

MONTHLY OVERVIEW

Human Rights Situation in Mon State, Karen State & Tanintharyi Region

SEPTEMBER
2022



Inflation is Contributing to Rising Levels of Poverty in Southeastern Burma as Civilians Struggle to Cope Amid Worsening Uncertainty

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Throughout the month of September, the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) reported on the challenges being faced by civilians in Southeastern Burma. Amid increasing clashes and worsening conflict, the military junta has also weaponized the law to work in their favor. Despite being an international human right, those abducted, detained and charged by the Burma Army are being denied their right to a free and fair trial. The regime continues to deny family members any information about loved ones and has continued to fabricate charges in sham trials.

In addition to the junta making a mockery of the rule of law, they continue to deploy strategies and activities which terrorize local populations. Across HURFOM's target areas of Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi region, people of all ages and backgrounds are being targeted. On 2 September 2022, four young nursing students were arrested, and one of them was sent to a notorious camp known as the "MI detention center."

A witness described that these four young men were beaten and arrested by junta soldiers while the troops raided the hostels: "They came with no arrest warrants but complete lists of who they wanted and

arrested four of these students." They are still under investigation, according to friends and families. Another local civilian from Painnae Taw confirmed that in the last two days, junta forces have been checking the families' registration lists and guest checks in some wards in Dawei downtown.

Students, including young children, also continue to have education prospects threatened and undermined by the military's presence in Burma. Parents are extremely worried about the uncertainties their children face at school given the heightened presence of the military junta. As a result, some University students in Mon State who have already passed their matriculation exam have chosen to put their studies on hold due to unsettled political agreements and security concerns.

Top universities including the University of Medicine, Economics, Computer Studies and the Education Degree College institute are located in Yangon, Mandalay and Magwe. As these institutions are located in cities that are very far from Mon State, parents worry: "Our child has a high enough score to join the University of Economics. However, it is scary to go to Yangon because it's not peaceful there. ***I dare not send my child.*** The current situation creates too much fear

SUMMARY OVERVIEW & ANALYSIS

SEPTEMBER 2022

for me to send my child away,” said one parent from Mudon Township. A lack of alternatives means these students often attend local universities such as the one in Mawlamyine.

Despite this uncertainty, the junta is putting pressure on schools to open despite security concerns. Approximately ten government schools in Kyaing Seiki Township, Karen State were forced to reopen despite security concerns. Due to the armed conflicts in the villages, most villagers have closed the schools since June 2022: “Even though armed clashes are ongoing, the junta council is pressuring our village head and school officials to open government schools in Nan Tie Tun, Pha Yar Ngar Zu and Daung De village of Kha Lae – Da Gon Dai area.”

The junta issued the order to open schools, but the teachers, the parents, and the village administrators held a discussion. The security situation here remains unstable, so most teachers are afraid of teaching. **“No one can guarantee the safety of students,”** said a villager.

Parents told HURFOM that they could not send their children to area schools due to the instability and fighting in the area with armed forces: “If we send our children to school, we have to worry about them for the

whole day. We don’t even dare go to work for our own livelihoods. If something happens, we would have to rush to school to pick up our children. Can the military guarantee the security of the children? If not, we will never send our children to school,” said a woman from Daung De village.

The junta forces have established bases at the Da Gon Dai Police Station and at nearby schools. A local news source also reported the Junta army placed active landmines on the school premises and put a ground-based artillery weapon in front of the school.

The insecurity across Burma is widespread. It extends to all social and economic sectors which the military has completely obliterated. In all of these circumstances, it is the people who continue to suffer the most. Those who have fled Burma for their safety, including human rights defenders, are still facing challenges in neighboring countries. HURFOM Program Director, Nai Aue Mon, spoke to Southeast Asia Globe on the security risks faced by activists who are living in exile stating: **“The situation on the ground is still horrible, everyday people are living in unstable circumstances.”**

Forced recruitment has also become a concerning issue across the region. More than sixty villagers were forced to flee their

SUMMARY OVERVIEW & ANALYSIS

SEPTEMBER 2022

villages in Yebyu, Dawei fearing they would be abducted and forced to fight. Now, they are unable to return as the junta's naval command seeks to expand their forces through advertising false promises of high pay and security. The military battalion conducting the forced recruitment is known as 'Maw-Ra-Waddy-Naval Command,' and operates under the management of Coastal Regiment Command in Ohn-Pin-Kwin, Yebyu, Dawei.

