

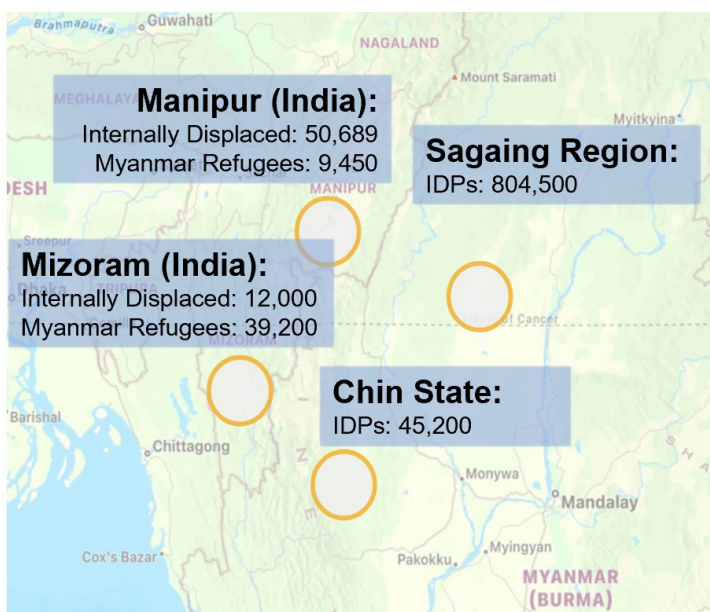


Indo-Burma Region Situation Report

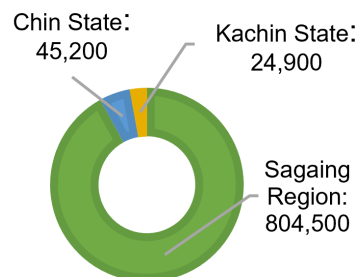
August, 2023 Update

Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples, Gender Justice and Peace

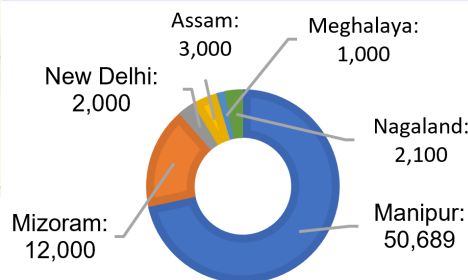
This monthly situation report tracks developing trends in the Indo-Burma region and is current with data through to August 31st, 2023. The report is compiled by the Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples, Gender Justice and Peace, in partnership with the Manipur Women Gun Survivor's Network and the Northeast Women's Initiative for Peace.



Breakdown of Internally Displaced Persons in Northwest Myanmar



Breakdown of Internally Displaced Persons from Manipur



Key Figures in Manipur:



NORTHEAST INDIA SITUATION Key Updates:

- 21 killed in August**, adding to the **225 people** who have been killed in escalations of violent conflict in Manipur since May 3rd. Over **6,000 injured**, over **70,000 displaced**, and over **8,814 houses burned** since the beginning of the conflict.^{1, 2} The escalation follows heightened tensions between Meitei and Kuki communities, in part triggered by the Meitei community's push for Scheduled Tribe Status in Manipur. Kuki groups have feared Meitei ST status would diminish job, educational, political and land opportunities.³
- 20 cases of gender-based violence** against women have been recorded, which include gang-rapes, torture, and assault with intent to outrage the modesty of women.⁴ Ground realities are likely higher. In addition, **21 women** have been murdered since the outbreak of violence in Manipur on May 3rd.²²



NORTHEAST INDIA SITUATION (continued):

- **316 arrested, 21,453 in preventative detention, and 6,523 FIRs** have been lodged in Manipur since the outbreak of violence in Manipur on May 3rd.^{5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11} Government data also reports 5,558 incidents of arson occurring since May 3rd, however, internal tracking reveals much higher numbers.
- **40,600**¹² Myanmar asylum-seekers are currently estimated in Mizoram; however, estimates are likely an undercount. The Mizoram government continues to issue Identity cards to refugees; however, civil organizations still push the Indian government to afford stronger legal rights to asylum seekers.
- **5,232**¹² Myanmar asylum-seekers have approached the UNHCR office in New Delhi since February, 2021. The true number of unreported refugees in New Delhi is still unknown.
- **9,450**^{12, 13} Myanmar asylum-seekers are currently estimated in Manipur; however, estimates are likely undercounted. The majority of refugees in Manipur remain in hiding due to fear of retribution by the Manipur State government.

