

INTRODUCTION

This report, prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, examines trends and patterns in violation of international law from 1 April 2023 and 30 June 2024. Findings are based on over 336 interviews with victims and survivors, corroborated by satellite imagery, verified multimedia files, and credible open-source information, despite having lack of access to the country persisting. Figures of casualties likely represent an underestimation of the reality on the ground.

CONTEXT

This report focuses on human rights violations in Myanmar, with emphasis on the most serious incidents which are indicative of the crisis in the country and lack of the rule of law. Focus is given to issues of arrest and detention, torture, deaths in custody, sexual violence, and conditions of detention. Given the growing number of individuals impacted across the country, the report also briefly presents concerns related to mental health services, including their critical importance to resolution of the current crisis.

Between 1 February 2021 and 30 June 2024



VIOLENCE, CONFLICTS, AND PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

As of 30 June 2024, credible sources verified at least 5,350 civilians as killed since the coup on 1 February 2021 and at least 2,414 between 1 April 2023 and 30 June 2024

Civilian deaths caused by airstrikes and artillery attacks significantly increased, with 613 verified deaths caused by airstrikes and 637 deaths by artillery attack from 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2024.

Since late October 2023, the military increasingly relied on airstrikes and artillery strikes, resulting in a 95 percent increase in civilian deaths in airstrikes, with 411 verified deaths, and a 170 percent increase in civilians killed by artillery, with 465 verified deaths, comparing the reporting period before and after the late October offensives.

Of particular concern are the human rights abuses against the Rohingya, committed by both the military and the Arakan Army include extrajudicial killings, some involving beheadings, abductions, forced recruitment, indiscriminate bombardments of towns and villages using drones and artillery, and arson attacks

On 17 May 2024, after driving the military from Buthidaung town, the Arakan Army set fire to buildings throughout the town, including Rohingya homes and public buildings where large numbers of Rohingya displaced by fighting in surrounding villages

With 933 verified deaths, Sagaing Region remains the most dangerous area for civilians between 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2024.

Fig. 1 Airstrike and artillery deaths and incidents

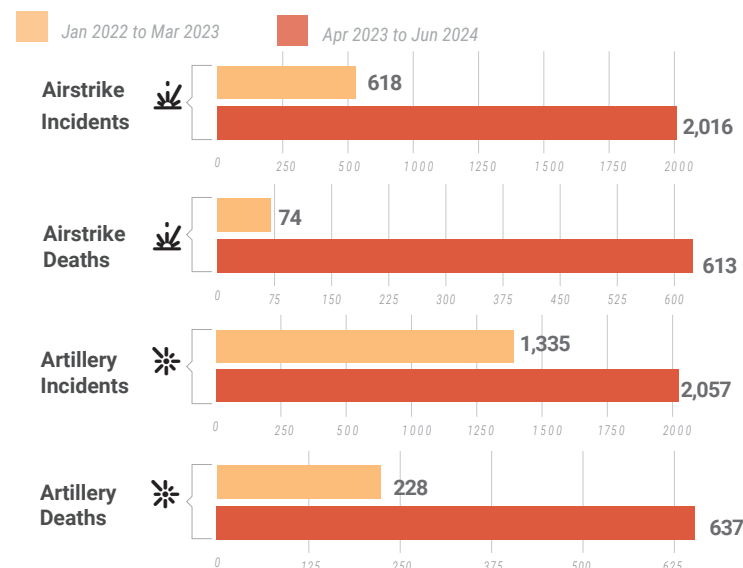
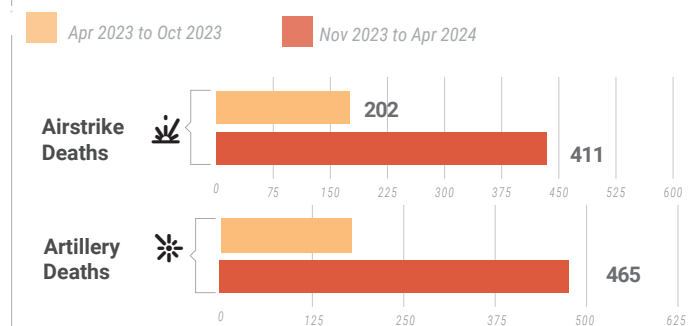


