

SPECIAL YEAR - END ISSUE

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## LIVE OR DIE Myanmar resistance intensifies war against illegal junta

● UN Security Council calls for peace in Myanmar



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# SEASON'S GREETINGS IN A DEPRESSING YEAR

**T**he Mizzima Editorial staff wish our readers Season's Greetings as we reach the end of a tumultuous year for the people of Myanmar.

While it has been depressing for us to log the litany of bad news over the last 12 months, the spirit of the Spring Revolution shines through.

The Myanmar generals clearly misjudged the people of Myanmar in their decision to execute a coup in 2021 and oust the popular, elected civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi, a leader now effectively facing life in jail. Ironically, that decision may mark their eventual death knell, as it has prompted the people of Myanmar to finally take concrete steps to end the decades of brutal military rule since General Ne Win's coup in 1962.

But getting rid of the junta is easier said than done. They are wily and they are set on a policy of divide-and-rule and should not be underestimated.

Clearly, there is a sense amongst the people that enough is enough. While there are a few pro-junta stragglers hanging on to the dirty coat-tails of the generals, the vast majority of Myanmar citizens recognize there is no other option than to struggle to rid the country of these evildoers and attempt to put the country on a path to freedom under a federal, democratic union.

Nobody is under any illusion this will be easy. The recent UN Security Council vote on Myanmar, and the US government's Burma Act initiative, may have reminded the world that Myanmar matters, but the sad truth for those hardened warriors under the National Unity Government (NUF) and those

shouldering guns in the badlands of the country is that nobody is coming to help, at least not in a substantive way. This is not Ukraine, which has seen billions of dollars and a battery of weapons given to the Ukrainian government resistance fighting Russia's military operation.

Still, that UN vote puts the Myanmar generals on the backfoot as they prepare for a national election in 2023.

At this stage, it is unclear as to whether the "election call" is actually a smokescreen to allow the junta cause further division amongst the various players.

If this election drive is real, the generals will hope a victory for pro-junta political parties will provide a fig-leaf of legitimacy on the international stage, and muddy the regional waters to a significant extent that at least some countries – possibly Japan, India, Thailand and ASEAN as a bloc will join China and Russia in providing support.

This desperate push by the generals to hold an election would appear to have galvanized the ranks of the Spring Revolution players – the NUG and the resistance fighters – to step up their fight on the battlefield and in the political halls of power.

But this narrative may be a game used by the junta to win over players to its side.

2023 could well prove a gamechanger for Myanmar. But if the resistance movement is to have any chance of tipping the scales, the election charade will have to be severely disrupted and the calls on the international stage will have to grow shrill.

Nobody, we suspect, is holding their breath.

## EDITORIAL

### mizzima WEEKLY

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**MIZZIMA MAGAZINE**

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**COVER PHOTO OF YOUNG RESISTANCE FIGHTERS IN SAGAING BY AFP**







## PROTEST

Myanmar migrant workers and supporters protest in Bangkok against the Myanmar junta earlier this month.

Photo: EPA



## MYANMAR PDF ATTACKS JUNTA TROOPS TORCHING SAGAING'S KANBALU TOWNSHIP

**A** People's Defence Force (PDF) used mines to attack junta soldiers who have been setting fire to villages near Kanbalu Township and Kawlin Township in the Sagaing Region.

It is reported that on 15 December 15, while the junta's troops were entering Baw Village around 12:50 PM after torching Let Khote Kone Village in Kanbalu Township, the local PDF detonated mines targeting the troops.

"Five planted mines at the entrance of Baw Village were detonated. We don't know about the injured yet.

After the explosion, they were recklessly firing guns into the forest so we assume that there would be injured. The locals are currently running. In 16 December morning, they started to fire again into Baw village," a local resident told Mizzima.

The arson of the junta's troops resulted in a total of more than 40 houses in Let Khote Kone Village and Baw Village being destroyed. At 8:30 AM on 16 December, it was reported that the troops torched these villages again.

"We could only see heavy

smoke. We do not know exactly yet as none of us dare to take a look closely at the village. There are no locals in the village now but watching their houses being burnt from a distance.

There are thick forests over there so locals are hiding in the forests and fields," said the local resident.

Due to the invasion and torching by the military junta troops, it is reported that local people have been fleeing and hiding in the forests and fields.

## MYANMAR PDF RELEASES VIDEO OF JUNTA ATTACK ON SAGAING'S NANCHANG VILLAGE

**T**he Joint Defense Forces released a video on 15 December showing the Military Council and the Hyenas Survey Corps exchanging gunfire after junta forces had been deployed for two days following the burning of Sagaing's Nanchang village, which is located in the north of Kalay Township.

The clash happened on 13 December, with the video and news statement released two days later.

A military force of 50 troops infiltrated Nanchang

village via Setawu village, burned some buildings, and then stationed itself there, according to a Hyenas Survey Corp statement.

The Military Council troops reinforced their position in the village with 30 more soldiers, destroyed a few more homes, and engaged the Hyenas Survey Corps and allies in a brief exchange of fire at around 5:00 pm, according to the PDF.

According to the PDF, the Military Council fired heavy weapons, but there was no damage on the PDF side, so they

retreated safely.

After the Military Council troops and Pyu Saw Htee left Nanchang village early on 14 December, the Hyenas Survey Corps and its allies discovered fire-damaged houses and buildings, as well as a dead body.

Locals claim that between 12 and 13 December, Military Council forces and the Pyu Saw Htee set fire to 24 houses and a church in Nanchang village.



# 81 CIVILIANS KILLED BY MYANMAR JUNTA IN SAGAING'S KANBULU DISTRICT IN LAST YEAR

The junta has killed 81 civilians in Sagaing Region's Kanbulu District in the year from November 2021 to November 2022, according to the Kyunhla Activist Organisation.

According to the organisation's statement released on 18 December the 81 civilians were shot, burned alive, and killed after being apprehended by junta soldiers.

It said that of the murdered people, 19 were from

Kyunhla Township and 62 from Kanbalu Township, both in Kanbulu District.

Of those murdered, three were juveniles. They were Aung Myint Myat (age 5) of Meikthalinkone Village, Paing Set Htoo (age 13) of Zeekanar Village, and Win Win Thu (age 17) of Hlyawphyukone Village in Kanbalu Township.

Aung Myint Myat was murdered on 9 September 2022 and Paing Set Htoo was murdered on 3 November 2022. Both were killed

by artillery shells fired by the junta.

Win Win Thu, an eighth-grade student, was murdered on 5 November 2022 after being arrested along with 13 other internally displaced people (IDPs) whilst they were fleeing to the jungle away from fighting.

According to the Kyunhla Activist organization, over 10,000 locals have fled their homes in Kanbulu District due to fighting and because they are scared by the junta troops in the area.

## MYANMAR JUNTA KILLS FOUR VILLAGERS INSPECTING FIRE DAMAGED VILLAGE IN SAGAING

Myanmar junta soldiers set fire to Pain In Village and then shot dead four residents of nearby villages who came to inspect the damage in Sagaing Region's Indaw Township on 18 December.

According to local news sources the junta soldiers then buried the bodies in Pain In Village Monastery.

A local said: "When the junta set fire to Pain In Village,

four victims from different villages banded together and went to inspect the damage. They were apprehended and killed by junta soldiers. We dug up three bodies today [19 December], transferred the remains to family members and buried them in their respective cemeteries in their villages. We still do not know the identity of the victim from Shwe Chaung Village."

The three identified victims were named as Ko Aung Naing Tun of Nanthae Village, Ko

Ne Win of Kunchaung Village, Ko Kyaw Lwin of Maugone Village, all in Indaw Township.

Following this incident, also in Indaw Township, 100 junta troops set fire to Sektawhone Village and almost completely destroyed it, according to the Indaw Revolution defence force.

Over 5,000 people have fled from 12 villages in Indaw Township, according to Indaw Revolution.

## USDP SUPPORTER AND COUSIN SHOT DEAD IN MANDALAY CITY

A supporter of the junta affiliated political party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) and his cousin were shot dead in a Mandalay City betel nut shop on 20 December.

According to a police officer two men on motorcycles fired five gunshots at Ko Nay

Myo Aung and his cousin Ko Si Thu Win Aung in Mhantan Ward, in Mandalay City's Amarapura Township, An Amarapura resident said: "Ko Nay Myo Aung, a USDP supporter, owned a betel nut shop. The victims were shot dead in the shop. Ko Nay Myo Aung, aged 40 years, was shot in the head and died at the scene and Ko Si Thu Win Aung, aged 22 years, was shot

in the chest. Both died on the spot. As of the time of reporting no organisation had claimed responsibility for the attack.

According to locals, police officers and junta troops are carrying out inspections in the area of the killing.