MYANMAR SITUATION Key Updates:

- **55,300** Asylum-seekers have now crossed the Indo-Burma border since the February 1st, 2021 coup. Numbers are expected to be an undercount.^{12, 13}
- **1,927,200** Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are still seeking refuge within Myanmar's borders. This includes **804,500** IDPs in Sagaing Region and **45,200** IDPs in Chin State, two of the three states sharing a border with Northeast India.¹²
- **24,586** Myanmar Nationals have been arrested by the military regime (19,901 still detained), and **4,023** civilians have been killed by the military regime. These numbers include arrests of **658** children, and the deaths of **449** children. Many children have died or been crippled by land mines set by the military regime.¹⁴
- **2,086 homes** have been burned down by the Myanmar military during multiple offensives from July to mid-August.¹⁵ Data for Myanmar reports **74,874** homes have been destroyed by the military since the beginning of the military coup. Shelter and basic commodities remain limited for people in Myanmar's border states due to road blocks and heightened conflict.¹⁶
- **16 attacks on healthcare** facilities across Myanmar were carried out over an 11-day period in August.¹⁷ Since the beginning of the coup, **89 doctors** and health care workers have been murdered, and 110 have been injured. The majority of incidents have occurred from military raids, police raids, and other junta-associated violence.¹⁸



MYANMAR SITUATION Key Updates (Continued):

- **State of Emergency extended** by Myanmar military for an additional 6-months, which will consequently delay any elections held in the country until 2024. Elections planned for 2023 were seen by the international community as largely undemocratic.¹²

SITUATION OVERVIEW:

In Northeast India, violent conflict which erupted in Manipur on May 3rd, 2023, has to date taken the lives of an estimated **225 people**, while also injuring over 6,000, and displacing over **70,000 civilians**. Over **8,814 homes** have been lost to arson.^{1, 2}

The central government has yet to structure and implement wide-spread humanitarian and legal support for over **55,300**¹² Myanmar refugees and asylum-seekers who have entered Northeast India, which many view as a major contributing factor to recent unrest in Manipur.

In Manipur, violent conflict continued throughout August, but continued to let up considerably compared to earlier months. The majority of incidents of violent conflict took place in Bishnupur and Churachandpur Districts, with many incidents splitting the border between the two districts. Early morning gunfights were common between communities and often ended in a number of casualties. Over the month of August, at least 21 people lost their lives, including one policeman and 20 civilians.¹

After an escalation on August 5th, when 3 civilians were killed in their homes in Kwakta, Bishnupur, and 2 more civilians and 1 police officer were killed in retaliatory fire in hours following,¹⁹ the Indian government sent an additional 10 companies (about 1,200 soldiers) of military personnel to Manipur.²⁰ There are currently an estimated 54,200 troops on the ground in Manipur, which includes 37,200 military and paramilitary personnel.¹

Another incident of gang-rape surfaced in August, occurring on May 3rd, 2023, in Churachandpur. After a 37-year-old woman's home was set to flames, she fled with her two infant sons. While fleeing, she was pinned down by a group of men and gang-raped.²¹ The Zero FIR (First Incident Report) was filed on August 9th, adding to the 6,523 conflict-related FIRs in the state.⁵

21 women have been killed in the conflict to date,²² and at least 20 incidents of gender-based violence have occurred, including rape, torture, and assault with intent to outrage the modesty of women.³ 5 police officers have been suspended in connection to the gang-rape case which went viral in July. The police officers are said to have handed the women over to the mob of men, and watched as they were paraded naked and gang-raped.²³



SITUATION OVERVIEW (continued):

While 212 displaced Manipuris who fled to Myanmar in the beginning of the conflict returned to India in August,²⁴ at least 300 Myanmar asylum seekers were deported from Manipur. They had fled for their lives from constant airstrikes and arbitrary killings in Tamu Township, of Sagaing Region, Myanmar.¹³

