Regional Overview Asia-Pacific March 2023

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April 6, 2023

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Myanmar: Military targets civilians in Sagaing region and southern Shan state

Incidents of violence targeting civilians by state forces increased in March compared to the previous month. In Sagaing region, a column composed of Light Infantry Division 99 troops, which has come to be known as the 'Ogre Column,' carried out a number of civilian killings as it made its way across the region. Several civilians were reportedly killed following a raid on Tar Taing village in Sagaing township early in the month. A few weeks after the violence in Tar Taing, on 19 March, coup leader Min Aung Hlaing visited the Northwestern Regional Command base in Monywa.[1]The Irrawaddy, 'Myanmar Junta Chief Visits Sagaing as Terror Campaign Intensifies,' 20 March 2023 The military's campaign of violence in the region falls under the Northwestern Regional Command.[2]Sa Tun Aung, 'The man behind the Myanmar junta's campaign of terror in Sagaing,' Myanmar Now, 22 March 2023 Meanwhile, as fighting between the military and resistance forces intensified in Kayah and southern Shan states, resistance groups reported that the military had killed dozens of people in Nan Neint village in southern Shan state.[3]Jonathan Head and Kelly Ng, 'Myanmar army kill more than 28 in monastery attack – insurgent group,' BBC News, 13 March 2023

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Afghanistan: Political violence involving the Islamic State increases

The Islamic State (IS) in Afghanistan was reportedly involved in at least twelve political violence events in March, marking a fourfold increase compared to the previous month. Over the past months, IS has targeted Taliban officials amid ongoing Taliban operations against the group. On 27 March, a IS suicide bomber reportedly killed six employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This marked the second attack on the ministry in 2023. Earlier in the month, the Balkh governor was killed in an IS suicide bombing. In addition to IS targeting Taliban officials, on 11 March, IS also targeted journalists in a bomb attack on a ceremony honoring journalists in Mazar-e-Sharif city in Balkh province. IS claimed they carried out the attack against journalists for their involvement in the "war and instigation

against IS."[4]Karam Sleiman, 'Afghanistan: Journalist Hosein Naderi killed in bombing of press event,' International Press Institute, 16 March 2023; Al Jazeera, 'ISIL claims attack targeting journalists in Afghanistan,' 12 March 2023

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Pakistan: PTI-led demonstrations spike as Imran Khan faces corruption case

Supporters of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) chairman and former Prime Minister Imran Khan took to the streets across Pakistan in March against attempts to arrest Khan over non-compliance with a court summons in a corruption case. Outside Khan's residence in Lahore, hundreds of his supporters threw stones and petrol bombs at police to thwart his arrest.[5]Al Jazeera, 'Pakistan court stops police action against Imran Khan till Friday,' 16 March 2023 On 18 March, Khan arrived in Islamabad for a court hearing amid clashes between PTI activists and police outside the judicial complex. In his absence, police entered and searched his residence in Lahore, clashing with PTI activists present at the site.[6]Abid Hussain, 'Imran Khan's 'fascism' jibe as Pakistan police file new cases,' Al Jazeera, 20 March 2023 Pakistan police have arrested hundreds of PTI activists for violence during the demonstrations.[7]Dawn, '316 PTI workers arrested so far for 'vandalism, attacking police' outside FJC: Islamabad police,' 22 March 2023 Khan has dismissed the corruption allegations as being politically motivated and has reiterated concerns about his personal safety following an assassination attempt last year. The latest developments come amid ongoing demonstrations by the PTI demanding early national elections, which are currently scheduled for later this year.[8]Al Jazeera, 'Imran Khan says Pakistan gov't 'petrified' of losing elections,' 8 March 2023

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Bangladesh: Rohingya refugees subject to increasing violence

Rohingya refugees continue to be the target of increasing violence in Bangladesh. While this violence is underreported, several refugees were killed by unidentified assailants in at least eight distinct attacks in Cox's Bazar in March. The attacks come amid ongoing tensions between the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army and the Rohingya Solidarity Organization, rival armed Rohingya groups active in the camps. Earlier in the month, the two groups clashed. A subsequent fire in one of the refugee camps, which left thousands homeless, was thought to stem from this conflict.[9]Kamran Reza Chowdhury and Sunil Barua, 'Bangladesh investigators probe cause of fire that left 12,000 Rohingya homeless,' Radio Free Asia, 7 March 2023

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Philippines: Negros Oriental governor killed amid ongoing targeting of local administrators

On 4 March, nine people were reportedly killed when unidentified assailants targeted Negros Oriental Governor Roel Degamo, killing him along with a barangay chairman, barangay councilor, and six other civilians. The attack took place at the governor's home in Barangay San Isidro in Pamplona, Negros Oriental. The killing came a month after the Supreme Court declared Degamo the winner of the governorship over his rival, Pryde Henry Teves, who was initially declared the winner.[10]Al Jazeera, 'Negros Oriental governor, five others shot dead in Philippines,' 4 March 2023 The Department of Justice is investigating Teves's brother, a congressman, for allegedly orchestrating the attack. Following the governor's killing, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. called for a crackdown on illegal firearms and private armies. Since the beginning of the year, ACLED has recorded dozens of attacks on local administrators in the Philippines.

