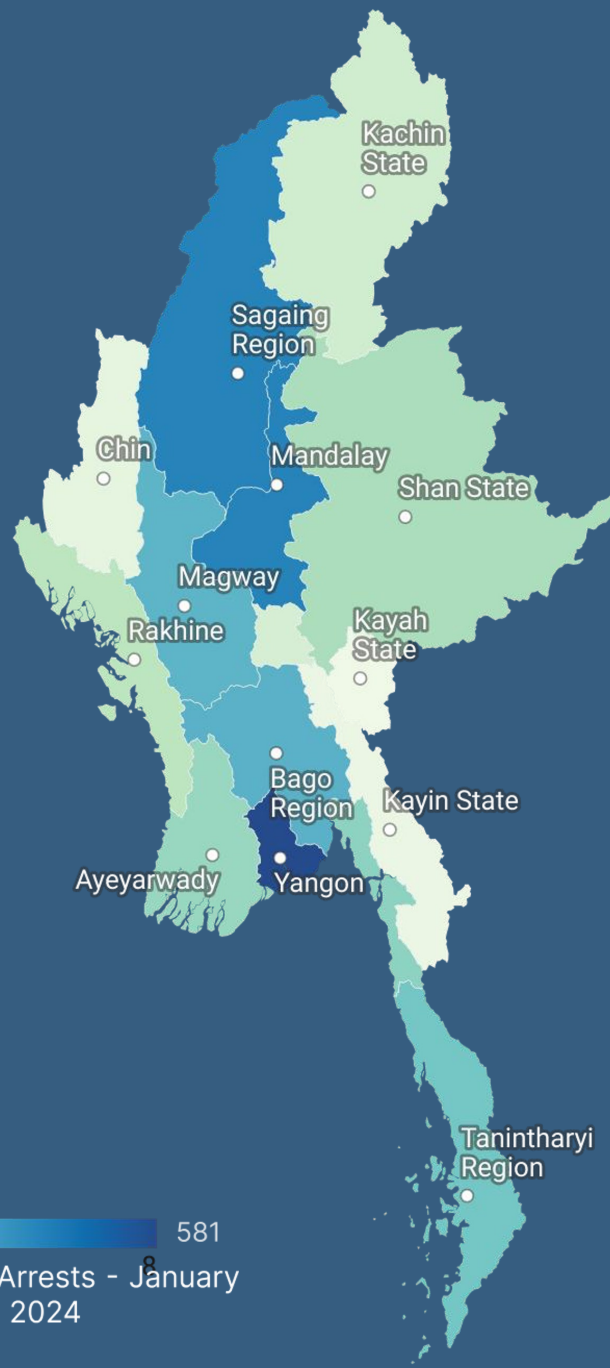


## ARRESTS

Based on political prisoner testimonies and witness statements from family members, it is evident that the junta routinely employs excessive use of force when carrying out arrests, detrimentally impacting the individuals both physically and mentally. The immediate use of violence by the junta at the point of arrest is evidently a tactic used to demonstrate power and control over the individual and undermine their opposition to the junta's rule. Violence and abuse at the point of arrest creates fear for the individual, while also instilling fear in the family and community.

In 2023, AAPP interviewed 30 victims of violence at the hands of the junta, most of these interviewees were arrested at their homes and on their way, some were beaten and verbally abused in front of family members.

The reflexive recourse to violence immediately and without provocation or apparent necessity can only therefore be explained by an apparent intent to scare and deter the individual, their family and wider community against opposing the military junta.



8 581  
AAPP Number of Arrests - January 1, 2023 to July 27, 2024



# VIOLENCE DURING ARREST



According to AAPP's reporting, junta uses property seizures to target the livelihoods of pro-democracy individuals, a disproportionate and oppressive tactic without legal basis, orchestrated by military junta officers with the complicity of the police and other junta officials. Whilst carrying out arbitrary arrests, junta authorities will also seize homes, shops, and/or businesses, and post a red sign on the property to visibly signify it has been seized. This gesture serves as a warning to the wider community that opposition to the military junta comes with harsh consequences. Property seizure is a powerful mechanism of oppression employed by the junta, as it forces individuals into financial instability or homelessness, and overall creates conditions of hardship for individuals and their families. Prior to the coup, the military did not seize property. However, now they seek to carry out collective punishment, by not only affecting the livelihood of those they have arrested but also often their family members. According to AAPP data, there have been 108 cases of civilian property seizures by the junta in 2023.