Fig. 2 Deaths before and after the October 2023 operation

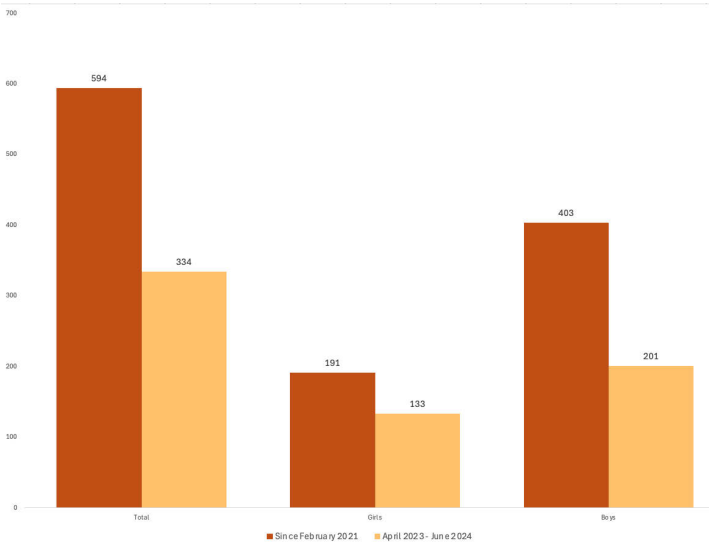


Deaths in Sagaing Region April 2023 - June 2024



Throughout the country, hostilities intensified during the reporting period, impacting civilians. According to credible sources, from 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2024, at least 2,414 civilians have been killed at the hands of the military, including 547 women and 334 children, a 50 percent increase in overall civilian deaths, compared with the preceding fifteen months.

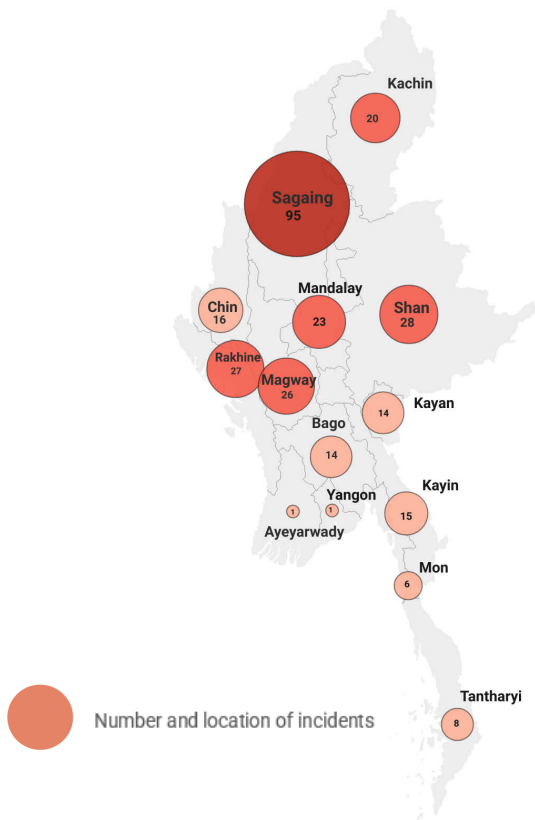
Fig. 3 Children killed disaggregated by sex



Intensifying hostilities resulted in regression in the enjoyment of economic and social rights by the affected population, including due to the lack of qualified medical personnel and teachers.

