

Eastern Burma: On the Brink



STAND
The Student Led Division of
GENOCIDE INTERVENTION

Actors:

State Peace and Development

Council (SPDC): The main body of government led by Gen. Than Shwe. The SPDC funds the army and is guilty of numerous human rights abuses.

Tatmadaw: The Burmese military forces, which receive half the country's budget and are used in conflicts with ethnic minorities.

Minority Nations/Armies: Ethnic groups who have been in conflict with the government for decades in a fight for autonomy. Include the Karen, who have been the target of a government ethnic cleansing campaign known as "Burmanization."

Armed Ceasefire Groups: Ethnic minority groups who have signed ceasefires with the military junta and receive support with drug trafficking in return.

Tactics:

Black Zones: Areas in eastern Burma where the military is allowed to operate with impunity.

Burmanization: The efforts of the SPDC to assimilate ethnic minorities into the dominant Burman culture.

"Four Cuts" Counterinsurgency

Strategy: The SPDC's aim to stop the flow of food, new recruits, funds and intelligence to insurgent groups within their border regions.

Where we are now:

Burma is entrenched in a decades-long, brutal conflict between the Burmese central government and ethnic minority groups who claim autonomy. The Burmese military targets civilians to destroy the opposition's resources and support base.

The Burmese military has destroyed an estimated 3,500 villages in Karen State since 1996. It also employs arbitrary execution, torture, rape, forced labor, and displacement as weapons against civilians.

More than 530,000 people have been internally displaced and over 700,000 have fled the country. It is estimated that millions more live as undocumented refugees in countries like Thailand, Malaysia, and Bangladesh.

How we got here:

Burma is made up of over 100 ethnic minority groups, many of whom were historically autonomous from the Burman majority until the British set Burma's colonial borders.

Burma received independence from the British Empire in 1948, and some ethnic minority groups took up arms against the government almost immediately. In 1962, a military coup overthrew the democratic government, and the new regime instituted the "Four Cuts" counterinsurgency strategy to consolidate control over ethnic minorities.

Since the 1970's, the government has increased its practices of forced relocation and forced labor, and implemented its "Burmanization" policy, waging what has been called a "slow genocide" against ethnic minority civilians, especially the Karen.

Our Response:

The violence in Burma is highly focused. Genocide Intervention Network estimates attributes 99% of all violence to the Burmese government or its proxies. The government's actions, including mining civilian villages and shooting civilians on sight, illustrate a repeated policy of targeting civilians.

Though the conflict has not been labeled genocide, the Burmese government has been perpetrating systematic and targeted violence against civilians for decades. In order to prevent this conflict from becoming genocide, we must call for policies from Burma, the UN, and the US to end human rights abuses. The US must engage diplomatically with the Burmese military regime, and must call for strengthened sanctions against Burma. The UN Security Council must call for a complete arms embargo and a Commission of Inquiry to investigate Burma's crimes against humanity.

In 2009, STAND's parent organization, Genocide Intervention Network, funded an early warning radio network in eastern Burma to protect villages from incoming attacks committed by government forces. As of September 2009, we have delivered over 100 radios to eastern Burma.

Educate yourself about Burma and more at www.standnow.org/learn