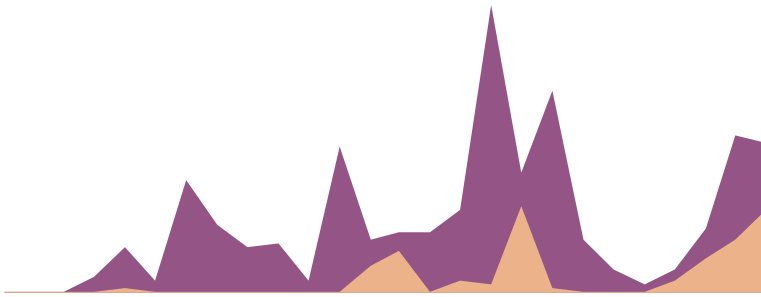


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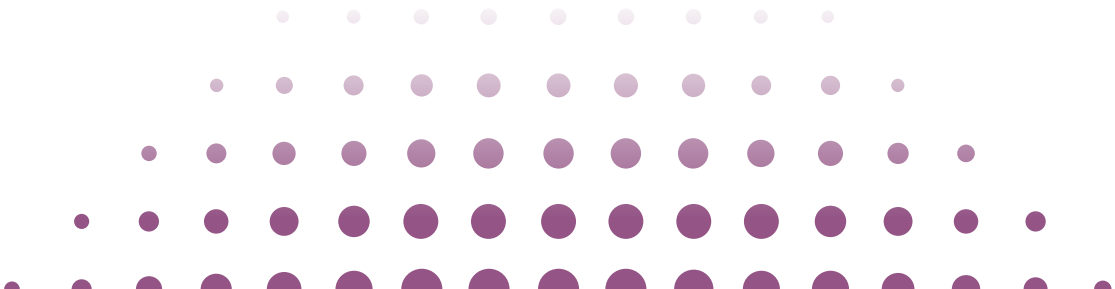
No. 42, 2023, April 10

Conflict, Peace and Security

SAC's Offensive Operations Ramp Up in Shan and Kayah States



The State Administration Council (SAC) imposed martial law two years since the coup and stepped up their offensives in areas where there was substantial resistance. The frequency of airstrikes increased as fighting between the SAC's forces and local resistance forces grew more intense in Kayah State, Southern Shan State, Karen State, Chin State, and Sagaing Region. Clashes between armed forces are occurring more frequently and throughout wider geographic areas because of the SAC's offensives. ISP-Myanmar will highlight and provide a brief explanation of clashes between Karenni resistance forces and the SAC's forces that took place in Shan and Kayah States.



■ Clashes tripled in number in Shan and Kayah States

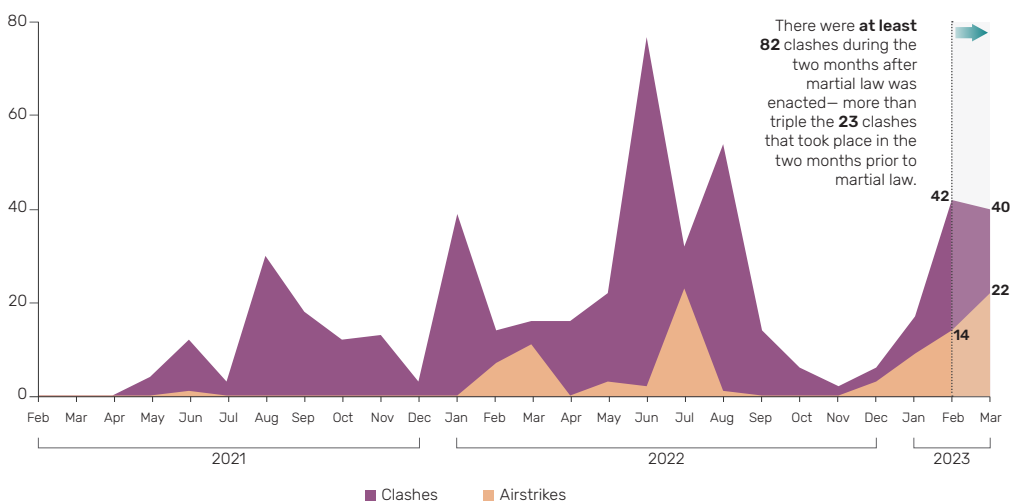
There were at least 82 armed clashes in Kayah State and Southern Shan State within two months since martial law was enacted—more than triple the 23 clashes that took place in the two months prior to martial law. This figure is still less than the total number of clashes occurred from June to August in 2022.