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Methodology

See the Codebook and the User Guide for an overview of ACLED's core methodology. For additional documentation, check the Resource Library. Region-specific methodology briefs can be accessed below.

Links:

- Methodology and Coding Decisions for Political Violence and Demonstrations in Afghanistan
- Methodology and Coding Decisions for Political Violence and Demonstrations in China
- Methodology and Coding Decisions for Political Violence and Demonstrations in Myanmar
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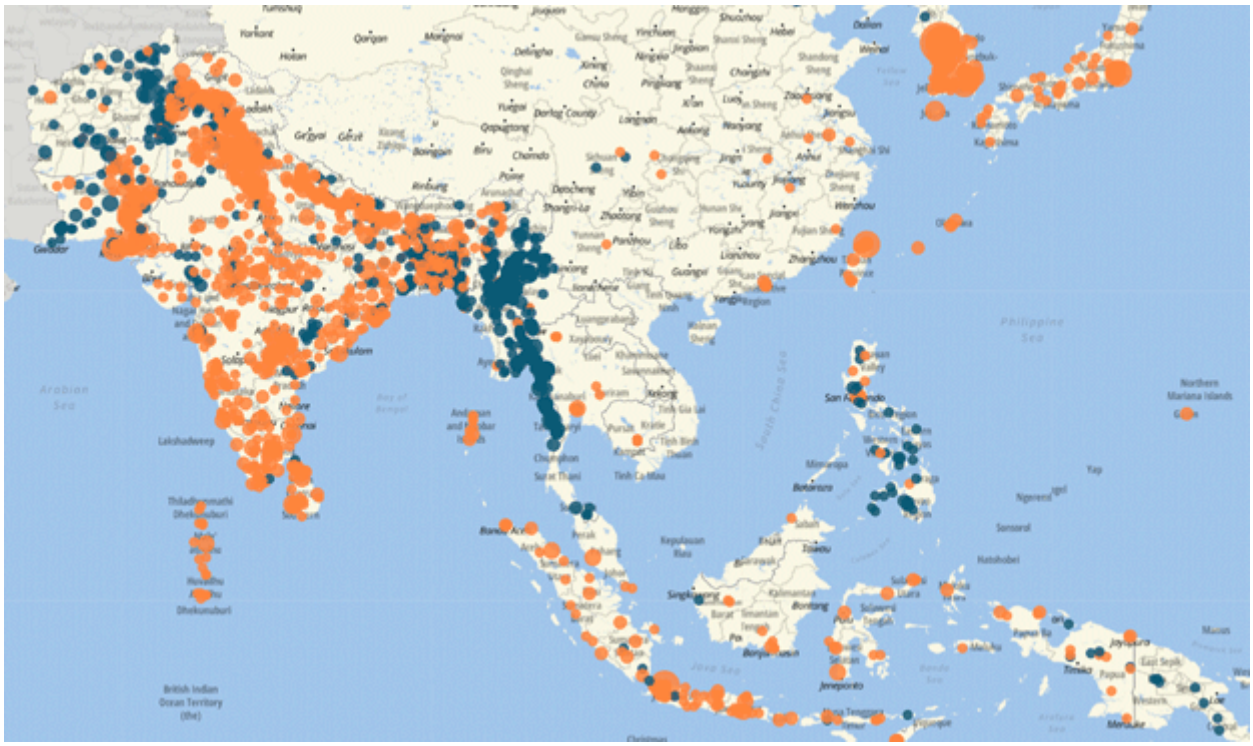

