



Regional Overview

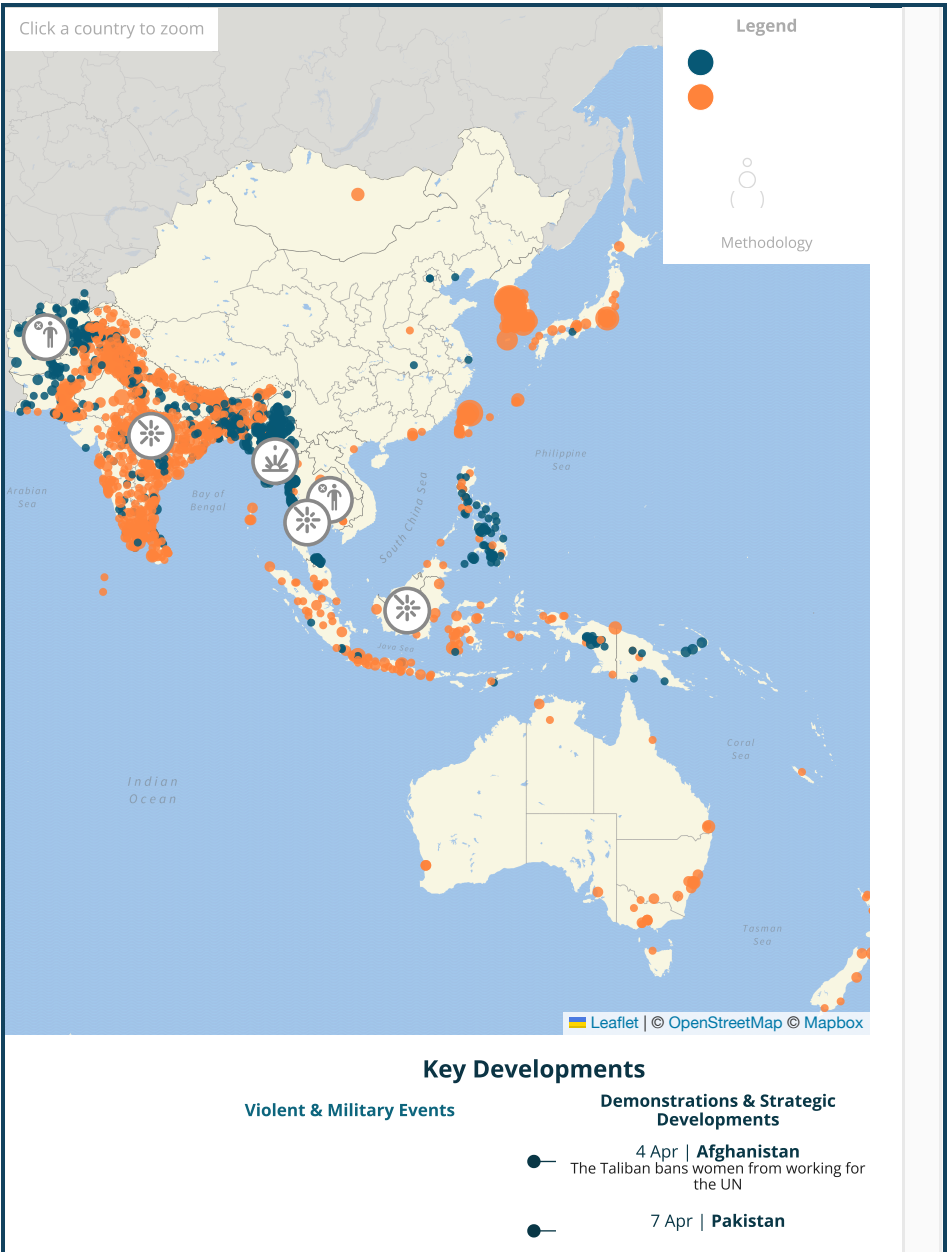
Asia-Pacific

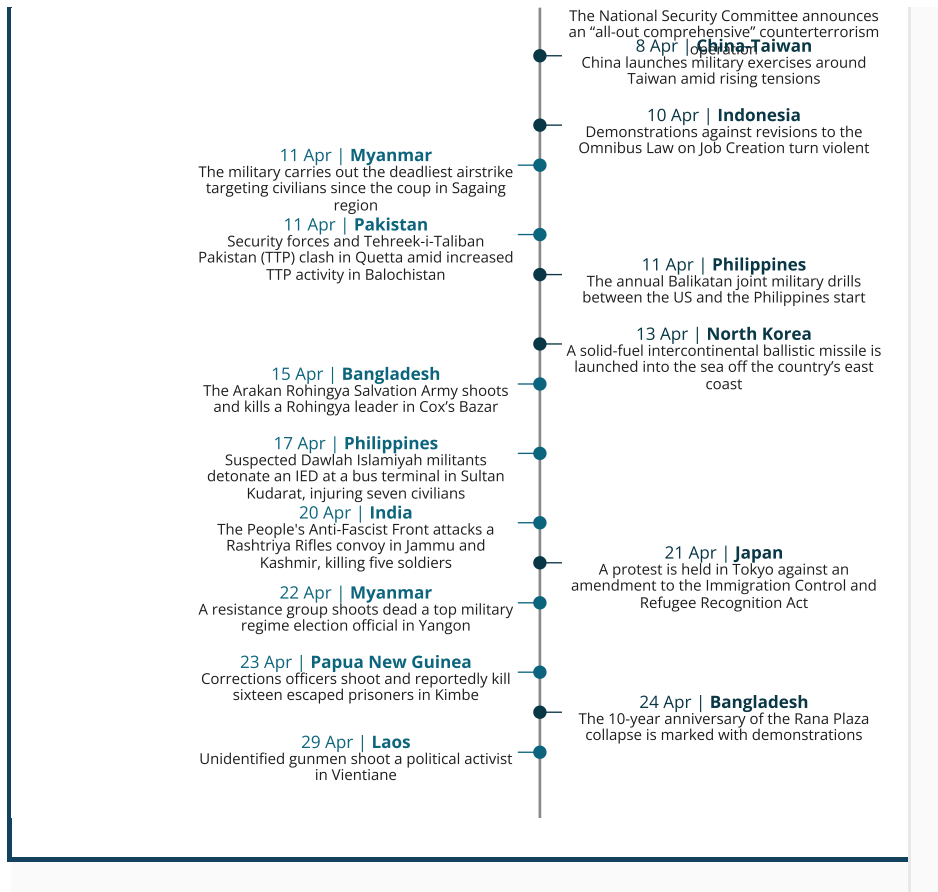
April 2023

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Myanmar: Deadliest military airstrike since the coup carried out in Sagaing region

April was the deadliest month in Myanmar for military airstrikes targeting civilians since the military coup. On 11 April, around 170 people, including dozens of women and children, were reportedly killed in a military airstrike in Kanbalu township in Sagaing region. The airstrike targeted villagers as they gathered to mark the opening of a new office of the People's Administration Team (Pa Ah Pha) under the National Unity Government (NUG) in Pa Zi Gyi village.¹ The military reportedly dropped two bombs on the area from a fighter jet before opening fire on the crowd using a Mi-35 helicopter gunship.² Over a week after the initial attack, the military dropped six bombs on the village from a fighter jet. No villagers were injured as most were still in hiding after the previous attack.³ The military claimed that the airstrikes targeted the People's Defense Force, which it claimed was present.⁴ The military [has increasingly resorted to airstrikes](#) targeting civilians as it fails to consolidate control over the country amid ongoing anti-coup resistance.

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Thailand: Resistance fighter killed after being returned to Myanmar by Thai immigration officials

Immigration authorities in Thailand arrested three members of the Lion Battalion, an armed resistance group in Myanmar, when they tried to seek medical treatment in Mae Sot, Thailand for battle injuries suffered by one of the members. While attempting to escape during the handover to the Myanmar military-backed Karen Border Guard Force on 4 April, one of the three members was shot and later died of his injuries.⁵ While the status of two other members is unknown, they were believed to be held at a military interrogation center in Mawlamyine township in Mon state in Myanmar.⁶ The actions of the Thai authorities were met with condemnation by local and international human rights groups, who have noted the growing harassment faced by people from Myanmar who fled to Thailand in the aftermath of the military coup.⁷ The forced repatriation comes amid increasing numbers of raids and arrests of people from Myanmar by Thai officials in Mae Sot.⁸ In late March, Thai immigration raided a building housing Myanmar nationals searching for people they believed to be connected to the People's Defense Force.

