News

Soldiers stand next to military vehicles as people gather to protest the military coup in Yango

Soldiers stand next to military vehicles as people gather to protest the military coup in Yangon, Myanmar, Feb. 15, 2021. (CNS photo/Reuters)



by Catholic News Service

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Fighting has intensified in northeastern Myanmar's Shan state as the military reinforces troops to crush local militias, and religious buildings continue to be targets.

Sacred Heart of Jesus Cathedral in the Diocese of Pekhon was hit by military artillery on Nov. 9 for the second time in five months, reported ucanews.com. There were no reported casualties, despite the windows and pews being damaged, according to church sources.

On Nov. 6, a nearby convent was hit by military shelling. No casualties were reported at the convent of the Sisters of Zetaman, which is situated in a Marian shrine, ucanews.com reported.

Fighting between the military and the combined forces of the Karenni army and Karenni People's Defense Force intensified Nov. 2.

More than 10,000 people from Shan's Pekhon township have been newly displaced due to the fighting and indiscriminate attacks with heavy weaponry by the military,

according to aid workers.

A Catholic social worker said his family was forced to flee from their homes as artillery shells fell on his neighbors.

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"It was intense fighting, so the majority of people have fled from their homes to safe areas," he told UCA News.

He said the fighting has affected church response to displaced people, because church aid workers are among those who have fled their homes.

Pekhon Diocese is one of the worst-affected areas, along with Loikaw Diocese in Kayah state, where the conflict escalated in May.

At least five Catholic churches in Loikaw Diocese have been attacked by the military, and a May 23 attack killed four Catholics and wounded eight others.

Church leaders, including Pope Francis, have called for the military not to target religious buildings; places of worship are the cultural property of a community covered by international protocol.