

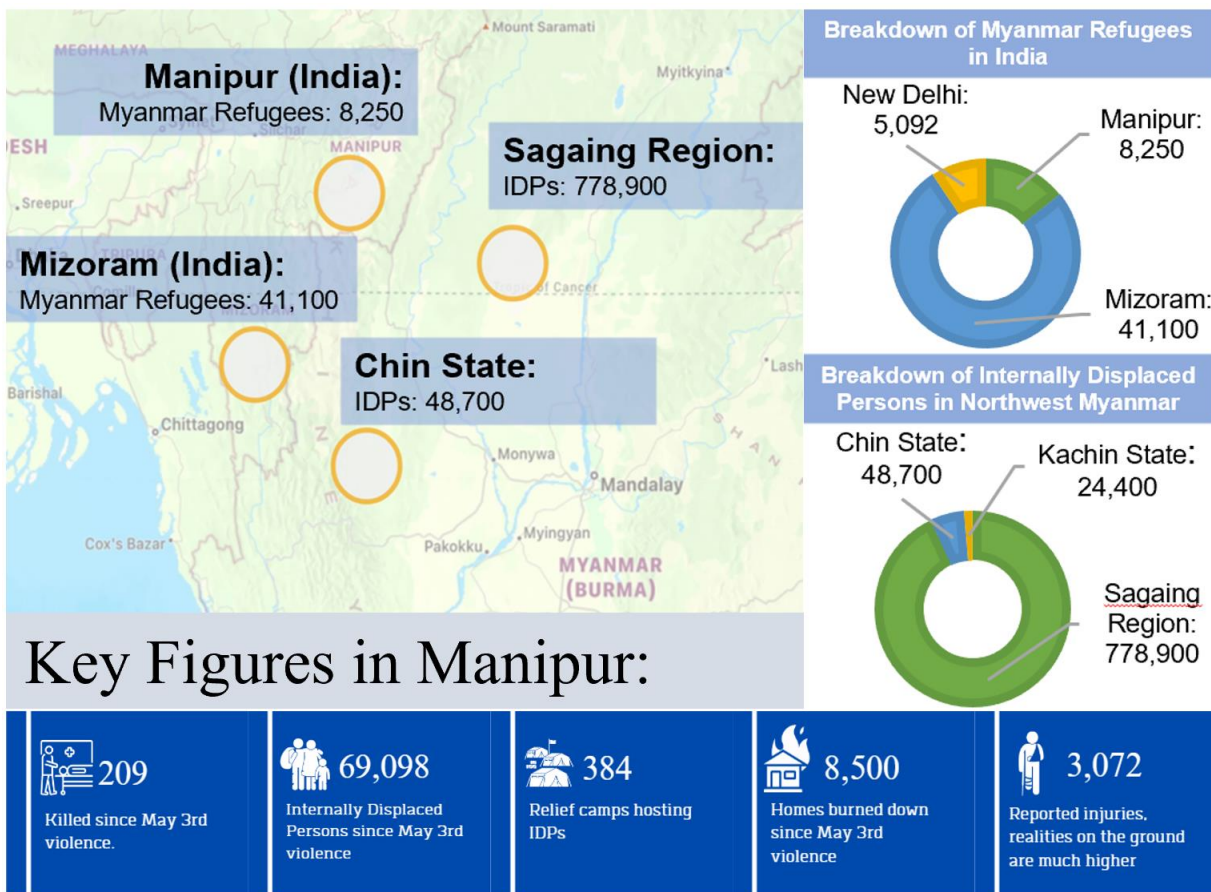


Indo-Burma Region Situation Report

July, 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 4th, 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.



NORTHEAST INDIA SITUATION Key Updates:

- 209 people have been killed** in escalations of violent conflict in Manipur, leaving over **3,000 injured**, **69,098** displaced, and over **8,500 houses burned**.¹ 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.²
- Video of 2 women paraded naked** by a mob of men on May 4th in Kangpokpi District, Manipur, went viral in July in a disturbing display of violence against women during recent conflict. The Global Alliance has recorded 13 cases of gender-based violence in Manipur since May 3rd, however, ground realities are likely higher.³



NORTHEAST INDIA SITUATION (continued):

