

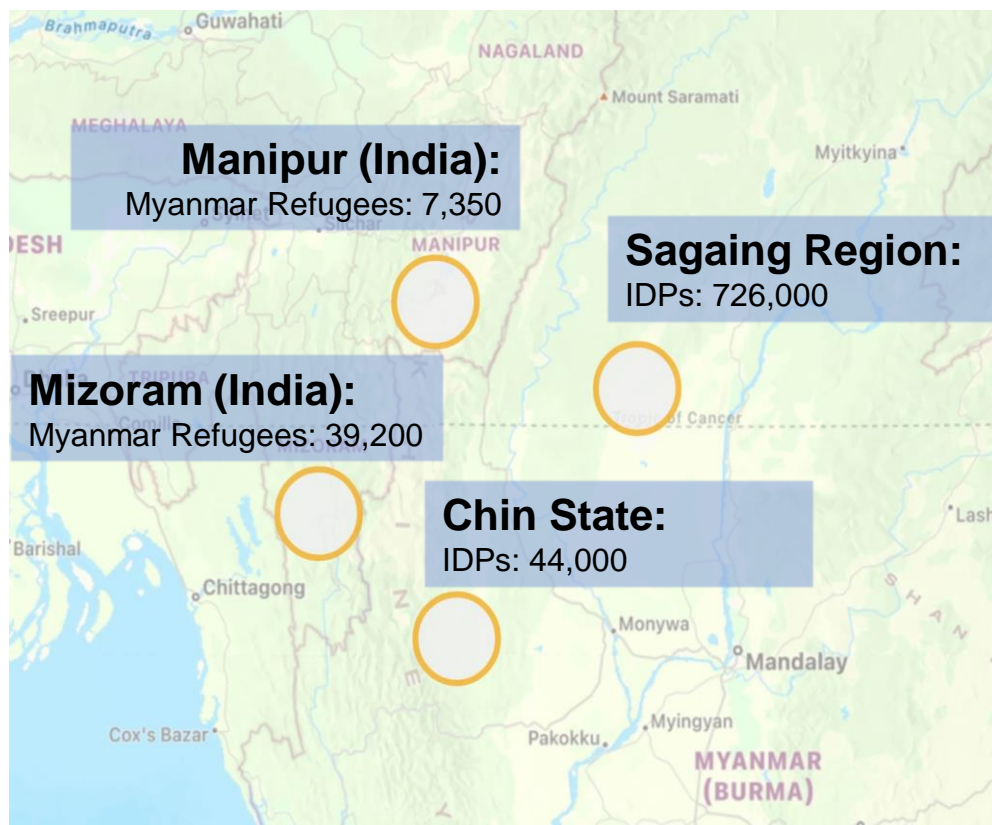


Indo-Burma Region Situation Report

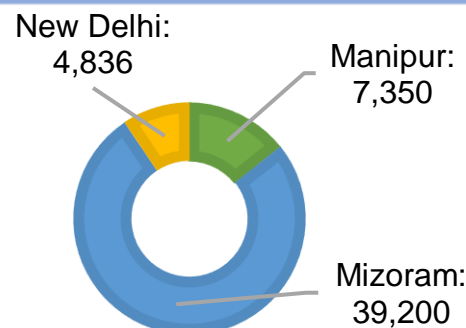
March, 2023 Update

Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples, Gender Justice and Peace

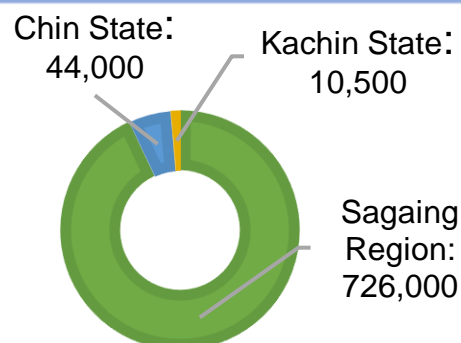
This monthly situation report tracks developing trends in the Indo-Burma region and is current with data through to March 25th, 2023. The report is compiled by the Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples, Gender Justice and Peace, in partnership with the Manipur Women Gun Survivor's Network and the Northeast Women's Initiative for Peace.