An interview by AAPP with the mother of a political prisoner described how the junta seized their home following the arrest of her son the previous year. The junta soldiers posted the red notice on the front door and secured the premises with a lock that they had brought with them. The junta threatened to kill her if she returned.

Property seizures can have a severe impact on the family members of the detained, as many lose their livelihoods as a result, forcing them into displacement, acting as a form of collective punishment. Many are also subject to constant surveillance and intimidation in their homes and neighborhoods.



Radio Free Asia/Citizen journalist (May 2023)



## PROPERTY SEIZURE

# 115

## TORTURED TO DEATH

According to AAPP data, in 2023, at least 115 political prisoners have been tortured to death in interrogation, whilst the actual figure is likely much higher.

Following arrest, political prisoners are either taken straight to police stations, or to interrogation centres located within military bases, or unofficial makeshift interrogation centres at unknown locations. The junta are reported to deploy methods of torture during interrogation at these locations, relying on it as a tactic to coerce information, intimidate, discriminate against, and punish individuals resisting military rule – another tool of repression of individuals favoured by the junta.[39] Soldiers who have defected from the military have reported – and demonstrated with secretly filmed videos – that severe torture has been used, ordered and overseen by military personnel holding ranks of major captain, corporal and warrant officer.[40] Such reports tell of detainees being electrocuted, severely and fatally beaten with heavy whips and other objects, subjected to threats of sexual violence and being forced to perform humiliating acts.[41]

In 2023, AAPP interviewed 30 former political prisoners and witnesses who say mental and physical torture was inflicted on them. In some of these cases, former political prisoners have attested to a lack of proper medical care in prison, which depending on the individual circumstances of each case may amount to a form of inhuman or degrading treatment and even torture. In one such case the denial of adequate medical treatment caused the death of two new-born infants of female political prisoners, in contravention of international human rights law and standards related to the provision of healthcare to individuals in detention, and

particularly pregnant women and women giving birth in detention.

It is evident that since the coup, the military junta's utilization of sexual violence as a weapon of oppression has continued in both detainment settings and in conflict areas, as has been reported by the IIMM. In its report to the Human Rights Council in 2023, the Mechanism reported it had amassed substantial evidence of sexual violence, torture and other forms of mistreatment being perpetrated at numerous detention facilities, and had identified specific abusers or those responsible for the operation of these facilities.[43]

The junta systematically perpetrate sexual violence at all stages of the process – at the moment of detainment, during interrogation and whilst detained – with this violence being gendered and targeted. Women have reported beatings that targeted their breasts and hips, groping during body searches, whilst LGBTQI persons have reported being kicked in the genitals, and transgender women reportedly being placed in cells with all men.[45]

The military junta's reportedly pervasive use of torture and including the use of sexual violence against individuals involved in or supporting the pro-democracy movement is one brutal tool in its repertoire of oppressive tactics to destroy the will of the individual, intimidate their family and sow fear in the wider civilian population in apparent attempts to weaken the resistance movement.



## TORTURE

# 349

civilians, at least, killed by artillery shells in the first four months of 2024

As per the military's scorched earth policy, airstrikes are intrinsically linked to the military's loss of territory and are often conducted in response to clashes with armed groups, where civilians are intentionally targeted.

According to Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica, in just the first four months of 2024, airstrikes by the military junta killed over 359 civilians, including 61 children and injuring 756 others.[46] The junta are using military fighter jets and helicopters to kill and injure civilians and cause damage to civilian areas, and causing the destruction of religious buildings, schools, and health infrastructures.

# 756

civilians, at least, injured by airstrikes in the first four months of 2024

On 3 June 2024 at around 8:20am, the junta's air force intentionally targeted a wedding ceremony in Sagaing Region's Mingin Township.[47] The military jet dropped three 500lb bombs on the wedding, despite the fact that there was reportedly no fighting in the area at the time.[48] Over 30 people were injured in the airstrike, making it one of the deadliest of the year so far.