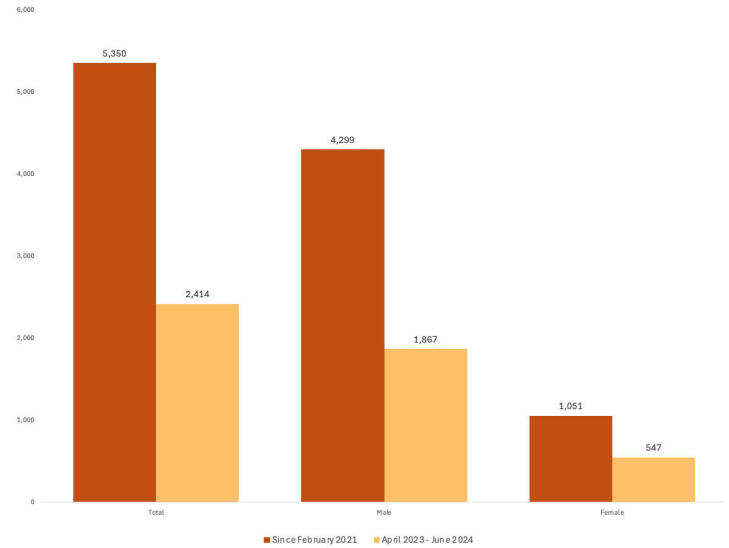
Health facilities and schools were significantly impacted, with reputable organizations reporting at least 183 medical units being damaged or destroyed as a result of attacks carried out by the military and another 73 - occupied by military forces. At least 168 health professionals were either killed, injured, arrested or kidnapped during the reporting period.

Fig. 5 Attacks against health facilities



Civilian deaths increased by 46 percent in the second half of the reporting period, with 1,436 verified deaths compared to 978 in the first, confirming the increase in civilian deaths due to military reprisals, following the changes in the situation on the ground after anti-military armed groups launched a series of coordinated offensives in October 2023.

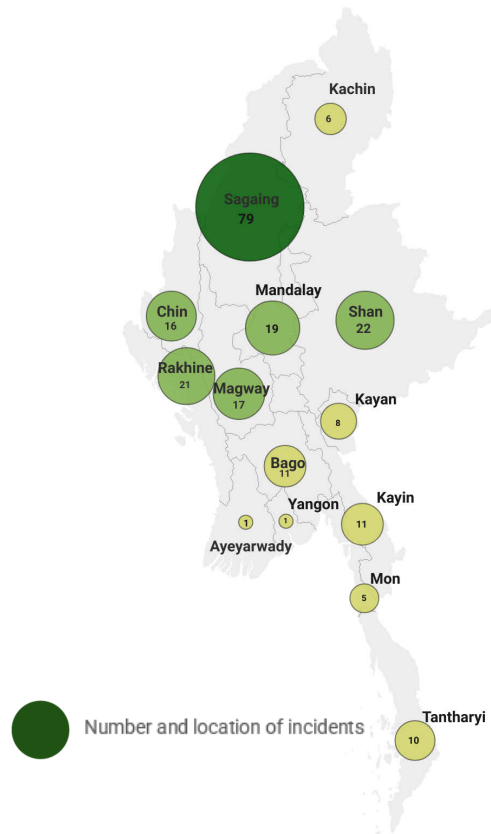
Fig. 4 Killed disaggregated by sex



Open sources indicated at least 239 incidents affecting educational facilities, and at least 73 educators killed. These incidents heightened the risk of exploitation and jeopardize the health, well-being, and education of children.

Armed violence, attributed to both the military and anti-military armed groups, resulted in at least 226 reported instances of attacks on religious sites, including monasteries, churches and pagodas. Military-imposed internet restrictions have reduced access to information and services, also affecting health and education.

Fig. 6 Attacks against educational facilities





LIBERTY AND SECURITY OF THE PERSON, TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

Over 9000 individuals were verified as having been detained by the military over the reporting period – a third of the 26,933 persons, including 5,556 women and 547 children, taken into custody since February 2021. Nearly half of arrests during the reporting period occurred in Yangon, Mandalay and Sagaing.

Arbitrary arrests have increased since the military announced implementation of forced conscription in February 2024.