- **9 arrested in connection** to the first Naga person to be killed in Manipur violence. Lucy Marem, a 57-year-old woman, was found with gunshot wounds and her face disfigured.⁴ The murder was heavily condemned by Naga groups, including the Naga Woman's Union, which led to a 12-hour shutdown in surrounding Naga territories.⁵
- **40,100⁶** 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.
- **8,250⁶** 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:

- **53,500⁶** Asylum-seekers have now crossed the Indo-Burma border since the February 1st, 2021 coup. Numbers are expected to be an undercount.
- **1,900,000** Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are still seeking refuge within Myanmar's borders. This includes **778,900** IDPs in Sagaing Region and **48,700** IDPs in Chin State, two of the three states sharing a border with Northeast India.⁷
- **24,048** Myanmar Nationals have been arrested by the military regime (19,660 still detained), and **3,848** civilians have been killed by the military regime. These numbers include arrests of **640** children, and the deaths of **428** children. Many children have died or been crippled by land mines set by the military regime.⁸
- **Over 600 homes destroyed** by the Myanmar military during an offensive in Sagaing Region in mid-July, leaving at least **8 civilians** dead.⁹ Over **70,000** homes and shelters have been destroyed by the military.⁷ Shelter and basic commodities remain limited for people in Myanmar's border states due to road blocks and heightened conflict.¹⁰
- **Nearly 500 dead, 280,000 homes destroyed** in latest Cyclone Mocha assessment estimates by the National Unity Government (NUG) and the Arakan Army (AA). Many from the 2,000 villages destroyed in Rakhine State following the storm remain in critical need of humanitarian aid, which the Myanmar military has mostly restricted.¹¹



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 Myanmar, heavy fighting remained constant across the nation's border states. July continued to see heavy airstrikes, arbitrary arrests, arbitrary executions, raids and the destruction of homes. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) grew slightly in July, especially in the Northwest Sagaing Region and Magway Region, as well as in Southeast regions of the state. A number of IDPs also returned to their places of origin. Refugees and asylum-seekers in neighboring countries, as well as worsening food insecurities and fuel shortages, continued to create roadblocks to survival for civilians.^{6, 7}

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. Sagaing Region continued to experience Internet shutdowns and blackouts, hampering humanitarian access and communications among civilians.⁷

Sagaing Region experienced widespread torching of homes and civilian infrastructure. In mid-July, over 600 homes were torched in multiple village raids near Mandalay, displacing over 2,000 people. At least 8 civilians were executed.¹³ On July 21 in raids of Sone Chaung village, 6 PDF resistance fighters and 8 civilians were killed.¹⁴

On July 2nd, in Khin-U Township of Northern Sagaing Region, military raids and torched homes led to around 15,000 residents to flee.^{15, 16} During the raids, the Myanmar military arbitrarily killed at least 4 civilians, including a 6-year-old boy.¹⁷ Earlier in July, 3 civilians and 15 PDF soldiers were killed in a military ambush on a PDF base in Ngazun Township.¹⁸

During a military raid on students after photos were posted of students protesting the junta resulted in the execution of at least 3 students. Their tongues were cut out and they were stabbed to death. An unknown number of people were also arrested.¹⁹ Airstrikes on Nyaung Kone Village on June 27th destroyed 11 homes and killed 10 civilians, including a Buddhist Monk and a child. At least 8 were wounded.^{20, 21}

There are over **778,900**⁶ IDPs in Sagaing. Of the over 70,000 homes and structures burned by the Junta across Myanmar, nearly **50,000** homes have been in Sagaing Region.^{7, 8, 22}



SITUATION OVERVIEW (continued):

Chin State IDPs number north of **48,700**⁶ people. The Chin State experienced airstrikes almost on a daily basis. Chin State also experienced frequent phone and internet blackouts throughout July, as well as increasingly difficult aid and transportation across the Indo-Burma border.⁷

Southern Chin and Rakhine Regions still maintain a ceasefire between the Arakan Army and the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF).^{6, 7} Rakhine Region is still reeling in devastation from Cyclone Mocha, with access to humanitarian aid heavily restricted. While the Myanmar military reports 145 dead, the National Unity Government (NUG) estimates close to 500 dead. The Arakan Army has reported over 2,000 villages and 280,000 homes destroyed by the storm. Survivors are still living in tents and suffering severely from starvation, illness, and untreated injuries.²³

