

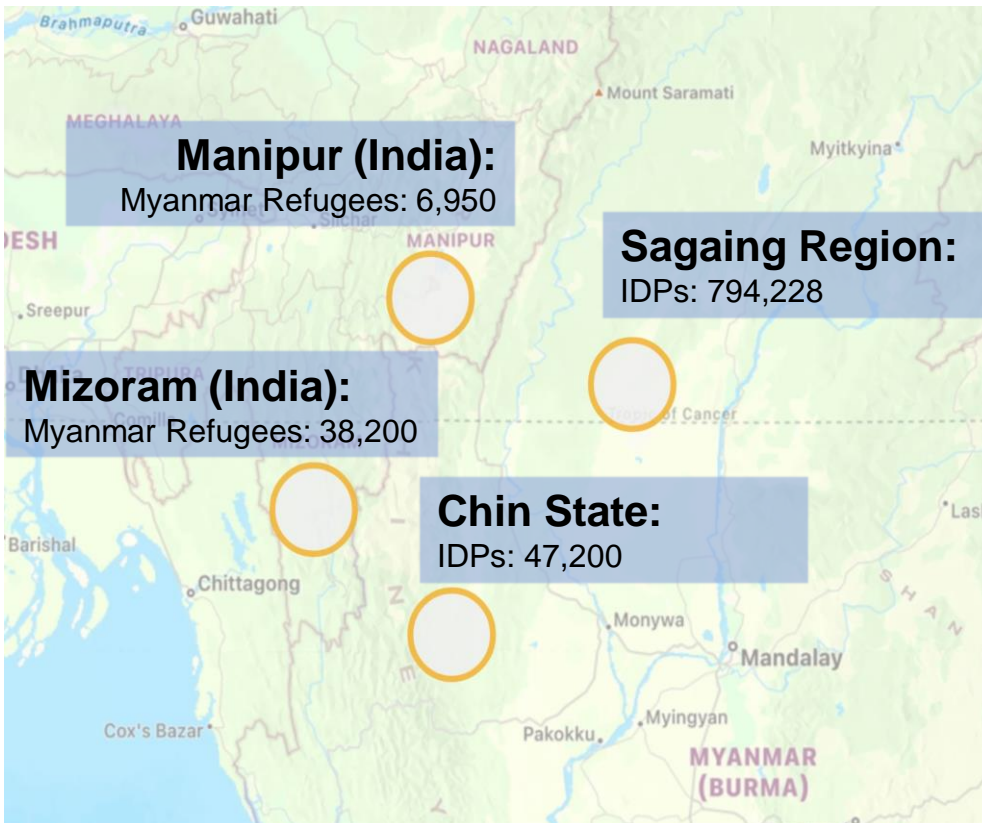


Indo-Burma Region Situation Report

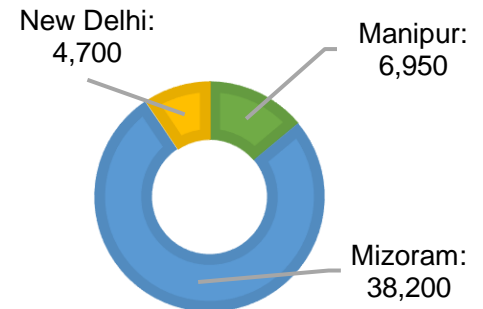
February, 2023 Update

Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples, Gender Justice and Peace

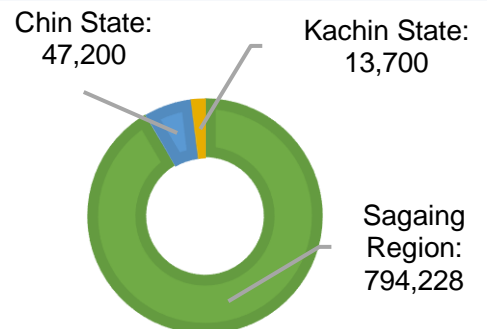
This monthly situation report tracks developing trends in the Indo-Burma region and is current with data through to February 25th, 2023. The report is compiled by the Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples, Gender Justice and Peace, in partnership with the Manipur Women Gun Survivor's Network and the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



