

BRIEFING

THE NEED FOR URGENT CROSS-BORDER HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE ON THE WESTERN FRONT SEPTEMBER 12, 2021

COUP CONTAGION CRISIS

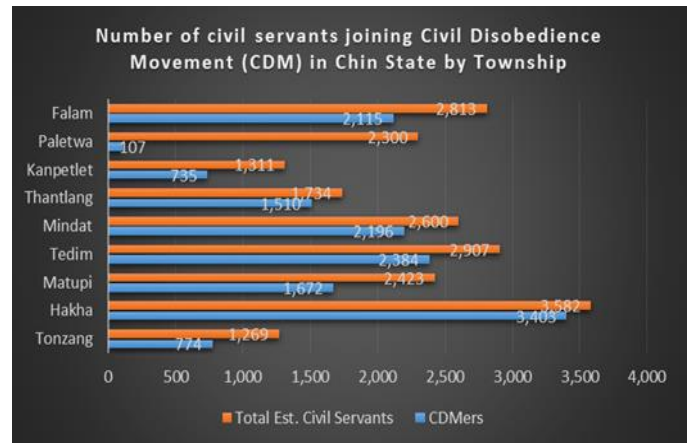
A humanitarian crisis is unfolding in Myanmar/Burma's poorest state following an escalation of fighting in Thantlang and Hakha Townships, Chin State. This adds to a state-wide health crisis following the new wave of COVID-19 infections and an existing humanitarian crisis in Chin State's southern townships, where fighting between the Tatmadaw and Chinland Defense Force (CDF) has been ongoing since May 2021.

Quick Statistics

- Over 450 arrests and 330 detained or sentenced;
- 111 Chin people have died nation-wide of which 70 have taken place inside Chin State;
- Gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law;
- Escalating fighting (Deliberate targeting of civilian infrastructure and religious buildings.)

Context

Following the February 1 military coup in Burma, mass spontaneous protests erupted on the streets of cities and towns across the country, which quickly turned into a nation-wide protest movement against the Myanmar junta. Civil servants from the medical and education profession immediately stepped in to inspire a campaign of non-cooperation and started a Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), which quickly became a symbol of public resistance against the military coup. In Chin State, over 95 percent of the state-level civil servants based in the capital Hakha have joined the CDM while about 71 percent or 15,000 of the state's estimated 20,000-strong government work force have gone on indefinite strike, effectively crippling the basic functions of government and bringing the local economy to a standstill (See figure)