# LIVE OR DIE

**Myanmar resistance intensifies war against illegal junta.**

**Sai Wansai**

**D**ressed in flip-flops, t-shirts and longyi or shorts, many of Myanmar's Spring Revolution resistance fighters may look rag-tag, yet they pack a punch, committed to live or die fighting.





Resistance fighters in Sagaing Region,  
Myanmar. Photo: AFP



As the second anniversary of the Myanmar generals' fateful 2021 coup looms, fighters under the labels People's Defence Forces (PDF) or Local Defence Forces (LDF) are battling the junta or State Administration Council (SAC) in Bamar-dominated regions as they build up their military clout and staying power. At the same time, Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAO) have seen a significant uptick in military clashes with the Myanmar military - or, conversely, some groups are sitting on the fence, pacified for now by junta-initiated "peace deals".

Taking stock of developments over the last 12 months, Myanmar's bloody civil war is clearly intensifying with the combatants on both sides digging in – the junta now arguably on the backfoot in a number of areas and over-stretched country-wide. Although junta troops have been using bloody "scorched earth" tactics to crack down on hundreds of villages in Myanmar's heartland, the "hit-and-run" guerrilla tactics of the PDFs and LDFs are increasingly taking their toll against the military, prompting changes in junta tactics as the soldier body-count rises.

Such is the horror of the junta's brutal tactics of torture, killing and rape – some incidents caught on video – they have prompted international outcry.

Aware they have a PR problem, the junta is pushing for a tightly-controlled national election in August 2023 that the generals hope will provide a fig-leaf of legitimacy on the international stage – despite the dismissal of the poll by the resistance.

This junta plan has prompted a sense of urgency amongst the ranks of the National Unity Government (NUG), a body that has been finding its feet with some level of coordination with the PDFs and LDFs, increased funding, and a growing profile internationally – with UN Myanmar representative Kyaw Moe Tun recently bagging a continuation of his "stand-in" position on the international stage.

As the UN Security Council voted on Wednesday last week for an immediate end to violence in Myanmar and call on the junta to release all political prisoners - including the 77-year-old ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi who effectively faces life in jail – the pressure on the myriad resistance groups to press for "victory" is growing shriller.

Yet the window between now and August 2023 poses a challenge. Security analysts warn there is a yawning gap between the fighting capabilities of the lightly armed Spring Revolution resistance and the heavily armed Myanmar junta forces – and that a PDF-EAO alliance is ever more crucial if there is ever to be a chance of real progress on the battlefield.

## YEAR OVERVIEW

Looking back, 2022 proved that the Spring Revolution resistance born post-coup was not a flash in the pan. On the contrary, the actions of this movement in its second year demonstrated increased action, competence and resolve to end oppressive military rule.

Appearances can at times appear to be deceptive. The PDF

groups with a myriad names that cropped up initially in 2021 appeared poorly armed in the face of the junta artillery, tanks, armoured personnel carriers, and fighter jets and helicopters. But entering 2022, and as the months ticked by, the PDFs displayed staying power and hit-and-run ability leading to a rash of casualties on the part of the junta forces.

True, many PDFs are poorly armed, some relying on home-made weaponry. But over time, supplies of factory-grade or imported weapons gradually improved, in addition to captured weapons. Even drones were used to bomb junta positions.

## BAMAR HEARTLAND

A shocker for the junta has arguably been the clashes they have had in what used to be their prime army recruiting ground. The Bamar-dominated regions, Anyar, also known as the Dry Zone, which includes Sagaing, Magway and Mandalay are the epicentre and hot beds of the new resistance movement, delivering fierce armed engagement to the junta. The rest, Ayeyarwady, Bago, Yangon and Tanintharyi regions, have sizeable resistance but less intensive armed conflict with the junta in comparison to the Anyar area.

The resistance movements in Anyar that started shortly after the February 2021 military coup by the military junta created a widespread armed resistance and political disobedience by the people that continued through 2022. The junta in turn responded with scorched earth, roving offensives deploying numerous troops supported by artillery, armoured vehicles and airstrikes to systematically



flush out the resistance forces of PDFs, under the NUG, and other numerous LDFs some affiliated to the NUG and some operating independently.

These actions have prompted hundreds of thousands of civilians to flee their homes, ratcheting up the humanitarian crisis. Security analysts are watching carefully.

“Besides the Tatmadaw (junta’s troops), the key conflict actors in the Dry Zone are SAC-allied Pyusawhti militia and anti-SAC PDFs, both of which comprise Bamar-Buddhist civilians without prior combat experience. EAOs are not significant actors here. The forces are unevenly matched: while the Tatmadaw reinforces the Pyusawhti with heavy weaponry, armoured vehicles, and aircraft,

the PDFs fight with improvised explosives, makeshift weapons, and small arms. Yet a decisive victory for the regime is not in sight; instead the Dry Zone is experiencing a painful war of attrition. At present, PDFs are making minor gains – successfully ambushing Tatmadaw columns, upgrading their weaponry, and growing increasingly organised – even as the SAC sets fire to communities suspected of supporting PDFs. For both PDF and Pyusawhti members, the fight is existential. The Dry Zone also illustrates how the coup has destabilised day-to-day social relations, with communities polarised along the lines of the conflict, creating a patchwork of pro-SAC and anti-SAC villages,” according to “Post-coup Myanmar in six warsapes” – 10 June 2022, published by The International

Institute for Strategic Studies.

### COOPERATION ON BOTH SIDES

The actors involved primarily in this ongoing civil war are the SAC forces with its militias Pyusawhti on one side and the PDFs, LDFs and their EAO allies like the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and Chin National Front (CNF) in Sagaing Region, including the Arakan Army (AA) in Magway Region to a lesser extent which helped train and partly equip the PDFs adjacent to its area. According to Ye Myo Hein’s recent report in United States Institute of Peace on 3 November 2022, it is important to understand the specifics of the resistance. “People’s Defence Force” is a general understanding for three types of armed groups that emerged after the coup in February 2021. They



People’s Defence Force fighters in Sagaing carry a home-made mortar. Photo: AFP

are PDFs, Local Defence Forces (LDFs) and People's Defence Teams (PaKhaPha/PDTs). The PDFs formed by NUG parallel shadow government that operate under joint command system with some EAOs; the LDFs local resistance militias that operate autonomously and locally; and the PDTs are localized guerrilla units formed for local defence and security purposes. The PDFs are sort of regular army which operate across the states-regions' townships, whereas the LDFs and PDTs are self-defence or community security militias operating at the community level.

Accordingly, there are roughly 65,000 total PDF troops. Approximately 20 percent of PDF troops are equipped with military-grade weapons and another 40 percent have home-made weapons. As of October 2022, there were around 300 PDF battalions with 200 to 500 troops each. Sixty-three additional battalions are awaiting NUG recognition.

"The PDFs in ethnic areas are operationally commanded by or affiliated with EAOs. For example, the Karenni People's Defence Force (KPDP) is under the command of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the Chinland Defence Force (CDF) is under the control of Chinland Joint Defence Committee (CJDC) and the KNDF is closely affiliated with the Karenni Army (KA) of the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP)."

"There are currently three military division commands (MDCs). Some 200 PDF units currently operate under the command of MDC 1 with responsibility for the Kachin, Anyar (Central Myanmar) and Chin

theatres. Approximately 50 PDFs operate in the areas of MDCs 2 and 3 which manage operations in the Karen and Karenni theatres, respectively," according to the report.

The NUG estimates that there were 401 LDFs as of April 2022 and recent analysis estimates that there are at least 30,000 LDF personnel. They are self-funded, primarily through community and diaspora donations and rely mostly on home-made weapons, though some LDFs are connected with large EAOs which provide training and equipment. The LDFs are engaged in guerrilla warfare through landmines, skirmishes, sabotage and targeted killings, with the primary aim to deny the SAC control over rural areas.

The PDTs are formed by the NUG, specializing in urban guerrilla warfare, basic training for new resistance fighters, logistics, public mobilization and PDF support. They have been formed in 250 out of 330 townships.

Unlike conflicts the resistance struggles in such countries as Timor Leste or Afghanistan, where the top key commanders could be identified, the Spring

Revolution warriors tend to hide behind a veil of anonymity.

## HUMANITARIAN CEASEFIRE

Troublesome for the junta in 2022 was the strife they faced in Rakhine State earlier in the year. The state burst into flames again and the AA and the SAC fought each other not less than ten times in the Arakan and Chin states in July alone. Four months later, in November, a "humanitarian ceasefire" was reached between the SAC and the AA, mediated by the chairman of Japan's Nippon Foundation, Yohei Sasakawa.

This leaves only the Shan State, out of all ethnic states, that is not fully enveloped with armed conflict, save for the northern part where there have been clashes on-and-off between the EAOs operating there and the junta's troops, including clashes between the PDFs of Karenni State, plus LDFs from Shan State with the junta in Moebye, Pekon area of southern Shan State at the most southern part bordering Kayah or Karenni State.

