

Burma

# March Deadliest Month This Year for Myanmar Military Amid Fierce Fighting in Karen

Sunday 24 April 2022, by [The Irrawaddy](#) (Date first published: 7 April 2022).

**March turned out to be the deadliest and most miserable month so far this year for Myanmar junta troops, as more than 400 soldiers have been killed in more than 500 clashes with ethnic Karen fighters in the country's south.**

The Karen National Union (KNU) said in a statement on Tuesday that fighting broke out between its armed wings and regime troops every day last month in the areas it controls in Karen State, adding that there were 510 clashes in total with 429 deaths. That means at least 16 clashes and more than a dozen regime soldiers were killed every day in March.

The KNU is Myanmar's oldest revolutionary group. Its armed wings are the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and the Karen National Defence Organization (KNDO). Both reject the regime and the coup it staged in February last year. Since then they have been fighting alongside local civilian resistance groups who also oppose the junta.

The head of the KNU's Foreign Affairs Department, Padoh Saw Taw Nee, said the clashes happened in the Law Kay Kaw area, south of Hpa Lu, Kawkareik and other places under the control of the KNU's 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade in Karen State.

"Before, there were about 300, 400 clashes a month, but this has now risen to over 500. The number of clashes and casualties are the highest so far [for the regime]," he said.

Numbers released by the KNU show there were 435 clashes in January with 399 regime deaths, and 421 clashes in February with 399 regime deaths.

Given these numbers, the total death toll among junta troops now stands at 1,139 from January to March this year. The Irrawaddy has not been able to independently verify the number.

Padoh Saw Taw Nee said the KNU had been forced to defend itself from junta offensive actions, adding that all seven of the KNU's brigades have been involved in clashes.

On the KNLA and KNDO sides, 22 soldiers were killed and 35 injured in March, according to the KNU, up from seven deaths in January and 16 in February.

Fighting between Myanmar junta troops and the KNU has intensified since the junta's raid on Lay Kay Kaw town in Karen State's Myawaddy near the Thai border on Dec. 14. The regime claimed that democracy activists and members of People's Defense Force (PDF) civilian resistance groups were hiding there.

The tension escalated in March when the regime responded to a KNU warning to withdraw troops from Kawkaeik by sending in reinforcements. Since late last month, the KNLA and KNDO have urged people not to use the Asia Highway—a lifeline for border trade with Thailand—in Karen State, as they would attack any regime troops using it.

The fighting between the regime and the KNU has left many people homeless, as the regime has conducted punitive airstrikes and artillery attacks. By the end of March, more than 100,000 civilians had been displaced by fighting in the areas it controls since the 2021 coup, the KNU said.

## **The Irrawaddy**

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