Lacking in due process or fair trial standards, the judiciary served essentially as a rubber stamp for military actions – convicting 1,648 individuals prosecuted for their opposition to the coup during the reporting period with no reports of acquittals.

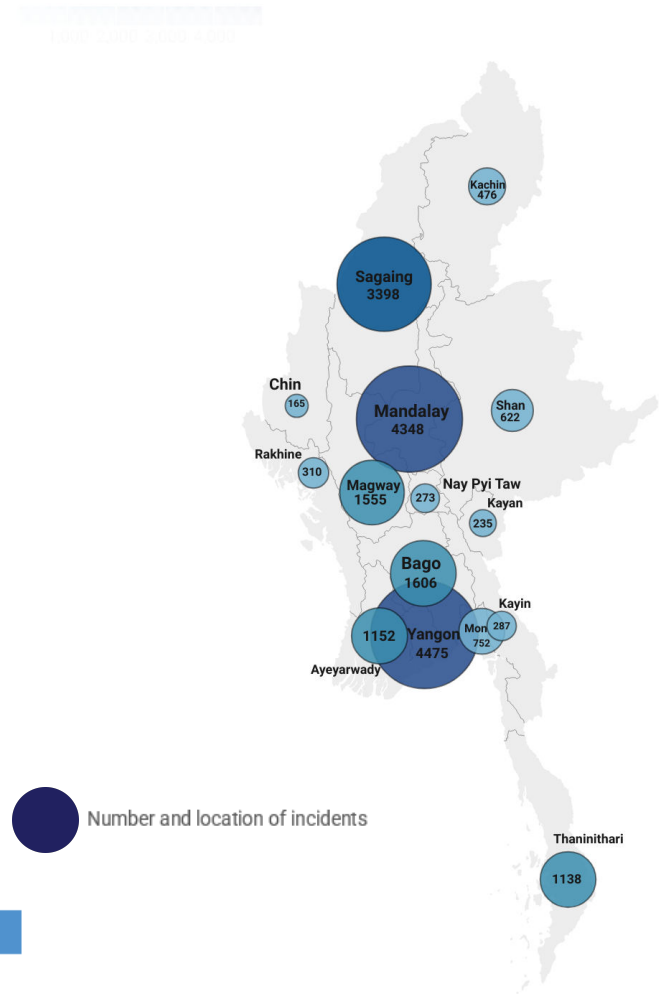
"Special courts" – military tribunals operating in camera within prison compounds – continue to be used to deal with cases relating to political detainees. Frequent hearing postponements and access restrictions to detainees and prison grounds have created regular time delays, resulting in prolonged periods of pre-trial detention. Defence counsel face severe restrictions, including bans on confidential communications, with client interactions being limited in many cases to brief conversations outside the courtroom. Many defendants are denied the right to appeal after initial conviction and sentencing.

Journalists and media workers continued to face arrest for covering the situation in the country with at least 194 journalists or media workers incarcerated, including 28 women, and 62 of them remain detained.

Fig. 8 Women and children detained



Fig. 7 Individuals still detained



CONDITIONS IN DETENTION

Deplorable treatment in many detention centres. Interviewees released from 12 prisons across nine states and regions described generally squalid facilities with cells being badly-lit, poorly ventilated, and overcrowded – often at double capacity with no space to lie down or to move around. Prolonged confinement without the ability to maintain personal hygiene, physical exercise, or religious observance were also described.

Ingestion of and exposure to spoiled food and dirty water, resulted in rampant waterborne diseases. Numerous interviewees described having to eat rotten or half-cooked food, and drink contaminated water, including from toilets containing faeces and insects. Interviewees described prisons as lacking medical supplies, qualified staff, and only stocking basic medicines such as paracetamol.

Women further reported intimidation, threats and physical and verbal abuse; and lack of access to reproductive health and postpartum care; adequate showers, toilets, and menstrual hygiene supplies.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

Torture and ill-treatment in military custody has continued to be pervasive. Detainees recounted being subjected to physical and psychological abuse, including sexual abuse, by officials in attempts to obtain information or as punishment, amounting to torture or ill-treatment.