## DIVIDE AND RULE

Amidst the chaos, the junta sought to divide-and-rule



Burnt out village in Sagaing, taken by drone. Photo: Supplied



by holding a number of peace talks ever since April with some 10 EAOs already twice to reach at least a tentative political settlement, probably to ensure that they won't turn against it, while at the same time it is gearing to hold general elections in 2023, hoping to "legalize" its military coup - aiming perhaps like Thailand's ex-military leader Prayuth Chan-ocha, who staged a military coup and after rewriting a new constitution followed by a successful referendum, later became prime minister through elections and is still in power today.

The junta faces a military and political alliance that is in the process of formation. Politically, the ethnic-democratic loose alliance, which includes the parallel National Unity Government/People's Defence Forces (NUG-PDFs); some EAOs such as from the Chin, Kachin, Karenni, Karen; and assorted Local Defence Forces (LDFs) are for uprooting the SAC and are not interested in a negotiated settlement.

The Chin, Kachin, Karenni and Karen states' EAOs and their respective local PDFs are solidly behind the battle cry of "no negotiation and uprooting the military dictatorship" as a top priority so that a "federal democratic union" can be established. Thus, they are working in collaboration with the NUG and this trend is gaining momentum.

In Mon State, the New Mon State Party (NMSP), the main EAO within the state, is keen to negotiate peace with the junta and thus is left out of the resistance fray. But numerous local PDFs and Karen National Union (KNU) Brigade 1 are nevertheless engaged in the fight against the

junta on Mon State soil.

What is clear is the SAC is committed to annihilate its opponents at all costs. In fact, the situation is highly polarized and both camps adamantly label each other as "terrorist" organizations.

### ***FAR FROM THE END GAME***

In short almost the whole country is resisting the junta's rule militarily. Politically, the junta has not been able to make headway to replace Kyaw Moe Tun, who recently on 12 December was allowed to retain his UN ambassador position on behalf of the NUG for another year by the UN credentials committee, although this doesn't mean the recognition of the NUG at this moment in time. It is understood as preserving a member's country seat and not particularly endorsing any of the two rival governments, the NUG and SAC.

Moreover, the United States House of Representatives on 7 December passed a compromise version of the National Defence Authorization Act (NDAA), and on 15 December the senate also overwhelmingly approved it, which pledges to provide non-military assistance

and to engage with Myanmar's EAOs and the resistance forces or PDFs. This move has uplifted the ethnic-democratic opposition groups psychologically for the time being, but what will come out practically from this bill when it becomes law is still an open question.

For 2023, the junta is determined to hold general election by all means, coupled with annihilation offensive campaigns against all of its oppositions countrywide and instil fear and intimidation among the population so that the public will be subdued, cowed and submit to its rule. This two-pronged strategy seems to be the way the junta has chosen to embark upon, taking a cue from what it has done since the military coup.

In such a polarized situation between adversaries within the country, there is little likelihood that the ongoing civil war will be resolved in the short term. And politically, the fight to win legitimacy and recognition between the SAC and NUG will continue in the UN and international arena, if the development trends displayed this year are an indicator.



● The junta has heavy weapons at its disposal. Photo: EPA

# UN SECURITY COUNCIL ADOPTS FIRST EVER MYANMAR RESOLUTION

**T**he UN Security Council called for Myanmar's junta to release Aung San Suu Kyi Wednesday last week as it adopted its first ever resolution on the situation in the turmoil-ridden Southeast Asian country.

The 15-member Council has been split on Myanmar for decades and was previously only able to agree on formal statements about the country, which has been under military rule since February 2021.

Suu Kyi, 77, has been a prisoner since the army toppled her government almost two years ago and violently cracked down on dissent.

Wednesday's resolution "urges" the junta to "immediately release all arbitrarily detained prisoners," including Suu Kyi and ex-president Win Myint.

It also demands "an immediate end to all forms of violence" and asks for "all parties to respect human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law."

The adoption marked a moment of relative Council unity in a year in which divisions have been heightened by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"Any opportunity for the Security Council to speak with one strong, united voice on any issue and especially on Myanmar would be much welcomed," Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's spokesman said ahead of the vote.

The text was adopted with 12 votes in favor. Permanent members China and Russia abstained, opting not to wield vetoes following amendments to the wording. India also abstained.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the resolution sent a "strong message" from the world that the junta "must end its violence across the country" and free prisoners.

"While we applaud the adoption of this resolution, the Council still has much more work to do to advance a just solution to the crisis," Blinken said, calling for greater efforts to restore democracy.

## ***First successful resolution***

Diplomats said the only existing Council resolution regarding Myanmar was the one the UN passed in 1948 approving the country's membership to the world body.

In 2008, the Council failed to adopt a draft resolution on Myanmar after Beijing and Moscow cast vetoes.

Then in December 2018, Britain made another attempt following the Rohingya crisis that saw 700,000 people flee Myanmar to neighboring Bangladesh but a vote was never held.

Britain began circulating a draft text of Wednesday's resolution in September. Several amendments were made to ensure its passing, UN watchers say.

Language relating to the Council's determination to use all its powers should Myanmar fail to adhere to the resolution were reportedly dropped.

Several members also objected to a provision requesting the UN secretary-general to report to the Council on the situation in Myanmar every 60 days.





Instead, the resolution calls for the secretary-general or his envoy to report back by March 15, 2023 in coordination with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The Council had issued one unified statement on Myanmar since the coup ended the country's brief period of democracy.

The military alleged widespread voter fraud during the November 2020 election,

won resoundingly by Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party, although international observers said the poll was largely free and fair.

A junta court has found Suu Kyi, a Nobel laureate, guilty on every one of the 14 charges it has heard so far, including corruption, and jailed her for 26 years.

Rights groups have slammed the trial as a sham designed to remove the democracy figurehead permanently

from Myanmar's political scene.

The military's crackdown on pro-democracy protesters has killed more than 2,500 people, according to a local monitoring group.

**AFP**



Photo: AFP

# HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH APPROVES UN MYANMAR RESOLUTION



**H**uman Rights Watch has commented on the United Nations Security Council adoption of a resolution on 21 December 2022, denouncing the Myanmar military's rights violations since the 1 February 1, 2021 coup.

According to Human Rights Watch the landmark resolution, passed with 12 yes votes and 3 abstentions, reflects the Myanmar junta's growing isolation generated by security force abuses amounting to crimes against humanity and war crimes.

It is the first Security Council resolution on Myanmar since the country, formerly known as Burma, acquired independence from Britain in 1948.

"The Security Council resolution is a momentous step on behalf of the people of Myanmar, opening the door toward holding Myanmar's brutal generals to account," said Elaine Pearson, Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "The resolution should bring renewed scrutiny to the junta's daily atrocities and recognition of the Myanmar people's brave efforts toward democracy and freedom."


The resolution, which the United Kingdom drafted under the UN Charter's Chapter VI concerning "peaceful settlement of

disputes," expresses deep concern at the "ongoing state of emergency imposed by the military in Myanmar on 1 February 2021 and its grave impact on the people of Myanmar."

It condemns the military's execution of pro-democracy activists, urges the military to "immediately release all arbitrarily detained prisoners," and demands an "immediate end to all forms of violence throughout the country."

The resolution includes numerous references to the





Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which adopted a "five-point consensus" in April 2021 in response to the Myanmar coup. Junta chief Sr. Gen. Min Aung Hlaing has since defied each point of the consensus while exploiting the international community's deference to the regional bloc, Human Rights Watch said.

The secretary-general or his special envoy on Myanmar is tasked with reporting orally by March 15, 2023, to the Security Council on UN support for implementation of the five-point consensus.

All Security Council members voted for the resolution, except for China, India, and Russia, which abstained.

The junta's widespread and systematic abuses since the coup – including extrajudicial killings, torture, and indiscriminate attacks on civilians – amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes. Security forces have killed over 2,600 people and arbitrarily arrested over 16,000, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.

The military has expanded abusive operations in ethnic minority areas, displacing more than one million people, and deliberately blocked humanitarian assistance from reaching populations in need as a form of collective punishment. The resolution calls for "full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access," expressing deep concern at the "increasingly large numbers of

internally displaced persons and dramatic increase in humanitarian need."

Activists in Myanmar have pressed for a Security Council resolution on the country for decades. China and Russia vetoed a 2007 draft condemning the then-military government's attacks on civilians and detention of political prisoners.

Calls for a resolution by UN experts, human rights groups, and others in response to the atrocities against the Rohingya in 2017 went unanswered. According to Human Rights Watch this was largely due to China and Russia's resistance, but also concerns on the part of Western governments of alienating the now-ousted civilian government led by Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been in military custody since the coup.

The Security Council has issued statements of condemnation on Myanmar in the past and received numerous briefings from UN experts and the secretary-general. Under resolutions of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, the council has debated reports on abuses against children in Myanmar.