Breakdown of Myanmar Refugees in India



Breakdown of Internally Displaced Persons in Northwest Myanmar



MYANMAR SITUATION Key Updates:

- **51,600¹** Asylum-seekers have now crossed the Indo-Burma border since the February 1st, 2021 coup. Numbers are expected to be an undercount.
- **1,912,769²** Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are still seeking refuge within Myanmar's borders. This includes **726,000¹** IDPs in Sagaing Region and **44,000¹** IDPs in Chin State, two of the three states sharing a border with Northeast India.
- **20,822³** Myanmar Nationals have been arrested by the military regime, and **3,158³** have been killed by the military regime. These numbers include arrests of **565** children, and the deaths of **305** children. Many children have died or been crippled by land mines set by the military regime.



MYANMAR SITUATION (continued):

- **Over 100 homes destroyed** by the Myanmar military in Mandalay. Residents were evicted moments before the homes were destroyed, without the chance to collect their belongings. The military claimed these homes were encroaching on government property, adding to over **50,000** evictions which the military has made since the coup.⁶ Over **58,000** homes have been destroyed by the military and basic commodities has remained limited for people in Myanmar's border states due to road blocks and heightened conflict.^{4, 5}
- **Over 28 civilians killed in Shan State monastery**, including **3 Buddhist monks**, with evidence the military lined up the civilians and executed them.⁷ In Sagaing region, the Myanmar military raped, tortured, beheaded, and executed at least **17 people** who had been detained by the military.⁸
- **Chin townships hit by airstrikes every day** over the last two months. At least 53 airstrikes had been reported, dropping at least 140 bombs in Mindat, Hakha, Matupi, and Thantlang townships.⁹

NORTHEAST INDIA SITUATION Key Updates:

- **At least 12 insurgents arrested** in India's Northeast in the last month^{10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17} adding to over **10,135** arrests of insurgents made in Northeast India since 2014. During that same period, **587** insurgents have been killed in counter-insurgency efforts, along with the death of **128** special forces personnel.¹⁸ **15 members** of the Eastern Naga National Government surrendered to the Indian government on March 13th, 2023.¹⁹
- **Over 170 Myanmar Refugees²⁰** arrested in Manipur since January for "illegal" entry into the country, adding to a rising number of arrests of Myanmar asylum-seekers in Manipur, deemed unlawful by many experts. Courts in Manipur have consistently sided with Myanmar nationals, stating that they are not "illegal" immigrants, and should be treated as refugees.²¹ **One refugee died** in custody in late February, 2023.²²
- **39,200¹** 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.
- **7,350¹** 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.



NORTHEAST INDIA SITUATION Key Updates (Continued):

- **Five government officials of Manipur arrested** for tampering official land records. The officials were attempting to fabricate government land, against the Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reform Act of 1960.²³ There were also clashes in Manipur among Indigenous activists and police forces over government wildlife sanctuaries encroaching on tribal lands.²⁴
- **21-year-old Myanmar refugee was gang raped** in Delhi. She was abducted, along with her daughter, and raped by 4 men on February 22nd, 2023, before being abandoned in an unknown location.²⁵
- **Government of India withdraws AFSPA** from 19 new police municipalities in Manipur.³⁸ The move by the Indian government represents recent shifts away from conflict and towards regional peace accords.

SITUATION OVERVIEW:

In Myanmar, heavy fighting remained constant across the nation's border states. March continued to see an increased number of airstrikes, evictions and destruction of homes, and arbitrary arrests and executions. Internationally Displaced Persons (IDPs) have continued to increase, specifically in the Northwest Sagaing Region, Chin State, and Magway Region, as well as in Southeast regions of the state. refugees and asylum-seekers in neighboring countries, and worsening food insecurities and fuel shortages.^{1, 4}

Northwest Myanmar saw dramatic increases in 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. Magway and Sagaing Regions both continued to experience Internet shutdowns and blackouts, hampering humanitarian access and communications among civilians. Fighting has increased the costs of essential goods due to movement and trade restrictions.⁴

Sagaing Region continued to experience arbitrary military arrests and executions. In early March, the Myanmar military raped, tortured, beheaded and executed at least 17 people in Nyaung Yin and Tar Tain villages of central Sagaing Region.⁸

There are an estimated **726,000**¹ IDPs in Sagaing, a number driven by increased military air strikes and raids, imposed martial law, food shortages, destruction of property, among other violence in the region.⁴ Data for Myanmar has also published that, of the 55,484 homes burned by the Junta across Myanmar, **43,292**⁵ homes have been burned down in Sagaing Region.



