

# **'Flee to Liberated Areas': Myanmar's Arakan Army Urges Rohingyas to Escape Forced Conscription**

Saturday 30 March 2024, by [The Wire \(IN\)](#) (Date first published: 7 March 2024).

**Since the Junta announced the conscription law in February, passport offices and embassies in the country have been flooded with applications to secure a visa to different nations. However, it is difficult for Rohingya men to flee the country legally as they have been stripped of their citizenship.**

**New Delhi:** Myanmar's ethnic armed organisation (EAO), the Arakan Army, which has been inflicting massive defeats on the Junta in the Rakhine state, has urged men from the Rohingya community to flee to the 'liberated' areas to escape their forced conscription into the military.

"I would like to urge young Muslim men to find the best way to escape from being forcibly drafted and to flee into and take shelter in the liberated areas, which are safer," Arakan Army spokesperson Khine Thu Kha told reporters at a press meet on March 4.

"He said the Junta is trying to protect itself at the expense of the lives of Muslim people by providing them with so-called military training and arms," [reported](#) *The Irrawaddy*.

Khine told reporters that the Junta's military "no longer has control in the Rakhine State and is in retreat, and is, therefore, deliberately looking to instigate new armed conflicts and communal violence in Rakhine State."

The news report said, "As of February 23, at least 400 Rohingya men had already been forcibly recruited from villages and IDP (internally displaced people) camps in Sittwe and Buthidaung townships (in Rakhine State) to fight the Arakan Army."

Quoting Rohingya activists and residents, it said, "On February 27, Junta troops abducted 40 relatives of some young Rohingya camp residents who fled conscription."

On February 29, the Junta's military abducted 107 Rohingya men aged 18 to 35 from Kyauk Talone IDP camp in Kyaukphyu Township.

*The Guardian* recently [reported](#) that since the Junta announced the conscription law in February, passport offices and embassies in the country have been flooded with applications by common citizens across different communities to secure a visa to different countries, particularly to Thailand. The report said it is, however, difficult for the Rohingya men to flee the country legally as they have been stripped of their citizenship, and officially, they don't belong to the country.

News reports have also come from other parts of Myanmar about kidnapping of youth for forced conscription. The Junta has denied all such allegations. According to a report, the Junta has been announcing through loudspeakers in cities like Mandalay that nobody would be forced to join the

Junta.

As per the recently activated People's Military Service Law, brought by the earlier military regime in 2010, to be enacted next month, men aged 18 up to 35, or women aged 18 to 27, can be conscripted for up to five years if needed by the Junta from April onwards.

*The Guardian* report [said](#) though the junta "recently clarified its initial announcement, saying that women will not be conscripted for now. This claim has been treated with scepticism by the public, however, and many women are still trying to flee."

In the last few weeks, the Arakan Army, part of the Brotherhood Alliance, has been successful in taking control of several towns in the Rakhine State. As per latest reports, it [has taken control](#) of the Ponnagyun town, located just 33 kilometres from the capital, Sittwe.

While a ceasefire with the Junta has been signed by the Alliance forces in the northern Shan State with the intervention of China, no such agreement exists between the military and the three EAOs fighting jointly as part of the Alliance.

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