

Burma

Mindat: Chin Civilian Resistance Continues to Fight Myanmar's Junta

Sunday 16 May 2021, by [The Irrawaddy](#) (Date first published: 16 May 2021).

Shooting between junta troops and civilian resistance fighters in Chin State's mountainous Mindat continue in the west of the town on Sunday, despite the regime occupying the town on Saturday.

Contents

- [Myanmar Junta's Troops Use](#)
- [Civilian Fighters Killed](#)
- [Chin Teenager Killed as \(...\)](#)

At about 8am on Sunday, shooting started on the Mindat-Matupi highway to the west of the town.

Civilian resistance fighters attacked about nine vehicles transporting approximately 150 junta troops reinforcing Mindat, according to a member of Mindat's Defense Forces.

There were casualties on both sides, he added. The Irrawaddy was not able to independently confirm the casualty numbers.

Fighting restarted last Wednesday night after a ceasefire agreed in late April broke down.

On Saturday morning, junta reinforcement backed by artillery and helicopters raided Mindat.

Junta troops also used 18 detained civilians as human shields while entering the town, according to residents.

Troops are now deployed across the town and are opening fire on anyone on the streets.

Around eight resistance fighters have been killed and approximately 20 were injured in shootouts in Mindat with the security forces, according to residents.

The wounded cannot receive treatment because of the deployment of troops.

The US Embassy in Yangon issued a statement on Saturday calling on the military junta to end violence against the civilians. It said the use of weapons of war against civilians demonstrated the depths to which the regime has sunk to retain power.

Junta forces in Mindat used artillery and automatic fire against resistance fighters armed with homemade hunting rifles using 19th-century techniques.

On Saturday, the civilian National Unity Government issued a statement urging the international

community to take immediate action to end all violence and to protect Mindat's civilians.

The Irrawaddy

- The Irrawaddy 16 May 2021:

<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/chin-civilian-resistance-continues-to-fight-myanmars-junta.html>

Myanmar Junta's Troops Use Civilians as Human Shields in Assault on Mindat

Myanmar junta forces reportedly used local civilians in Mindat as human shields during a raid on the mountainous town in Chin State, northwestern Myanmar, on Saturday.

The raid came after several days of firefights between civilian resistance forces and the junta's troops.

Civilian fighters resisted again Saturday, with shootouts lasting from about 6:30 a.m. to about 8:30 a.m. At that point, the civilian fighters retreated, said a member of the civilian force.

Following the early Saturday morning shootouts, junta forces raided houses and arrested any man they encountered in the town.

The civilian defense force member said the junta forces arrested at least 18 people and used them as shields when they entered the town.

"We could not fight back while our people were being arrested and used as human shields. We can't hurt our people in town. Therefore we slowly retreated and most of the healthy men in town ran away," he said. "But they fired with artillery and continued to attack us."

At least three civilians were injured and some houses and religious buildings were damaged as junta forces fired about 20 artillery rounds from Battalion 274, which stationed in the town on Saturday morning, according to local residents.

In the meantime, junta forces used aircraft to bring in hundreds of reinforcements and weapons to the military's Battalion 274 from Kyaukhtu, Magwe Region.

Three civilians were injured and one of the junta forces was wounded, according to residents.



A wounded Mindat resident on May 15. / CJ

The sounds of gunfire and artillery could still be heard on Saturday afternoon, even though the military had taken control of the town by then, said a resident, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The resident said everyone is afraid and hiding behind their doors while junta troops are patrolling the downtown. Continuous gunfire can be heard from both the east and west sides of the town and from the mountains.

Local residents are worried about the arrests, tortures and other atrocities against the civilians, especially women, young children and the elders, because many of them were unable to flee from their homes when the troops raided Mindat.

The regime declared martial law for Mindat, which is home to some 20,000 people, on Thursday night after bombarding the town with artillery in response to the residents' weeklong resistance. However, intensive shootouts continued on Friday and Saturday morning.

The junta's assault on the town was followed by civilian resistance fighters seizing about six military vehicles that were approaching Mindat from Kyaukhtu on Friday.