During the third week of February 2023, SAC launched its offensive operations in Kayah State and Southern Shan State with 1,500 soldiers spread over 12 missions. The SAC's primary offensive actions were carried out in Shadaw Township, Bawlake Township, Demoso Township, Pekon Township, and Pinlaung Township. These townships are under the territorial control and governance of the local resistance forces and situated in locations from where the SAC's administrative capital, Naypyitaw, might potentially face military threats from resistance forces.

Situation of Armed Conflicts in Shan and Kayah States

(February 1, 2021 - March 31, 2023)

At least 440 clashes took place across Myanmar in the two months following the declaration of martial law. Among these, **at least 178** clashes took place in Sagaing and Magway Regions (**more than 40%** of all clashes) while **at least 82** clashes occurred in Kayah State and Southern Shan State (**about 19%** of all clashes). During the same period, there were **at least 36** airstrikes in Kayah State and Southern Shan State, with **26 more** in Sagaing and Magway Regions.



Reference : Data is collected in accordance with ISP-Myanmar's system for documenting information on armed conflicts, and it is cross-checked with reports from various independent organization. Actual figures might be higher.

The SAC's offensive operations targeted areas that were crucial to the Karenni military resistance strategy as a whole. These included territories under the strong military control of the Karenni Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF) and People's Defence Forces (PDFs), such as Demoso Township, Bawlake Township, Pekon Township, and Pinlaung Township, as well as Karenni Army (KA) military bases in Shadaw Township. In previous clashes with Karenni resistance forces over the last two years, the SAC focused on seizing control of roads, cities, and villages. More recently, they have tried as well to cut off communication between frontline and rear bases of Karenni forces. In Pinlaung Township, where the KNDF's newly founded 22nd Battalion is active, the SAC also spread false information to sow unrest based on inter-ethnic mistrust between the local Palaung (Ta'ang) people and Karenni forces.

One thing to note is that despite the SAC's ramped up offensives, Karenni forces lost no control over any significant territory. Rather, they seized control of four SAC outposts in Shadaw Township. Military tensions between two sides still remain with little chance that the conflict intensity will decrease any time soon.