Breakdown of Myanmar Refugees in India



Breakdown of Internally Displaced Persons in Northwest Myanmar



MYANMAR SITUATION Key Updates:

- **50,900¹** 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 **794,228²** IDPs in Sagaing Region and **47,200¹** IDPs in Chin State, two of the three states sharing a border with Northeast India.
- **19,836³** Myanmar Nationals have been arrested by the military regime, and **3,022³** have been killed by the military regime. These numbers include arrests of **486** children, and the deaths of **286** children. Many children have died or been crippled by land mines set by the military regime.
- **55,484⁵** homes and basic commodities has remained limited for people in Myanmar's border states due to road blocks and heightened conflict.⁴



MYANMAR SITUATION (continued):

- **Martial law in 37 new townships** has been declared by the Junta military regime. Offenses include breaking curfew, discrediting the state, illegal association, and unlawful possession of weapons. All new townships under martial law are currently under control of opposition forces.⁶ Regional military commanders have been instructed to impart maximum sentences for violations. It is likely there will be an increase of death sentences and executions.⁷
- **Myanmar Junta boosts relationship with Russia**, signing an International Agreement on Nuclear Energy Cooperation on February 6th, 2023, to build small scale nuclear reactor facilities.⁸ The move also brings Myanmar closer to its nuclear weapons development agenda. Min Aung Hlaing, the Chief of the Myanmar Junta, has vowed to continue and improve relationships with Russia.⁹

NORTHEAST INDIA SITUATION Key Updates:

- **15 insurgents arrested** in India's Northeast in the last month^{10, 11, 12, 13, 14} adding to over **10,125** 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.¹⁵
- **94 Myanmar Refugees**^{16, 17, 18} arrested in Manipur during the last month 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.¹⁹
- **38,200¹** 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.
- **6,950¹** 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.
- **Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh** insists on referring to Myanmar asylum-seekers and refugees as "illegal" immigrants, despite multiple refutes of the "illegal" status of refugees in Manipur's courts.^{19, 20}
- **Manipur hospital services impacted** by an indefinite shutdown begun on February 14th, 2023, led by the All Manipur Health Services Doctors' Association (AMHSDA) consequence to demands which continue to go unmet by government agencies.²¹



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'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 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.

SITUATION OVERVIEW:

In Myanmar, heavy fighting remained constant across the nation's border states. February saw an increased number of airstrikes and raids on homes, which has caused an uptick in IDPs, refugees and asylum-seekers in neighboring countries, and worsening food insecurities and fuel shortages.^{1, 4}

Northwest Myanmar saw widespread destruction of homes, medical facilities, and other crucial infrastructure has led to increased vulnerability to hunger, illnesses, and human trafficking. Fighting has increased the costs of essential goods due to movement and trade restrictions.⁴

Saigang Region saw increased attacks on medical facilities. On January 23rd, the Junta destroyed 2 ambulances, a religious building, and 9 homes. On January 24th, the Junta seized a third ambulance and repurposed it for their election needs. On January 26th, from another medical facility the Junta stole a portable X-Ray machine, an operating table, an oxygen concentrator, and medicine.²²



SITUATION OVERVIEW (continued):

From February 11th – February 14th, the Junta entered Katha township and burned 700 homes. 7 villagers were found murdered near a lake, and land mines were planted in the village.²³

There are an estimated **794,228**² 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.

Chin State IDPs number north of **47,200**¹ people. In Southern Chin and Rakhine regions, a ceasefire between the Arakan Army and the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF) remains in effect, however, many worry that the ceasefire will fail after the seasonal harvest is finished.⁴

A new martial law put into effect by the Myanmar Junta includes 7 Chin townships, 11 Sagaing townships, and 5 Magway townships. Other townships include 5 in Bago, 4 in Kayah, 2 in Karen, 2 in Tanintharyi, and 1 in Mon.⁶ A dusk-to-dawn curfew was placed on Chin townships.⁷