Mindat's Civilian Defense Force, the civilian resistance fighters who took up their traditional homemade percussion lock firearms to resist the junta's troops, said in its statement on Friday that the military has used reinforced troops, heavy explosives, artillery, rocket propelled grenades and automatic machine guns in the shootouts.



Spent mortar shell found in Mindat town on May 15. / CJ

Armed resistance against the junta began in Sagaing Region's towns in late March and was later joined by Chin State's towns. Those towns resisting the junta troops are located in northwestern Myanmar.

Armed resistance by Mindat residents started on April 26 with an attack on the police station after junta forces broke promises to release seven young anti-regime protesters.

On April 26 and 27, the newly-formed Mindat Defense Force attacked military reinforcements approaching the town using homemade percussion lock firearms, leaving at least 20 junta troops dead.

Local resistance fighters and junta forces have been fighting for four days in Mindat since the late April ceasefire collapsed on May 12. At least ten junta troops and four local residents have died in the shootouts.

The Chin Human Rights Organization expressed concern about "possible war crimes against the people of Mindat as the junta troops prepared for an all-out assault" on the town on Saturday.

A statement by the civilian National Unity Government (NUG) issued on Saturday afternoon said the military has been sending more troops to Mindat, where the local residents are "exercising the right

to self-defense” to protect town residents. The military helicopters are hovering above the town, while they fire into the town.

The NUG statement said that besides junta forces killing five civilians and injuring ten people recently, “Many more are potentially under the threat of fatalities and serious injuries” while the town is at risk of becoming a battleground and thousands of people are potentially facing the danger of being displaced.

The NUG urged the international community “to take immediate actions” to end all forms of violence by the military and protect the defenseless people of Mindat.

The Irrawaddy

- The Irrawaddy 15 May 2021:

<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-juntas-troops-use-civilians-as-human-shields-in-as-sault-on-mindat.html>

Civilian Fighters Killed; Shootouts Continue Amid Martial Law in Myanmar’s Chin State

Ignoring a declaration of martial law, Chin State’s civilian resistance forces engaged in intensive shootouts with junta troops in the mountainous town Mindat on Friday. Two more members of the civilian resistance forces were killed in the fighting.

“Two of our members died in the shootouts at the east side of the town. One was killed by an artillery shell and another was shot dead by a junta sniper,” a member of Mindat Defense Force said.

Local residents said that they are not able to retrieve the two dead bodies or rescue the wounded since the junta troops that have deployed in the town are opening fire on anyone who appears on the streets.

“The junta troops are trying to enter into the town via both the west and east entrances while we are protecting our town. Fighting at the east side of the town is intensifying. Shootouts also occurred downtown,” the civilian resistance fighter said.

The civilian resistance fighters also reportedly seized about six military vehicles from Kyaukhtu that were approaching Mindat during the shootouts.

A viral video on social media shows weapons and provisions on about six vehicles abandoned by the fleeing junta troops being taken by the ethnically Chin civilian resistance fighters.

Local residents also said that at least five junta troops were reportedly killed during the shootouts on the east side of the town.

Fighting between junta troops and the Mindat Defense Force restarted Wednesday night after a ceasefire in late April broke down.

The military regime declared martial law for Mindat on Thursday night after bombarding the town

with artillery in response to the residents' week-long resistance.

Under martial law, those who commit one of 23 "offenses" in the town will be tried in military courts and face penalties ranging from death, indefinite jail terms with labor and the maximum possible punishments under existing legislation, said orders signed by the military regime's secretary Lieutenant-General Aung Lin Dwe.

The 23 offenses also include high treason, sedition, obstruction of military personnel and civil servants performing their duties, possession of weapons, ties to unlawful associations and violence.

However, the martial law declaration has had no effect on the town since 60 percent of Mindat is under the control of its residents, said a member of Mindat's People Administration.

"Our people do not accept the martial law. Currently, we are concentrating on the shootouts. We can govern the whole town, except the police station and some places," a civilian resistance member said.