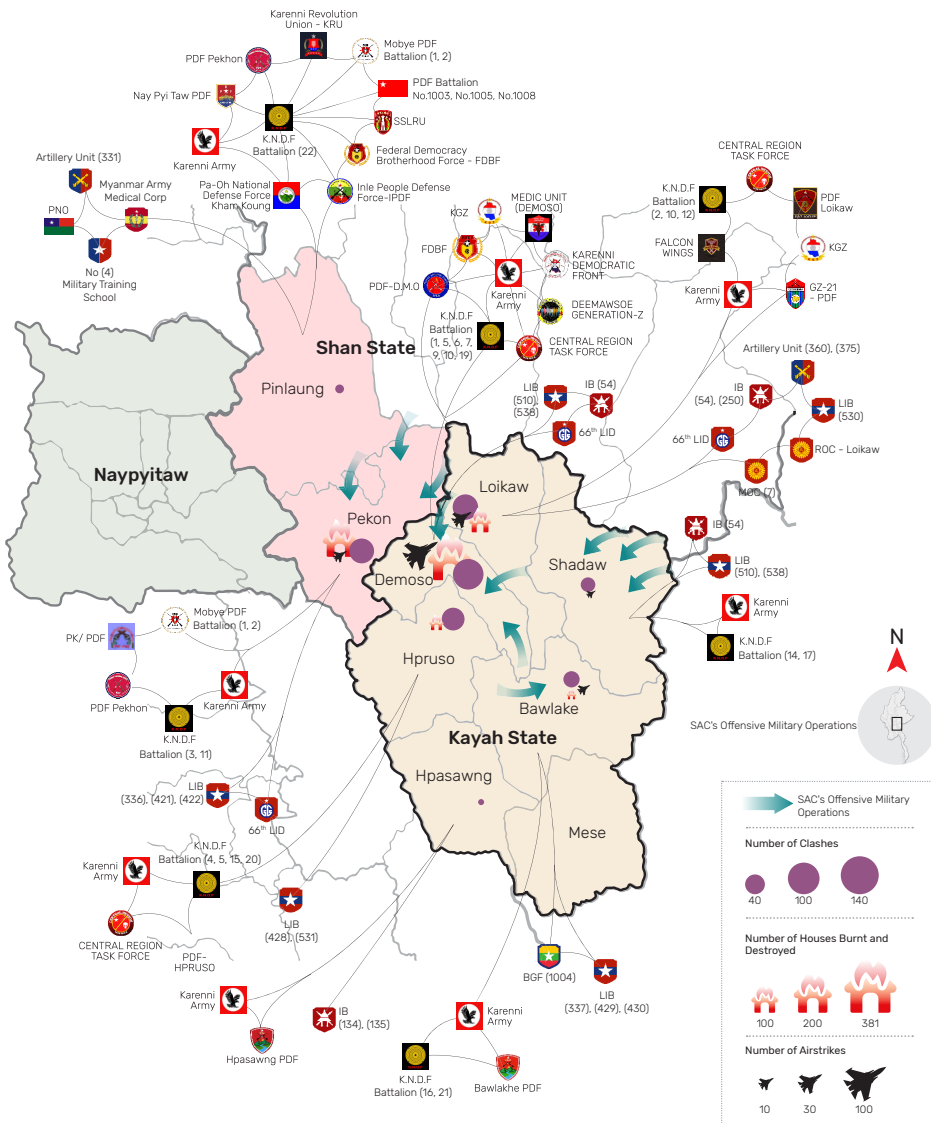
■ **Pinlaung Township became a fierce new theater for armed conflicts**

No substantial clashes occurred in Pinlaung Township in the Pa-O Self-Administered Zone until the end of 2022. However, fighting became more intense once the SAC stepped up its offensive attempts in the third week of February 2023. These conflicts started when resistance forces, which had previously been active in Pekon Township, expanded their operations there and clashed with the SAC, making Pinlaung a new frontline for armed conflicts.

The 22nd Battalion, the KNDF's newest battalion and one of the strongest forces in Kayah State, have a base in Pinlaung Township, and the Pa-O National Defense Force-Kham Kaung (PNDF-KK) is also active in this township. Pinlaung Township is originally a part of "Special Region 6" of the Pa-O National Organisation (PNO). When new armed forces entered PNO territory, tensions with both the SAC and PNO increased. PNO is a people's militia force that has been training civilians in military skills to defend the Pa-O region ever since the coup in early 2021.

■ Conflict Map of Shan and Kayah States (February 1, 2021 - March 31, 2023)

At least 48 resistance force battalions are active in Kayah State and Southern Shan State, where 18 battalions and one division from the SAC are conducting offensive operations. Additionally, SAC-allied militias are also present in these areas.



- Remark : Data here refers to forces that are active in each particular township and is not a representation of territories that are controlled by particular forces.
- Reference : Data is collected in accordance with ISPD-Myanmar's system for documenting information on armed conflicts, and it is cross-checked with reports from various independent organizations. Actual figures might be higher.