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Thailand: Spike in separatist violence precedes May elections

Malay Muslim separatist violence increased in Thailand's Deep South in April. On 13 April, separatists fired on police in Narathiwat province, injuring three officers. The following day, separatists clashed with military and police forces at six security bases across the Deep South. On 20 April, a separatist-planted explosion occurred while police were on patrol in Narathiwat, killing one officer and seriously injuring another. Amid the upswing in separatist violence, Barisan Revolusi Nasional Melayu Patani, the largest separatist group, released a video calling for the prosecution of those responsible for the 2004 Tak Bai massacre that saw dozens die at the hands of security forces, as the case is about to expire.⁹ The uptick in separatist violence comes as Thailand prepares for general elections on 14 May. Among the opposition parties, the Move Forward party has called for the demilitarization of the Deep South.¹⁰ Prior to the elections, anti-government demonstrations opposing the role of the military and monarchy in Thai politics have been on the wane due to judicial harassment. Still, the United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship led an annual gathering in Bangkok on 10 April to commemorate the 13th anniversary of the dispersion of the 2010 red-shirt demonstrations.¹¹ Currently, Paetongtarn Shinawatra, leader of the Pheu Thai party and the daughter of the red-shirt-backed Thaksin Shinawatra, is leading in the polls.¹²

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Afghanistan: Key Islamic State leader killed in Taliban operations

The Taliban continued to carry out raids in April targeting the Islamic State (IS), reportedly killing over a dozen IS militants across Afghanistan. Amid these raids, the United States claimed that the Taliban had killed the mastermind of the IS attack on the Kabul airport during the US withdrawal in August 2021.¹³ However, US-based reports have found that despite the Taliban's ongoing crackdown on IS, Afghanistan has become a staging ground for potential IS attacks in Asia and Europe. The Taliban has rejected this assessment.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the UN is considering suspending its operations in Afghanistan after the Taliban banned women from working for the organization. UN officials are meeting in Qatar in early May to discuss key issues, including human rights, in the country; the Taliban was not invited to the meeting.¹⁵

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India: Deadly 'Red Corridor' violence reported during Tactical Counter-Offensive Campaign

Clashes in India between Naxal-Maoist rebels and Indian security forces continued at elevated levels in April, following increased activity in March. On 26 April, Naxal-Maoist rebels targeted a police convoy with an IED in Chhattisgarh state, reportedly killing at least 10 security personnel. This was the deadliest attack on security forces in the 'Red Corridor' in two years.¹⁶ Earlier in the month, security forces reportedly killed five high-ranking CPI (Maoist) cadres, including two special area committee members, in an exchange of fire in Jharkhand state. The 'Red Corridor' typically sees an increase in armed activity between [March-June every year](#), when Naxal-Maoist rebels carry out their annual Tactical Counter-Offensive Campaign, increasing recruitment and offensive activities before the onset of monsoon season. The escalation in violence also comes when the Central Reserve Police Force has established several new forward operating bases in former rebel strongholds.¹⁷

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Indonesia: Civilians at risk amid deadly clashes in Papua

Clashes in Indonesia between state forces and the [West Papua National Liberation Army](#) (TPNPB) in Central Papua and Highland Papua provinces continued at elevated levels in April as the government seeks to rescue a New Zealand pilot held captive by the rebels since February. The authorities announced at least seven soldiers died in the recent clashes,¹⁸ while the rebels claimed to have killed 15 military officers.¹⁹ Since the beginning of the year, ACLED has recorded more than a dozen armed clashes between state forces and the TPNPB. The violence in Papua has also directly impacted civilians, with the TPNPB implicated in over a dozen events targeting civilians in 2023. The TPNPB has stated that it would target all non-Papuans and foreigners entering Papua until the Indonesian government grants independence to Papua.²⁰ Meanwhile, military and police forces have raided villages in Papua looking for TPNPB members, causing many villagers to flee their homes.²¹ Civilians suspected of involvement in the TPNPB's activities have been targeted by state forces, with state forces carrying out at least 10 separate attacks targeting Papuan civilians in 2023.

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The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) is a disaggregated data collection, analysis, and crisis mapping project. ACLED is the highest quality and most widely used real-time data and analysis source on political violence and protest around the world. Practitioners, researchers, journalists, and governments depend on ACLED for the latest reliable information on current conflict and disorder patterns.

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