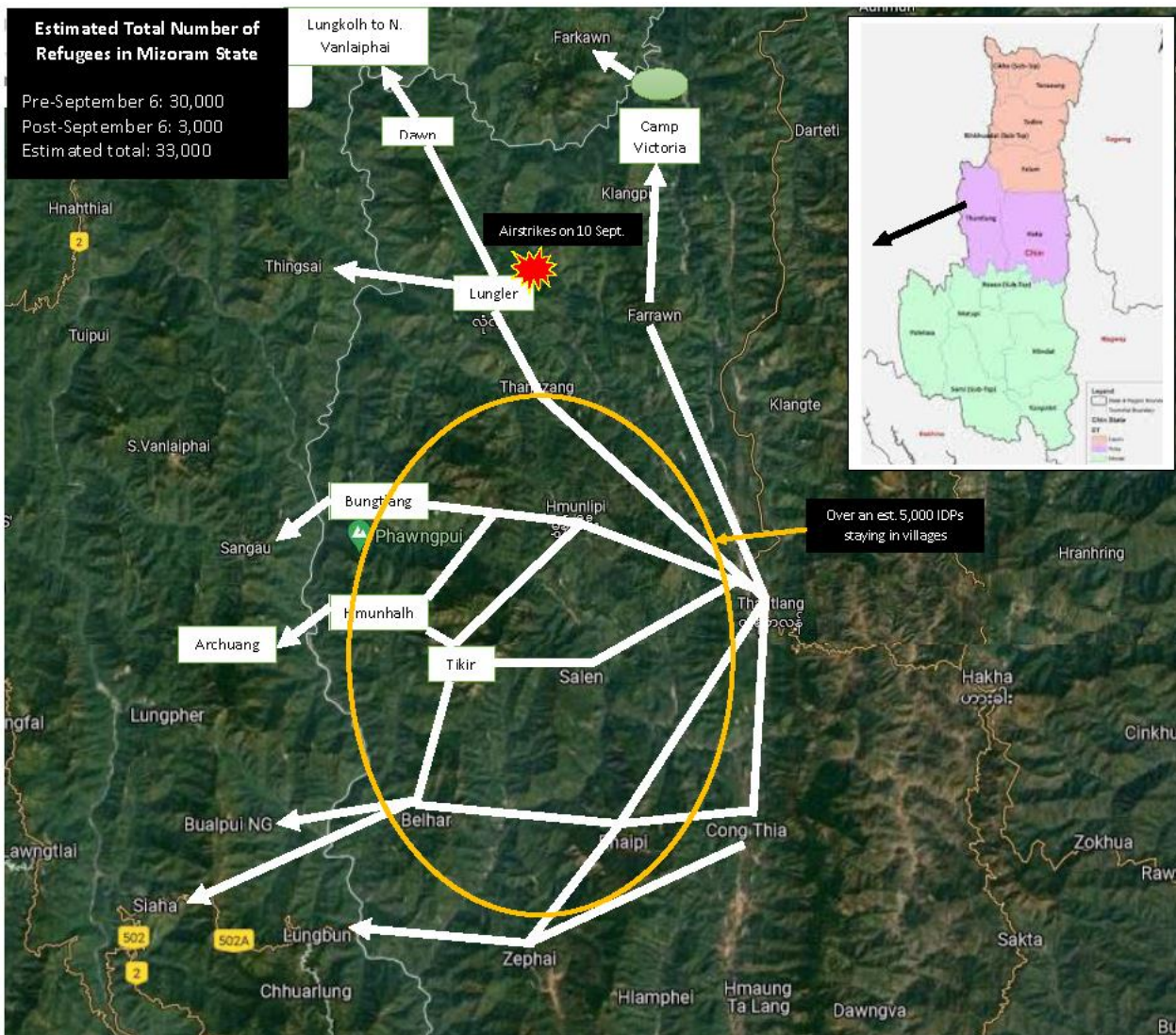


Displacement Situation

- Around 50,000 (Roughly 10 percent of the entire population not including Paletwa Township) have been displaced since February 1
 - Approx. 30,000 people are estimated to have crossed into neighboring Mizoram State of India as refugees since the coup (Source: unofficial figure from Mizoram Govt.)
 - Approx. 20,000 remain internally displaced in Mindat Township
 - Up to 5000 people are newly displaced and on the move in Thantlang Township since September 6 amidst the junta's deliberate targetting of civilians.
- Monsoon rain and swelling rivers are making life more difficult for the internally displaced. Strict COVID-19 prevention measures in India are hindering border crossing.

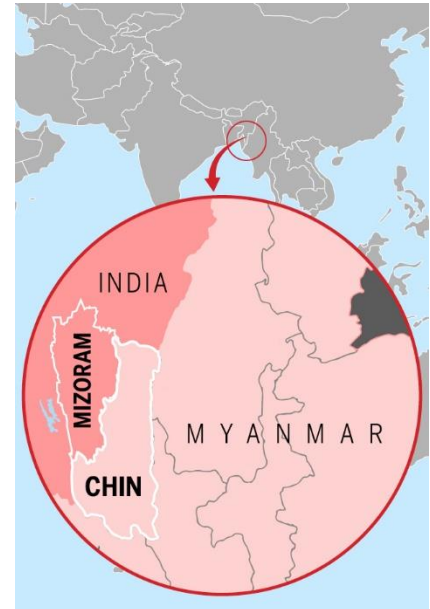
- Mizo villages along the borders are assisting refugees trying cross the border into their state but they are already being overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of refugees in just the last few days. Those who have arrived on the border are being accommodated in quarantine centers and makeshift tents, which are now overwhelmed.
- The Indian Central Government is officially banning entry for refugees, which prevents refugees from using the official and safe border crossing points.
- The State Government of Mizoram has so far resisted orders from the Indian Home Ministry not to accommodate refugees and has recently announced access to education for refugee children in the state school system

Map of New Displacement in Thantlang Township Following fresh fighting on September 6



