

Brief: Myanmar's Conscription Law

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Date: May 19, 2024

Issue: A newly activated conscription law is leading to a mass exodus of young people.

Myanmar's Military Junta Activated the Country's Conscription Law

- Myanmar's military junta [activated](#) a 2010 conscription law on 10 February, 2024, mandating at least two years of military service for all men aged 18 to 35 and women aged 18 to 27, with limited exemptions and harsh penalties for those evading service.

This is Taking Place Amidst A Massive, Ongoing Civil War Following the 2021 Coup

- The 1 February, 2012 coup triggered a civil war which has led to the deaths of an [estimated](#) 50,000 people.
- Large demonstrations, followed by a Civil Disobedience Movement, were met with violent suppression.
- Government officials and activists in opposition to the junta have formed a National Unity Government (NUG). Its armed wing is the Peoples' Defence Forces (PDF).
- Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations (EROs) have mostly continued to oppose the military junta and have increasingly been coordinating with the NUG and PDFs.

The Conscription Push Signals Weakness in the Myanmar Military, From Ongoing Junta is Signalling Weakness. Conscription May be a Desperate Attempt of Making Up for Massive Defections

- The junta is in the face of a military junta that is [losing significant sections](#) of the country to the EROs and PDFs. country's People's Defense Forces (PDF) and armed Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations (EROs), otherwise known as Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs).

The military continues to faces continual [defeat and defections](#) as well as [criticism of its battlefield failures, even from strong supporters](#).

The Conscription Law is Worsening the Migrant Crisis From Myanmar

- The number of refugees, internally displaced peoples (IDPs), and migrants has surged since the coup. According to UNHCR's 2024 figures, there are over [1.35 million refugees, asylum seekers, and people in refugee-like situations, 2.3 million IDPs, and over 650 million Rohingya refugees](#) in Myanmar.

It is also Generating More Risks for Already Suffering Young People

- University student populations have already [dropped 90% due to the situation](#).
- This is putting 14 million young people, or 27% of the population, at risk of conscription. [The law has caused many young people to join the armed resistance or flee to other countries, including Thailand.](#)

The Already-Oppressed Rohingya are Some of the First to be Conscripted

- Reports suggest that the military has forcefully abducted and recruited [over 1000 Rohingya men in Rakhine State](#).
- Other armed groups—including the ethnic Rakhine Arakan Army and the Rohingya Solidarity Organization—are also allegedly [forcibly recruiting Rohingya, further inflaming communal tensions in the area](#).



Chart 1 (Source: The New York Times)

The resistance now controls more than half of Myanmar's territory

Areas of control

- Largely military junta control
- Largely resistance control
- ▨ Contested