The Manipur government is beginning to transition IDPs to prefabricated homes, which are expected to house around 3,000 families. Many IDPs fear that after they move into the prefabricated homes, they will never again be able to return to their homes, which they lost to the conflict.²⁵

In the end of August, Manipur held its first local assembly meeting since the crisis began, however, it the session ended in less than an hour, enraging citizens across Manipur who had hoped leaders would come together to address continued violence throughout the state.²⁶

The National Crime Records Bureau arrived in Manipur in the first week of August to begin work documenting Myanmar asylum-seekers, which they term as 'illegal-immigrants'. They will begin work in Imphal's Sajiwa Jail, and have a September 30th deadline to conclude collection of data.²⁷ The Manipur Human Rights Commission assessed the living conditions of Sajiwa Jail Detention Center, where 105 Myanmar asylum-seekers are currently detained, concluding that inadequate food and medical supplies needed immediate government attention. Detainees include 6 children and 2 pregnant women, all of whom don't have access to relevant healthcare professionals.²⁸

In Mizoram, there are an estimated **40,600**¹² Myanmar refugees. The Mizoram State Government has undertaken informal measures to ensure the safety and security of Myanmar Nationals in the region. The government has led a campaign to issue Identity cards to all refugees.²⁹ Although the Identity Cards don't hold any legal ramifications, they have helped refugees and asylum-seekers assimilate more freely into society, and have also given humanitarian aid organizations a structure within which to assess needs and administer aid.

9,190 refugee students, including 2,574 children displaced from Manipur, as well as refugee students from Myanmar, resumed education in Myanmar in August. They all receive a mid-day meal, and provide the children with critical social structures. High school pass percentage among Myanmar refugee students was 90.32% last year, showing what can be achieved when a Indian states have a structured response to refugees fleeing from war in neighboring countries.³⁰

In Myanmar, heavy fighting remained constant across the nation's border states. August continued to see heavy airstrikes, arbitrary arrests, arbitrary executions, raids and the destruction of homes. IDPs grew significantly in August, especially in the Northwest Sagaing Region and Magway Region, as well as in Southeast regions of the state. Worsening food insecurities and attacks on civilian infrastructure continued to create roadblocks to survival for civilians.¹²



SITUATION OVERVIEW (continued):

Northwest Myanmar continued to see constant airstrikes, landmine incidents, arbitrary arrests and executions, and arson attacks. Increased violence has continued to drive an influx of refugees across the Indo-Burma border. Consequence of increased fighting, humanitarian aid access became nearly inaccessible in Northwest regions.¹²

Sagaing Region experienced widespread torching of homes and civilian infrastructure. On August 11th, a monastery sheltering IDPs in Ta Laing Village was hit by airstrikes, injuring 10 and killing 4, including an 8-month-old child.³¹ On August 15th, a column of junta soldiers razed over 50 homes and murdered at least 4 civilians in Myinmu Township.³² On August 14th, in Mu Le Village, Pinlebu Township, the Myanmar junta killed and burned 4 civilians, including a 21-year-old pregnant woman.³³

Landmines in Sagaing Region continue to pose major threats. On August 17th, a truck carrying political prisoners hit a landmine, killing the driver and a doctor in custody, while injuring 25 others.³⁴

On August 17th, the Myanmar military raided homes looking for resistance soldiers. During the raids, they killed two civilians, including a 3-year-old boy murdered in front of his mother. His mother and her other son were taken into custody.³⁵

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) remains a major threat to women in Myanmar. On August 26th, in Wetlet Township, a pregnant woman and her sister-in-law were gang raped and murdered.³⁶

There are over **804,500**¹² IDPs in Sagaing. Constant airstrikes and artillery shelling in Tamu Township have forced many across the Indo-Burma border in July and August, however, the Indian government has been working to force the asylum-seekers back into Myanmar.¹³

Chin State IDPs fell slightly to **45,200** people in August. The Chin State still experienced heavy airstrikes, and frequent phone and internet blackouts throughout August, as well as increasingly difficult aid and transportation across the Indo-Burma border.¹²

Magway Region faced increased threats of arbitrary arrests and executions. On August 21st, 100 civilians were arrested during a raid, and 4 men were tortured, leading to the death of one man.³⁷