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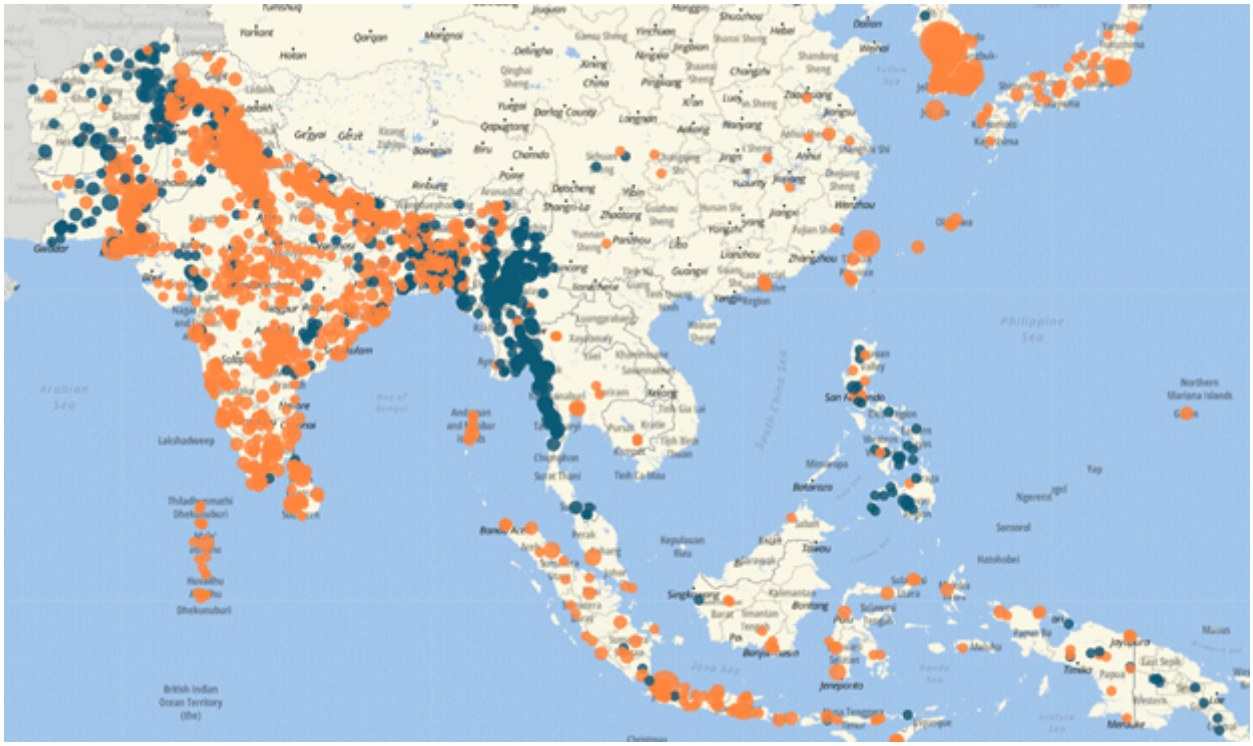

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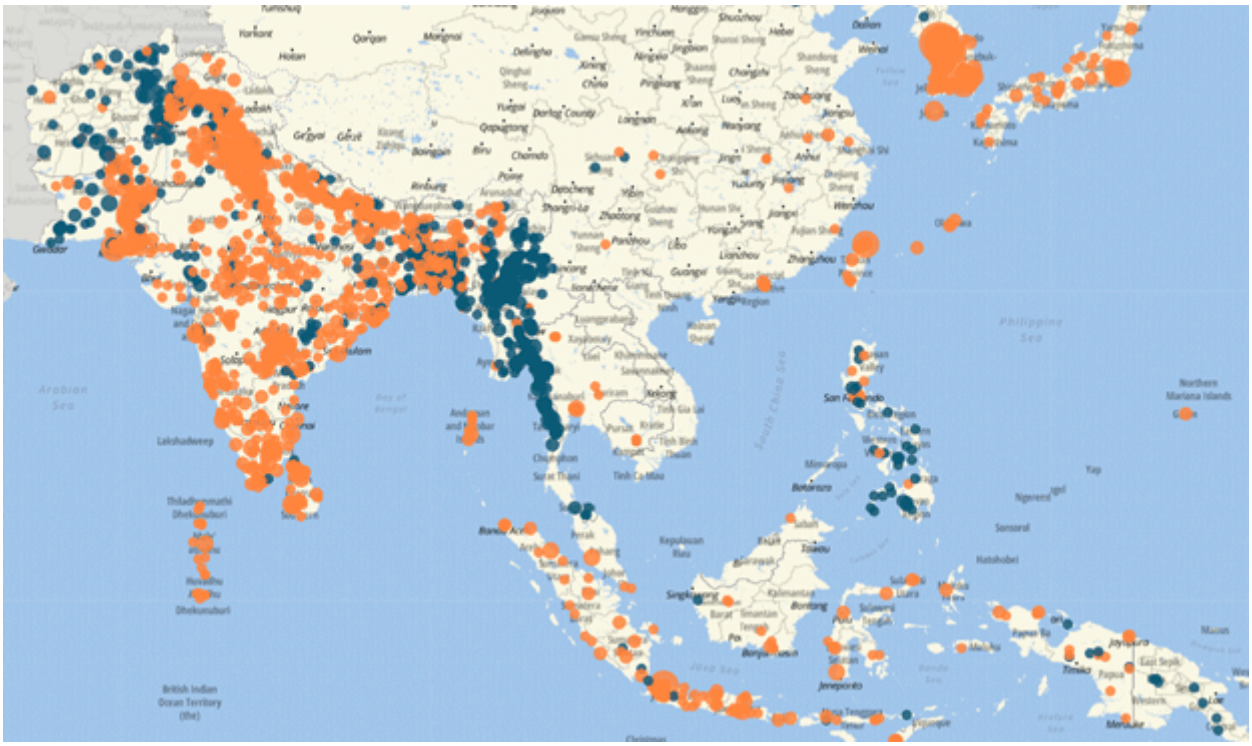

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