

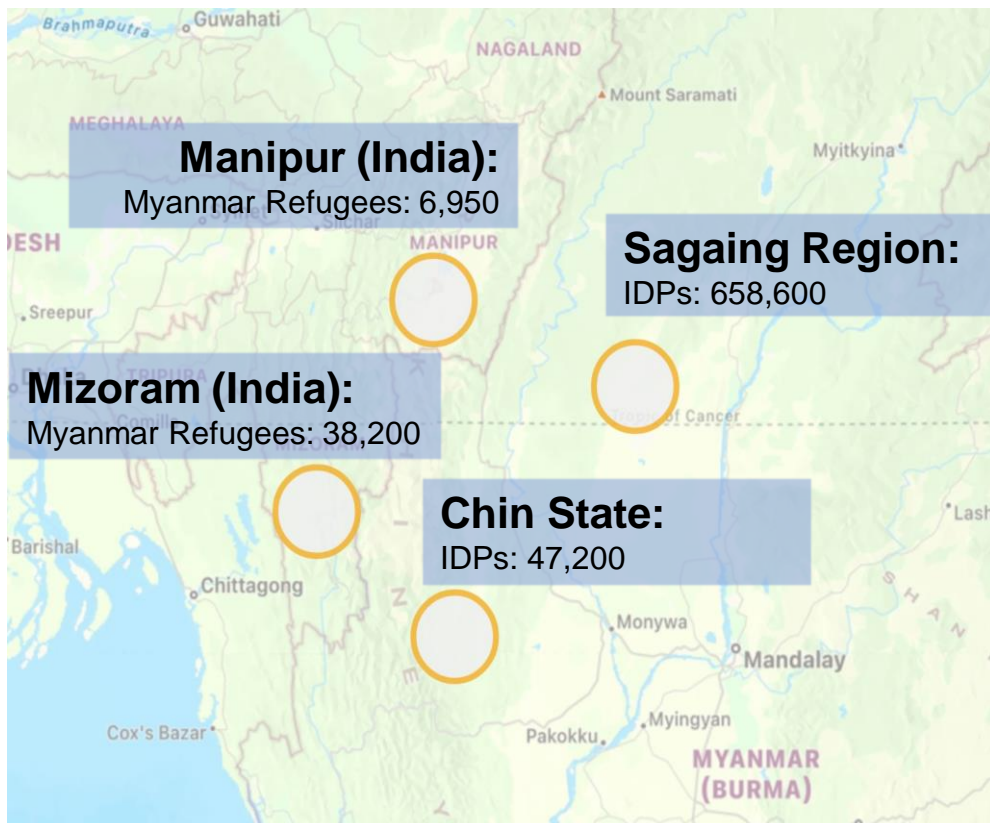


Indo-Burma Region Situation Report

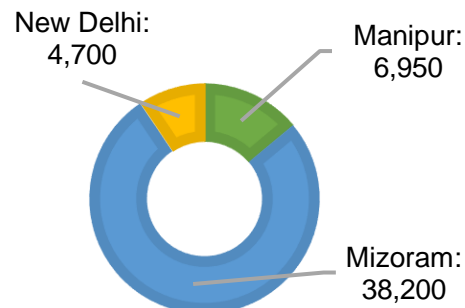
January, 2023 Update

Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples, Gender Justice and Peace

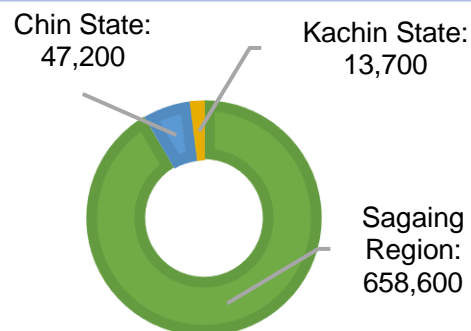
This monthly situation report tracks developing trends in the Indo-Burma region and is current with data through to January 25th, 2023. The report is compiled by the Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples, Gender Justice and Peace, in partnership with the Manipur Women Gun Survivor's Network and the Northeast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



Breakdown of Myanmar Refugees in India



Breakdown of Internally Displaced Persons in Northwest Myanmar



MYANMAR SITUATION Key Updates:

- **50,000¹** Asylum-seekers have now crossed the Indo-Burma border since the February 1st, 2021 coup. Numbers are expected to be an undercount.
- **1,551,900¹** Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are still seeking refuge within Myanmar's borders. This includes **658,600¹** IDPs in Sagaing Region and **47,200¹** IDPs in Chin State, two of the three states sharing a border with Northeast India.
- **Air strikes** administered by the Myanmar military on January 10th and 11th hit Camp Victoria in Chin State killing at least 5 people and destroying medical facilities.² It was reported that the Myanmar Air Force flew into Indian airspace during the attack, and shrapnel landed on Indian territory in the Tiau River, which runs along the Indo-Burma border.³ No official statement has been issued by New Delhi condemning the Myanmar military's airspace violations or stray shrapnel, raising concerns among refugees and allies in India.⁴ Relentless air strike attacks have continued to kill civilians across Myanmar in January.^{1, 5}



MYANMAR SITUATION (continued):