SITUATION OVERVIEW (continued):

Chin State IDPs number north of **44,000**¹ people. Over the last 2 months, Chin townships have been hit with over 53 airstrikes, amounting the dropping of over 140 bombs. The attacks are daily encounters and target military bases as well as civilian infrastructure such as churches, schools, hospitals, and homes.⁹

Southern Chin and Rakhine Regions still maintain a ceasefire between the Arakan Army and the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF), however, many worry that the ceasefire will fail after the seasonal harvest is finished. There are reports of forced recruitment of civilians, and there has been an increased Rohingya exodus via dangerous land and sea routes.⁴

In March, the United Nations accompanied representatives of the Myanmar military regime to Bangladesh, where parties discussed repatriation strategies and terms of Rohingya refugees, however, many experts believe these talks are premature and unrealistic given current internal conflict in Myanmar.²⁶

Northeast and Southeast Myanmar has seen increased shelling and airstrikes, arbitrary arrests and forced labor, reduced access to food and basic needs, and continued attacks near town centers and IDPs sites.⁴

Mandalay saw upticks in IDPs in March consequence of forced evictions, destruction of homes, and arbitrary civilian arrests and executions. On March 11th, 2023, the Myanmar military executed over 28 civilians sheltering in a monastery, among the murdered were 3 Buddhist monks. Those hiding in the monastery were reportedly lined up outside the building and shot.⁷ Also in Mandalay, the Myanmar military forcibly evicted residents of over 100 homes comprising of two residential blocks without warning. Residents had no time to collect their personal belongings before their homes were destroyed. Over 5,000 homes have been destroyed over military claims of encroachment on government land since the beginning of the coup.⁶

A new report by the UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar, Thomas Andrews, reports over **58,000** homes being destroyed by the Myanmar military. Although UN figures vary between 50,000 and 80,000 Myanmar refugees and asylum seekers due to conflict in the country, Andrews reports that the number of undetected movement across international borders is likely in the hundreds of thousands.⁵

A note smuggled out of Obo prison in Mandalay and obtained by the Anti-Junta Forces Coordination Committee, on March 8th, 2023, exposed violence against incarcerated women. The note describes an incident where 150 male prison guards beat over 100 female political prisoners with batons, bamboo sticks and slingshots, resulting in broken limbs as well as eye and facial injuries.²⁷



SITUATION OVERVIEW (continued):

Across Myanmar, the Military regime has selected five political parties eligible for the general election. The parties selected are all either pro-military or lack enough support to win or gain any influence in national politics. The five parties selected are the Development Party, National Unity Party, Union Solidarity, Union Democratic Party, Public Contribute Students Democracy Party, and the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party. Opponents urge a boycott of the election, as any participation and loss will lend credibility to the military. Experts have concluded that elected officials will still not have the power to represent the people of Myanmar.²⁸

Internationally, new reports of aviation fuel shipments compiled by Amnesty International, Global Witness, and Burma Campaign UK, suggest that countries involved in recent shipments include Greece, India, Japan, Thailand, and Luxembourg.²⁹

Although the United States has passed the Burma Act, has brought a case against the Myanmar military to the International Court of Justice, supports a UN resolution prohibiting the import of guns into Myanmar, and currently maintains sanctions against 80 people and 32 entities, they have approved new development projects involving Japan and the Myanmar military. Experts believe that this shift in Japan and US policy stems from fears of China, Russia, and India gaining influence in Myanmar.³⁰

