

Eastern Burma:

on the brink



Conflict Snapshot:

Where we are:



The Burmese Government is currently involved in a military campaign against the ethnic minority group in Eastern Burma, the Karen.

The Burmese army moves through the region and destroys villages, displacing an estimated half a million people and killing thousands. The Burmese army specifically targets the Karen's crops and resources in order to starve them out and kill them without drawing the international community's attention. Rape is said to be commonly used as a weapon and new reports show that the Burmese army might be using chemical weapons against the Karen. The government has designated much of

East Burma as a "free fire" zone, meaning that they can act indiscriminately toward the citizens there.

Much of what the international community knows comes from the refugees that flee into Thailand who report what they have experienced firsthand.

How we got here:

Historically, East Burma has always been very independent from the central Burmese Government. East Burma's largest indigenous ethnic group are the Karen, who don't even consider themselves Burmese. They have large Christian population in a mostly Buddhist nation and have close ties to the British, Burma's former colonizers.

This made the Karen a perfect candidate for the Burmese Government's "Burmanisation" plans: plans the governments intentions to eliminate those who do not fit in to what is thought of as being "Burmese,"

Thus, for almost, 20 years, the Burmese military has waged what has been called a "slow genocide" against the Karen people.

Why we care:

The methods used by the Burmese Government against the Karen minorities are slow and indirect, but intentional nonetheless. Although Burma has not been classified as a genocide, it is still a large-scale civil conflict where civilians are targeted based on their ethnic group. It is up to us to ensure Burma never becomes a genocide.

STAND: a Student Anti-Genocide Coalition, is uniting students around the world in a permanent anti-genocide constituency.

We are working towards a world in which the international community protects civilian from genocidal violence and prevents conflicts from becoming genocides.

It is up to students to take the concrete steps to make this genocide-free world a reality. Join the anti-genocide generation. Log onto www.standnow.org

- In 1962, Burma's fledgling post-colonial democracy was overthrown in a military coup

- Since then, the military has kept tight control over any pro-democracy movements, often resorting to violence to do so.

- The main opposition group is the National League for Democracy (NLD)

- The NDL's leader, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, has been under house arrest for 20 years.

- In 2007, the nation's Shanga (the coalition of Buddhist monks) led nation-wide protests against the military junta.

- This "Saffron Revolution" was also brutally put down by force and violence, which the Burmese Government tried to cover up.

- The Burmese Government made changes to the constitution to give more power, and held a sham referendum to make them seem legitimate

- In 2008, Cyclone Nargis hit Burma, causing widespread death and destruction. The Burmese Government blocked humanitarian aid to the worst-affected areas for weeks, causing the deaths of countless Burmese civilians.