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.⁷

Kayah State saw an increase in IDPs and increased threats to IDPs. During July, 8,000 civilians were displaced in Bawlake, Hpasawng, and Mese Townships.⁷ Ywar Thit Township was seized by the Myanmar military, who trapped around 500 civilians and forbade them to leave, while also executing at least 6 civilians.²⁴

Bago Region saw upticks of raids and consequent IDPs in July. On July 20th, the Myanmar military razed Nanza village, burning alive 2 civilians who were trapped inside their home.²⁵

Mandalay Region civilians experienced heightened tensions and threats throughout July. On July 14th, 4 civilian carpenters were arbitrarily arrested and tortured by the Myanmar military. Their remains were found in a river and a lake on July 18th.²⁶ A teenager was also shot and killed while riding his moped by allegedly drunk Myanmar military soldiers.²⁷ On July 26th, around 100 civilians were taken hostage and held in a monastery for nearly a week without proper food or care.²⁸

Across Myanmar, the Military regime has continued to target health, education and other civilian infrastructure. Between June 14th and June 27th, there were 13 attacks on medical facilities and infrastructure, including ambushes on ambulances, abduction of doctors, arson attacks and airstrike attacks.²⁹ A new report by Free Expression Myanmar highlights serious human rights violations occurring in Myanmar's justice system since the military coup. According to the report, search warrants are rarely used, FIRs are not produced prior to a search, and searches are not conducted with any witnesses. Further, men, women, and children are typically denied bail and often sent straight to military interrogation centers without access to family or friends. Information extracted under the use of force is often accepted in courts, and lawyers are often threatened and prosecuted for properly defending their clients.³⁰

The World Bank has estimated that Myanmar's economy won't fully recover from the coup until 2027 or 2028.³¹ The United Nations has positioned potential war crimes committed by the Myanmar junta in aid restrictions and intentional targeting of vulnerable IDP populations.³²



SITUATION OVERVIEW (continued):

The Myanmar military has moved Aung San Suu Kyi out of solitary confinement and to house arrest, while also dropping five charges against her.³³ Despite charges dropped, she will remain in detention.³⁴

The NUG has appealed to the United States government for \$500 million in non-lethal (\$200 million) and humanitarian aid (\$300 million). Non-lethal aid includes drones, vehicles, radar gear, telecommunications hardware, and military medical supplies. Drones and radar technology would help the NUG pre-emptively evacuate civilians from towns before raids occur.³⁵ China has invited Junta Chief General Min Aung Hlaing to Beijing in September.³⁶ China is pushing infrastructure projects in Myanmar to gain greater access to the Bay of Bengal region, and has also surrounded its existing mining operations in the region with landmines, posing a serious threat to civilians.³⁷

In Northeast India, violent conflict which erupted in Manipur on May 3rd, 2023, has to date taken the lives of an estimated **209 people**, while also injuring over 3,000, and displacing over **70,000 civilians**. Over **8,500 homes** have been lost to arson.¹

The central government has yet to structure and implement wide-spread humanitarian and legal support for over **53,500**⁶ Myanmar refugees and asylum-seekers who have entered Northeast India.

In Manipur, violent conflict continued throughout July, but let up considerably compared to months of May and June. 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.¹

The United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) highlighted issues in Manipur and urged India to address emerging conflict zones with peace negotiations.³⁸ Trying to open pathways towards peace, Kuki volunteers released five captured Meitei youths. In an interrogation video posted to social media, the Meitei men expressed thoughts that CM N Biren Singh was behind the violence, and that most Meiteis were against it. Their release represents one of the first acts towards peace taken by either side of the conflict.³⁹

A video of two naked women being paraded and harassed by a mob of men went viral in mid-July, sparking international condemnation of atrocities committed in Manipur. The women were allegedly molested and gang-raped. To date, 7 individuals have been arrested since the video went viral, and their cases have been referred to the Indian supreme court.⁴⁰ A Border Security Forces Personnel was suspended for groping and molesting a woman in a grocery store on July 20th.⁴¹



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 Churachandpur torched a new gym that Chief Minister N. Biren Singh was scheduled to speak, leading to an internet shut down.



REGIONAL BACKGROUND (Continued):

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 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'etat 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 Myanmar.

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

Email: gaipgap@gmail.com
www.globalallianceofindigenouspeoples.org



**Manipur Women
Gun Survivors Network**

