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TWO YEARS



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the second anniversary
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SAD ANNIVERSARY

The Myanmar people marked a sad anniversary on 1 February – two years after the Myanmar military illegally grabbed power.

Myanmar is in the midst of crisis - a crisis made worse by the junta's insistence on holding elections this year to try to legitimize their illegal rule. According to the military-written 2008 Constitution their state of emergency ran out on 31 January, necessitating a process to bring in an elected government. The junta is attempting to adhere to their own rules on what they refer to as "disciplined democracy".

Behind the smokescreen, the Myanmar generals are at war with their own people. While it is impossible to read the minds of Min Aung Hlaing and his fellow cohorts, they are likely shocked by the response of the people under what is referred to as the Spring Revolution. Analysts guess the generals expected the initial pushback by elements of the population would fairly quickly die down, as happened during earlier pro-democracy protests in 1962 and 1988. At the worst they would have to face a disgruntled but impotent population, with some unrest in the ethnic areas.

But they had not bargained on the aggressive response by Generation Z. Most had grown up during a period of hope, the opening of the door to a more democratic future under the military-instituted Thein Sein regime from 2011 that led to civilian elections in 2015 and 2020 that brought in the people's choice – Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for

Democracy-led administrations.

For many under the Spring Revolution a frightening yet inspiring vision unfolded in front of them. This was to fight or die in one final push for freedom. Most of the last six decades in Myanmar have been under some form of military rule. Even during Aung San Suu Kyi's brief stint, she had to often defer to the military, under the restrictions of the 2008 Constitution, even to the point where The Lady stood up for the Myanmar military at the Hague when they faced genocide charges in the wake of their 2017 attacks on the Muslim Rohingya community.

The Spring Revolution players - the National Unity Government (NUG), the People's Defence Forces, and the Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations - are all involved in a make-or-break push to get rid of military rule once and for all. Right now, there is no other option, no negotiated compromise on the horizon. The generals in Naypyitaw have to be crushed militarily or have to step down. Myanmar's military – contrary to their belief – have to buckle down under civilian rule. All this would appear to be a bridge too far at this stage.

As the crisis in Myanmar worsens, there are no indications that either side will back down. And the path forward is unclear as the junta plays games with an election and the NUG have yet to publicly lay out a combined Bamar-Ethnic democratic federal union future for the country that the majority of the main players will agree on. Two years in, yet these are early days for Myanmar's resistance.

EDITORIAL

mizzima WEEKLY

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MIZZIMA MAGAZINE

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COVER PHOTO OF MYANMAR PROTESTOR IN BANGKOK BY AFP



IN FOCUS



Taking refuge

A Rohingya refugee child shows her hand henna after receiving polio and rubella vaccines organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) at a temporary shelter in Ladong, Aceh province in Indonesia on January 27.

Photo: AFP



SILENT PROTEST CAMPAIGN IN YANGON ON 1 FEBRUARY 2023



Photo: EPA

YANGON RESTAURANT STAFF BEAT DEFENCE FORCE FIGHTER TO DEATH

Restaurant staff in Yangon apprehended two defence force fighters on a mission to bomb an administration office and beat one of them to death.

The two fighters from the Yangon Urban Guerrilla group were on their way to attack the South Okkalapa Township ward administration office which is located next to the Ngwe Taung Restaurant when staff from the restaurant apprehended them at about 1:00 p.m. on 21 January.

One of the men managed to escape, but the restaurant staff beat the other man, Thar Din, to death, according to local witnesses.

A local resident said: “Ngwe Taung Restaurant was the same restaurant that was serving snacks and drinks to the Military Council troops during the protests in early 2021. At that time, we said we must boycott this restaurant. Maybe people forgot. The restaurant owner U Than Win’s son is also a captain in the Military Council Army. Now the employees are arresting urban guerrilla soldiers, so we see that both the restaurant owner and the employees are on the same side.”

Several Yangon defence forces expressed their disgust at the incident and threatened retaliation.

The Dark Shadow urban guerrilla group accused the restaurant staff of collaborating with the “terrorist” Military Council and called on them to take responsibility for their actions. The group further stated that all “Military Council’s puppets and followers who cause trouble for our revolutionary soldiers and people will be treated as a trigger for the goal of independence and will be eliminated.”

The Shwe Pyi Thar Underground Guerrilla Force and the Blackfox Yangon Defense Force also expressed their dissatisfaction and warned that Ngwe Taung Restaurant will now have to repay a “blood debt.”

As the Military Council prepares for a general election by conducting a national population census revolutionary forces are opposing the 2023 election by targeting the junta’s offices, including township administration offices, and ward administration offices.

NUG PRIME MINISTER SEEKS JUSTICE FOR PRISONERS TORTURED IN PATHEIN PRISON

Mann Win Khaing Than, Prime Minister of the National Unity Government (NUG) pledged at the 82nd the National Unity Government cabinet meeting earlier this month that justice needs to be brought for prisoners allegedly tortured at Patheingyi Prison, the NUG reports.

He said justice needs to be brought for Ko Win Min Htet and eight other detainees tortured by the State Administration Council or SAC on 30 December 2022 for organising an in-prison strike against the military's use of capital punishment.

The prisoners were reportedly brutally tortured at 11pm on 5 January and seven were put

in solitary confinement.

Ko Win Min Htet was reported missing.

The NUG further expressed their concern over the case of large scale torture by 50 armed prison staff against prisoners on the 7 January 2023 resulting in thousands of injured prisoners and the death of Ko Wai Yan Phyo and the critical wounding of a further nine prisoners.

Stories continue to leak out of prisons across the country over the poor treatment and on occasions torture of political prisoners.

DRONE ATTACK IN SAGAING'S AYADAW KILLS TWO JUNTA SOLDIERS

Local resistance forces dropped bombs from a drone onto a junta checkpoint in Sagaing Region's Ayadaw Township, killing two junta soldiers and seriously injuring another four on 21 January.

The attack, on the checkpoint outside the junta Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Department's

Agricultural Mechanisation Office, took place at about midday on 12 January. A drone dropped two bombs onto the checkpoint, which caused soldiers to fire indiscriminately and randomly at vehicles and into the surrounding area.

A press officer for Danger Force LPDF, one of the defence forces involved in the attack said: "After the drone attack, ambulances arrived and

took three critically injured soldiers to Monywa Hospital.

The others [who were wounded] were taken to the Ayadaw Hospital. They are receiving medical treatment. According to our information, two of the three critically injured soldiers died in the hospital. We are carrying out numerous missions to fight the regime and, as a result, we require public assistance.

Soldiers at the bombed checkpoint had been extorting money from pedestrians, private cars and trucks.

The defence forces involved in the attack were: Danger Force LPDF, the Ngwe Dwin Revolution Force (NDRF) and the Middle Revolutionary Technical Front (MRTF).



TWO YEARS

Taking stock on the second anniversary of the Myanmar military coup

Sai Wansai

As the second anniversary of the Myanmar military coup on 1 February falls upon us, the military junta or State Administration Council (SAC) is determined to hold a national election in the second half of the year in the hope of achieving legitimacy, while the ethnic-democratic forces under the Spring Revolution will be looking to heighten collaboration in the face of a common enemy.



A Myanmar protestor outside the Myanmar Embassy in Bangkok. Photo: AFP



● A PDF fighter takes aim. Photo: Screenshot from video

Time flies. Two years have past since the generals wrested control from the democratically-elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy (NLD) party, briefly lined up to take up power by the November 2020 election. This, therefore, is an opportune time to take stock.