Further, as another month passes, it is also a reminder of the inaction of the international community. Rather than take steps to hold the Myanmar military accountable, numerous United Nations bodies have instead signed multiple Memorandum of understanding with the regime. It is disappointing to see such a contradictory approach to human rights from bodies who have set international standards that they are failing to oblige by. HURFOM reiterates the calls of our networks and members in condemning the atrocities taking place and calling for urgent action.

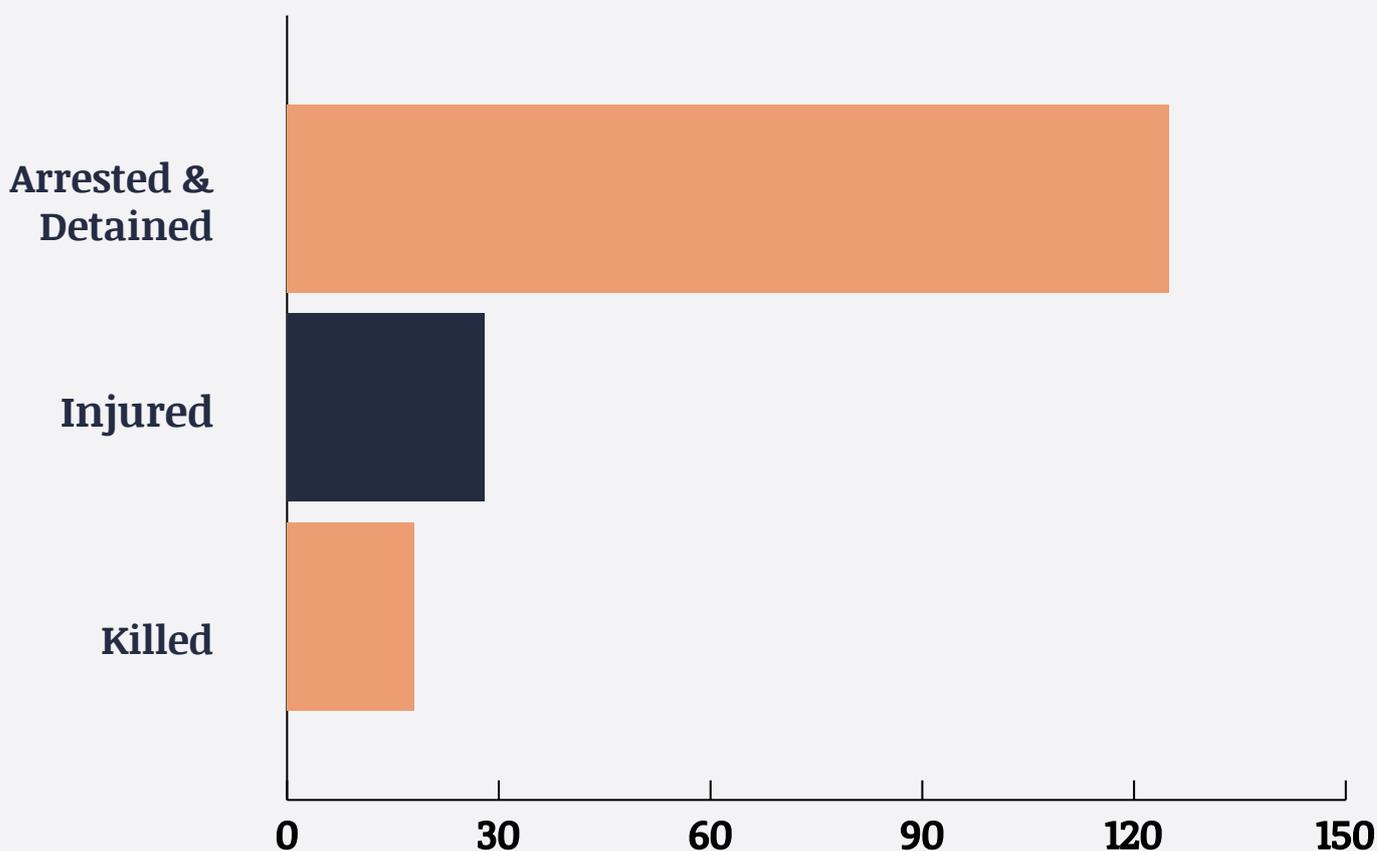


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SCALED UP HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

HURFOM fieldworkers continue to take great risks to document the human rights violations being perpetrated in target areas of Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi region. By the end of September 2022, HURFOM recorded least **87 arrested, 38 detained, 28 injured and 18 killed**.