■ The Pinlaung Massacre

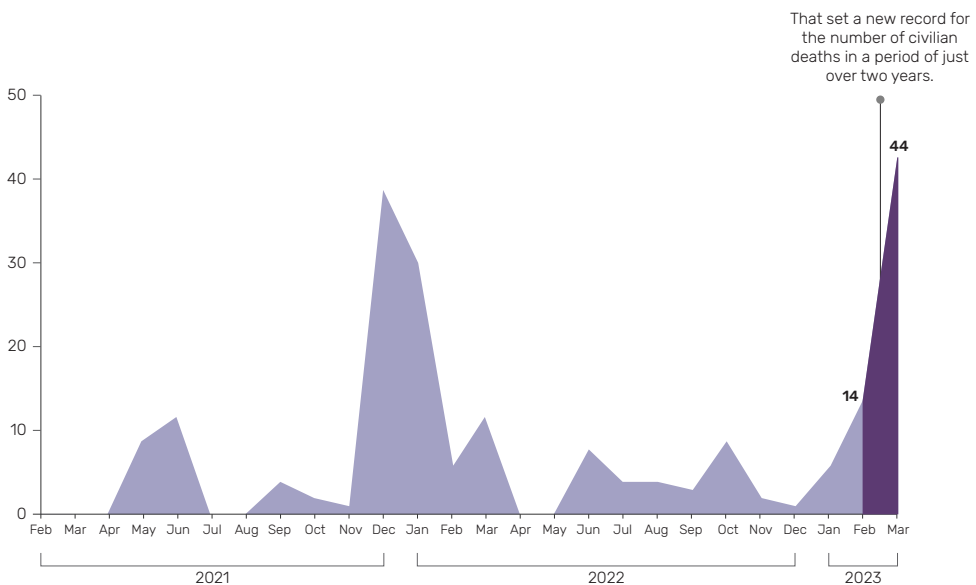
During the SAC’s offensive operations in Pinlaung Township, intense clashes occurred and 28 civilians, including three Buddhist monks, were brutally murdered. While Karenni forces claimed that the SAC was responsible for the slaughter, the SAC and PNO blamed resistance forces. The remnants of ammunition, equipment, and bullet casings found at the scene of the massacre belonged to the SAC, according to Karenni troops.

These tragic events have not stopped with both sides blaming each other. In Taunggyi, the PNO rallied the Pa-O people and staged a public protest intended to demonstrate that the Pa-O do not welcome Karenni forces on their territory. The majority of the resistance forces in Pinlaung Township are Karenni troops, whereas the local populace is Pa-O. This has raised tensions along both inter-ethnic and military lines. Allegations have been made that the fomenting mistrust and conflict is being orchestrated by the SAC.

Deaths of Civilians Breaking Records

(February 1, 2021 - March 31, 2023)

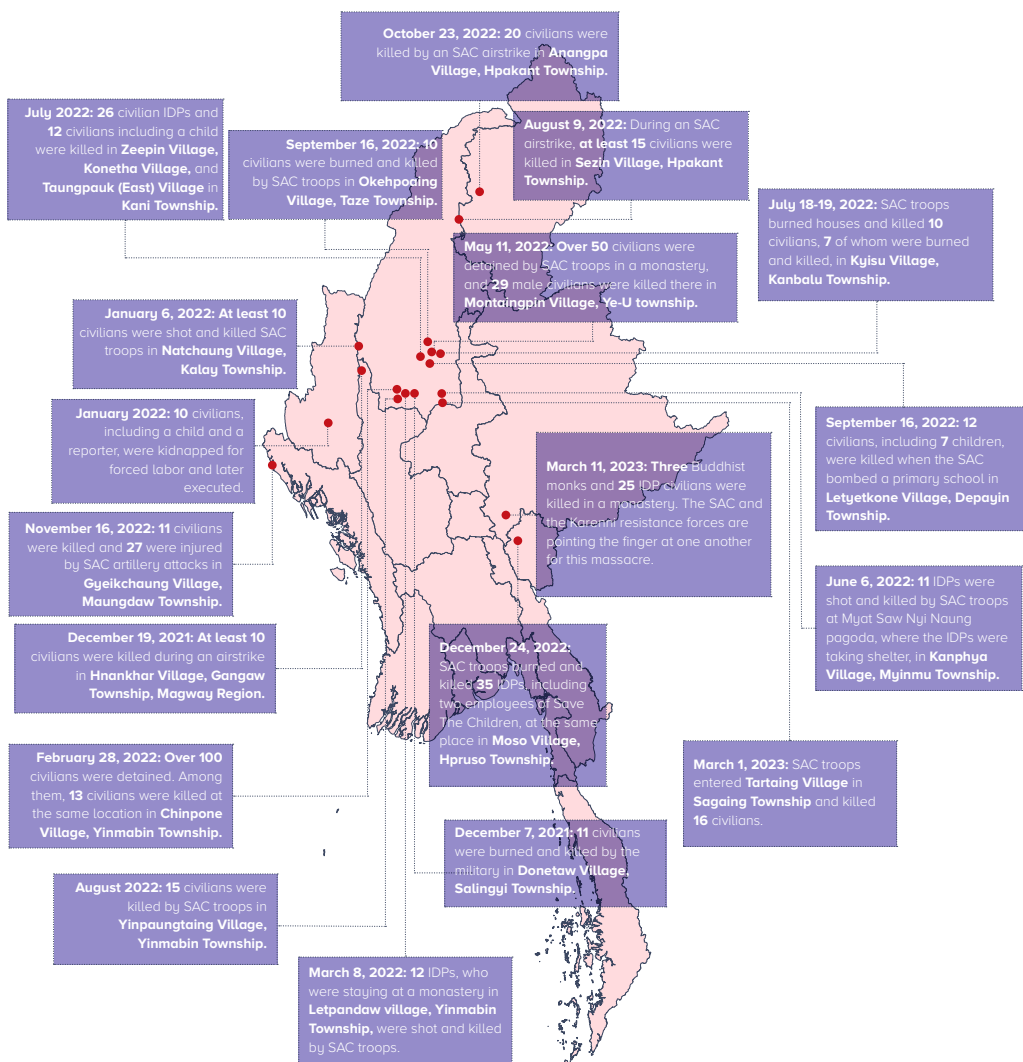
Two months after martial law was enacted, **55** civilians and **three** Buddhist monks were killed in Kayah and Southern Shan States.