This resolution represents a significant escalation of the council's engagement on Myanmar and offers a basis for sustained future monitoring of the situation in the country, Human Rights Watch said. This first-step resolution should be followed by close monitoring and reporting on the junta's

compliance and further action by the council.

Human Rights Watch has long called on the Security Council to impose a global arms embargo, refer the country situation to the International Criminal Court, and impose targeted sanctions on junta leadership and military-owned companies.

The initial draft of the resolution called for an immediate end to arms sales to Myanmar, which was later removed.

"China and Russia's abstentions signal that even the junta's few friends have lost interest in sticking out their necks to defend its atrocities," said Louis Charbonneau, UN director at Human Rights Watch. "The building blocks put in place with this resolution offer a starting point for reinvigorating pressure on the junta among Security Council members and governments across the globe."

# MYANMAR'S AUNG SAN SUU KYI TO HEAR FINAL VERDICTS IN JUNTA TRIAL

**A** Myanmar junta court could hand down the final verdicts in an 18-month trial of Aung San Suu Kyi this week, closing the latest chapter in the military's decades-long battle with the democracy figurehead.

The Nobel laureate, 77, has already been found guilty on 14 charges ranging from corruption to illegally importing walkie-talkies and breaching the official secrets act.

Since her trial began she has been seen only once -- in grainy state media photos from a bare courtroom -- and has been reliant on lawyers to relay messages to the world.

Many in Myanmar's democracy struggle she has dominated for decades have abandoned her core principle of non-violence, with "People's Defence Forces" clashing regularly with the military across the country.

The nation has been in turmoil since generals seized power last year and deposed Suu Kyi's civilian government.

Final arguments for her trial on five remaining corruption charges are set for Monday and verdicts are expected shortly after.

The court could add up to 75 years in prison to the 26 she has already been sentenced to, concluding a closed-door trial that rights groups say is a sham.



It is "unlikely" the junta will press any more charges, said Richard Horsey of the International Crisis Group.

The military wants the focus next year to be on celebrations for the 75th anniversary of independence from Britain, "and on elections it is likely to hold mid-year", he told AFP.

But after the polls, any new military regime "could perhaps approach Suu Kyi and try to use such negotiations to try to divide the opposition", Horsey added.

Analyst Soe Myint Aung said there is "always a possibility of an unexpected pardon and release" for Suu Kyi once her trial is finished.





● Aung San Suu Kyi remains a beacon of light for Myanmar protesters. Photo: AFP

“The military regime definitely sees a role for Suu Kyi in reducing societal tensions and stopping the armed resistance,” he said.

Whether the still-popular ex-leader would play ball in exchange for a pardon or freedom is a matter of intense speculation.

“There is nothing impossible in politics,” junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun told AFP in July when asked if the military would consider talks with Suu Kyi to find a way out of the crisis unleashed by its coup.

### **‘Sham’ elections**

Suu Kyi is currently imprisoned in a compound in the capital Naypyidaw, close to

the courthouse where her trial is being held, and has been deprived of her household staff and pet dog Taichido.

“I seriously doubt that the junta would release her from prison, at least until the 2023 election is over,” said Htwe Htwe Thein, an associate professor at Curtin University in Australia.

Horsey said it was also “unlikely” the generals would allow her to return to her family’s colonial-era lakeside mansion in Yangon, where she spent around 15 years under house arrest after winning elections in 1990.

During that time she regularly gave speeches to crowds on the other side of her garden wall, becoming a global democracy icon for her peaceful resistance to authoritarian military rule.

The United States has said any elections held by the current junta would be a “sham”.

Russia - a major ally and arms supplier - has said it supports the military’s plan to hold polls next year.

Analysts and diplomatic sources say neighbours China, India and Thailand may also give their blessing.

But many of Myanmar’s myriad political parties could boycott the polls rather than compete on the junta’s terms and risk retaliation from anti-coup fighters.

**AFP**

# UN SECURITY COUNCIL TRYING TO 'DESTABILISE' MYANMAR, JUNTA SAYS



The Myanmar junta is unhappy with the UN Security Council action. Photo: EPA

**M**yanmar's junta on Friday last week slammed a United Nations Security Council resolution calling for an end to violence and release of ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi, accusing the body of attempting to "destabilise" the country.

The Security Council adopted its first ever resolution on the situation in the turmoil-ridden Southeast Asian nation on Wednesday, after junta allies China and Russia abstained rather than veto the document.

The 15-member Council has been split on Myanmar for decades and was previously only able to agree on formal statements about the country.

The resolution contained "several intrusive elements on Myanmar's internal affairs that contravene the principles and purposes of the United Nations," the junta's foreign affairs ministry said in a statement.

"Exerting pressure to destabilise Myanmar rather than supporting the government's efforts

does not help the country and Myanmar will not accept such acts."

The text was adopted with 12 votes in favour. Permanent members China and Russia abstained, opting not to wield vetoes following amendments to the wording. India also abstained.

In its Friday statement the junta repeated its claim of alleged widespread voter fraud during the November 2020 election, won resoundingly by Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party.

International observers said the poll was largely free and fair.

Suu Kyi, 77, has been a prisoner since the army toppled her government almost two years ago.

The military's crackdown on pro-democracy protesters has killed more than 2,500 people, according to a local monitoring group.

**AFP**



# CRISIS GROUP PUBLISHES REPORT ON HOW RESISTANCE FORCES RAISE MONEY

**T**he non-governmental organisation (NGO) Crisis Group has published a new report that details how resistance forces in Myanmar have successfully leveraged social media and online tools to raise money and how efforts by Myanmar's junta to cut off funding for anti-military groups have significantly hindered humanitarian aid delivery in the country.

The report is titled "Crowdfunding a War: The Money behind Myanmar's Resistance".

Tom Kean, Crisis Group's Senior Consultant for Myanmar and Bangladesh said: "Myanmar's anti-military forces have harnessed the power of social media to successfully raise tens of millions of dollars – and possibly hundreds of millions – for their struggle against the junta. Just as importantly, they've been able to move that money into and around the country under the nose of the regime, and there is little prospect of the junta being able to stop them."

But, he also cautioned that "the regime's restrictions have had a major impact on humanitarian aid delivery", and as a result of this warns donors to "deal directly with local partners as much as possible, and be more flexible in their operating and reporting requirements."

# NUG URGES EU AND ASEAN TO SANCTION SUPPLIERS OF AIR FUEL TO MYANMAR JUNTA



**M**yanmar's exiled National Unity Government (NUG) called on the EU and ASEAN to impose effective sanctions against companies selling aviation fuel to the Burmese junta.

It said that doing this would "dismantle the junta's capacity to inflict further atrocities on the civilians."

The NUG made the remark in its 19 December announcement welcoming the Joint Leaders' Statement from the 14 December EU-ASEAN Commemorative Summit, the first EU-ASEAN Commemorative Summit marking 45 years of dialogue between the EU and the ASEAN.

The NUG statement went on to say: "An EU-ASEAN commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms must respect the democratic will of the Myanmar people by upholding the results of the 2020 General Election and blocking all attempts by the junta to hold sham elections. It must see support for the Federal Democracy Charter and rejection of the junta's unlawful state of emergency."

It also called on the EU and ASEAN to put intense pressure on the junta so that they stop executing more political prisoners.

Similarly on 9 December, 516 Civil Society Organizations including Burma Campaign UK and Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) wrote to the British Foreign Secretary, calling on the British Government to take action against British companies directly or indirectly selling jet fuel to the Burmese military, according to Radio Free Asia (RFA).

According to the Institute for Strategy and Policy-Myanmar, the military junta has recently been carrying out airstrikes. It said that at least 57 airstrikes were carried out across the country in October this year, resulting in at least 37 civilian deaths in October alone.



# MYANMAR JUNTA FM MEETS ASEAN COUNTERPARTS AT 'INFORMAL' THAI MEETING

Three Southeast Asian foreign ministers and a regional envoy tasked with solving the Myanmar crisis met with the junta's top diplomat at an "informal" meeting in Thailand on Thursday last week, the Thai government said.

The meeting came shortly after the United Nations Security Council adopted its first resolution on Myanmar, demanding "an immediate end to all forms of violence".

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has led diplomatic efforts to resolve the turmoil that has gripped Myanmar since the military seized power last year.

There has, however, been little progress on a "five-point consensus" agreed with the junta in April 2021, which calls for an immediate end to violence and dialogue between the military and the anti-coup movement.

There was "candid and constructive" discussion between the foreign ministers of Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia, Thai foreign ministry spokesperson Kanchana Patarachoke said.

"This included the opportunity to hear from Myanmar and to exchange views on finding the exit strategy and pathways towards a return to normalcy in Myanmar," she said.

The meeting touched on facilitating humanitarian assistance, Kanchana said, as well as "exploring other approaches that could support the implementation of the Five-Point Consensus".