In this respect a virtual discussion held recently by the Stimson Center entitled “Outlook of Myanmar’s Resistance Movement in 2023”, including the participation of Christina Fink and Ye Myo Hein, is worth mentioning, particularly because the proposition dwells on how to improve the overall undertaking of the ethnic-democratic forces’ capability and solidarity to hammer out better coordination and cooperation amongst the resistance players.

After all, the success or failure of the Spring Revolution could well pivot on this crucial issue.

Christina Fink, an analyst of Myanmar issues, in analyzing the strengths and

weaknesses of the current revolutionary movement said that the National Unity Government (NUG) is more successful than the revolutionary forces of the past in raising funds for war victims. The revolutionary forces also can now undertake whatever they want without relying on external support.

Although the anti-dictatorship armed movement only took place in non-Bamar ethnic states in the past, this time around it has spread to the majority Bamar areas, and it can be argued that the Military Council is losing control in one region after another, forced to spread a reign of fear through the burning of villages and the massacre of villagers.

As Fink notes, the military now treats the civilian population as the enemy. This reflects the fact that the military really does not know how to deal with this.

Emergence of PDF forces

Fink pointed out the challenges as the Spring Revolution players attempt to work together and the resulting

changes in junta military tactics.

“One challenge is that the Military Council may increase airstrikes. Twenty years ago, they didn’t have the ability to do this. They have bought fighter jets from Russia and China. They also received military training. At the moment, when the Military Council’s ground forces are quite weak, they use more airstrikes. In addition, they know that there is almost no support for them among the people, so morale is also declining. But the army is making the best use of the air force’s capabilities. One of the things they are doing is launching airstrikes on the headquarters of the ethnic armed groups that provide military training to the People’s Defense Force (PDF) troops. In this way, they are trying to separate Bamar revolutionary groups from ethnic groups,” she said.

“Another challenge is that there is some authoritarianism among both civilian and ethnic leaders, including the National League for Democracy (NLD) party. Thus, it is very difficult to organize all groups under one leadership. Therefore, it would be more practical for all revolutionary groups to stand as a network connected to each other rather than as a single group. From here, we can gradually improve cooperation,” Fink notes.

She also considers it important for the Bamar leaders to understand the wishes of the ethnic groups in order to build trust with the ethnic leaders.

“The peace process started in 2010, but the NLD

was not allowed to participate. During the period when the NLD came to power, their performance was not good. They do not understand the needs of the ethnic groups and the relationship between ethnic groups. It is also because the NLD party did not choose the person whom the ethnic parties wanted to appoint as the state chief minister. Only ethnic members from the NLD party are appointed to these positions, so it remains under the control of the NLD. So, in the ethnic states, especially in Rakhine and Shan states, trust is destroyed. Therefore, in order to build trust with the ethnic groups both militarily and politically, as the forces active in the cause of democracy, we need to overcome not only past actions, but also the mistrust caused by recent actions,” Fink said.

She echoed the call of a US diplomat. As Scott Marciel, the former US ambassador to Myanmar, said in an interview, currently, the revolutionary forces need to develop a road map.

This is a refrain heard from a number of experts. Now, there is a need for a road map that is accepted by all, to ensure that the various armed resistance groups’ activities are coordinated and that they are moving toward the same goal of becoming a stable and peaceful country in the future.

Political analyst on Myanmar Ye Myo Hein of Woodrow Wilson Center suggested that only through trust-building, cooperation and coordination can the current political crisis be overcome.

“Right now, it is

Two years in and the key elements needed for success are emerging from the fog of war.

important to have cooperation between the revolutionary forces. According to the history of Myanmar, it is unrealistic to expect perfect unity. Therefore, as revolutionary forces, we must build a plan step-by-step.”

Ye Myo Hein also emphasized that the NUG in cooperation with the ethnic armed forces were able to set up five military regions across Myanmar, creating and establishing Central Command and Coordination Committees (C3C), Joint Command and Coordination (J2C) and the Alliance Relation Committee, in order to improve the relationship between the newly-established PDF groups and the existing ethnic armed groups.

Success with this is crucially important for the Spring Revolution.

Conditions needed to win

Two years in and the key elements needed for success are emerging from the fog of war.

According to “Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements,” by James DeFronzo, five conditions for a successful revolution are listed as follows: mass frustration resulting in local uprisings; dissident elites; powerful unifying motivations; a severe crisis paralyzing state administrative & coercive powers; and a permissive or tolerant world context.

The Burma or Myanmar situation actually meets all the conditions mentioned above for a successful revolution.

For example, there is mass frustration leading to local uprising because the military staged a coup and took away the people’s partial democratic



● The Spring Revolution has turned militant with the growth of resistance forces. Photo: AFP

rights that they enjoyed from 2011 to 2021, which is intolerably breaching their freedom and thus met with the countrywide resistance. There is more than enough dissident elites joining the revolution. The powerful unifying motivations are to uproot the military dictatorship, including all forms of autocratic rules, and unwavering aspirations to rebuild the country within the frame of federal democratic union.

A severe crisis paralyzing state administrative and coercive powers can be seen by countrywide anti-coup demonstrations and later armed resistance that transformed into nationwide civil war and the military inability to rule as more than 50 percent of the country's territories are under the control of ethnic-democratic forces.

According to Special Advisory Council for Myanmar (SAC-M), the junta can only claim to have stable control over 17 percent of the country, as its rule is being actively contested elsewhere.

A permissive or tolerant world context is also the prevailing atmosphere, because the neighbouring countries and even the ASEAN cannot do anything to defuse the ongoing civil war and seems unwilling to take the sides of the two conflict parties, the military junta and the ethnic-democratic forces, which can either be taken as being impotent, indifferent, or tolerant to the revolutionary movement.

In sum, it may be seen as favorable conditions for a successful revolution as outlined by James DeFronzo.

Moves to be undertaken

Nevertheless, even if the Spring Revolution may have grown with leaps and bounds in less than two years it is still quite far away from immediate victory for several reasons.

In general terms political unity and military cohesion still need to be solidify and important nuts and bolts have to be in place first.

In a practical sense political unity actually can only be achieved by resolving the constitutional crisis which has plagued the country from the outset since the country's independence from the British in 1948.

Problems from the past

To make a long story

short, the Bamar political class has never honoured the 1947 Panglong Agreement, which is the sole legal bond between the Bamar and the non-Bamar ethnic nationalities. They have rejected the non-Bamar ethnic nationalities' 1961 federal amendment proposal, popularly known as the Shan Federal Proposal, of the 1948 Union of Burma Constitution to make it more federal, as it was only federal in structure but unitary in essence. And there has been a steadfast rejection of ethnic equality, democracy, federalism and human rights by successive Bamar military leaders and the Bamar civilian political class.

Thus in order to win over the remaining EAOs, the

NUG and its ethnic allies may need to produce a federal democratic union constitution and not just the Federal Democracy Charter (FDC), which is just the guidelines and not a constitution. For the non-Bamar ethnic nationalities this has to be in place first or agreed upon first before committing themselves to war-time coalition-building. In other words, the transformation of the FDC to a federal democratic union constitution has to be speeded up, without delay, as no decisive move from the part of the remaining EAOs will happen if the constitution is not in place.

Sure, it is a step-by-step process. But constitutional drafting, which at least should

include agreed core principles, will have to be given priority so that a speedy political unity and expansion of a military alliance between the NUG and EAOs can gain momentum.

To sum up, the achievement of political unity of the Spring Revolution depends upon an agreeable constitution of all stakeholders, which in turn will pave the way for the further development of military coordination and cooperation, even if this does not lie under one command.