Southern Chin and Rakhine Regions still maintain a ceasefire between the Arakan Army and the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF). Although access to humanitarian aid in the region has expanded, saltwater contamination, poor drainage, and sanitation are now posing severe threats for a rise in malaria and water-borne illnesses across the region.¹²



SITUATION OVERVIEW (continued):

At the end of June, Chief Minister N Biren Singh was scheduled to announce his resignation, however, in a dramatic turn he tore up his resignation papers citing large support from his followers. The following day, the Chief Minister posted a number of polarizing and inappropriate tweets. After one twitter user posted, “You should have resigned long time ago”, CM N Biren Singh responded saying, “Are you from India or Myanmar :D ?” This kind of discourse on public platforms only adds fuel to the flames in Manipur.⁴²

The Supreme Court of India has launched aggressive criticism against Manipur Police Forces and their handling of conflict in Manipur, calling them either “incapable” of their duties, or intentionally “uninterested” in the rule of law.⁴³

Although the Manipur government and security forces claim to be doing their best to destroy bunkers and de-escalate violent conflict, 20 people have died in July and the first week of August, and countless more have been injured and displaced.¹

In Mizoram, there are an estimated **40,100⁶** Myanmar refugees. The Mizoram State Government has undertaken informal measures to ensure the safety and security of Myanmar Nationals in the region. The government has led a campaign to issue Identity cards to all refugees.⁴⁴ Although the Identity Cards don’t hold any legal ramifications, they have helped refugees and asylum-seekers assimilate more freely into society, and have also given humanitarian aid organizations a structure within which to assess needs and administer aid.

REGIONAL BACKGROUND:

Northeast India is home to one of the world’s longest running armed conflicts, where a former British colonial martial law signed into law by the Union of India on September 11th, 1958, known as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), remains in effect to this day. The imposition of this law over the last 6 decades has led to the death of over 20,000 Indigenous peoples in the Northeast India state of Manipur alone.

Manipur Violence

In Manipur, tensions had been rising throughout April over the push by the Meitei Indigenous community to receive Scheduled Tribe status. Meitei people, who make up 53% of the population of Manipur, had applied for Scheduled Tribe in 2013. Other Indigenous groups in Manipur, including Kuki and Naga groups, fear the recognition of Meiteis as Scheduled Tribes would take away opportunities for education, jobs, political seats, and also affect land rights.

Without clear communication from the Manipur government about the actual implications of approved Meitei ST status, protests became violent. Houses and communities on both sides were targeted. Tensions began to simmer on April 27th when protestors in Churhandpur torched a new gym that Chief Minister N. Biren Singh was scheduled to speak, leading to an internet shut down.



SITUATION OVERVIEW (continued):

Central, Northeast and Southeast Myanmar has seen increased threats to IDPs, shelling and airstrikes which have heavily damaged houses, and reduced access to food and basic needs. The Myanmar military has continued to target vulnerable IDPs, pushing thousands across the Thai-Burma border.¹²

Bago Region saw upticks of raids and consequent IDPs in August. Heavy airstrikes and artillery shelling by a junta offensive in Nyaunglebin Disting in the third week of August left 5 civilians dead and 12 injured.³⁸

Monsoon season has hit Bago region the hardest, with floods killing at least 5 people and displacing tens of thousands. Across Myanmar, 48,000 have been displaced in recent monsoon floods.³⁹

Kachin State suffered from increased raids and arbitrary arrests and executions. On August 25th in Nant Yar, Kat Hmaw, and Saing Hpara Villages, at least 100 civilians were arrested to be used as human shields for advancing junta columns.⁴⁰

Across Myanmar, the Military regime has continued to target health, education and other civilian infrastructure. Between August 9th and August 22nd, there were 16 attacks on medical professionals and medical facilities and infrastructure, including ambushes on ambulances, abduction of doctors, murder of medical professionals, arson attacks and airstrike attacks.¹⁷

Forced resignations have been a common part of military rule, and 10 more resignations were announced in early August, including Chief Justice Tun Tun Oo, the Auditor-General Tin Oo, the Myanmar Anti-Corruption Commission chairman, Htay Aung, and the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission chairman, Hla Myint.⁴¹