Since about 6 p.m. on Thursday, shootouts started on the Mindat-Matupi highway, which is located on the west side of the town. Civilian resistance fighters conducted defensive actions against about 11 vehicles transporting 250 junta troops that were approaching Mindat for a raid.

Meanwhile shootouts have been happening on the highway connecting Chin State's Mindat and Magwe Region's Kyaukhtu on the east side of the town since Thursday morning. Civilian resistance fighters there are fighting against about 180 junta troops from Kyaukhtu of Magwe Region that are approaching the town.

Also, civilian resistance fighters resisting junta troops at the east side of the town have also been attacked by artillery based in Kyaukhtu, Magwe Region, 33 kilometers to the east, members of Mindat Defense Force told The Irrawaddy on Friday.

Mindat Defense Force said in its statement on Friday that the military has used reinforced troops, heavy explosives, artillery, rocket propelled grenades and automatic machine guns in the shootouts with civilian resistance fighters.

In the firefights, most civilian resistance fighters are using traditional percussion lock firearms, a kind of hunting rifle. The firearm uses technology dating back to the early 19th century.

On Friday, residents were suggested by the Mindat's People Administration to dig bomb shelters as two military helicopters were hovering over the town.

On Thursday night, shootouts between junta troops and resistance fighters occurred at Mindat's police station near the headquarters of the military's Battalion 274. After the small firefights, junta troops continued random shooting in the downtown that night.

In Thursday's conflicts, an ethnically Chin teenager was killed and six other members of Chin State's civilian resistance forces were wounded by junta artillery.

Armed resistance by Mindat residents started on April 26 with an attack on the police station after junta forces broke promises to release seven young anti-regime protesters.

On April 26 and 27, the newly formed Mindat Defense Force attacked military reinforcements approaching the town using homemade percussion lock firearms, leaving at least 20 junta troops dead.

The military casualties led to talks with residents and a ceasefire in April.

The Irrawaddy

• The Irrawaddy 14 May 2021:

<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/civilian-fighters-killed-shootouts-continue-amid-martial-law-in-myanmars-chin-state.html>

Chin Teenager Killed as Myanmar Regime Bombards Resistance Town

An ethnically Chin teenager was killed and six other members of Chin State's civilian resistance forces opposing Myanmar's regime were injured by junta artillery in Mindat on Thursday.

Fighting between junta troops and the civilian resistance in Mindat started on Wednesday night after a ceasefire broke down.

Since about 6am on Thursday, civilians in Mindat have been attacked with artillery based in Kyaukhtu, Magwe Region, 33km to the east, according to a resistance fighter.

"A 17-year-old was killed. They are still firing on us from Kyaukhtu. About six others were injured," a member of Mindat Defense Force, a civilian defense group fighting the junta, told The Irrawaddy.

The resistance fighters, largely armed with homemade hunting rifles, face junta troops with automatic rifles and artillery.

On Wednesday night, shootouts between junta troops and resistance fighters occurred at Mindat's police station and a government office near the headquarters of the military's 274 Battalion.

"The artillery battalion is in Kyaukhtu. We agreed a ceasefire with the military after they agreed not to deploy more troops to the town and not to pass through the town in military vehicles," said a Mindat resident.

Civilians later agreed that 17 vehicles carrying around 270 junta troops could pass through from Matupi Township in exchange for the release of five young protesters being held by the security forces.

The ceasefire ended after the military regime reportedly claimed it would release only four of the five.

"Our demands were not met. Shootouts are ongoing. They are firing continuously from Kyaukhtu. We also hear planes," said a Mindat Defense Force member. "There will be no more talks. We will protect our town as best we can."

The use of artillery on civilian targets has led to talk of possible genocide being committed against the mountainous community.

On April 24, a nighttime shootout occurred when junta forces broke promises to release seven young

anti-regime protesters.

On April 26 and 27 the newly formed Mindat Defense Force attacked military reinforcements approaching the town using homemade weapons, leaving at least 20 junta troops dead.

The military casualties led to talks with residents and the ceasefire.

In early May, civilians allowed military troops to pass through the town.

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