Reference - Data is collected in accordance with ISP-Myanmar’s system for documenting information on armed conflicts, and it is cross-checked with reports from various independent organizations. Actual figures might be higher.

■ **Locations of Massacres**
(February 1, 2021 - March 31, 2023)

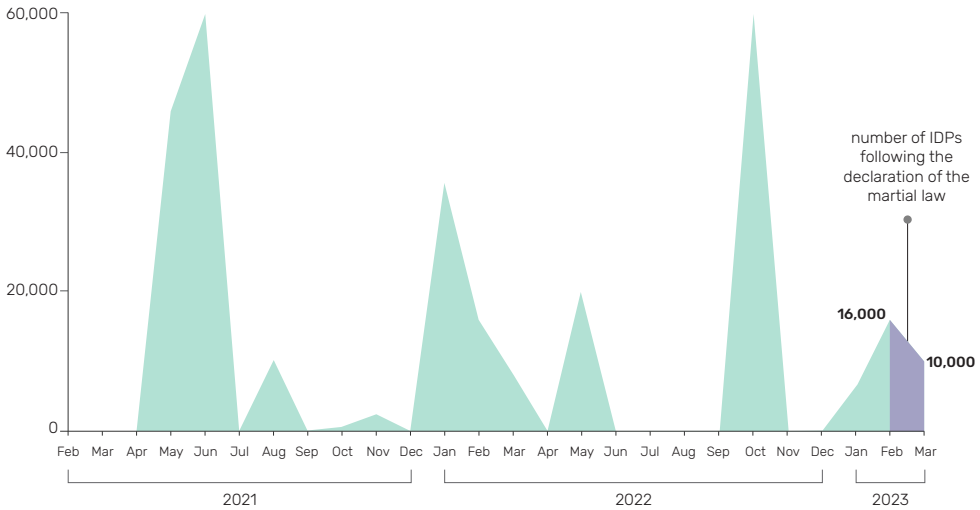
At least 19 massacres occurred as a result of armed conflicts after the coup. At least 10 victims were killed in each massacre. At least 290 civilians were murdered in all 19 of these massacres, which took place in Kachin State, Kayah State, Southern Shan State, Rakhine State, Sagaing Region, and Magway Region. According to data made public by the National Unity Government's (NUG) Ministry of Human Rights on March 15, 2023, there were 64 massacres that resulted in the deaths of 766 civilians. The NUG's list was based on the definition of a massacre, which is an attack in which at least five civilians were killed.



