

# Burma – Complex Emergency

APRIL 4, 2024

## SITUATION AT A GLANCE

<p><b>5.3</b> MILLION</p> <p>People Targeted for Humanitarian Assistance in Burma in 2024</p> <p><i>UN – December 2023</i></p>	<p><b>2.6</b> MILLION</p> <p>IDPs in Burma Displaced Since February 2021</p> <p><i>UNHCR – March 2024</i></p>	<p><b>800,000</b></p> <p>IDPs in Burma Displaced Since Late October 2023</p> <p><i>UN – January 2023</i></p>	<p><b>12.9</b> MILLION</p> <p>Number of People in Need of Food Assistance in 2024</p> <p><i>UN – December 2023</i></p>	<p><b>3</b> MILLION</p> <p>People Targeted for Protection Assistance in Burma in 2024</p> <p><i>UN – December 2023</i></p>
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- Violence between the MAF and various armed groups in northwestern and southeastern Burma, as well as Rakhine State, continued to drive deteriorating humanitarian conditions in March, according to the UN.
- Since military authorities announced a military conscription law on February 10, protection violations—including arbitrary arrests and forced recruitment—continue to pervade in Rakhine.
- Despite challenges related to insecurity, USG partners continue to support populations in need in Burma through the provision of multi-sector assistance.



### TOTAL U.S. GOVERNMENT HUMANITARIAN FUNDING

USAID/BHA<sup>1</sup> \$47,000,000

For the Burma Response in FY 2024

*For complete funding breakdown with partners, see detailed chart on page 5*

**Total \$47,000,000**

<sup>1</sup> USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA)

## **KEY DEVELOPMENTS**

### **Hostilities, Including Airstrikes and Shelling, Continue to Drive Humanitarian Needs Across Burma**

Violence between the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF), ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), and people's defense forces in northwestern and southeastern Burma, as well as Rakhine State, continued to drive deteriorating humanitarian conditions in March, according to the UN. Since the breakdown of an informal Arakan Army (AA)–MAF ceasefire in November 2023, armed clashes in Rakhine have resulted in 170 civilian deaths and injury to approximately 400 individuals, as of March 3. In addition, the renewed hostilities have led to the new displacement of approximately 157,000 people in the state. Increased MAF artillery shelling has affected Rakhine's capital city of Sittwe and surrounding townships, including an attack near a market that resulted in at least 21 civilian deaths and injury to more than 30 others in Sittwe on February 29.

MAF airstrikes have continued to affect civilians across Burma, particularly in Rakhine, according to Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) analysis. Overall, the MAF conducted nearly 590 airstrikes across the country, 19 percent of which—approximately 110 airstrikes—targeted areas in Rakhine, between November 1, 2023, and March 8, 2024, ACLED reports. Notably, an airstrike hit Rakhine's Minbya township's Thar Dar village—a community predominately comprising ethnic Rohingya—on March 18, resulting in at least 23 deaths and injury to more than 30 people as of March 30, according to international media. In response to the persistent airstrikes in Rakhine, UN Secretary-General António Guterres called for restraint from all involved parties in Rakhine on March 18.

Meanwhile in southeastern Burma, conflict between the MAF and various EAOs continues to drive displacement with nearly 821,000 people displaced across the southeastern region—comprising Kayah, Kayin, Mon, and southern Shan states, and Bago and Tanintharyi regions—as of March 18, according to the UN. In late March, EAO–MAF violence expanded in Mon's Kyaikmaraw township, displacing more than 1,000 people and destroying more than 300 homes as of April 1. Overall, nearly 2.9 million people remain displaced across Burma due to ongoing insecurity, including 2.6 million people displaced since the coup d'état in February 2021. Violence-affected populations remain in need of food, health, protection, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) assistance, the UN reports.

In contrast to increased hostilities in northwestern and southeastern Burma, as well as Rakhine, conditions in northern Shan State have relatively stabilized since the announcement of a January 2024 ceasefire between the MAF and Three Brotherhood Alliance, a coalition of EAOs that launched widespread attacks against the MAF in late October 2023. As a result, approximately 117,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) returned to their areas of origin in the state as of March 3, according to the UN. Despite this recent relative stability, nearly 23,000 IDPs from areas in northern Shan remain displaced as of early March, while landmines and explosive remnants of war continue to present risks to IDPs and other civilians in the region.