Civilians Arrested, Injured & Killed in September 2022 in Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi region



Members of Parliament and their families targeted by the military junta.

9

PROTESTS ACROSS TARGET
AREAS IN SEPTEMBER 2022

7

TANINTHARYI
REGION

1

MON STATE

1

KAREN STATE



8,500+

CIVILIANS DISPLACED ACROSS TARGET AREAS

CIVILIANS TARGETED IN MON, KAREN STATE
& TANINTHARYI REGION

10+

DISMISSED FOR
INVOLVEMENT
IN THE CIVIL
DISOBEDIENCE
MOVEMENT

6+

PROTESTERS/
ACTIVISTS
SENTENCED IN
JUNTA COURTS

9+

ENFORCED
DISAPPEARANCES
BY THE MILITARY



KAREN STATE

2, 800+ Newly Displaced

9 Injured, 3 Killed



Mon State



Tanintharyi Region

Locals in Karen State have reported worsening offensives between the military junta and the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). Troops from the Light Infantry Battalion No. 545, led by Captain Soe Min Thu and the Police Officer, Tun Thin Oo, have committed human rights violations against civilians: ***“Since mid-September, we have been facing lots of movement restrictions which directly impact us. We have no chance of working outside the village. There is extortion and sexual harassment against young women in the village,”*** a villager from Taung-Kyarinn village, Kawkareik said. “It appears like the junta is generating money under the name of security,” he added. In some cases, the villagers’ motorcycles have been confiscated and are forced to pay 200,000 MMK in order for the motos to be returned.

On September 13 2022, troops indiscriminately fired artillery shells at Taung Kyarinn village. At least 14 houses were damaged, including a Buddhist monastery. Four villagers were injured. Among them, one Buddhist Monk was included.

Meanwhile, the Junta Army (LIB No. 545, 546, 310 and IB 22) deployed more troops to southern Kawkareik Township to conduct offensive against the KNLA B.6 and People Defense Forces.

“Militarization negatively affect the local inhabitants, including forced village sentry duties, unpaid labor, commandeering vehicles for their transportation, and porter services, looting,” a 25-year-old villager from Taung-Kyar-Inn, Kawkareik Township, told the reporters

In addition, concerns over landmines planted in civilian areas pose serious threats to local livelihoods. At the moment, no one dares to go and work in their own village.

On September 16th 2022, residents said a drone flew over a military base in Hpa-An, Karen State and then the junta opened fire and abducted at least two innocent civilians nearby. It was 8:00 PM and a drone flew over the LIB No. Armor Repair Unit. (151), which operated under the Military Council Division No. (22) in Hpa-an city. Several indiscriminate gunshots were fired as the junta attempted to shoot down the drones. A source near the shooting described the arbitrary arrests: “An estimated 20 troops with guns pointed at the residents and grabbed two young men by accusing them of using drones and tried to attack them. These young locals were ordinary civilians, and they were innocent.”



MON STATE

1,350+ Newly Displaced

7 Injured, 2 Killed



Karen State



Tanintharyi Region

Civilians in Mon State continue to live with the uncertainty surrounding the military's midnight checks and raids. A group of approximately 30 members of the junta and militia groups, including members of the junta-backed village administration, have been conducting midnight searches in Ka Mar Mole village, in the Chaung Zone Township, Mon State. Villagers said they are worried about their safety.

“We don't know when they will come to search our houses. They've said they'll search for drugs, but we're afraid that they will give us an irrational reason to arrest us,” said one villager. The military has presented unsubstantiated claims to justify the night searches. The junta forces are alleging that members of the People's Defense Forces (PDFs) are hiding in Ka Mar Mole village. They also claim that a Ka Mar Mole resident who is the biggest drug dealer in the village is supporting them. The military junta has established many checkpoints where passengers traveling by car or motorbike are stopped and subjected to rigorous security checks.

The hardships in Burma are even taking a toll on the soldiers of the military who are serving on the front lines, and are being exploited by upper military officials. The primary way this takes place is through loans attached with high interest rates, according to one source. Family members of the junta soldiers are dependent on the military salaries, which are not sufficient to cover the rising costs of basic commodities. Family members then have to borrow money from senior military officials who are charging high interest rates: “My husband is on the front lines and my family lives in the battalion. His salary isn't enough for us, so we have to borrow money from captains. Then we are in debt. It keeps going round in circles,” said the wife of a private soldier.