Myanmar's junta-appointed foreign affairs ministry said the delegation "cordially exchanged views on the matters of Myanmar's... implementation of the ASEAN five-point consensus".

It was the first time in more than a year that its foreign minister met an ASEAN foreign minister grouping in person, after the bloc snubbed the junta from top-level summits over a lack of progress on ASEAN's peace plan.

It was also Myanmar Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin's first known trip abroad since visiting China in March.

Myanmar's ministers responsible for international cooperation and humanitarian assistance were also present, the statement said.

Kanchana emphasised that while the meeting was a "non-ASEAN" gathering, it was intended to "complement" the regional bloc's work.

The 15-member UN Security Council has been split for decades on Myanmar, but on Wednesday it called for the release of former leader Aung San Suu Kyi and "all arbitrarily detained prisoners".

Twelve members voted in favour, with permanent members China and Russia, as well as India, abstaining.

AFP



Myanmar Junta FM.  
Wunna Maung Lwin

# MYANMAR ARRESTS MORE THAN 110 ROHINGYA FOR TRAVELLING 'WITHOUT OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS'

**M**yanmar authorities have arrested more than 110 Rohingya, including children, for travelling "without official documents" as they tried to make their way to Malaysia, state media reported Friday last week.

A total of 112 people, including a dozen children, were arrested in the southeastern township of Bogale, according to the Global New Light of Myanmar, with 35 given five-year prison terms.

The report, which identified the group by the pejorative "Bengalis", gave no date for the arrests, but local media quoted police sources as saying they took place the morning of December 20.

Widely viewed as interlopers from Bangladesh, members of the mostly Muslim minority group are denied citizenship -- along with access to healthcare and education -- and often require permission to travel.

A local court sentenced 35 of the group to five years in jail for travelling without documents, the Global New Light reported, adding that 13 under the age of 18 would be detained at a "training school" until they were 20.

Thousands of Rohingya risk their lives each year making perilous journeys to reach Malaysia or Indonesia.

A military crackdown in Myanmar in 2017 sent hundreds of thousands of Rohingya fleeing into neighbouring Bangladesh with harrowing stories of murder, rape and arson.

Myanmar is facing genocide accusations at the United Nation's top court following the mass exodus.

Thirteen Rohingya were found dead on a roadside near Hlegu town near the commercial hub Yangon on December 5.

Myanmar police later arrested 12 suspected members of a human-trafficking gang linked to the deaths.

A Rohingya source and local media said the group had been travelling inside an oil tanker linked to the gang.

**AFP**





# ROHINGYA REFUGEE BOAT LANDS IN INDONESIA AFTER MONTH AT SEA

A broken-down boat carrying 57 Rohingya refugees landed on Indonesia's western coast on Sunday after a month at sea, police said.

Thousands of the mostly Muslim Rohingya, heavily persecuted in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, risk their lives each year on long, expensive sea journeys -- often in poor-quality vessels -- in an attempt to reach Malaysia or Indonesia.

The wooden vessel with 57 men on board arrived around 08:00 am local time (0100 GMT) on a beach in the westernmost Aceh province, local police spokesman Winardy told AFP.

"The boat had a broken engine and it was carried by the wind to a shore in Ladong Village in Aceh Besar (district)," Winardy, who goes by one name, said.

"They said they have been drifting at sea for a month."

Winardy added that police arrived at the beach after being informed by some locals that the boat had docked there.

He said four of the men on board were sick and had been transported to a hospital.

Telmaizul Syatri, the head of the local immigration office, said the refugees will be

temporarily housed at a local government facility.

"We will coordinate with the International Organisation for Migration and the UNHCR so that it can be handled well," Syatri said.

This is the third Rohingya refugee boat to arrive in Muslim-majority Indonesia in recent months.

Two boats carrying a total of 229 Rohingya landed in Aceh on 15 and 16 November, according to the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR).

Sunday's arrival comes after the UNHCR and Southeast Asian politicians called for the rescue of another vessel carrying as many as 200 Rohingya

refugees, including women and children, which has been stranded at sea for several weeks.

That boat has been reported in waters close to Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and India in the Andaman Sea and the Malacca Strait, one of the world's busiest shipping routes.

The UNHCR said last week that it has been in the water since late November, and it had received reports of at least a dozen people dying on board. Those left on the boat have no access to food or water.

AFP



The boat that brought the Rohingya migrants. Photo: AFP

# WFP TO RESUME FOOD ASSISTANCE FOR RAKHINE STATE IDPS



Photo: WFP

**T**he World Food Programme (WFP) is expected to resume providing food assistance to internally displaced people (IDPs) in Rakhine State in the coming days.

The WFP halted food distribution in Rakhine State in mid-September due to security issues. Despite this the WFP maintained a regular presence in the area and will resume distributing food as soon as possible following the ceasefire between the junta and Arakan Army (AA), agreed at the end of November, according to the WFP Country Director for Myanmar, Paolo Mattei.

He said: “Our beneficiaries in central and northern Rakhine State have not received WFP assistance since mid-September. As a result, we hope that the recently announced ceasefire will allow us to provide IDPs with food and the life-saving assistance.”

WFP will distribute food to approximately 3,500 internally displaced people from five townships in central Rakhine State and approximately 95,000 people in north Rakhine.

In total, he expects that WFP will assist more than 350,000 in need in Rakhine State.

“WFP will distribute food and nutrition

supplies throughout Rakhine State. As a result, we aim to assist up to 350,000 people in need. We have also met with the relevant officials from their respective townships to assist in the delivery of food assistance to needy people”, he said.

Since 2019 the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief, and Resettlement had been supplying IDPs in Rakhine State with 1500 kyats in cash and 3 pyi of rice (6.39 kg rice) per day per person, but that scheme finished in mid-July 2022.

A resident of the Lanmakyaung IDP camp in Rakhine State’s Buthidaung Township said that since they stopped receiving aid daily life has become harder.

She said: “I primarily rely on WFP humanitarian aid and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief, and Resettlement. I earn 2,000 kyats per day working, I can save it for medical expenses and eat rice and food supplied by the World Food Programme and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief, and Resettlement. We no longer receive any aid and it is inconvenient for us to spend our entire paycheck on goods.”

There are over 90,000 IDPs in Rakhine State who were unable to return home due to fighting between the junta and the AA.



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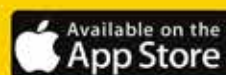
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# CHINA SEEKS TO TACKLE UPTICK IN COVID CASES

**“D**eceased, deceased,” a staffer in full protective gear shouted as she handed a nurse a death certificate, their hospital in central China overflowing with patients who were said to have Covid.

China appears to be battling a wave of infections that has hit the elderly hard, but has officially logged only a handful of deaths from the coronavirus after the government redefined the criteria by which Covid deaths are counted.

At No. 5 People’s Hospital in Chongqing, the main entrance lobby had been converted into a makeshift Covid ward when AFP visited on Friday.

In the vast atrium, about a dozen beds occupied by mainly elderly patients on IV drips were cordoned off with red and white tape.

In a nearby room, about 40 mostly elderly and middle-aged patients sat on sofas and lay on beds receiving IV drips, some coughing.

A nurse said they all had Covid.

In an intensive care unit next door, three people lay on beds attached to respirators and heart monitoring equipment.

An elderly man was wheeled in on a stretcher, coughing and struggling to breathe.

At the emergency department, around 50 people queued for triage, including Covid patients, with one person at the front of the queue telling AFP they had waited for more than an hour.

The emergency room at another medium-sized hospital in downtown Chongqing was also overrun, with around 30 elderly people attached to IV drips, squeezed among beds and chairs.

Several were breathing through respirators and a few had pulse oximeters attached to their fingers.



It was

A cleaner and a nurse at the first hospital told AFP there were several deaths per day since the government’s sudden decision at the beginning of the month to lift health restrictions and end mass testing.

It was not clear if all of the deaths were related to the virus.

## ***‘Died too quickly’***

On Thursday evening, AFP visited a crematorium in the city’s south and witnessed 40 bodies being unloaded in two hours.



not clear if all of the deaths were related to the virus.



Photo: EPA

The relatives of several of the deceased said the deaths were due to Covid.

One woman said her elderly relative, who was suffering from cold symptoms, had tested negative but died after they could not get an ambulance in time.

A woman in her 20s told AFP she suspected her father had died of Covid, though he had not been tested.

"He died too quickly, while on the way to hospital," she sobbed. "He had lung issues to begin with... He was only 69."

Under China's new definition of Covid deaths, only those who die of respiratory failure - and not pre-existing conditions exacerbated by the virus - are counted.

That means many of the dead in Chongqing -- and across the country -- are no longer even being registered as coronavirus victims.

At the first hospital's ICU on Friday, the cleaner told AFP it was mostly elderly people who were dying.