### **Telecommunications Outages and Physical Obstructions Due to Fighting Continue to Hinder Humanitarian Assistance Across Burma**

Telecommunications disruptions and power outages in violence-affected areas, particularly Rakhine, from January to March have hindered humanitarian actors' ability to gather information, assess needs, and deliver assistance, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) reports. For example, prolonged telecommunications outages have challenged humanitarian actors' capacity to gather data on displacement trends and the needs of displaced populations. In addition, physical barriers, such as

blocked or damaged bridges and roads, have continued to obstruct humanitarian activities across Burma. Furthermore, these obstructed transportation routes and resultant effects on supply chains have contributed to escalating prices and shortages of food, fuel, medical supplies, and other essential commodities in Rakhine, a USAID/BHA partner reports. A UN-supported market monitoring analysis of eight townships in the state found that fuel and medicine were scarce in markets in early February, while retailers cited high transportation costs as their largest challenge to supply.

Despite access constraints due to elevated violence, humanitarian actors in Rakhine and Sagaing Region continued to deliver essential assistance and services, including protection, shelter, and WASH assistance, to populations in IDP sites, the UN reports. Furthermore, in response to the increased access constraints, UN World Food Program (WFP) Deputy Executive Director Carl Skau visited Burma from March 11 to 13 to meet with WFP partners, staff, and stakeholders to discuss ongoing assistance and emphasize the importance of access to reach all people in need affected by the violence.

### **Military Conscription Law Contributes to a Rise in Protection Violations, Particularly in Rakhine**

On February 10, military authorities in Burma announced plans to enforce a compulsory military service law and intend to call 5,000 people each month to service in the MAF starting in mid-April, international media reports. Since the announcement, protection violations—including arbitrary arrests and forced recruitment—continue to affect civilians. These protection risks particularly pervade in Rakhine, creating concern for vulnerable Rohingya individuals at higher risk of forced recruitment into EAOs and the MAF, according to the UN. For example, in the Kyauk Ta Lone displacement site in Rakhine's Kyaukphyu township, military authorities have offered increased freedom of movement for Rohingya people in exchange for military service and detained more than 100 Rohingya individuals from the same site on February 27 in an effort to bolster their forces, according to international media. In addition, more than 700 people in Rakhine were placed in detention by the MAF or EAOs since the breakdown of the AA-MAF ceasefire in November 2023, according to the UN. In response to the protection violations prompted by the military conscription law, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Burma called for greater efforts to protect civilians in the country on February 21. The UN official also called for increased humanitarian assistance, including cross-border assistance, to communities adversely affected by the violence. The announcement of the conscription law has also driven new migration from Burma to neighboring Thailand, international media reports.

### **Rohingya Refugees Continue to Arrive in Indonesia via Sea Routes**

Approximately 2,000 Rohingya refugees—an estimated 73 percent of whom are women and children—arrived in Indonesia via sea routes from Bangladesh and Burma from mid-November 2023 to late March 2024, according to U.S. Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (State/PRM) partner the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). A vessel carrying more than 140 Rohingya refugees capsized off the coast of West Aceh Regency in northern Indonesia, resulting in the deaths of 67 people, including 27 children, in March, underscoring the continued life-threatening dangers to refugees resorting to the route. In addition, the refugees at sea also face risk of malnutrition and severe protection risks such as extortion, gender-based violence (GBV), and physical abuse. Moreover, a concerted media effort to spread disinformation, hate speech, and misinformation about Rohingya refugees in Indonesia has prompted increased concern among humanitarian actors, who reported forced relocation of refugees and personal threats to their staff members from local community members, according to UNHCR.

In response to the increase in Rohingya refugees fleeing by boat to Indonesia, the International

Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNHCR issued a joint emergency appeal for \$5.4 million to provide food, health, protection, shelter, and WASH assistance to refugees in Aceh and North Sumatra provinces in northern Indonesia on January 9. Furthermore, UNHCR conducted GBV protection and response activities, as well as established protection reporting systems at nine sites hosting refugees in Aceh and North Sumatra. Additionally, UNHCR continued to provide food, health, shelter, and WASH services at ten sites.

## KEY FIGURES



**\$38.4 Million**

In dedicated USAID/BHA  
FY 2024 support for  
food assistance



**5**

USG partners  
implementing health  
activities



**12**

USG partners  
implementing standalone  
protection interventions



**9**

USG partners supporting  
WASH activities

## U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

### FOOD SECURITY

USAID/BHA provides funding to WFP to deliver emergency food assistance—including cash transfers for food; food vouchers; and in-kind food assistance through local, regional, and international procurement—to communities in need in Burma. USAID/BHA also supports complementary nutrition services, as well as coordination and capacity-building activities among food security actors in the country to strengthen response efforts to food needs.

### HEALTH

USAID/BHA and State/PRM partner with IOM and four implementing partners to provide life-saving health care for violence-affected people in Burma. USAID/BHA partners provide health assistance—including health awareness trainings, maternal health assistance, and medical consultations—to IDPs and vulnerable communities across Chin, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, and Rakhine states and Magway and Sagaing regions.