Sai Wansai
(SPECIAL REPORT)



Peace appears a long way off. Photo: AFP

TWO YEARS AFTER MYANMAR COUP, SITUATION DIRE SAYS UN HUMAN RIGHTS CHIEF

Two years after the Myanmar military launched a coup against the democratically-elected government, the country has sunk deeper than ever into crisis and has undergone a wholesale regression in human rights, UN Human Rights Chief Volker Türk said Friday.

“By nearly every feasible measurement, and in every area of human rights – economic, social and cultural, as much as civil and political – Myanmar has profoundly regressed,” he said, reflecting on the spiralling crisis since the attempted coup of 1 February 2021, according to a press release issued by his office.

“Despite clear legal obligations for the military to protect civilians in the conduct of hostilities, there has been consistent disregard for the related rules of international law. Far from being spared, civilians have been the actual targets of attacks – victims of targeted and indiscriminate artillery barrages and air strikes, extrajudicial executions, the use of torture, and the burning of whole villages.”

“At this somber time, I want to acknowledge the courage of all those whose lives have been lost in the struggle for freedom and dignity in Myanmar, and the continuing

pain and suffering of their families and loved ones.”

According to credible sources at least 2,890 people have died at the hands of the military and others working with them, of whom at least

others, including the bulk of the country’s Rohingya Muslim population, who fled sustained persecution and attacks over the past decades.

Credible information indicates that over 34,000



Volker Türk. Photo: EPA

767 were initially taken into custody. This is almost certainly an underestimation of the number of civilians killed as a result of military action. A staggering further 1.2 million people have been internally displaced, and over 70,000 have left the country – joining over one million

civilian structures, including homes, clinics, schools and places of worship, have been burned over the past two years. Myanmar’s economy has collapsed with nearly half of the population now living below the poverty line.

Since the coup was

launched, the military has imprisoned the democratically elected leadership of the country and, in subsequent months, detained over 16,000 others – most of whom face specious charges in military-controlled courts, in flagrant breach of due process and fair trial rights, linked to their refusal to accept the military's actions.

“There must be a way out of this catastrophic



situation, which sees only deepening human suffering and rights violations on a daily basis,” said Türk. “Regional leaders, who engaged the military leadership through ASEAN, agreed a Five-Point Consensus that Myanmar's generals have treated with disdain.”

“Two of the critical conditions that were agreed - to cease all violence and to allow humanitarian access - have not been met. In fact, we have seen the opposite. Violence has spiralled out of control and humanitarian access has been severely restricted.”

The High Commissioner pointed to other measures that would be crucial to a political foundation for resolving the crisis: the release of all political prisoners, including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and President U Win Myint, as called for by the UN Security Council; inclusive dialogue with all parties -- involving both the ASEAN Chair and the UN Special Envoy; and allowing the UN Human Rights Office meaningful access to the country to monitor the situation independently and impartially.

“Restoring respect for human rights is a key to ending this crisis, to end this situation where Myanmar's generals are trying to prop up through brute force a decades-old system in which they answer to no-one but themselves,” said Türk.

“Those responsible for the daily attacks against civilians and the human rights violations must be held accountable. The military needs to be brought under real, effective civilian oversight. This will be difficult to achieve, but these elements are critical to restoring any semblance of democratic rule, security and stability to the country.”

In its first year of independence, Myanmar was among

the first Member States of the United Nations to vote in favour of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Sadly, as we mark 75 years since the Declaration's adoption, the military is actively engaged in violating its fundamental values, principles and rights enshrined in it,” the High Commissioner said.

“How can a military that purports to defend the country have brought their own people – from all parts of Myanmar's rich and diverse society – to such a point of desperation?”

“Last month, the Security Council united to adopt a path-breaking resolution that demanded an immediate end to the violence, among other urgent steps. Now it is time for the world to come together to take common actions to stop the killing, protect the people of Myanmar, and ensure respect for their universal human rights.”

NUG ACTING PRESIDENT: ARMED STRUGGLE NECESSARY TO OVERTHROW JUNTA



The Acting President of Myanmar's exiled National Unity Government (NUG), Duwa Lashi La, has said that the use of armed struggle is necessary to overthrow the Myanmar junta.

Speaking at an NUG internal meeting on 24 January, he said that previously many political leaders had rejected the idea of an armed revolution, but that their experiences had now led them to realise that an armed revolution is necessary.

"I think that the Spring Revolution has bought good things out of bad things. There were many political leaders who rejected armed struggle in the past, who now know through experience that Myanmar must focus on an armed struggle to overthrow the dictatorship", said Duwa Lashi La.

"Despite this, our ultimate goal is to resolve political issues via political dialogues. Unfortunately, the actions of the Burmese military leaders have forced the people to take up arms", he continued.

"I would like to say clearly that we must complete the work we started", he concluded.

Following the Myanmar military's coup on 1 February 2021. The NUG responded by forming its armed groups, the people's defence forces (PDFs) on 5 May 2021.

According to a June 2021 NUG statement, there are five regional PDF commands, Northern, Southern, Central, Eastern, and Western commands, each of which consists of at least three brigades each made up of five battalions, which in turn are divided into four companies.

There are also other armed groups fighting the junta, but not under the command of the NUG. These groups are often referred to as local defence forces (LDFs).

BURMESE WOMEN REFUGEES CALL ON INDIA TO REVERSE REFUGEE RULE CHANGES



A group of Burmese women refugees in India has called on the Indian Government to reverse changes it has made to the way it issues refugees with residential permits, long-term visas and exit permits.

The requests were made in a letter sent by the Burmese Refugee Women Delhi organisation to the Indian Minister for External Affairs, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, on 10 January 2023.

The Burmese Refugee Women Delhi was formed in India and has been working with communities to alleviate the suffering of the refugee community.

The letter thanked India for the way it has treated Myanmar refugees.

It said: “We are aware that India is not a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention 1951, but despite this India has welcomed refugees. We are grateful that we have been able to stay in your country and take refuge; it has meant that we are safe from the brutalities being committed by the military junta that has taken over our country once again forcing us to leave our homes, families and our country.”

But then, the letter goes on to talk about new problems the refugees in India face which the

women say “has made it increasingly difficult for us to survive.”

Previously, India issued Burmese refugees a residential permit or a long-term visa on the basis of their UNHCR card.

It allowed the refugees to get an Aadhaar number, a 12-digit unique identifying number issued to Indian residents and foreigners who have been in India for over 182 days. It is considered proof of residence in India, but not citizenship. Without an Aadhaar number refugees cannot open bank accounts, apply for jobs, get vehicle licenses or the necessary identity cards.

According to the letter the Indian government has also stopped issuing exit permits to refugees, even when they get permission to settle in a third country. This has caused an especially large problem for those wanting to leave for a third country that has accepted them because it means they cannot leave India to move to their new homes.

The Burmese Refugee Women Delhi also attached the names of 38 Burmese refugees in India who cannot leave the country, despite being offered refuge in Australia, Canada and USA, because they do not have an exit permit.

MYANMAR JUNTA PUSHES FORWARD WITH ILLEGITIMATE ELECTION

Coming up to the second anniversary of the coup with the junta-imposed state of emergency about to be lifted the junta is increasingly working on the national elections it has planned for Myanmar.

Civil Society Organisation Progressive Voice says the elections will be a sham and they must not be misinterpreted as a reason or, even worse, an excuse for countries to normalise relationships with the junta. It believes that the international community must follow the lead of the Spring Revolution in establishing a federal democratic Myanmar.

According to Progressive Voice, the State Administration Council will repackage itself as an interim civilian body — a 'transition council'

— to smooth a fake democratic transition. But, whatever it does or call itself will not cover-up the junta's illegitimacy.