Victims described methods, such as being forced into stress positions, being suspended from the ceiling without food or water; being forced to kneel or crawl on hard or sharp objects; use of snakes and insects to instil fear; asphyxiation; mock executions; electrocution and burning; beatings with iron poles and bamboo sticks.

Credible and disturbing reports of sexual violence, including rape, and sexualized torture or ill-treatment, including forced nudity in front of others.

DEATHS IN CUSTODY

Since the coup, 1,853 individuals have been verified as dead while in military custody. Of these, 258 have perished in formal custodial settings –such as military interrogation centres, police stations, and prisons; 95 of those were killed during the reporting period, including 14 women and six children; the youngest a two-year old girl.

Over 759 people, including 58 women, 31 boys and two girls have died after being detained by military units during the reporting period.

Many of these individuals have been verified as dying after interrogation, suffering ill-treatment and denial of access to adequate healthcare thereafter.

601 of the 759 individuals were extrajudicially executed in informal settings during the reporting period, often after being detained during village raids or related ground operations by the military.

Sagaing had the most verified deaths with 340 of the 759 deaths in custody during the reporting period.

Overall, deaths in custody have amounted to an average of four persons dying every day for over three years representing 35 percent of the total verified deaths since the military launched the coup.

Families have reported receiving notifications from custodial authorities that their loved ones had died of natural causes or during alleged escape attempts. In most cases, no medical certificate was provided, and bodies were cremated without the consent or presence of family members.

Fig. 9 Deaths in custody

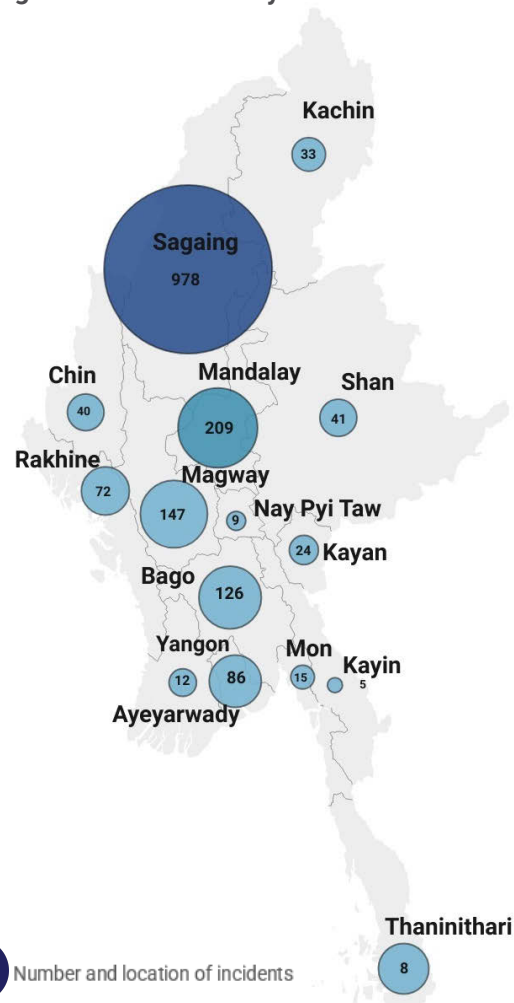


Fig. 10 Deaths in custody by sex and age



SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence against detainees was increasingly reported as a recurring concern.

Men and women, including members of the LGBTIQ+ community, reported that custodial authorities regularly perpetrated acts of sexual violence and sexualized torture.

Vaginal and anal rape, whether committed by an individual or multiple perpetrators, penetration with foreign objects, invasive vaginal searches of women detainees, threats of sexual violence, and sexual humiliation were commonly reported.

In formal detention settings, sexual violence often occurred during interrogations and it was generally perceived by the detainees as a form of punishment for not providing interrogators with the information they wanted.

Victims considered resisting the abuse as pointless, fearing would only further enrage interrogators.