Key Concerns

- Further escalation of fighting in Hakha and Thantlang Township and the possibility of Tatmadaw launching new airstrikes or heavy ground assault against CNF positions/camps;
- Physical protection for people still remaining in towns and villages from raids, indiscriminate shooting, shelling, looting and pillaging from the junta forces.;
- Increased risks to civilian deaths or injuries from landmine or unexploded ordnances
- Disease and risk to life along the journey and in IDPs camps/villages where they take shelter, further risks of COVID-19 infections, drowning in swelling rivers as people attempt to flee;
- Villages along both sides of the borders will soon become overburdened/overwhelmed in accommodating and providing for IDPs and refugees;
- The situation in Mizoram is very volatile and overwhelming burdens for small villages along the border can become a flash-point for social hostility and sudden changes in attitudes towards refugees;
- Intervention from Indian Central Govt. through sending in paramilitary forces to guard key border-crossing points.

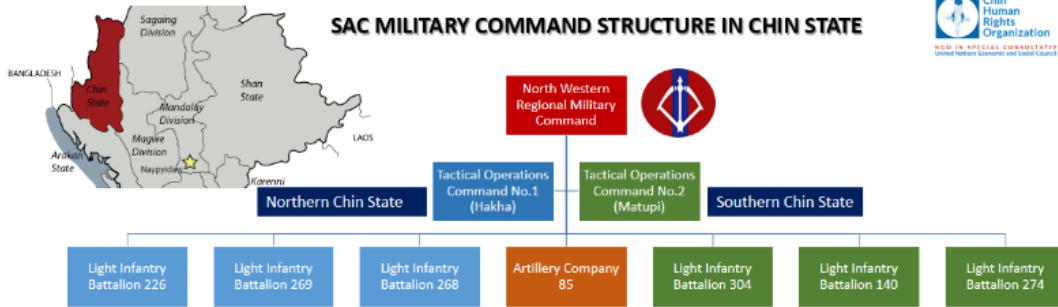


Overview of Human Rights Situation

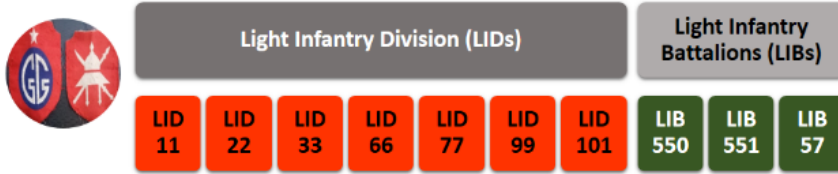
- Security raids, surprise checks, random searches of private homes, properties, including cellphones and frisking commuters on the streets, result in daily arrests and detention, causing people to go into hiding or flee their towns and villages;
- Deliberate and indiscriminate firing of heavy weapons in residential neighborhoods, urban areas and shooting indiscriminately on the streets causing panic and fear for residents. This has resulted in deaths and injuries, including children as young as 9 months-old;
- The “four-cuts” policy is now in full effect. Road transportation is grinding to a halt as the junta prohibits goods, food or commodities to be transported to Chin State without prior permission, which requires all items of goods to be pre-approved and inspected by the Northwestern Regional Military Command, based in Hakha.

Human Rights Violations Committed by SAC Soldiers in Chin State

- Arbitrary Arrests & Detentions
- Torture and Ill-treatment
- Unlawful Killings
- Looting & Pillaging of Civilian Properties
- Deliberate Targeting of Civilians in Military Attacks
- Use of Human Shields
- Indiscriminate Planting & Use of Anti-personnel Landmines
- Occupation of Schools, Hospitals and Places of Religious Worship
- Denial of Food and Essential Goods and Supplies to Civilians
- Scorched Earth Campaign/Four-Cuts Policy
- Enforced Disappearances



REINFORCEMENT/SUPPORT UNITS THAT HAVE BEEN SPOTTED DURING MILITARY OPERATIONS IN CHIN STATE

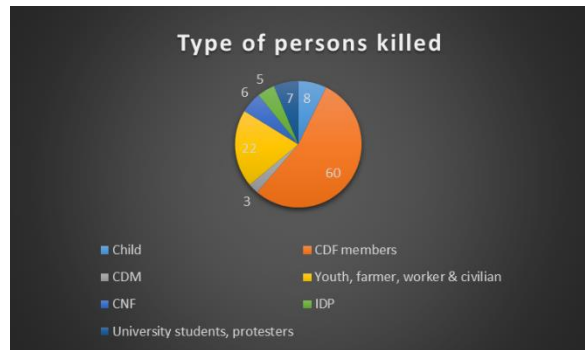


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Note: Paletwa Township falls under Western Command based in Rakhine State