Three facts stand: the people of Myanmar already voiced their wishes in the 2020 elections; the military has absolutely no legal authority or capability to hold any election; and any election under current circumstances is bound to ignore the Myanmar people's political will and aspirations and deprive the country of democratic rule.

Progressive Voice believes that the junta's illegal election will not resolve the worsening crisis, but rather add more violence and suffering to an already devastating situation.

As stated by the Strategic Initiative Forum — a coalition of General Strike Committee, ethnic



Members of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) talk to media during the press conference at the party in Yangon, Myanmar, 11 November 2020. Photo: EPA

revolutionary organizations (EROs) along with other civil society organizations set up to establish a federal democratic union — “The ‘election’ will most certainly not bring any stability, peace, justice or equality to Myanmar society.”

But, the junta will take any steps to clutch at claims to legitimacy, so the fraudulent elections are most likely to take place. Only a handful of people who support or align with the military will cast a ballot, and others in areas under the junta’s control will be coerced into doing so under threat of violence.

Votes will be cast in the military’s shrinking domains and in limited areas of their allied ethnic militias, and under extremely limited conditions — simply just so the junta can parade “evidence” of a vote.

Every precautionary measure is being taken to ensure the vote happens. Local administrations in the junta’s control areas are fielding household registration and lists of voters are being compiled, while candidates’ phone numbers have been recorded.

The junta has now closed down the office responsible for issuing and renewing passports to lock people inside the country. Meanwhile, a war rages on in Karen State, Sagaing Region and elsewhere in an attempt to bludgeon local resistance into submission.

The junta is crossing its fingers that, once the votes appear in its favor, international pressure will be eased and the resistance movement will be fractured. Playing the same tune as previous military dictators, the junta outlawed its democratic opposition the National League for Democracy, while offering empty promises for constitutional changes to non-Bamar ethnic nationalities.

This time, however, standing alongside the people’s movement, ethnic political parties and the EROs are not playing along with the junta’s game. The Karen National Union has already categorically opposed the bogus vote, as have the Chin National Organisation, the Kachin Independence Organization and the Palaung State Liberation Front. The Arakan League for Democracy, the Karenni National Progressive Party, the Shan National League for Democracy and the Ta’ang National Liberation Army refused to participate

in the fraudulent process.

People across regions have taken to the streets to oppose the junta’s illegal election, and revolutionary forces are launching multiple attacks on election personnel. The Tamu Township Election Commission in Sagaing Region was torched, while several blasts sabotaged survey infrastructure in Yangon, Mandalay, Magwe and Sagaing Regions. Youth in Yangon have also handed out leaflets to “fight against illegitimate and sham elections of fascist military.”

All resistance actions are not simply to denounce the planned illegal election. It is also to remind the world that the Myanmar people had already given their votes in the 2020 elections, which was blatantly disrespected by the military.

To the international community, feigning elections may seem like a convenient pretext to establish relative stability in the region and return to business-as-usual. But it must not fall into this trap. The resistance and defiance of the Myanmar people in the past 24 months should already be enough to convince the world that this is an incorrect, unethical approach to take. If not, the protest from the Mandalay Strike Committee should do the trick: “Let’s oppose the election, lest we fall under the boots of the military again.”

Global and regional responses must be guided by the determination and calls of the Myanmar people, not deceived by the junta’s ploy and a false sense of regional stability. ASEAN and the wider international community must stand in solidarity with the people’s movement: strongly object and denounce the junta’s sham election; and provide political and practical support to the Spring Revolution. As the Indonesian Investment Minister has aptly put: “Let someone else who is qualified manage this country.”

13,000 VILLAGERS FLEE JUNTA'S SAGAING CLEARANCE OPERATIONS IN ONE DAY

Over 13,000 villagers from 13 villages on the Patheingyi to Monywa Highway in Sagaing Region fled their homes on 24 January because of junta clearance operations.

The villages are in the eastern part of Yinmarbin Township and the northern part of Salingyi Township.

“On 24 January at 1:00 p.m., a column of 100 Military Council soldiers marched from Shwe Taung Oo Hill, also known as Dalan [Informant] Hill into Yinmarbin Township, and carried out clearance operations in the villages”, said someone who leads public strikes in Yinmarbin and Salingyi.

The junta soldiers also set fire to the villages after they cleared them, according to locals. Mizzima is currently trying to find out more.

The 13 villages where junta clearances caused the villagers to flee were: Kyaysaekya,

Hlekone, Htantawgyi, Silaungchaung, Yaykyipin, Ywarthit, Ywarhaung, Mya Yeik and Mya Sein villages in Yinmarbin Township and Ywarthar, Donetaw, Gonetaw and Kankone villages in Salingyi Township.

According to the Institute for Strategy and Policy-Myanmar (ISP-Myanmar), the junta has burned down 43,216 buildings and houses in the Sagaing region since the February 2021 coup until 24 January 2023 and the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) in Myanmar as of December 2022 had reached at least 1,912,769 due to armed conflict following the coup.



Destroyed village in Sagaing.
Photo: Supplied

THAI REGISTRATION PROCESS FOR MYANMAR MIGRANT WORKERS EXTENDED



Myanmar migrants queue up at a registration centre in Thailand. Photo: EPA

The deadline for illegal Myanmar workers in Thailand to apply for a Certificate of Identity (CI) that legitimises them in Thailand has been extended until 15 May 2023, according to Thai media outlets.

The CI is intended for migrants who do not have a Burmese ID card or a household registration document. A CI will allow migrants to freely travel in order to obtain necessary documents and, eventually, apply for a Burmese passport in Thailand.

“The Thai government issues the CI. There are no regulations. It is Thai government policy to carry out the process whenever they want. Many migrants are interested now. Normally, the deadline is 13 February, but because so many people are doing it now, they [the Thai government] have extended extended the [application] time”, said a Myanmar migrant worker.

“Migrants with a pink card and a household registration document don’t necessarily need to

apply for the CI. They can also directly apply for a Burmese Passport and a work permit [also known as the blue book]. They can apply at the Myanmar embassy in Bangkok”, he added

After the coup, many people went abroad due to the scarcity of job opportunities in Myanmar. Of those, many went to work in Thailand illegally. If those workers apply for a CI they will then have legal Thai documentation.

Currently, many Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand are without the correct documentation as they have been unable to renew their work permits because they are waiting for a new Myanmar passport.

It is estimated there are more than four million Myanmar workers in Thailand, of whom over two million have been issued temporary passports by the Myanmar government while about 800,000 have pink card identity documents from the Thai government.

CRIMINAL COMPLAINT AGAINST MYANMAR JUNTA LAUNCHED IN GERMANY

Human rights organisation Fortify Rights and 16 individual complainants from Myanmar filed a criminal complaint with the Federal Public Prosecutor General of Germany under the principle of universal jurisdiction against senior Myanmar military generals and others for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity on 24 January.

The 215-page complaint and more than 1,000 pages of annexes provide evidence to assist the Office of the Federal Prosecutor to investigate and prosecute those responsible for the Rohingya genocide as well as atrocity crimes related to the military junta's 1 February 2021 coup d'état.

Though it is nearly the second anniversary of the coup and over five years since the Myanmar military's most egregious attacks on the Rohingya people in August 2017 no individuals responsible for or crimes related to both have yet to be held accountable.

"An ethnically diverse and united front of survivors from throughout Myanmar are bringing this case to seek justice and accountability," said Matthew Smith, Chief Executive Officer and co-founder at Fortify Rights. "Despite international attention and several ongoing accountability initiatives, the Myanmar military still enjoys complete impunity, and that

must end. These crimes cannot go unpunished. Germany's universal jurisdiction law is a global model for combatting impunity for the worst crimes and providing access to justice for survivors of atrocities no matter where the crimes occur or where the survivors are located.

