

# MYANMAR

## UNDERSTANDING OF CMR CONTAMINATION

Myanmar is heavily affected by explosive ordnance as a result of decades-old conflicts between the Tatmadaw (army) and numerous non-State armed groups (NSAGs) affiliated with ethnic minorities. Since the military coup in 2021, violence has sharply escalated in geographic scope and intensity accompanied by extensive government air strikes and including reports of cluster munition use. The extent of contamination from cluster munition remnants (CMR) is not known but is not thought to be substantial.

Reports indicate military use of cluster munitions in at least five of Myanmar's seven states, including Chin, Karenni (Kayin), Karen (Kayah), Shan, and Rakhine states, as well as the central Sagaing and Magway regions.<sup>1</sup> Cluster munitions have been delivered in air strikes but also reportedly in 120mm mortar shells.<sup>2</sup>

Specific incidents documented by human rights and news organisations include Myanmar Air Force use of cluster

munitions in attacks on Mindat township in the western Chin State in July 2022<sup>3</sup> and a year later in July 2023.<sup>4</sup> Amnesty International documented an attack on Namkham township in northern Shan state in December 2023 using bombs it said were most likely cluster munitions. Photographs of the device's remnants matched those of cluster munitions used in previous Myanmar Air Force attacks.<sup>5</sup>

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar said in 2024 that photographic and video evidence suggested continued use of cluster munitions in areas inhabited by civilians.<sup>6</sup> In May 2025, local People's Defence Forces and the opposition national unity government said the military used cluster munitions in an airstrike on the O Htein Twin village school in Sagaing region although other international reporting and comment on the attack made no reference to cluster munitions.<sup>7</sup>

## PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Myanmar does not have a structured mine action programme. Tentative steps over several years towards setting up a national mine action authority (NMAA) ended with the military coup in 2021. The State Administration Council established by the Tatmadaw to lead the government has not set up a mechanism for managing or coordinating mine action and focused on military campaigns marked by intensifying air strikes and sharply increased explosive ordnance contamination.<sup>8</sup>

The operating context for humanitarian demining organisations—as for humanitarian and civil society organisations in general—has become increasingly challenging. Myanmar informed the Eighteenth

Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) in November 2020 that it had set up a Mine Action Working Group in May 2020 as "the first step towards formulating a National Strategy and Plan of Action for mine clearance".<sup>9</sup> A Department of Rehabilitation created in 2018 gradually took over responsibility for overseeing mine action and took steps towards setting up a NMAA but momentum was lost with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and government elections in November 2020.<sup>10</sup> No concrete results emerged by the time the Tatmadaw took over the government in February 2021. Since then, operators have followed a policy of non-engagement with the Department of Rehabilitation.<sup>11</sup>

1 Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, "Cluster Munition Production & Use in Myanmar/Burma", Briefing Paper, August 2023; and "UNICEF Myanmar calls for the urgent protection of children in Rakhine State as schools reopen soon", 28 May 2019.

2 Email from an international organisation in Myanmar, 19 May 2025.

3 Amnesty International, "Deadly Cargo", 22 November 2022.

4 "Air strikes by Military Council with bombs and cluster munitions", *Burma News International*, 11 July 2023.

5 Amnesty International, "Myanmar military should be investigated for war crimes in response to 'Operation 1027'", 21 December 2023.

6 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Thomas H. Andrews, UN doc. A/HRC/55/65, 14 March 2024, para. 36.

7 Depayin People's Defense Force, cited in "Death Toll From Myanmar Junta Airstrike on School Rises to 24", *The Irrawaddy*, 14 May 2025; see also "Myanmar junta airstrike kills 22 at school: witnesses", *Agence France-Presse*, 13 May 2025.

8 Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar, Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN doc. A/HRC/57/56, 4 September 2024, pp. 4–5; Myanmar Protection Cluster Strategy 2024–2025, Global Protection Cluster, undated, pp. 2–3; N. Gillen, "Myanmar: at least 43 killed and 50 injured by junta air strike in Rakhine", *Action on Armed Violence*, 10 January 2025.

9 Statement of Myanmar, 18th Meeting of States Parties to the APMBC (18MSP), Geneva 16–20 November 2020.

10 Email from Hilde Jørgensen, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), 27 May 2021.

11 Email from Matthew Walsh, Head of Humanitarian Response and Mine Action, DanChurchAid (DCA), 22 April 2021.

A national Mine Risk Working Group (MRWG) first set up in 2012 has not formally convened since February 2021. A Mine Action Area of Responsibility (MA AoR) which was set up in 2022 under the Global Protection Cluster comprising UN agencies, international organisations, and NGOs has provided

a platform for coordinating, and information sharing between, humanitarian demining organisations, supported by five subnational AoRs for the north west, the north east, the south west, the south east, and Rakhine State.<sup>12</sup>

## PLANNING AND TASKING

In the absence of a national mine action authority, Myanmar has not formulated national or state level plans for any form of mine action.

The MA AoR strategic plan for 2025–26 set out general objectives, including expanding risk education, enhancing the coverage and effectiveness of mine action and ensuring

access for victims to health care and support. It calls for increasing the number of local mine action organisations and providing them training. It also called for systematic surveys to map explosive ordnance contamination and establishing an information management department with a centralised database accessible to all mine action stakeholders.<sup>13</sup>

## MINE ACTION OPERATIONS

It is not known whether any CMR were destroyed during survey or clearance operations in Myanmar in 2024. Even before the 2021 coup, demining organisations were not permitted to conduct technical survey or clearance and therefore concentrated on building up non-technical survey (NTS), risk education, and community liaison. After February 2021, an increasingly hostile political environment and escalating conflict limited the space for international NGO involvement in humanitarian demining.

<sup>12</sup> Mine Action Area of Responsibility Strategy 2025–26, Global Protection Cluster, undated.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 6–9.