Gesturing to a space where a bed had been a little while before, he said: "Look, that old man in there died just now."

AFP

# MYANMAR FISHERMEN FEAR LOSS OF LIVELIHOOD due to China-backed Kyaukphyu Deep Sea-Port

In 2018, China signed an MoU with Myanmar to establish the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC). In January 2020, during a two-day visit by President Xi Jinping to Myanmar, 33 projects were identified to operationalize CMEC. This included development of Kyaukphyu Port and Special Economic Zone (KPSEZ), Myanmar's first deep-sea port in Rakhine state. The project is to be developed by the Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone Deep Seaport Co. Ltd., a joint venture between the Chinese consortium CITIC Myanmar Port Investment Limited and the KPSEZ management committee.

Despite Myanmar's political strife after a military coup in February 2021, China continues to fill an immense economic gap left as many western benefactors fled. But it is not all about Chinese benevolence to Myanmar. Beijing considers the KPSEZ and the deep sea-port especially vital to the BRI, as they will give China direct access to the Indian Ocean, so allowing Chinese trade to bypass the congested Strait of Malacca near Singapore, while boosting development in landlocked Yunnan Province, which borders Myanmar. In Myanmar, China sees an opportunity to significantly expand its sea power beyond its influence in the Pacific region.

Myanmar Survey Research (MSR) has been conducting environmental and social impact assessments for the US\$1.3 billion Kyaukphyu SEZ, and the assessment is scheduled to be completed in

July 2023 after which the construction will commence. The deep sea-port project will be implemented in three phases and is estimated to cost US\$7 billion.

However, the commencement is bound to face resistance. Activists claim that the deep sea-port is expected to seriously disrupt the livelihoods

Maday Island only did harm and brought no good for local fishermen, said the spokesman for the Centre for Peace and Development, a civil society organization monitoring the Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone (SEZ) project, to which the deep sea-port is closely tied. The government ignored fishermen's demands in 2017. As a result, they lost 50 percent



Photo: EPA

of local fishermen as fish stocks have been seriously depleted. On October 27, underlining the concern, activists organized a campaign against the project in the Thanzit River near Maday Island, where the deep sea-port is stated to be built. The campaign demanded that local fishermen be respected, and that development of the deep-sea port project be halted immediately as it was initiated without the consensus of local residents and has not addressed the grievances of local fishermen and residents.

An oil and gas pipeline project that was also backed by China and implemented on

of their fisheries. Now they have to rely only on the remaining 50 percent to make a living.

The asymmetric relationship between China and its smaller and troubled BRI partner Myanmar is expected to generate a range of political risks for stakeholders. The Kyaukphyu deep sea-port project and associated Special Economic Zone located in Myanmar's troubled Rakhine state is investigated as a case study of risks on the Belt and Road. Myanmar must be wary of how China will throw its weight around in future, which underlines the need to better understand risks that accompany BRI-related projects.



# NEW SITTWE PORT FOR INDO-MYANMAR DIRECT TRADE WILL OPEN FOR INDO-MYANMAR TRADE

The Military Council-appointed Rakhine State government Chief Minister Dr Aung Kyaw Min said in his opening address on the 48<sup>th</sup> Rakhine State Day that one of the Indo-Myanmar friendship projects, the Sittwe port, would be opened soon for direct trade between India and Myanmar.

This Kaladan multi-modal transit transport (KMTT) project would be beneficial not only for Myanmar but also for Rakhine State development, he said.

Similarly, the press release issued by the Indian embassy in Myanmar says that Kaladan multi-modal transit transport project will be beneficial to the Rakhine State

development and also for the local residents of Rakhine State. All the projects being implemented will help all local residents in the Rakhine State, it says.

A source close to the India embassy confirmed that new Sittwe port which was a part of KMTT project would be opened soon and 5,000-6,000-ton vessels would sail between Sittwe and Kolkata ports.

In Indo-Myanmar trade, maritime trade between Kolkata and Sittwe which are 539 kms apart will be a priority in direct trade between two countries and trade between Sittwe and Paletwa in Chin State will be conducted by inland water transport vessels.

This news source close to India embassy also said that road transport would be used to travel to Zorinpui in India which is 109 kms from Paletwa port.

KMTT is the sea-river-road trade route between the two countries and it will connect Kolkata in India and Sittwe in Myanmar with sea transport and then river transport will be used for Sittwe in Rakhine State and Paletwa in Chin State. And then the goods will be transported to Mizoram State in India by road.

India and Myanmar governments signed the MoU in 2008 for the KMTT project and the construction of Sittwe port started in 2009.



Photo: EPA

# UN EXPERT ON MYANMAR: SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION NOT STRONG ENOUGH ON 'SYSTEMATIC GROSS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS'

In response to the adoption of the Security Council's first resolution on Myanmar since the military unleashed a brutal crackdown nearly two years ago, a UN-appointed independent human rights expert warned on Thursday that the carnage would only worsen without "strong, coordinated action" by UN Member States.

Thomas Andrews, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, acknowledged as "notable" that the Council crafted and advanced a draft that managed to avoid a veto, but "with all due respect", said that the resolution adopted yesterday was not enough.

"Demanding that certain actions be taken without any use of the Security Council's Chapter VII authority, will not stop the illegal Myanmar junta from attacking and destroying the lives of the 54 million people being held hostage in Myanmar", he said in a statement.

"What is required is action".

## *Resolution long time coming*

The resolution expressed "deep concern" at the continuing state of emergency since the military seized power and the "grave impact" of the coup on Myanmar's people.

It also urged "concrete and immediate actions" towards implementing a peace plan, which was agreed to by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and called to uphold "democratic institutions and processes".

The Council has long been split on how to deal with the crisis – with China and Russia arguing against strong action. They, along with India, abstained from Wednesday's vote while the remaining 12 members voted in favor.



Photo: Gayatri Malhotra



After the vote, China's ambassador, Zhang Jun, said that his country had wanted the Security Council to adopt a formal statement on Myanmar, not a resolution. Russia's ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia, said that as Moscow did not view the situation in Myanmar as a threat to international peace and security, it believed that it should not be dealt with by the Council.

## **Resolution lacks strength**

Mr. Andrews spelled out that "the systematic gross human rights violations – amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity – being perpetrated daily on the people of Myanmar by an illegal military junta requires strong, coordinated action by UN Member States".

He acknowledged that the resolution's demands – including an immediate end to all forms of violence, the release of political prisoners, unimpeded humanitarian access, and respect for the rights of women and children – are "critically important" but missing are "consequences for the failure to meet them and the imposition of sanctions and accountability for crimes the military has committed to date".

He stood in accord with Security Council members Norway, the United Arab Emirates, the United

States, Iceland, and Mexico in saying that the language of the resolution should have been stronger.

## **'Wake-up' call**

The resolution makes clear however, that the action required to end the crisis would not come from the Security Council, the UN expert said.

"It is, therefore, imperative that those nations with the political will to support the people of Myanmar take coordinated action immediately to end the carnage".

He underscored that the resolution should not become "a dead-end...followed by more international inaction".

"It should be a wake-up call for those nations who support a people under siege", he continued.

"It is clearly time for the creation of a working coalition of nations who are willing to stand with the people of Myanmar by providing what they need most – action".

The UN expert agreed with the Secretary-General's declaration last month saying that the international community had failed Myanmar.

"This failure cannot be rectified by resolutions that have no consequences", stressed Mr. Andrews.

Instead, targeted action is needed, including coordinating sanctions, cutting off revenue that finances the junta's military assaults, and an embargo on weapons and dual-use technology.

"What is required is the political will", he concluded.

Special Rapporteurs are appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a specific human rights country situation. The experts are not paid for their work.

*Courtesy of UN News*





Photo: Thet Khine

## KAREN STATE

Myanmar troops killed in battles in Kawkaik in Karen State. On 16 December at 5:30 am, the Lion Battalion Commando-strategy column (Kaw Thoo Lei Army), Karen. National Liberation Army, and affiliated resistance forces attacked Military Council troops stationed in Ngartaing power station in Kyondoe town, Kawkaik District, in the Karen National Union (KNU) Brigade (6) controlled area. Six military council troops stationed at the Ngartaing Power Station were reportedly killed in this battle, including a second-in-command, an adjutant, three soldiers and a policewoman. "We started the attack around 5:30 am and the battle ended at 10:10 am. Three firearms were seized," a Lion Battalion Commando-strategy column (Kaw Thoo Lei Army) official said. During the battle, the Military Council force launched two air attacks with a Mi 35 fighter helicopter.