Universal jurisdiction is a legal principle enabling a state to prosecute individuals responsible for mass atrocity crimes—genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes—regardless of where the crimes occurred or the nationality of the perpetrator or victims. Universal jurisdiction is typically reserved for "international crimes," which are so severe that they represent offenses against the entire international community.

The criminal complaint was filed on January 20, 2023. Fortify Rights is represented by Covington & Burling LLP, which has offices in Germany. The complaint is on file with the German authorities and is not publicly available.

Approximately half of the 16 individual complainants survived the Rohingya genocide and Myanmar military-led "clearance operations" in Rakhine State in 2016 and 2017, and approximately half survived post-coup atrocities in states and regions throughout the country in 2021 and 2022.

The complainants include six women and ten men who represent several ethnicities in Myanmar, including Arakanese (Rakhine), Burman, Chin, Karen, Karenni, Mon, and Rohingya. They include students, scholars, farmers, human rights defenders,



businesspersons, former village heads, and homemakers. All the complainants survived or witnessed crimes in Myanmar, and many have since fled the country. At the time of writing, the complainants are located in several countries, including Myanmar, Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Germany, and the U.S.

Two of the complainants—"M.K." (not their real initials) and Nickey

Diamond—are presently situated in Germany and have retained German legal counsel for matters related to the complaint announced today. They both experienced and witnessed crimes in Myanmar in 2017 and 2021, respectively.

In the complaint, Fortify Rights and the complainants request that the German Prosecutor open an investigation into specific military officials and others who,

according to evidence, are liable for mass atrocity crimes. The complaint also requests that the German authorities open a "structural investigation" into the situation in Myanmar, which would uncover numerous other crimes in various locations and affecting other ethnic groups not otherwise covered by the complaint.

In addition to the complainants' testimonies to the Prosecutor General, the



Children take shelter from the bombing. Photo: Supplied

complaint draws on more than 1,000 interviews with survivors of international crimes in Myanmar conducted by Fortify Rights since 2013 as well as leaked documents and information provided by Myanmar military and police deserters and others that shed light on the military's operations, crimes, and command structures.

According to Fortify Rights, an investigation and subsequent prosecution of these crimes under German law would serve to punish those who have committed the gravest of crimes, prevent future crimes by perpetrators in Myanmar, and signal to other would-be perpetrators in Myanmar and elsewhere that accountability for atrocity crimes cannot be avoided.

As part of this complaint, several Myanmar civil society organizations agreed to cooperate with the German authorities, including the Chin Human Rights Organization, the Karen Human Rights Group, the Karenni Human Rights Group, the Human Rights Foundation of Monland, the Burmese Rohingya Organization U.K, and an organized network of Myanmar lawyers working throughout the country.

Similarly, as part of this complaint, prominent human rights defenders from Myanmar and several senior U.N. officials, diplomats, and others have agreed to be resource persons for the German prosecutor in this case. They include U.N. Special Rapporteur Tom Andrews; former U.N. special rapporteurs Tomas Quintana

and Yanghee Lee; former Dutch Ambassador Laetitia van den Assum; former Thai Ambassador Kobsak Chutikul; members of the U.N. Fact-Finding Mission Marzuki Darusman and Chris Sidoti; President of Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Kerry Kennedy; and others.

An investigation and subsequent prosecutions in Germany of the atrocity crimes detailed in the complaint would not duplicate other international accountability efforts underway but would only add to the mounting evidence about the Myanmar military's crimes, said Fortify Rights. Other efforts include an investigation by the International Criminal Court (ICC), a genocide case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and a universal jurisdiction case in Argentina for crimes related to the Rohingya genocide.

The German authorities are well-placed to fill present gaps left by the currently pending accountability mechanisms, said Fortify Rights.

In 2019, Fortify Rights began exploring international legal options for survivors in Myanmar to pursue criminal prosecutions under universal jurisdiction. The organization researched and analyzed the feasibility of 16 jurisdictions in Europe, Africa, and South America that provide access to justice for atrocity crimes committed outside their national borders, ultimately deciding to file the complaint in Germany.

Under German law, the Prosecutor has the ultimate

discretion to bring a case under universal jurisdiction. The Prosecutor should do so in particular when important witnesses to atrocities are present in Germany, which is the case regarding the complaint announced today.

German prosecutors are currently conducting more than 100 investigations into international crimes related to other countries and contexts. The Prosecutor General has also undertaken numerous structural investigations into atrocity crimes, which have led to several trials. German courts have heard cases dealing with torture in Syrian prisons as well as crimes by members of Da'esh, including against the Yazidi community.

In January last year, a German court jailed a former Syrian colonel for life for overseeing the murder of 27 people and the torture of 4,000 others at a Damascus detention centre a decade ago.

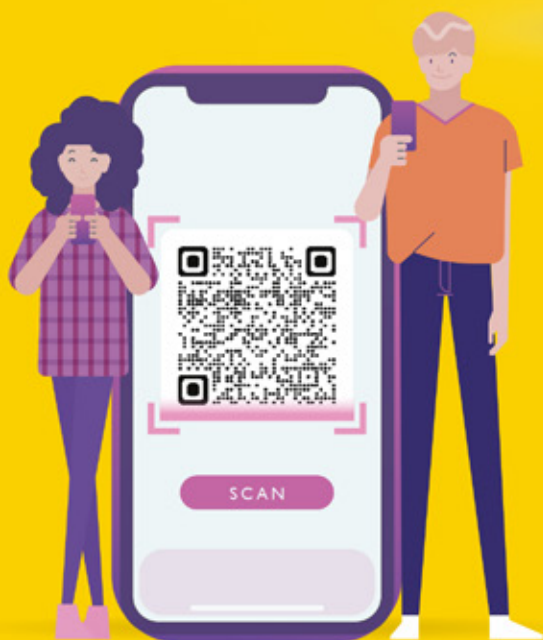
More recently, the federal prosecutor's office in Karlsruhe opened an investigation into suspected war crimes by Russian troops following the invasion of Ukraine.

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CHINA SAYS COVID DEATHS DOWN BY NEARLY 80 PERCENT



Chinese travellers arrive at the airport in Beijing. Photo: EPA

The number of daily Covid-19 deaths in China has fallen by nearly 80 percent since the start of January, authorities have said, in a sign that the country's unprecedented infection surge may have started to abate.

A wave of virus cases has washed over the world's most populous nation since Beijing abruptly ended its zero-Covid policy in December 2022.

Beijing's figures are believed to only represent a fraction of the true toll, given China's narrow definition of a Covid death and official estimates that swathes of the population have been infected.

The CDC last week said nearly 13,000 people had died from Covid-related illnesses between January 13 and 19, adding to a previous announcement that around 60,000 people had succumbed to the virus in hospitals in just over a month.

But recent local government announcements and media reports have indicated that the

wave may have started to recede since peaking in late December and early January when hospitals and crematoriums were packed.

There were 896 deaths attributable to the virus in hospitals on Monday, a decline of 79 percent from January 4, China's Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said in a statement on Wednesday.

Severe cases in hospitals also dwindled to 36,000 by Monday, representing a 72 percent drop from a high of 128,000 on January 5, the CDC said.

The announcement came during China's biggest public holiday, the Lunar New Year, with authorities previously warning that the period of mass travel and social gatherings may trigger a renewed spike in infections.

As of Tuesday last week, around 664 million trips had been taken nationwide during the Lunar New Year travel period, state broadcaster CCTV reported, citing official figures.