Mingin Township is a resistance stronghold, particularly in its rural areas. The military have responded to this territorial loss by bombing and shelling, not only resistance bases and camps, but intentionally targeting civilian areas.

# 359

civilians, at least, killed by airstrikes in the first four months of 2024

The event fits into a broader pattern of targeted aerial attacks, that continuously see the military carrying out airstrikes in civilian areas, where there is a resistance stronghold. For instance, this event is akin to that on 23 October 2022, where it is estimated that 60 civilians were killed by an airstrike during a music concert in Kachin State that was being held in celebration of the 62nd anniversary of the resistance organisation, the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO).

These attacks are shown to be targeted towards civilian areas. But the junta also conduct indiscriminatory airstrikes into civilian areas where EAO's hold control, creating a lack of measures to ensure the safety of civilians during fighting and no warning of potential airstrikes into civilian areas. The military have increasingly relied upon airstrikes within resistance-controlled areas, as they lose control on the ground.

The military junta has also consistently used military artillery against populated areas. At least 349 have been killed by artillery shells in 2023, according to AAPP data. In June 2024, OHCHR reported that from August 2023 – March 2024, incidents of artillery shelling killed at least 376 civilians.

Punitive attacks of this nature are illustrative of the junta's mentality and strategy of imposing collective punishment on the civilian population for the Spring Revolution and assumed support of the resistance. Both purposefully and indiscriminately targeting men, women, and children in civilian areas is a tactic wielded to punish the population for its supposed opposition to the military junta and aimed at terrorizing the civilian population into complacency, likely amounting to war crimes.



## AIRSTRIKE AND ARTILLERY

## Communication Restrictions

To cut-off of information as part of its military strategy, the junta systematically cut off mobile internet lines and Wifi throughout the area they are operating in, so that nearby townships couldn't be made aware of the military activities and human rights violations being committed there. [50] In May 2024, the junta intensified this oppressive tactic of restricting information flow further by announcing a ban on the use of Virtual Private Networks (VPNs), and stopping and searching individuals' phones.[51] Those caught have been forced to pay a bribe, or are arrested under arbitrary charges.

Such restrictions on the flow of information also inhibit reporting on and verifying accounts about human rights violations by the junta, both on the ground and from outside the country.[52]

## Restriction of Humanitarian Aid

The widening humanitarian crisis in Burma is directly connected to the attacks by the junta forces on the population combined with restricting access to critical aid. The forced displacement of communities through atrocities committed by the junta, the destruction of entire villages, including crops and farms, the destruction and burning of houses, transportation, obstruction of medical and food supplies all exacerbates the needs of

the population, who are therefore in need of humanitarian aid, which the junta intentionally restricts as part of its 'Four Cuts'. Since the coup, the junta have placed restrictions on humanitarian aid from UN agencies and other international organizations by impeding access to areas outside of its control through bureaucratic measures. Such measures include imposing requirements for travel authorizations for any movement of staff or materials and then denying such authorization requests.[53] Arrest and detention of humanitarian workers and impounding humanitarian supplies have also disrupted operations.

Humanitarian operations are also victim to the junta's internet and telecommunications shutdowns - in much of Sagaing and other States and Regions, they have been closed since mid-September 2021.[54] These blackouts affect vital communication between aid agencies, their staff, and partners.

The intention of the military, for decades, has been to restrict access to those in need of humanitarian aid. Nonetheless, some agencies are subjecting themselves to the restrictions in order to continue operating, thus complying with the junta leaders' military objectives. Knowing that UN agencies need assurance from the junta that they can stay and operate in Burma in order to receive funding from large international actors and get visas approved, the junta uses this to their advantage and are essentially blackmailing aid actors by threatening to further restrict access and visas.