## RAKHINE STATE

Despite ceasefire Myanmar junta does not allow medicine deliveries in Rakhine State. Despite a ceasefire being declared between the Arakan Army (AA) and the junta in Rakhine State on 26 November 2022 the junta authorities are still not allowing medicine deliveries in Rakhine State. Apparently pharmacies in the state are still suffering from shortages of medicines because truck drivers and transportation companies are refusing to deliver medicines in Rakhine State until they receive official permission to do so. The chairman of the Rakhine State Federation Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Tin Aung Oo, said that the truck drivers and transport companies will not transport medicines in Rakhine State until the Rakhine State Administrative Council gives official permission for medicines to be transported in the State, which it has not yet done. When renewed fighting erupted between the AA and the junta in Rakhine State earlier this year, the junta banned the transport of pharmaceutical products to Rakhine state or even within the State from township to township, according to some pharmaceutical retailers and manufacturers Companies trading in pharmaceuticals have sent requests to the Rakhine State Administrative Council via the Rakhine State Chamber of Commerce and Industry asking for permission to transport medicine from Yangon to Rakhine State as there are shortages of medicines in Rakhine State and stocks are very low. They have not yet received any sort of reply to their requests. Maung Maung Tun, a truck driver who has his own transport business taking goods between Maungdaw and Taungpyo in Rakhine State said that truck drivers could only transport medicines and pharmaceutical products after receiving permission from the Health Department. As a result of this, Rakhine State residents are facing severe shortages of medicines and the prices of those medicines still left in the shops have soared so that they can now cost three times their normal price. Additionally, pregnant women and children have been unable to get the vaccinations they need in a timely manner.

## CHIN STATE

Chin National Defence Force being trained by U.S. armed forces veteran. The VAKOK Battalion of the Chin National Defence Force (VAKOK CNDF) announced that it is receiving special forces training from a U.S. armed forces veteran in Sagaing Region's Kale Township. VAKOK CNDF said, in the 17 December statement announcing the training, that they are having to train with a limited number of weapons due to a lack of funds Uk Pi, the VAKOK CNDF Station Commander said: "The trainer was born in Myanmar and retired from the US Army. He has volunteered to train other ethnic groups. I'm not going to reveal his name for security reasons. This will be a short training with only a few VAKOK CNDF members due to a lack of weapons and financial constraints." He said that the trainer was giving intense training in close combat and counter offensives and that once the VAKOK CNDF members complete their training they will carry out counter offensive attacks and guerrilla operations in the inner city and southern areas of Kale Township, where the VAKOK CNDF operates.





## 7 NCA SIGNATORIES DECIDE NOT TO ATTEND JUNTA'S PEACE TALKS

**S**even signatories to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) said that they would not attend the junta's planned meeting from 27 to 29 December, according to local news.

The seven NCA signatories are the Restoration Council of Shan State, New Mon State Party, Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council, Arakan Liberation Party, Democratic Karen Benevolent Army, Pa-O National Liberation Organization and Lahu Democratic Union.

These seven ethnic armed groups visited Nay Pyi Taw twice this year to meet with the junta, and on December 19, the junta informed these groups that they should meet from 27 to 29 December to hold peace talks.

Before that, the seven signatories, on 7 December, proposed an informal meeting with Lieutenant General Yar Pyae, chairman of the military junta's National Solidarity and Peace Negotiation Committee, but the junta replied that its committee was not prepared to hold an informal meeting with the seven signatories.

In response, the seven signatories have decided not to attend the junta's meeting.

During this year, ten groups, including the seven NCA signatories, attended the peace talks invited by the junta. The non-signatories that attended the previous peace talks are the United Wa People's Army, The Shan State Progressive Party and National Democratic Alliance Army.

# WORLD BANK DIVESTS FROM MYANMAR'S YOMA BANK

According to campaign group Justice for Myanmar (JFM) the International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank Group is divesting from Myanmar's Yoma Bank after its business with military companies was exposed.

JFM is now calling on the remaining investors in Yoma bank, Norfund and GIC, to stop the bank's support for Myanmar military or divest.

The IFC owns 4.5% of Yoma Bank and is selling all its shares to First Myanmar International (FMI) for US\$ 5 million, which equals the value IFC used to convert its 2014 loan to equity, which it completed in 2019.

IFC signed a share sales agreement with FMI and Yoma Bank on December 12, 2022.

According to JFM the IFC's divestment comes amid the Spring Revolution, with mass pressure from the people of Myanmar for companies to cut ties with the junta and its conglomerates. Yoma Bank has a record of doing business with the military and its conglomerates, which stand accused of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

In 2020, Yoma Bank gave a loan to Pinnacle Asia, a Myanmar company owned by Khin Thiri Thet Mon, daughter of military chief and war criminal Min Aung Hlaing. The loan supported the company to build

towers for the military-owned mobile operator, Mytel.

Last month, JFM disclosed that as of March 2022, Yoma Bank held over \$10 million in a US dollar account for Telecom International Myanmar, the owner of Mytel.

Also in November, a release of records from the military owned Innwa Bank by Distributed Denial of Secrets exposed over 200 transactions

with Yoma Bank. Innwa Bank's parent company, Myanmar Economic Corporation, is sanctioned by the US, EU, UK and Canada.

Last month, the Australian bank ANZ announced it is exiting Myanmar after its transactions with Innwa Bank were exposed.

Yoma Bank is controlled by FMI, a holding company listed on the Yangon Stock





Exchange. It is led by Serge Pun and backed by major international investors.

Greenwood Capital, an affiliate of Singapore's sovereign wealth fund, GIC, owns 19.7%

its conglomerates and partners or responsibly divest, in accordance with their international human rights obligations.

IFC did not respond to questions from JFM regarding

National Unity Government, which is the legitimate government of Myanmar.

"IFC should be transparent over their divestment plans, human rights due diligence and any attempts they made to prevent Yoma Bank's business with the junta and its conglomerates.

"IFC acquired equity in Yoma Bank following the Myanmar military's 2017 campaign of genocide against the Rohingya, and should have done its due diligence at the time on the bank's support for the Myanmar military, its businesses and associates.

"The fact that IFC failed to prevent Yoma Bank's support for military businesses and Min Aung Hlaing's own family suggests serious human rights failings that requires investigation and rectification if IFC plans to continue operating in Myanmar.

"IFC also must also stop renting an office in Sule Square, a development on land leased from the US sanctioned Quarter Master General Office, and end any remaining business with the junta, its conglomerates and partners.

"We call on Yoma Bank's remaining international investors, Norfund and GIC, to ensure Yoma Bank cuts all ties with the Myanmar junta, its businesses and partners or responsibly divest, in accordance with their international human rights responsibilities."

of Yoma Bank. The Norwegian development finance institution, Norfund, owns 10.6%.

FMI is buying out IFC's shares through a transaction with Pun Holdings (HK) Limited, a holding company in Hong Kong.

JFM calls on Yoma Bank's remaining international investors, Norfund and GIC, to use their leverage to stop the bank's business with the military junta,

responsible disengagement from Yoma Bank.

JFM spokesperson Yadanar Maung said: "IFC's divestment from Yoma Bank is a positive step if it cannot prevent the bank from doing business with the Myanmar military, which is waging a war of terror against the people of Myanmar.

"We urge IFC to responsibly disengage from Yoma Bank, in consultation with the



# US BAN ON 'MADE IN HONG KONG' LABEL BREACHES TRADE RULES: WTO

**T**he United States is flouting international trade rules by labeling imports from Hong Kong as those from China, the World Trade Organization ruled Wednesday last week, an outcome that Washington rejects.

The WTO ruling addressed a decision under former president Donald Trump's administration after Beijing imposed a sweeping security law on the financial hub in 2020 to stamp out dissent.

Trump retaliated by removing special trading privileges for the city and US customs authorities later said goods produced there could no longer be stamped "Made in Hong Kong", sparking the complaint.

Hong Kong argued that such a move ignored its status as a separate member of the WTO, violating trade rules.

On Wednesday, a panel set up by the WTO's dispute settlement body said that the origin marking requirement was "not justified" under global trade rules.

It added that the US "has not demonstrated that the situation at issue constitutes an emergency in international relations".

The US's labeling requirement also gives Hong Kong products "less favorable" treatment than others, the panel said, adding that goods of other countries bear their own name rather than that of another WTO member.

The outcome drew a sharp rebuke from Washington Wednesday, with US Trade Representative spokesperson Adam Hodge saying the country "strongly rejects the flawed interpretation and conclusions" of the panel report.

The US was responding to China's "highly concerning actions", threatening US national security interests, Hodge said.

He added that the US does not plan to remove the marking requirement as a result of the latest report.



“Issues of national security cannot be reviewed in WTO dispute settlement, and the WTO has no authority to second-guess the ability of a WTO Member to respond to what it considers a threat,” Hodge said.

### **‘Discriminatory’**

But Hong Kong’s Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development praised the WTO ruling and called on Washington to reverse course.

“It was discriminatory and totally unreasonable and a serious breach of the WTO’s rules,” Algernon Yau told reporters, adding the change had “confused customers”.

In the past, Washington treated imports from Hong Kong differently to goods from the rest of China, in recognition of its semi-autonomous status.