Northeast and Southeast Myanmar has seen increased shelling and airstrikes, arbitrary arrests and forced labor, reduced access to food and basic needs,⁴ and attacks on civilian infrastructure, including schools.²⁴ On February 15th, 2023, there was a bombing on the Naw May Oo school in Karen State, a new undergraduate and graduate institution dedicated to providing access to degrees for students behind opposition lines.²⁴ Many university students have rejected the Military regime, and have either pursued degrees abroad, or pursued degrees from institutions like Naw May Oo and Nway-Oo University, a university established by the National Unity Government.²⁵

Across Myanmar, the Military regime has also passed new legislation to allow pro-Junta civilian militias to form legally and carry guns and ammunition.²⁶ Many experts worry that this move will further complicate fighting in areas held by opposition forces, and indicate that it will increase the number of violent clashes.²⁷

The U.S. and other international allies to the National Unity Government are increasingly worried about new relationships being forged between Myanmar and Russia. In addition to providing Myanmar with weapons and trade opportunities, senior Russian military officers visited Myanmar in December, 2022, focusing on cooperation for defense and counterterrorism efforts. Preceding meetings, the two regimes signed the Intergovernmental Agreement on Nuclear Energy Cooperation to improve Myanmar's energy production.⁸ Myanmar also sees Russia as a key partner in developing nuclear weapon capabilities.⁹ China has also supported the Myanmar military regime by providing 6 latest-generation Mountain Eagle fighter jets, in December, 2022.²⁸

Despite new U.S. sanctions, private companies continue to purchase teak from the Myanmar military regime in steady increments from 2020, when they purchased approximately 1,250,000 Kgs of teak, to 2022, when they purchased approximately 1,500,000 Kgs of teak. Teak in the U.S. is mostly used in the manufacturing of superyachts.²⁹



SITUATION OVERVIEW (continued):

In Northeast India, the government has yet to structure and implement wide-spread humanitarian and legal support for over **50,000**¹ Myanmar refugees and asylum-seekers. In the last month alone, at least 94 Myanmar refugees and asylum-seekers have been arrested by Manipur officials.^{16, 17, 18}

In Manipur, there are an estimated **6,950**¹ Myanmar refugees, most of whom are in hiding due to a crackdown on what Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh is calling “illegal immigrants”.²⁰

Courts in Manipur have consistently ruled in favor of Myanmar nationals, stating that they should not be referred to as “illegal immigrants”, and rather should be considered refugees and asylum-seekers. In its latest ruling of 71 arrested Myanmar nationals, the court ruled that border crossings were legally justified by the inability for Myanmar nationals to return to their home country, thus dismissing their cases.¹⁹ In contradiction, Governor La Ganesan visited Churachandpur openly encouraging the reporting of and arrests of Myanmar refugees, which he referred to as “illegal immigrants”.³⁰

Hospital service in Manipur have been affected by a shut down initiated by the All Manipur Health Services Doctors’ Association (AMHSDA), who have had a fraught relationship with legislatures since November, 2022, as they demand improved work conditions. Their demands include the extension of pensions for doctors, established time-bound promotions, among other updates to legal frameworks which protect the workforce.³¹

In Mizoram, there are an estimated **38,200**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.³² 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.

India Border Security Forces (BSF) have also been reportedly driving refugees back from crossing the Bangladesh-India border, which the Mizoram MP has pushed back on, and has asked the Indian Government to consider accepting refugees from Bangladesh on humanitarian grounds.³³

The United States passed the **Burma Act** on December 15th, 2022. The act allows the Biden administration to provide non-lethal assistance to the National Unity Government and multi-ethnic forces fighting the Myanmar military. The passage of the Burma Act is meant to encourage the establishment of a stable democracy in Myanmar and puts pressure on the international community to support pro-democracy resistance in Myanmar.³⁴



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 Core Relief Items (CRIs) and 4,000 PPEs to families in need.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 6,500 PPEs in the region and provided emergency shelter assistance to over 300 people.¹

Kachin and Shan (North) States have received micro-grants from the UNHCR to improve damaged civilian infrastructure. In the region, the UNHCR has also provided 1,169 IDPs with CRIs, including mosquito nets, sleeping mats, blankets, and buckets.⁴

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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