### PROTECTION

USAID/BHA and State/PRM support 12 humanitarian partners to address protection concerns among displaced and violence-affected populations throughout Burma. Ongoing U.S. Government (USG)-supported protection activities in Burma focus on increasing access to protection assistance, such as GBV prevention and response services and community-based mental health and psychosocial support. USG partners also work with the broader humanitarian community in Burma to advocate for and promote the delivery of protection services in areas with significant humanitarian access constraints.

### WASH

USAID/BHA and State/PRM fund WASH programming throughout the country to promote access to safe drinking water and prevent waterborne disease outbreaks. USAID/BHA supports nine partners to implement critical WASH activities, including conducting hygiene awareness sessions, rehabilitating water systems and latrines, and providing safe drinking water to violence-affected people.

## CONTEXT IN BRIEF

- On February 1, 2021, Burma’s military staged a coup d’état against the civilian government during which soldiers detained senior civilian government officials, including State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint, and announced a one-year state of emergency. Military authorities have extended the state of emergency five times since the coup, with the most recent extension from February 2024 to July 2024, which has further delayed elections. Three years since the February 2021 coup happened, clashes between EAOs, MAF, and other local non-state armed groups across Burma have persisted, resulting in continuous displacement and humanitarian needs. Coup-related instability has also resulted in access challenges, limited cash availability, and restricted banking operations, challenging the provision of assistance by relief actors at a time of significant humanitarian need. From February 2021 to March 2024, more than 126,000 refugees fled to neighboring countries, such as Bangladesh, India, and Thailand.
- The coup d’état exacerbated the already complex issues in Burma. The MAF launched large-scale and indiscriminate military operations—which the USG has since characterized as genocide—in Rakhine’s Buthidaung, Maungdaw, and Rathedaung townships following Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army attacks on northern Rakhine checkpoints and police posts in October 2016 and August 2017. As of September 2023, nearly 966,000 ethnic Rohingya—a minority group not recognized by Burma’s military forces and denied rights to citizenship, freedom of movement, and public services—had fled to neighboring Bangladesh, the majority of whom live in refugee camps in Cox’s Bazar District. As of December 2023, an estimated 633,000 ethnic Rohingya remained in Rakhine. Many IDPs in Rakhine are Rohingya, including approximately 147,000 people affected by clashes in 2012 who remained displaced as of July 2023. In addition, approximately 78,000 civilians, mostly ethnic Rakhine, remained displaced in Rakhine and Chin states as of mid-March 2022 due to AA–MAF clashes that erupted in 2018. Displaced populations, as well as other vulnerable individuals, continue to lack access to basic services and livelihood opportunities due to persistent violence and associated movement restrictions.
- On November 17, 2023, U.S. Chargé d’Affaires Susan N. Stevenson re-issued a declaration of humanitarian need in FY 2024 for Burma due to the ongoing complex emergency. USG partners are continuing to support affected populations in Burma with emergency food, health, nutrition, protection, shelter, and WASH assistance, as well as other critical relief commodities.

## USG HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR THE BURMA RESPONSE IN FY 2024<sup>2</sup>

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER	ACTIVITY	LOCATION	AMOUNT
<b>USAID/BHA</b>			
Implementing Partner	Health, Multipurpose Cash Assistance, Nutrition, Protection, Shelter and Settlements, WASH	Kayah, Kayin, Shan	\$5,500,000
UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)	Humanitarian Coordination, Information Management, and Assessments	Countrywide	\$1,500,000
WFP	Food Assistance—Cash Transfers for Food, Local, Regional, and International Procurement; Nutrition	Bago, Chin, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Magway, Mon, Rakhine, Shan, Sagaing, Tanintharyi	\$40,000,000
<b>TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING FOR THE BURMA RESPONSE</b>			<b>\$47,000,000</b>
<b>TOTAL USG FUNDING FOR THE BURMA RESPONSE IN FY 2024</b>			<b>\$47,000,000</b>

<sup>2</sup>Year of funding indicates the date of commitment or obligation, not appropriation, of funds. Funding figures reflect publicly announced funding as of April 4, 2024.

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## **PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION**

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for disaster responses around the world can be found at [interaction.org](https://interaction.org).
- USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed, often in the affected region; reduce the burden on scarce resources, such as transportation routes, staff time, and warehouse space; can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietarily, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
  - USAID Center for International Disaster Information: [cidi.org](https://cidi.org)
  - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at [reliefweb.int](https://reliefweb.int).

USAID/BHA bulletins appear on the USAID website at [usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work](https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work)