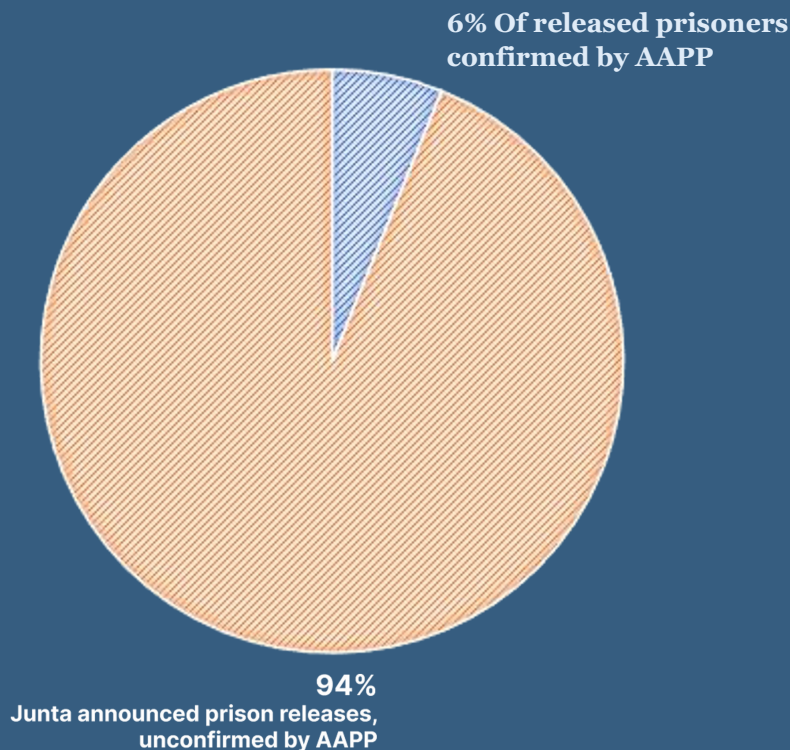


# RESTRICTIONS

The military junta's repressive tactics extend to the world stage, whereby it attempts to deceive the international community with prisoner release announcements and commuting of death sentences, in the hopes of attaining international legitimacy. These tactful yet deceptive gestures give the false impression that the junta is a cooperative and compromising regime, when in reality they belie its increasingly brutal and reprehensive conduct against those who oppose it and the civilian population. Burma's military has historically used amnesties to deceive the international community for respite from sanctions, diplomatic pressure and to gain credibility ahead of global events.

On 1 August 2023, the junta announced that it would release 7,749 sentenced prisoners and prisoners facing trial. However, few of these released were detained as political prisoners.[55] It has also refused to be transparent about the identities of the political prisoners so as to impede independent verification of accurate numbers released, and whether political prisoners are included in the release. On the same day, the junta announced that two of the five charges against President U Win Myint were removed, reducing his sentence by two years and meaning he would still have to serve 10 years in prison. Five of the 19 charges against Daw Aung San Suu Kyi were removed, reducing her sentence by 5 years, meaning her sentence totals 27 years imprisonment. These commuted charges therefore made no difference to what essentially amounts to life imprisonment. The junta attempts to curry international favor, and to portray themselves as a compromising authority meanwhile unleashing brutal repression to civilian populations.

NUMBER OF PRISONERS RELEASED DURING MASS RELEASES  
FEBRUARY 1, 2021 - JULY 25, 2024



## DECEPTION AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL



Meanwhile, as human rights violations are becoming increasingly blatant, the military's constitutional insulation and lack of accountability has emboldened them. Along with the inbuilt impunity that the 2008 Constitution grants, the egregious inaction by the international community to hold it to account for such crimes allows for their ongoing impunity. In some cases, global actors are complicit in these crimes, failing to impose sanctions and continue to hold meetings, justifying their legitimacy and further encouraging the junta to continue its committal of human rights violations.

Despite well documented atrocities spanning years, the UN Security Council has failed to take effective measures. Existing international efforts, such as cases at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and International Criminal Court (ICC), are unfortunately inherently limited.

The Southeast Asia region and Burma's neighbours have and continue to play a role in aggravating the crisis in the country. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) issued a statement[56] in September 2023 strongly condemning the ongoing violent actions in Burma, acknowledging the suffering of the population, the humanitarian crisis, and the destruction of public facilities, as well as reaffirming the commitment to assisting Burma in finding peace and a lasting solution to the crisis. Yet, simultaneously, it has members at the top of the list of trading partners and arms suppliers.