But Trump vowed that this would change after Beijing imposed the security law to quell huge and often violent pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong.

His administration decided Hong Kong was “no longer sufficiently autonomous to justify differential treatment” from China.

Once an outspoken city with distinct political freedoms, Hong Kong is fast becoming a mirror image of the authoritarian mainland.

Many democracy activists who advocated for Hong Kong to have more autonomy from China have been jailed or have fled overseas.

Authorities have been treading a fine line by insisting Hong Kong is a separate customs territory in international trade, but politically it is an “inalienable part” of China.

In 2020, authorities arrested three people for selling face masks labeled “Not made in China”, saying they breached trade regulations on specifying a product’s place of origin.

AFP

Moscow. Photo: Anastasiya Romanova

# HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERN OVER SOUTH KOREAN POSCO'S SMALL MYANMAR HOLDINGS



Photo: POSCO

**P**osco International Corp. is one of the last foreign companies with a significant stake in Myanmar's oil and gas sector, despite the industry's ties to a military regime that has been widely condemned for violations of human rights, reports Bloomberg.

The South Korean company also remains a holding in nearly a dozen ESG-focused funds, including those run by BlackRock Inc., State Street Corp. and Samsung Asset Management Co., according to Bloomberg data on the latest available filings, the agency reports.

While Posco International derives just a small fraction of its global revenue from Myanmar, less than 4 per cent comes from its energy business overall, its inclusion in ESG funds reflects a dividing line between investors on the issue of human rights. It also demonstrates how ESG investors' reliance on ratings agencies and index funds can limit scrutiny of specific areas of concern.

Posco International, a subsidiary of the South Korean steelmaker Posco Holdings Inc., is the majority shareholder of one of Myanmar's largest natural gas fields, which generates as much as \$400 million for a military-controlled

state-owned enterprise every year, according the United Nations special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar Tom Andrews.

Andrews urged companies to make sure their operations don't directly benefit the junta in Myanmar, during a visit to South Korea in November. Myanmar state entities have been sanctioned by the US and the European Union in the wake of the 2021 coup.

Posco International has a 51 per cent stake in the Shwe Gas field, and notes their involvement helps the Myanmar people.

"The Shwe Project serves as a main gas source for the central-northern region of Myanmar and any issue with its operations may bring real and tangible disruptions to the daily life of people in the country," Posco International said in a statement, adding that the ongoing development had been planned since 2010. "Given such conditions, we believe that the best possible approach to protect people and local communities in Myanmar from harm is to ensure the reliable operation of the project."



Penrose Thitsa

## ADIDAS SHOE SUPPLIER STILL REFUSES TO RE-APPOINT DISMISSED WORKERS

**P**ou Chen Group Factory in Myanmar, which supplies shoes to German multinational corporation Adidas, had still refused to re-appoint 26 workers who were sacked for protesting about low pay. Pou Chen Corporation is a Taiwan-based holding company. The workers said that they were still negotiating with the factory for nearly two months and the issue had not been resolved. Regarding the issue, workers rights activists and the workers discussed with the Department of Labour, but no resolution had been reached, a worker said on 20 December. According to the worker rights activists, the factory officials said that they could not re-appoint the sacked workers and the workers were entitled to severance pay equal to three months' salary. The sacked workers did not want to receive the severance pay and they were hoping for re-employment. On 8 December, the Department of Labor said that the workers could file a lawsuit against the factory in a civil court. But, the activists (who are helping the workers) said that the workers did not file the lawsuit because the workers believed that they would not get a fair result in the court because of the unfair judicial system under the junta. Instead, they now are trying to directly negotiate with the factory officials.

In addition, the workers who have been dismissed from the factory have encountered difficulties to get another job because employers do not like those staged protests.

"I haven't had a job for almost two months now, so I need a job. Our negotiation with the employer is still not fruitful," said a worker who was fired. "We staged a peaceful protest because our wages were not sufficient, consequently we were sacked."

On 25 October, more than two thousand workers from the factory protested for their daily wage to be increased from Kyat 4,800 (US\$1.7) to Kyat 8,000 (US\$2.9). On 28 October, 26 workers, including leaders of the protest, were dismissed.

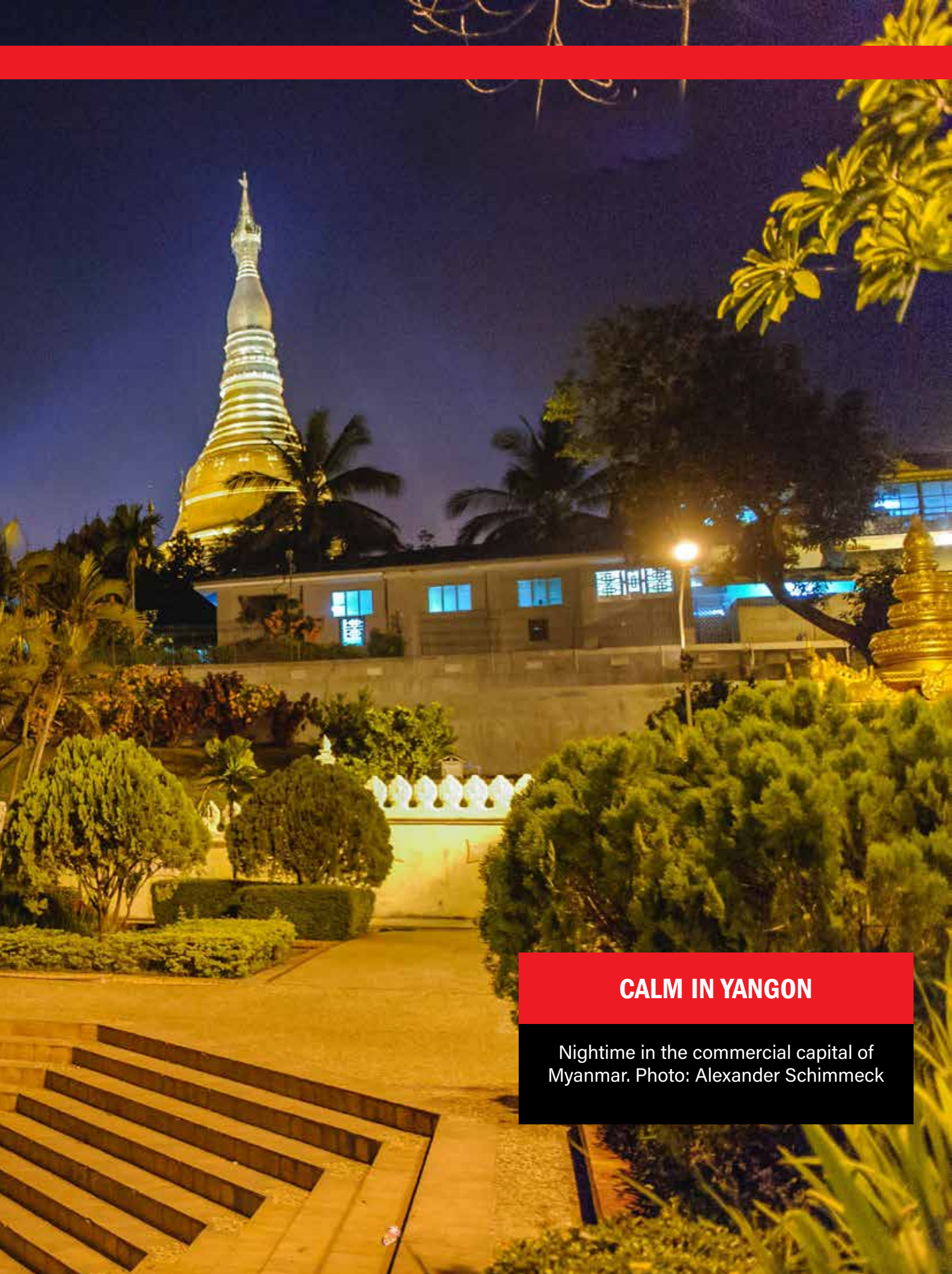
In 2018, the minimum daily wage was increased from Kyat 3,600 to Kyat 4,800.

Since the coup in February 2021 in Myanmar, employers have ignored workers' rights. Consequently, the majority of workers are vulnerable to exploitations.



Photo: Alexander  
Schimmeck





## CALM IN YANGON

Nighttime in the commercial capital of Myanmar. Photo: Alexander Schimmeck

## CLOSE CALL

# MYANMAR FOOTBALL TEAM LOST 0-1 TO MALAYSIA

Yangon hosted a regional football game last week with Myanmar fans able to watch their team.

Myanmar played Malaysia on 21 December in the ASEAN Football Federation (AFF) Mitsubishi Electric Cup 2022 Group B soccer match in Yangon.







**Unfortunately  
for the host side,  
they lost 0-1 to  
Malaysia.**





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