AFP

DOZENS OF COVID PROTESTERS STILL BEHIND BARS IN CHINA: HRW

Dozens of demonstrators are still detained in China after taking part in wide-spread protests against the government last year, Human Rights Watch said Thursday, adding that the whereabouts of some remain unknown.

Protesters gathered in cities across the country in November to call for an end to China's hardline zero-Covid restrictions, in some cases also demanding greater political freedoms.

The ruling Communist Party abolished its virus containment strategy the following month, after which a wave of infections caused a spike in hospitalisations and deaths.

Campaigners and media outlets have reported in recent weeks that Chinese authorities have quietly detained an unknown number of protesters, including university students and journalists.

On Thursday, Human Rights Watch urged Beijing to "immediately release and drop all charges against everyone detained for participating in the 'white paper' protests", referencing the blank sheets held in defiance of state censorship.

"Young people in China are paying a heavy price for daring to speak out for freedom and human rights," said Yaqiu Wang, senior China researcher at the US-based NGO.

"Governments and international institutions around the world should show support and call on the Chinese authorities to release them



Chinese protesters in December 2022 in Beijing. Photo: AFP

immediately."

Swift crackdown

China's government and state media apparatus have made scant acknowledgement of the protests -- some of which occurred in major cities such as Beijing and Shanghai -- and have not directly mentioned the detentions.

But an oversight body for domestic law enforcement said in November that it would "crack down on illegal criminal acts that disrupt social order" in a possible warning to demonstrators.

Security services appeared to move swiftly in the wake of the unrest, with participants' friends and relatives confirming to AFP that several arrests subsequently took place.

One mother said her child -- an LGBT activist -- was held for 30 days before being released on bail.

The whereabouts and legal status of several other demonstrators remain a

mystery, Human Rights Watch said.

They include 26-year-old Cao Zhixin, an editor at a publishing house who was taken into police custody after attending a vigil for the victims of a deadly fire in Xinjiang province, which became a trigger for unrest.

In a pre-recorded video uploaded to social media after her detention, Cao said that several of her friends had also been detained and could not be contacted.

"Don't let us vanish from this world. Don't let us get taken away or convicted of a crime arbitrarily," she said.

The campaign group Chinese Human Rights Defenders said last week that the number of known detentions "probably indicate the tip of the iceberg", warning that the demonstrators "are at high risk of enforced disappearance and torture".

AFP

IS THE MYANMAR JUNTA FALLING OUT OF FAVOUR WITH CHINA?

After the February 2021 coup d'état in Myanmar, China surreptitiously stepped up its engagement with Myanmar's junta. While falsely professing support for international calls for a return to democracy, Beijing has armed the junta and clandestinely exported small arms and munitions, and CH-3 drones to the Tatmadaw or Myanmar military.

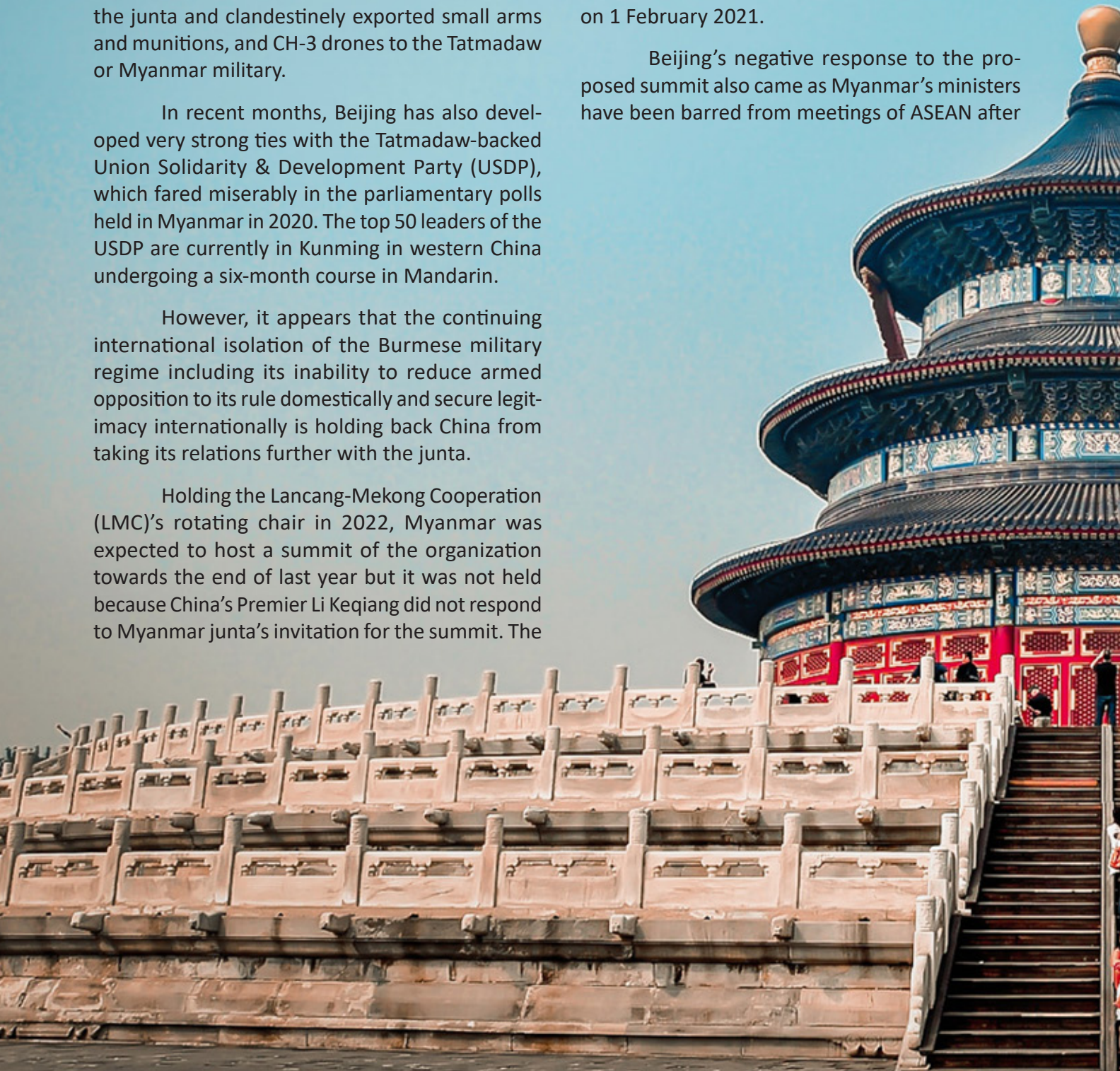
In recent months, Beijing has also developed very strong ties with the Tatmadaw-backed Union Solidarity & Development Party (USDP), which fared miserably in the parliamentary polls held in Myanmar in 2020. The top 50 leaders of the USDP are currently in Kunming in western China undergoing a six-month course in Mandarin.

However, it appears that the continuing international isolation of the Burmese military regime including its inability to reduce armed opposition to its rule domestically and secure legitimacy internationally is holding back China from taking its relations further with the junta.

Holding the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC)'s rotating chair in 2022, Myanmar was expected to host a summit of the organization towards the end of last year but it was not held because China's Premier Li Keqiang did not respond to Myanmar junta's invitation for the summit. The

development neutralized the chance of a meeting between Army Chief Min Aung Hlaing (MAH) with a senior Chinese official in person, given the fact that MAH has not yet been able to meet a senior Chinese leader or official since the coup on 1 February 2021.

Beijing's negative response to the proposed summit also came as Myanmar's ministers have been barred from meetings of ASEAN after



the Myanmar junta failed to make progress in implementing the five-point peace plan drawn up by ASEAN in April 2021.