Meanwhile, the junta continues to abuse their power by extorting civilians for their money, property and possessions and even their time. Locals reported that in some villages in Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State, the junta is forcing them to serve as sentries to protect their

Administration Offices, schools and other community perimeters from attack. Although village security falls under the junta troops' authority, the area's ongoing conflicts have resulted in the soldiers forcing the local civilians to guard the villages and the junta-related departments and buildings: ***“They have been forcing us to take sentry duties for almost a year and a half. They ordered us to work for free. This is a form of forced labor,”*** said a civilian, age 45 who wished to remain anonymous.

Inflation has made every day decisions impossible as villagers must consider whether or not they will risk their lives to leave their homes and try to generate an income amid the fighting and possibility of being arrested and detained: ***“We are scared of being stuck between the two sides who are fighting. During this time, I cannot find enough income to support my family,”*** said a local resident. Villagers living in not only part of the eastern Kyaikmayaw Township, but also in some villages located along the side of Attaran River have been forced to guard their towns for the junta.

Indiscriminate firing and attacks are also threatening civilian security. On September 23 2022, at 2:00 in the morning, a young man from Kaloh village was shot and killed by the junta security troops in the village, Ye Township. Residents who witnessed the incident reported that the shooting happened during the curfew decree, which has increased fears. The deceased is 35-year-old U Naing Oo, a resident of Kaloh Village, who was shot while leaving his home: “When he was walking and crossing that road, he was shot dead by the deployed army” said another witness. He died on the spot due to the shooting. Naing Oo's body was brought in a car and left at the village entrance. ***“Another case of losing a villager that will end like this without getting any justice,”*** a young villager expressed.

These attacks are mounting and further indicators of the miscarriages of justice that are ongoing in Mon State. Victims are entitled to reparations and accountability.



Tanintharyi region

5,500+ Newly Displaced

22 Injured, 11 Killed



Karen State



Mon State

The situation in the Tanintharyi region is continuing to deteriorate. In the last six months alone, the junta-backed courts have imposed orders on approximately 42 political prisoners in Dawei Prison, according to the sources from Dawei Political Prisoners Network. At least 30 are still facing sham, closed-door trials. Most of those imprisoned in Dawei have been unlawfully charged under sections 505 A and B of Penal Code

Junta forces have been relentlessly arbitrarily arresting people. On 4 September 2022, three young people were driving a car in Nyang Yangtaung Ward, Dawei. According to the local witnesses, a group of police forces and soldiers were conducting a security check on a car and three people were arrested. The second source also confirmed that the junta checked and arrested the Honda Fit car driver and pointed the guns at the three men, forced them to kneel on the street and started beating them: ***“They were likely included in the list of arrest warrants, and that was why the three young men were taken. Their names and addresses are still being investigated,”*** a 50 year old man who talked to the reporters said. According to the HURFOM field research, there were about (19) civilians arrested in Dawei

within a week, and only about eleven people were released by paying ransoms.

The junta forces have also carried out their campaign of deliberately destroying civilian properties. In Kyun-Su Town, Myeik District, troops destroyed 14 houses and seized land plots: ***“They destroyed and took the land with no compensation. They justified it by saying that it was for building the electricity department compound and office,”*** said a local.

The director of the General Administration Department and the person in charge of the electricity department were the ones who gave the orders for confiscating the land and removing the houses. The dates this occurred was between September 3 and 6, 2022 at Ward no.3, Kyun-Su Town.

Reporters tried to contact one of the landowners, and she said most of the male heads of households living in these homes are currently working in the fishing boats. Some of them lived as day laborers in the plantation and orchards, and the rest of the family members found it difficult to move during the rainy season. The incidents happened while their husbands were away. A

member of the destroyed family confided that there was no life security, no food, and now there was no place to live.

The growing military presence has made villagers fearful to leave their homes. The junta forces have been patrolling around the villages with approximately 200 soldiers in the Kanbauk village, Ka Laing Aung township, Dawei. Villagers dare not travel or go to the plantations. At least five villages have been under the control of the junta. More than 200 soldiers are based there. Locals are worried.