New reports suggest that in October, 2022, an Indian state-owned firm sold artillery barrels worth upwards of \$330,000 USD to the Myanmar military.³¹ Indian government involvement in the Myanmar military regime can also be traced to the Bilateral Kaladan Transport project, which connects Rakhine State to Kolkata by a hybrid of sea, river, and road transportation via Mizoram. Min Aung Hlaing, the head of the military regime, has recently discussed the acceleration of the infrastructure project with the Indian foreign secretary, and has also visited transport construction sites. India has become the regimes top partner, after Russia, with frequent high-level bilateral visits.³²

In Northeast India, the government has yet to structure and implement wide-spread humanitarian and legal support for over **51,600**¹ Myanmar refugees and asylum-seekers. Since January, 2023, over 170 Myanmar refugees and asylum-seekers have been arrested by Manipur officials.²⁰ In late February, 2023, a 32-year-old refugee died in custody in a Foreigner Detention Center in Imphal East District of Manipur. Although there were no reports of foul play, and the young man died of a cardiac arrest, no medical professionals arrived on site despite desperate calls for help when the young man went into cardiac arrest, and fellow detainees were unable to revive him. The conditions faced by detained refugees are harsh, sleeping on cold hard floors with little to eat.²²

In Manipur, there are an estimated **7,350**¹ Myanmar refugees, most of whom are in hiding due to a crackdown on what Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh is calling “illegal migrants”.³³ Local residents who assist in hiding refugees have also been arrested, with the IPR minister Dr. Sapan Ranjan urging people to be alert against “illegal migrants” and not to assist in hiding them.³⁴ The



SITUATION OVERVIEW (continued):

government also assigned additional police personnel to the region in the wake of intensifying conflict close to the border. They hope to reduce the number of migrants crossing the border.³⁹

Manipur also saw increased disputes over land in the last month, with Indigenous rights activists clashing over government owned wildlife sanctuaries which they claim encroach on their tribal lands. In contrast, the Chief Minister N. Biren Singh accused the protesters of using protected forests for poppy and drug cultivation, despite the fact that many Indigenous peoples are local farmers growing legal groups to make a living.³⁵ Protests escalated, and protestors were reportedly injured by teargas, while police were injured by stones thrown at them.²³ Five government officials were arrested for tampering official government land records to fabricate government owned territory, violating the Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reform Act of 1960.²⁴

The Manipur government also withdrew from the Suspension of Operations agreement, of which signatories include the Kuki National Army (KNA) and the Zomi Revolutionary Army (ZRA), largely due to influencing agitation over potentially illegal government land claims. Experts fear that the government's withdrawal could escalate the conflict between insurgency groups in Manipur and the government.³⁶

In Mizoram, there are an estimated **39,200**¹ 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.³⁷ 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.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE:

In Northwest Myanmar regions, humanitarian aid remains largely inaccessible to those in need due to heightened conflict. In the Magway Region, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has distributed 2,700 Core Relief Items (CRIs) to families in need Pakokku and Seikphyu Townships of Magway Region.¹

In Rakhine State, the ceasefire has improved humanitarian access. As of December 27th, 2022, 11 humanitarian aid organizations have been granted access to the region. Restricted areas still remain, and humanitarian access across the rest of Myanmar is still largely restricted.⁴ The UNHCR and partners have distributed over CRIs to 19,687 IDPs (4,859 families), and 872 people in Rakhine North. People in Rakhine central also received assistance to build longhouses.¹

Kachin and Shan (North) States have received CRIs for 1,570 IDPs as well as 250 iron sheets provided to 25 IDPs to renovate shelters.¹ The region has also received micro-grants from the UNHCR to improve damaged civilian infrastructure.⁴



HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE (Continued):

Southeast States have received CRIs for 16,253 IDPs, and 3,042 people (869 families) received iron roofing sheets. In Bago Region (East), the UNHCR distributed 270 desks and benches, benefiting 1,300 students and 700 IDPs.

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.

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 50,000 displaced peoples, including at least 14 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 Myanmar.

For additional details, please contact the office of Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples, Gender Justice and Peace:

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**Manipur Women
Gun Survivors Network**





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