

# Myanmar airstrike attacks civilians and their identities

Anna Johnson

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Demonstrators protest the coup Credit: [Ninjastrikers](#)

Anna Johnson - Myanmar's military seized power in a coup last year and they have been monopolizing power by attacking ethnic identity groups ever since. The most recent, and one of the most direct attacks, came last Sunday when [four bombs were dropped on an outdoor concert](#), killing at least 80 people. The concert was organized to celebrate the founding of the Kachin Independence Organization, an organized ethnic group in the north of Myanmar. The Kachin Independence Organization has been in conflict with the military for years over a desire for autonomy. Myanmar's military junta sees the organization and the Kachin identity it bolsters as a threat to its power, prompting a military strike on the organization.

The attack was not just on the individuals at the concert, but also on the idea of [Kachin national identity](#). A group's national identity is based upon their sense of attachment to the place in which they live and its ties to a particular nation. The Kachin ethnic group, while diverse in language and background, shares a common identity and loyalty. The Kachin Independence Organization bolsters Kachin national identity in direct conflict with Myanmar's military which seeks to build up Myanmarese national identity. The concert was a way for the Kachin people to celebrate their national identity and find unity. This united identity threatens the power of the military regime. By attacking this celebration of identity, the junta is able to destabilize support for the Kachin national identity group. Destabilizing the Kachin Independence Organization through military action lends itself to the junta's interests because it also destabilizes key military forces within the region including the Kachin Independence Army, the military arm of the

Kachin Independence Organization which has been helping to train soldiers for the People's Defense Force, a pro-democracy resistance group formed after the coup. On the international scale, Myanmar is not a huge military power, but within the state, the military has significantly more military might and resources than resistance groups like the People's Defense Force or the Kachin Independence Army. Attacking ethnic identities that oppose their regime is a way for Myanmar's military to exercise material power through direct action.

Bombs and jets, like those used in this attack, are one aspect of material power. Population size is another. When Myanmar's military regime attacked the Kachin Independence Organization, they killed members of a threatening population and they threatened the ties that unite the Kachin ethnic group. If they can continue to suppress the Kachin identity, they can effectively eliminate the threat from the Kachin Independence Organization without further direct attacks on citizens.