Survivors reported that custodial authorities used foreign objects to penetrate their anus, including bamboo sticks and glass.

Detainees consistently reported threats of sexual violence and sexualized verbal abuse as an interrogation tactic.

Survivors commonly described their mental states following abuse, including feelings of embarrassment, shame, dehumanization, and thoughts of suicide.

Sexual violence, abuse, harassment, and threats repeatedly occurred in conjunction with beatings and other forms of violence with perpetrators being confident about their impunity.



MENTAL HEALTH

Recalling the right of everyone to the highest attainable standard of mental health, Myanmar currently lacks sufficient legal, institutional and professional capacity to address the scope of mental health concerns prevailing in the country.

The idea that “caring for one’s mental health is seen as a mental weakness in a time when you have to stay strong” was identified as leading to marginalization, exclusion, and discrimination.

The 1912 Lunacy Act forms the legal basis for mental health services defining individuals-in-need as “lunatics” and “idiots”.

There is no regulatory framework or professional board overseeing professional certification, licensing, or ethical standards.

According to pre-coup United Nations data, already prior to the coup, Myanmar possessed an average of less than one mental health worker per 100,000 persons.

Mental health education was lacking with undergraduate medical students receiving only two weeks of related lectures and training.

Postgraduate training for psychiatrists was limited, with none in ethnic states.

Health assistants received few hours of training.

Similarly, no clinical training was available for psychology students.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The High Commissioner calls on the **military** to:

Cease immediately all violence and attacks directed against civilians, including the Rohingya, and civilian objects, in compliance with Security Council resolution S/RES/2669(2022);

Ensure the full and timely implementation of the provisional measures indicated by the International Court of Justice, particularly with reference to killings, infliction of serious bodily or mental harm, and deleterious conditions of life of members of the Rohingya community;

Release all political prisoners without further delay and discontinue politically-motivated prosecutions through the instrumentalization of the judiciary;

Respect and protect the right to life and bodily integrity of individuals deprived of liberty, including by providing those detained with necessary medical care;

Take urgent measures to improve conditions of detention by ensuring adequate conditions and access of independent monitors to places of deprivation of liberty.

The High Commissioner further recommends that the **National Unity Government**:

Monitor and document violations in detention settings to support future accountability processes;

Ensure that groups under its control and their affiliates fully respect international humanitarian law and human rights, refraining from violence to life and person and outrages upon personal dignity;

Coordinate with relevant stakeholders to assess needs and evaluate current psycho-social support programmes available on the ground, particularly from local civil society organizations, to identify gaps, and strengthen support through training programmes and adequate resources;

Maintain and expand mental health assistance, education, and programmes to promote access to services for the civilian population, creating conditions for the establishment of a modern, rights-based, people-centred, nationwide mental health system.

The High Commissioner renews his recommendation that the **Security Council** refer the full scope of the current situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court.

The High Commissioner urges **Member States** to:

Maintain rigorous attention to developments in Myanmar, as the situation continues to deteriorate, and actively support documentation and all accountability efforts;

Continue to demand accountability for human rights violations and other violations of international law perpetrated by the military and other actors as an essential component of a future democratic and stable Myanmar;

Support without delay programmes and activities aimed at raising awareness on mental health, strengthening education and the delivery of services;

States with a sizable Myanmar population should allow for psycho-social support programmes and educational opportunities for mental health professionals to initiate addressing the concerns related to the long-term needs for professional education;

Provide flexible and direct funding to civil society organizations to support political prisoners, their families, legal counsels, while detained and after their release.

The High Commissioner recommends that **Ethnic Armed Organizations** and anti-military armed groups:

Ensure the full respect for international humanitarian law, including by refraining from violence to life and person and outrages upon personal dignity;

Refrain from carrying out death sentences and ensure that local justice systems under their authority fully comply with international standards;

Introduce mental health education for medical professionals in their ranks and, in collaboration with civil society organizations, expand coverage of mental health services to the population in areas under their control.