China appeared to signal that it would not prioritize its relationship with the Myanmar military regime above its relationship with other ASEAN countries.

Beijing's concerns may not just be diplomatic with Myanmar as the growing conflict in the country is undermining the investment environment, with Chinese projects facing growing risks as the anti-coup conflicts escalate across the country. The Myanmar people view China as a supporter of the military junta in their country and there have been many attacks on Chinese

properties and investments in Myanmar since the coup in 2021. Out of 7,800 clashes recorded nationwide since the coup in 2021, 300 have taken place in areas where major Chinese project sites are located, with 100 in 19 townships where China's oil and natural gas pipeline projects are located.

What could further upset Beijing's plans is the growing resistance by pro-democracy resistance forces, known as People's Defence Forces (PDFs), in Myanmar, creating further destabilization. The PDFs, in conjunction with ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), have been carrying out attacks on Tatmadaw personnel and facilities and a large number of junta soldiers and officers have been killed in such attacks. More than 250 of Myanmar's 330 townships have witnessed attacks on police and military by PDFs and EAOs.

All these developments raise questions as to whether the Myanmar junta might be gradually falling out of favour with Beijing.

This commentary is provided by a writer who prefers to remain anonymous.

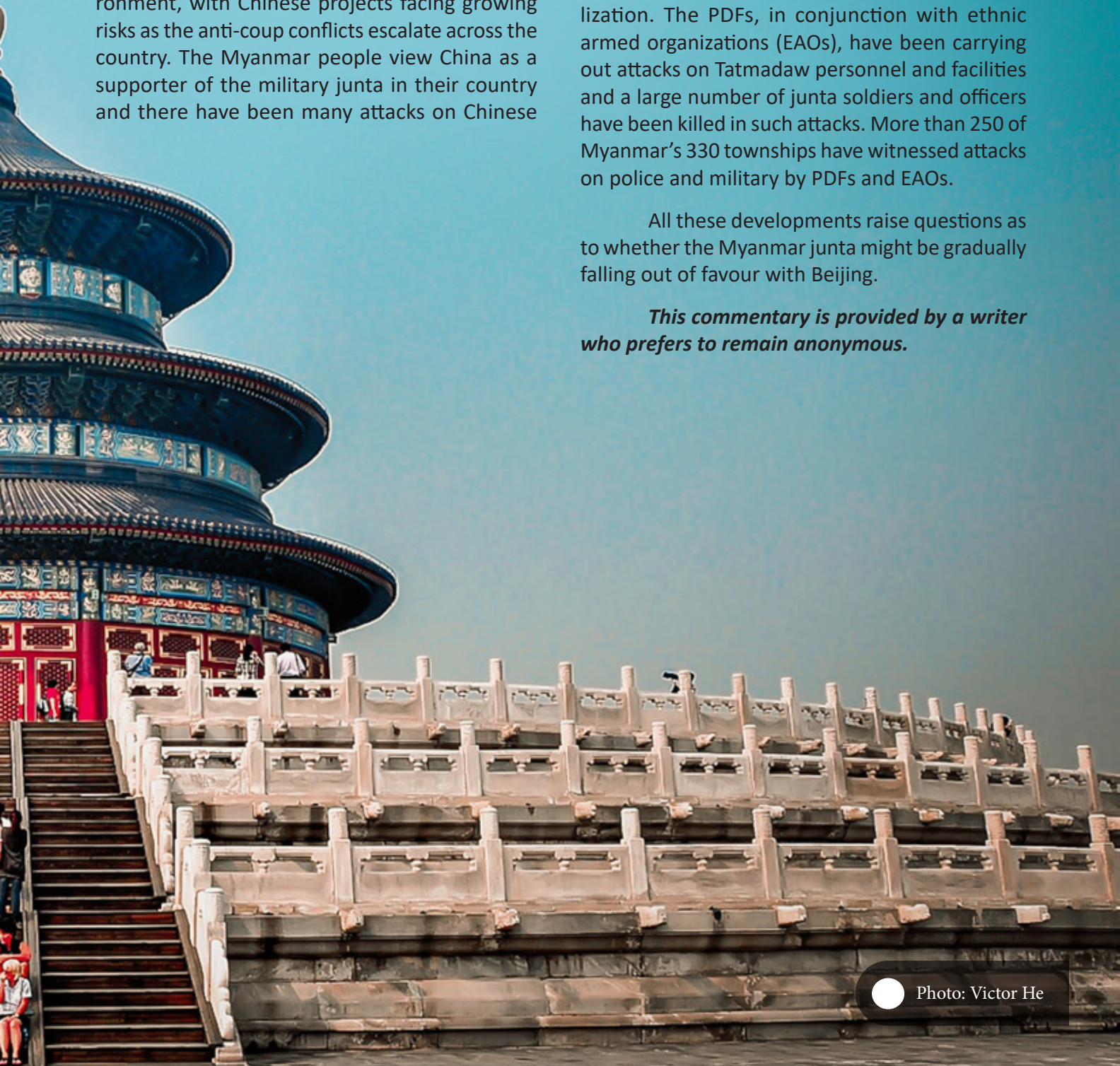


Photo: Victor He

HUMAN RIGHTS MUST BE DEFENDED IN THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM: UN CHIEF

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has warned that the fight against terrorism will never succeed if we perpetuate the “denial and destruction” of human rights.

Speaking at the ninth meeting of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact in New York, he urged for all counter-terrorism policies and initiatives to be “firmly grounded” within their defence.

“Combatting terror must never be used as an excuse for trampling on people’s human

rights,” he said.

“When we protect human rights, we are in fact tackling many of the root causes of terrorism”.

The UN chief said that the Compact’s work was now “more important than ever”.

“Terrorism remains a global scourge — an affront to humanity on every level,” he added.

Terrorism in vacuums

Mr. Guterres pointed out the need to avoid vacuums, where

terrorism can breed.

He described these as vacuums of security, of political and civic institutions, of opportunity and hope, and respect for human rights, equality and dignity, especially for minorities and women and girls.

Holistic approach

The UN chief called for the proposed New Agenda for Peace to focus on “a holistic and comprehensive approach” to building “societies in which terror has no home”.



UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres visits an exhibition on the Mumbai attacks.
Photo: UN News

This includes prevention to address the economic and social conditions that can lead to terrorism in the first place; inclusion, to ensure that counter-terrorism strategies reflect a wide array of voices, communities and constituencies, and “through placing human rights and the rule of law at the core of all counter-terrorism policies”.

Response grounded in data

Mr. Guterres also highlighted the problem of regulating technology “where terror can spread at the touch of a button”.

Tackling the threat requires an “equally nimble and adaptive response, grounded in data and evidence”.

But he warned that “when it comes to the collection, analysis and strategic use of data, we are several steps behind”.

He called for data-driven tools and strategies to be placed “at the heart of our approach to building peace and security — including counter-terrorism efforts”.

Mr. Guterres’ words come ahead of the upcoming review of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in June.

Since its launch in 2018, this Compact has grown to 45 member and observer entities and has also started meaningful engagement with civil society and private sector partners.

Evidence-based operations: Voronkov

The head of the UN Counter-Terrorism Office, Vladimir Voronkov, who also chairs the Counter-Terrorism Compact Coordination Committee said that “now more than ever, evidence-based and data-centric approaches are paramount to confront the terrorist threat with an effective response.”

He added that such responses, “are also a precondition for devising and implementing effective, sustainable and human rights-compliant efforts, aimed at preventing and countering this threat.”