On September 9 at 9:30 PM, the joint forces of pro-junta militias and military forces (approximately 40 troops) entered the Nyaung Zin village, Thayetchaung Township, Dawei, and fired discriminately at the civilians' houses and harmed at least three women villagers. Three of them were shot in the shoulder and arm.

Ma Thin Myint, Daw Moe, and Daw Aye Shin were wounded by the indiscriminate gunfire. The junta and militias illegally burglarized villagers' locked homes by kicking them in. They kicked the door and forced it open. Homeowners were taken out at gunpoint. Nyaung Zin villagers have kept organizing silent strikes and threatened not to go on any more strikes, and if they went out again, they threatened to burn down the whole village. In the case of terrorist attacks and lootings, the militias and soldiers mainly enter houses with shops and take valuable things such as phones and gold items by force.

Later that night at 3:30 a.m., a junta military council of Light Infantry Battalion #406, a convoy with 17 military trucks, entered Wa-kone village in Dawei Township by indiscriminately firing heavy weapons. Seven homes were destroyed. Villagers had to flee because of the attacks. The junta spent a night in the villages, destroyed things and stole the villagers' belongings, including the motorbikes and valuable items.

Released political prisoners are also being targeted. A previously detained activist in Dawei Prison was re-arrested at around 2:30PM on 12 September 2022, according to his colleagues close to him. Ko Myo Minn Oo, age 22 a student at Dawei University of Technology, was arrested

when he came to his work in Khon-Win-Dyt Ward, Dawei. This is the second time he was arrested: “the first time was in May last year,” his neighbor said. “He spent about 6 months in prison in October 2021, but then he was freed and released.” On September 11, one of his colleagues, Ko Aung Wayan Tun, a student at Dawei University of Technology, was also abducted by junta security forces during a midnight raid in Dawei downtown. It is not yet known why they were arrested.

The junta continues to violently abuse, beat, arbitrarily arrest, and destroy properties, and confiscate goods in Bawapin village, according to the villagers who are fleeing parts of Tanintharyi region regularly. A 50-year-old female villager, who fled with three children, said junta soldiers and their allied militias continue to commit illegal confiscation and destruction of villagers’ property. “Approximately 70 soldiers with full-armed forces and the local militias raided the village. After that, they arrested seven men and beat them. The villagers who escaped could not take anything with them. The soldiers picked up the remaining items they wanted and destroyed what they could not carry. **It’s like a real battlefield.**”

Young men continue to be accused of being affiliated with local resistance forces. At least five young civilians were abducted for having alleged ties with the People’s Defense Forces in Dawei according to their friends, on the evening of September 22, 2022. Two detainees Maung Maung Lwin and Ko Thet, were natives of Yebyu township, and three originally from Dawei. These arbitrary arrests happened when a group of 10 junta troops and local pro-junta militias, raided Painnae-Taw Ward, Dawei: **“Their motorcycles have been confiscated and the troops brought all five men to unknown places,”** said a 45 year old witness.

Nonetheless, young brave activists in Dawei are still pursuing peaceful protests despite the grave danger and numerous challenges in their areas. **“We must continue raising our voices as the revolution is longer than we predicted. We are worried that the movement’s momentum will slow down.”**

KEY OBSERVATIONS

1. Inflation across all target areas has had a devastating toll on civilians who are unable to have their most basic needs met.
2. Clashes have led to forced internal displacement in Burma as instability and tensions force people from their homes.
3. Concerns have spread as the military junta begins to make decisions which would bar competing, democratic parties from the next election in Burma. The military junta has been trying to change/ manipulate the numbers of constituencies.
4. Motorcycles, mobile devices, and money are regularly confiscated and extorted from civilians at checkpoints stationed by the junta deliberately along key-routes. Civilians were forced to pay excessive bribes to retrieve their possessions. However, very few were able to afford the high costs.
5. Torture remains rampant in Burma, and across target areas where innocent civilians are subjected to grueling, horrifying acts by the junta to extract information.
6. The international community including UN bodies and ASEAN are not responding swiftly enough to the situation on the ground in Burma, which demands urgent attention and consequences for the junta.
7. Military impunity remains deeply ingrained into the institutions representing the Tatmadaw, which only emboldens the junta to continue perpetrating human rights violations.
8. Children have been targeted by the military junta, and deprived of their basic needs including medical attention, food, education and the right to live safely.
9. The arbitrary arrests and unlawful detention by the junta are ongoing, as are warrantless raids and indiscriminate firing into civilian areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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