In his May 2023 address to the Human

Rights Council, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar reported with concern the provision of military equipment to the junta, including fighter jets, helicopters, reconnaissance and attack drones, advanced missile systems, tank upgrades, radio and communication equipment, radar complexes, and components for naval ships, amounting to at least \$1 billion USD.[57] From the junta's perspective, engagement with the international community allows for further arms deals, weaker sanctions, and potential support from other states.

As stated in SAC-M's report How the UN Is Failing Myanmar,[58] since February 2021 at least 66 "official" meetings between the junta and UN representatives have been publicly reported. In August 2023, Martin Griffiths - the highest UN official to visit Naypyidaw since the coup to date, met with military officials in Burma. The meeting was to negotiate humanitarian access across Myanmar, including to Rakhine State following Cyclone Mocha - despite the cyclone occurring three months previous - and was used by the junta as propaganda to gain international recognition and legitimacy. The statement following the visit did cite the cause of the escalating humanitarian crisis as the junta's atrocities, or that the junta is weaponizing humanitarian aid by blocking access to Cyclone Mocha victims.[59] But the visit was used as a manipulation tool to push the narrative of cooperation with international bodies, which the junta media outlets portrayed as 'political progress in Myanmar'.[60]

## DECEPTION AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL



On the international stage, meeting with diplomats creates the false impression that the junta are open to dialogue. These visits enable the junta to manipulate the international community through the media, and so it therefore only allows visits from countries which will support and facilitate its regime.[61]

Diplomatic relations with the junta are projected from Naypyidaw as engagement and adhering to junta-led dialogue. The junta is given legitimacy by neighbors who appear more sympathetic to military rule or apprehensive about the impact of a prolonged conflict. Through these lines of diplomatic relations, neighboring countries reveal an expectation for the junta to prevail over the pro-democracy movement, and therefore accelerate the junta-led dialogue and international legitimization of the regime.

Human rights violations by the military junta, against its own population, have not only continued unabated between 2023 and 2024, but have seemingly intensified and multiplied. Such violations are committed through the junta's reliance on its repertoire of oppressive tools and tactics, and is facilitated through impunity at the regional and national level. The patterns of oppression committed by the junta forces is evident when examining arbitrary arrests, torture, and massacres, while executing a nationwide tactic of collective punishment. Through strategies such as 'Four Cuts', the junta have ensured the general suffering of the population.

To the junta, it is essentially a power game. Military officials persist in the execution of their annihilation plan with arson and airstrikes to destroy villages, conducting arbitrary arrests and committing murders, all in a ruthless bid to subvert and control the population, effectively holding them hostage in zones of control and non-control. Simultaneously, they engage in negotiations with humanitarian aid organizations, striving to create the illusion of humanitarian cooperation. Meanwhile, entities condemning these heinous acts begrudgingly accommodate the junta, securing in exchange the bare minimum of operational space.

FINAL COMMENTS

# FINAL COMMENTS



The legitimization of the junta's terrible actions, through the silence or complicity of international actors, adds to the number and depth of a population once again marked by the violence of its state. The lack of resources due to the restrictions of the military, create a strategy for ongoing suffering. There is no pity or intention of reparation on the part of the junta, which insists on continuing to perpetrate undeniable human rights crimes on a widespread and systematic scale.

While the junta continues to seek ways to maintain and entrench its grip on power, manipulating humanitarian entities to regulate themselves in accordance with its regime and making agreements with neighbouring countries in attempts to bolster itself against the growing power of the Spring Revolution, any sliver of credibility it ever had is fast diminishing.

Since the 2021 coup, the population of Burma have expressed their strong opposition to the illegitimate government through widespread protests, mass participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), silent protests held throughout the country, and the emergence of armed resistance groups in response to the junta's consolidation of power.

The population is rejecting and rebelling against the military junta, signalling their refusal to tolerate oppression it has long been subjected to. Their resolute stance is a clear expression of "enough is enough," as they reject the junta's brutal atrocities. The Spring Revolution is growing in strength, with the aim of putting an end to the indiscriminate violence against their own citizens.

## FINAL COMMENTS



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