Justice for Myanmar (JFM) has urged the Singapore government to take more immediate action against businesses and partners of the Myanmar Junta, who have been exporting weapons, military equipment, civilian goods, and technology to the military regime. JFM has also accused the Myanmar military of using Singapore banks to unlawfully transfer funds belonging to the people of Myanmar.⁴² China continues to prop up the military regime, with 597 investment projects totaling \$21.863 billion USD. Chinese investment represents 23.5% of total foreign investment in Myanmar.⁴³

The Prime Minister of the National Unity Government (NUG), Mahn Winn Khaing Thann, has appealed to resistance fighters not to engage in any criminal behavior or crimes against humanity as the resistance movement grows. His appeal comes after reports of resistance fighters using weapons and armed status to bully and abuse civilians.⁴⁴



HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE:

Manipur Response:

Humanitarian aid in Manipur remains difficult, especially in Kuki areas where education access and critical medical supplies and medical professionals remain largely inaccessible. In response to conflict, Manipur Women Gun Survivors Network (MWGSN) and partners have distributed **3,184 Core Relief Items (CRI)** across 3 relief camps in Kakching District. CRIs include sanitation kits, female reproductive health and hygiene kits, food items, water, and education materials.¹

In Delhi, MWGSN and partners have distributed **438 CRIs** to 45 survivors across 15 households.

MWGSN and the Northeast India Women's Initiative for Peace (NEIWIP) have also signed MoUs with community leaders on the ground to assist in psychosocial support relief and access to humanitarian aid for survivors.

Broader access to humanitarian and government aid for IDPs across Manipur needs national and international attention as conflict in Manipur continues into its 5th month.

Myanmar Response:

In **Southeast** States and Regions, UNHCR has distributed 13,100 CRIs to survivors, including kitchen sets, mosquito nets, sanitation kits, sleeping mats, solar lamps, and jerry cans. 2,200 people in Kayah and Kayin States received plastic tarpaulins and roofing sheets for shelter assistance.¹²

In **Kachin** and **Shan (North)**, CRIs were distributed to 1,980 people, and shelter assistance provided to 270 people. **Northwest** Myanmar remained largely inaccessible to humanitarian aid organizations; however, shelter materials were distributed to 280 people in Magway Region.

In **Rakhine** and **Chin (South)**, 34,200 CRIs were distributed, and 37,800 received emergency shelter assistance from UNHCR. 2,300 people were moved to transitional shelters reconstructed by UNHCR and partners.¹²

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REGIONAL BACKGROUND (Continued):

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On May 3rd, the All Tribal Student Union of Manipur led a march of over 60,000 in protest of the ST status application of the Meiteis, and an armed mob of protestors attacked Meitei communities in Torbung, Churachandpur during the attack. Women groups organized human chains to stop armed mobs from entering Meitei communities. Kuki leaders, including MLAs, claim the violence was initiated by the Meiteis and submitted a petition for a separate state, citing fear of future attacks. Groups on the ground have described the desperate need for peace negotiations and leaders from both communities to invest in a mutual understanding of each other and the situation, while also cautioning that there are political interests at play which have yet to be uncovered.

Myanmar Civil War

On February 1st, 2021, across the Indo-Burma border in Myanmar, the military overthrew a democratically elected government in a coup d'état which has since left Myanmar (Burma) in a state of violent conflict and turmoil. Fleeing conflict zones where fighting and arbitrary military murders remain a daily constant, many Burmese refugees arrive in Northeast India carrying the traumas of death, sexual violence, and displacement – the traumas of war. With 1.2 million refugees and asylum-seekers, and another 1.5 million Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs), Myanmar has the 6th largest global population of refugees in the world. The UNHCR reports that over 50,000 displaced peoples, including at least 18 lawmakers of Myanmar's National League for Democracy, have crossed the Indo-Burma border in the last 2 years. The vast majority of displaced peoples have crossed the Indo-Burma border without documentation. Many Burmese refugees do not have access to Identity Cards or the means to fulfil their most basic needs.

A growing humanitarian crisis has evolved over the past two years, and exacerbates the already dire circumstances people in Northeast India face under martial law. Many survivors lack basic necessities, such as food, shelter, and medical attention. Burmese refugees who have not received official Identity Cards are at risk of detention or being returned to Myanmar.



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Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples, Gender Justice and Peace

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**Manipur Women
Gun Survivors Network**