Deaths associated with violent military crackdown since the February 1 military coup in Burma/Myanmar

No.	Reasons/Cause of Death	M	F	Total	
1	Death in hiding & camp		5	1	6
2	Found dead/other		3	0	3
3	Explosion at home		5	0	5
4	Killed by landmine & explosion		11	0	11
5	Killed in conflict		57	1	58
6	Murdered		2	0	2
7	Raped and killed		0	2	2
8	Shot dead during protest, tr		18	3	21
9	Tortured to death		3	0	3
	Total		104	7	111



Conclusion & Recommendations

Given the four-cut policy that has been instituted by the State Administrative Council (SAC) in Chin State where the supply and transport of goods and basic commodities have been either restricted or banned, urban residents in major towns across Chin State are likely to face food shortages soon. The current fighting is likely to escalate as the military reinforce troops to Chin State and CDF steps up its military campaign across the State. On September 12, following the fall of a key strategic SAC outpost in Lungler Village, SAC has sent what appears to be surveillance aircraft over the area where the Chin National Front is located. This followed the aerial attacks on Lungler Village by SAC fighter jets on September following an overnight firefight between CDF and SAC troops manning the camp. The developments over the past week indicate that Thantlang and Hakha Townships will see more fighting over the immediate future. Meanwhile, the junta is likely to step up security measures in the towns and place further restrictions on movement of goods and people. There is also a likelihood that soldiers will increase security sweeps in the forms of raiding of private homes, guest registration checks, frisking, search and seizures in the towns, causing more people to flee the area. In Hakha, the junta has recently begun targeting leaders of the Civil

Disobedience Movement for arrest and pressurizing key government staff to go back to work. All of these likely scenarios could result in further population movement and contributing to further humanitarian crisis in outlying villages considered to be safe.

In light of the developments of the past week following the escalation of fighting in Thantlang and Hakha Townships, CHRO recommends the following:

- Provide monetary assistance to trusted local church groups and committees, which have been set up to respond to the displacement situation. Making cash readily available for these groups is important given that it is practically almost impossible to send goods to Chin State at this time. Local groups can purchase food items, medicines and other materials locally and distribute them to places that need them most. CHRO is ready to assist in identifying and recommending groups operating on the ground
- Consider cross-border modalities of aid distribution, as well as making funds available to Chin groups operating from the Mizoram side to reach people stranded in villages along the border;
- Consider providing relief and basic assistance to refugees inside Mizoram State to take the relieve the burden of local communities in Mizoram who are either already overwhelmed or are likely to be overwhelmed by the current influx of refugees;
- Advocate to the Indian Government to allow UNHCR access to Mizoram State, as well as to allow international aid organizations to channel assistance to refugees in Mizoram State.

About the Chin Human Rights Organization (www.chinhumanrights.org)

CHRO is a non-governmental non-profit organization legally registered in the United States and has a Special Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 2018.

Founded in 1995, CHRO is the primary rights-based advocacy organization for the Chin people and has worked with Chin communities throughout the world continuously since the very beginning. Over the years, CHRO has nurtured working relationships with the Chin, developed the institutional capacity, and become a trusted voice of the Chin people and a leading and respected human rights organization for Chin communities throughout the world. In working towards our objectives, CHRO monitors, documents and reports on the human rights situation, provides capacity building through human rights training and education to empower individuals and communities affected by rights abuses, and conducts policy advocacy to improve human rights protection frameworks at the local, national and international levels.

During the famine-like food crisis of 2008 in Chin State, CHRO led a consortium of border-based organizations to provide cross-border humanitarian aid from the Mizoram border and took the lead role in advocating for international humanitarian assistance to victims of the food crisis. Similarly in 2015, CHRO was instrumental in creating a national coordinating body to respond to the massive flood and landslides that struck Chin State following continuous heavy rains.###