- **Access to food** and basic commodities has remained limited for people in Myanmar's border states due to road blocks and heightened conflict.⁶
- **While collecting ballots** for an election in Myanmar deemed by many as corrupt and undemocratic, the military killed and burned six people in Ngalai village of Mutupi Township, Chin State, on January 15th. Property has also been reported missing from 2 Christian churches - the Ngalai Baptist Church and the Ngalai Holy Church.⁷
- **Ceasefire** in Rakhine and Southern Chin State remains in place, but fragile. The ceasefire has increased access to food and humanitarian aid, however humanitarian aid is currently restricted to life-saving aid.⁶

NORTHEAST INDIA SITUATION Key Updates:

- **7 Insurgents Arrested** in Manipur on January 25th, 2023,¹³ adding to the **10,107** 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.¹⁴ The Union Home minister, Amit Shah, reported that there has been a 74% reduction in insurgent casualties in the region. There has also been a 60% decline in security forces casualties, and a 90% reduction in civilian casualties in the region.¹⁵
- **Indian Cabinet Passes Schemes of MDoNER** initiative to further development priorities in Northeast India regions. The Schemes of Ministry of Development of North Eastern India focuses on infrastructure and transportation development in the region,¹⁶ and brings India closer to a vested interest in the natural resources of Northeastern regions.¹⁷
- **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.
- **Young Mizo Association (YMA)** staged a sit-in in solidarity with Kuki-Chin refugees who fled their homes due to conflict and are now sheltered in Mizoram.
- **Three Myanmar Refugees Missing** from a temporary jail in Churachandpur, Manipur. The refugees reportedly fled from the jail after being unlawfully detained as "illegal immigrants".⁸ As determined by the Manipur High Court, asylum-seekers fleeing from conflict zones are protected under Article 21 of India's constitution.⁹



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. January 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.^{1,6}

In Northwest Myanmar, widespread destruction of homes, medical facilities, and other crucial infrastructure has led to increased vulnerability to hunger, illnesses, and human trafficking. Across the region, internet blackouts are still constant.⁶

Across the **Chin State**, IDPs number north of **47,200¹** people. In Southern Chin and Rakhine regions, a ceasefire between the Arakan Army and the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF) remains in effect, however, the ceasefire is still very fragile. The ceasefire has given humanitarian aid organizations more freedom to operationalize. Assistance is still restricted to life-saving aid. Some trade and civilian movement has also increased, driving down food and basic commodities cost.⁶



SITUATION OVERVIEW (continued):

On January 15th in Mutupi Township of Northern Chin State, in an effort to collect ballots for an election held by the military, the Myanmar military killed and burned 6 people. Only 2 of the bodies have been identified. In the raid, the military also burned down two homes. The international community, along with many Myanmar Nationals, have criticized the election as corrupt and undemocratic. Also in Mutupi Township, it has been reported that the military stole property from two Christian churches - the Ngalai Baptist Church and the Ngalai Holy Church. Similar raids have been a constant across Chin State and Saigang Region.⁷

In **Saigang Region**, there are an estimated **658,600**¹ IDPs, a number driven by increased military air strikes and raids. On January 10th and 11th, the Myanmar military targeted the Chin National Front (CNF) at Camp Victoria in a series of airstrikes, which killed at least 5 people and destroyed essential medical facilities.² Camp Victoria is on the Indo-Burma border, and it was reported that the Myanmar fighter jets involved in the attack violated India's airspace.³ Shrapnel from the attack also landed in the Tiau River along the Indo-Burma border and damaged a truck on the Indian shore. New Delhi has yet to issue a statement condemning the airstrikes, the violation of their airspace or the stray shrapnel.⁴ Lack of government response has raised concerns among Myanmar refugees in India and the international community about the safety of regions in Northeast India which border Myanmar. It is estimated that 59 families (about 200 people) fled across the Indo-Burma border to Champhai, Mizoram, in response to the airstrikes.² Also in Sagaing region, the Myanmar Air Force has been bombing civilian targets in Moetar, Sagaing.⁵

Restricted mobility in Myanmar's Northwest regions have caused severe inflation in the cost of food and other essential goods, worsening the humanitarian crisis.⁶

In **Northeast India**, the government has yet to structure and implement wide-spread humanitarian and legal support for over **50,000**⁶ Myanmar refugees and asylum-seekers. There have been continued reports of police arresting and detaining Myanmar Nationals.

In **Manipur**, there are an estimated **6,950**¹ Myanmar refugees, most of whom are in hiding due to a crackdown on what many in India claim are "illegal immigrants".¹⁰ Following a wake of arrests, three Myanmar refugees fled from a temporary jail in Churachandpur, Manipur, after being unlawfully detained as "illegal immigrants".⁸ Earlier in a 2022 case regarding Myanmar asylum-seekers, the Manipur High Court decided that those fleeing from conflict zones have rights and are protected under Article 21 of India's constitution.⁹

In **Mizoram**, there are an estimated **38,700**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.¹¹ 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.



SITUATION OVERVIEW (continued):

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 other ethnic forces fighting against the Myanmar military. Types of non-lethal assistance may include intelligence, medicine, funds, etc. but stops short of directly supplying arms. 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.¹²

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 Chin and Sagaing regions, frequent cuts to internet and communications access has continued to inhibit a coordinated humanitarian response from the UN and INGO partners.⁶

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.⁶ The UNHCR and partners have distributed over 6,500 PPEs in the region and provided emergency shelter assistance to over 300 people.¹

In Kachin and Northern Shan States, the UNHCR and other relief partners of the UN have distributed CRIs to over 3,200 IDPs in need, as well as over 20,000 PPEs, and temporary emergency shelter to over 1,100 IDPs.¹

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**Manipur Women
Gun Survivors Network**





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