Reference : Data is collected in accordance with ISPD-Myanmar's system for documenting information on armed conflicts, and it is cross-checked with reports from various independent organizations. Actual figures might be higher.

Over 26,000 new IDPs
(February 1, 2021 - March 31, 2023)

Two months after martial law was declared, armed conflicts in Kayah State and Southern Shan State resulted more than 26,000 new IDPs, the highest increase since 2022 October.



Reference - Data is collected in accordance with ISP-Myanmar's system for documenting information on armed conflicts, and it is cross-checked with reports from various independent organizations. Actual figures might be higher.

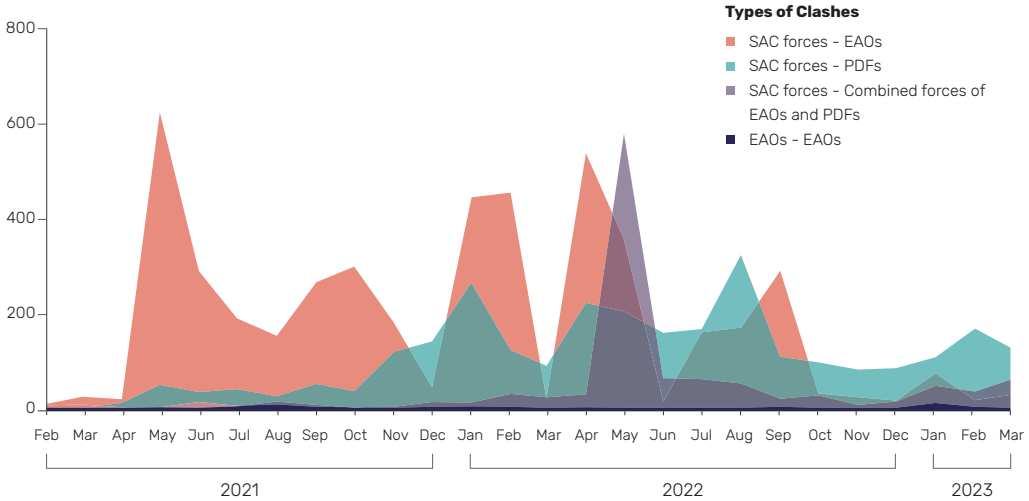
Within two months of martial law's implementation, at least 55 civilians and three Buddhist monks were killed in armed conflicts. At a monastery in Nan Neint Village, Lonpyin Village-tract, Pinlaung Township, 28 civilians, including three Buddhist monks, were killed. During this time, there was a surge of over 26,000 IDPs. Due to widespread conflicts following the coup, there are more than 2.5 million IDPs across the country. This includes around 300,000 IDPs in Kayah State and at the Shan State-Kayah State border.

■ An increase in the number of conflicts between the SAC and PDFs

More than two years after the coup (through March 31, 2023), there were over 8,721 armed conflicts between SAC's military and various resistance forces. During the first three months of 2023 alone, 686 clashes occurred—58% of them, or at least 398, between the SAC's forces and local resistance forces.

Situation of Nationwide Armed Conflicts (February 1, 2021 - March 31, 2023)

Since October 2022, there were certain alterations in the pattern of conflict trends. The number of clashes between SAC and PDFs became higher than the rest.



Reference - Data is collected in accordance with ISP-Myanmar's system for documenting information on armed conflicts, and it is cross-checked with reports from various independent organizations. Actual figures might be higher.

Since October 2022, certain alterations were seen in the pattern of conflict trends. Compared to other types of armed engagements (such as fighting between the SAC forces and EAOs, or clashes between the SAC forces and combined forces of EAOs and PDFs), the number of clashes between the SAC forces and PDFs increased dramatically.

This could mean that the SAC is shifting its attention to solely attacking PDFs or that the coalition forces of EAOs and PDFs are decreasing their joint attacks on SAC forces. But PDF forces, which have engaged with SAC troops recently in Sagaing Region, Magway Region, and Kayah State, are not individual entities. Instead, they are under the joint command of the regional military forces of various EAOs and the Ministry of Defense, National Unity Government (NUG).

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