Courtesy of UN News





Photo: Ajay Karpur

MON STATE

Myanmar junta soldiers extorting and stealing in southeastern Myanmar. Extortion by junta personnel from civilians is an ongoing threat to stability in Southeastern Burma, according to civil society organisation, the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM). On the evening of 16 January, local villagers reported that soldiers from the junta's Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) 285 led by Captain Khin Zaw killed a 33-year-old villager from Shin Pone village, in Tanintharyi's Palaw Township, Myeik District and stole his belongings worth about three million kyats when they entered the village. Local villagers reported that after soldiers from junta Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) 285 led by Captain Khin Zaw entered Shin Pone Village, in Tanintharyi's Palaw Township on the evening of 16 January, they killed a 33-year-old villager and stole his belongings worth about three million kyats. "They raided and searched at least ten suspected houses at around 7:00 p.m. Junta forces led by Cap. Khin Zaw raided the house of Ko Lin Lin Wai. They killed him and took a gold chain and property worth 30 lakh. He was a fisherman, originally from Shap Pone Ko", said a local. According to villagers about 40 soldiers from LIB 285 are now stationed at Shap Pone Village School. "The junta arrested five villagers. Two were from this village, and another three men were from other nearby areas. They were arrested as porters. They [the junta] also confiscated two four wheels drive trucks with their drivers," said a Shin Pone villager who witnessed these incidents reported.

KAREN STATE

Four junta offices simultaneously attacked in Karen State. Four junta government offices in the centre of Payathonzu Town in Karen State were simultaneously raided at around 10:00 p.m. on 23 January. The raids were carried out by the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and allied defence forces. The offices they attacked were: Military Intelligence (also known as Sa Ya Pa or SYB); the General Administration Department; the Immigration and Population Department (also known as La Wa Ka or LWK); and the Land Records Department, according to a local. The offices of Military Intelligence and the Immigration and Population Department are opposite each other and despite the junta closing the road to civilians for the last 18 months they still got attacked and partially destroyed. The General Administration Department was also partially destroyed, whilst the Land Records Department office was burnt to the ground, according to residents. Another local told Mizzima that gunshots were heard and that the blaze from the Land Records Department could be seen across the city. Apparently, some non-Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) staff in the offices were injured in the raids, but currently, there are no further details. The next day, 24 January, there was not any increased troop presence in the area, though soldiers in civilian clothing were seen guarding various locations in Payathonzu Town. As of the time of reporting no revolutionary forces had issued any statements about the attack.

CHIN STATE

Eight airstrikes on Chin State's Mindat Township in 16 days. The Myanmar junta launched at least eight airstrikes on Chin State's Mindat Township between 7 and 13 January 2023, according to the Chinland Defense Force-Mindat [CDF-Mindat]. Junta army airstrikes and ground attacks on Mindat Township started with two airstrikes on 7 January, which were followed up on 8 January with a further two airstrikes. Later in the month, the junta launched two airstrikes against Mindat on 21 January and three on 23 January, making for eight airstrikes on the township since 7 January. A total of four people were injured and five IDP [internally displaced people] shelters including a monastery were bombed [in the eight airstrikes]", said a resident. CDF-Mindat also said that four IDPs were injured by the junta's air strikes during the period. shortly after the airstrike, the junta army fired heavy-artillery at monasteries and IDP camps. According to local residents the attacks have caused over 2,000 people to flee the area. A CDF spokesperson said that the junta's use of artillery and fighter jets against civilians are crimes against humanity that go against international humanitarian law. At the time of reporting, 25 January, all internet and telephone connections to Mindat were cut off. Similarly, the junta bombed the Chin National Front (CNF) in Chin State's Thantlang Township on the Indo-Burmese border on 10-11 January, which caused more than 200 people to flee to India. Since the military coup in February 2021 until November 2022, at least 1,489 houses and buildings in Chin State have been torched during clashes, according to an Institute for Strategy and Policy-Myanmar report that also said that armed clashes and conflicts had resulted in at least 99,550 IDPs in Chin State, with the highest number of IDPs, 35,000 staying in the state capital, Hakha.



RCSS LEADER CRITICIZES LACK OF PROGRESS IN NCA IMPLEMENTATION

General Yawd Serk, chairperson of the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS), criticized the failure to implement the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), in a meeting with the National Peace Talks Team on 24 January in Nay Pyi Taw, reported Narinjara.

He stated that the past 7 years have been a waste as there has been no progress since the NCA was signed in 2015 by eight ethnic armed organizations, and ten in 2018 after two more groups joined.

Serk emphasized that mistakes from the past must be learned from in order to continue the peace process.

Despite the miserable record of the Myanmar military- led NCA process ,there is no indication that General Yawd Serk is thinking of holding a dialogue with the other major EAOs including the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) that have rejected the junta's peace process. And there is no indication that he will side with the revolutionary movement to end the 2008 constitution.

NORWAY FUND DROPS CHINA, INDIA FIRMS OVER MYANMAR WEAPONS

Norway's sovereign wealth fund, the world's biggest, has excluded two companies from China and India for selling weapons to Myanmar, the Norwegian central bank said.

The fund said it had divested from AviChina Industry & Technology and Bharat Electronics due to the "unacceptable risk that the companies are selling weapons to a state that uses these weapons in ways that constitute serious and systematic breaches of the international rules on the conduct of hostilities".

The fund -- which was valued at 13.2 trillion kroner (\$1.3 trillion) on Wednesday -- owned 0.37 percent of the Chinese group and 0.32 percent of the Indian company at the end of 2021, the most recent figures available.

It said AviChina had delivered light aeroplanes in December 2021 to Myanmar, which has been in turmoil since Aung San Suu Kyi's civilian government was toppled in an army coup almost two years ago.

Bharat Electronics meanwhile delivered a remote-controlled weapons station to Myanmar in July 2021.

The decision to exclude the two companies was taken by Norway's central bank, based on a recommendation by an ethics board.

The fund, in which the Norwegian state's oil revenues are placed, is one of the biggest investors in the world with stakes in more than 9,000 companies.

It also has holdings in bonds and real estate.

It is governed by rules that prohibit it from investing in companies involved in serious human rights violations, those that manufacture "particularly inhumane" or nuclear weapons, as well as coal and tobacco products.

As a result, it has previously divested from a number of companies, including Airbus, Boeing, Glencore, Lockheed Martin and Philip Morris.

AFP



US CLAIMS THAT THAILAND ENERGY SECURITY RELIANT ON MYANMAR GAS EXPORTS INCORRECT

The Biden administration's and the oil industry's claims that sanctioning Myanmar's gas sector would negatively affect Thailand's energy security are incorrect according to a new report by EarthRights International.

Analysis by the non-governmental organisation (NGO) confirms that due to its high energy reserves and substantial import capacity, Thailand has sufficient energy to meet its needs and is not dependent on Myanmar gas.

Gas revenues are the largest source of foreign currency available to the Myanmar military junta.

Soon after its February 2021 coup, the military seized control of revenue flows to the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) – the Myanmar government office that collects revenues from the country's lucrative offshore gas projects – and is now using these revenues to wage war on the people of Myanmar.

While the Biden administration has recognized that these revenues are fueling the attacks, it has neglected to take effective measures to sanction Myanmar's gas sector. Research from EarthRights estimates that the junta illegally seizes as much as \$2.1 billion USD annually.

"The military coup in Myanmar has destabilized the region and pushed millions into a humanitarian crisis," said Kirk Herbertson, Senior Policy Advisor for EarthRights. "Gas from Myanmar's offshore projects fuels human rights abuses and the climate crisis.

"Meanwhile, fossil fuel majors such as Chevron continue spreading disinformation, exploiting concerns about Thailand's energy security to justify keeping the gas flowing. This is nothing but hot air.

"The Biden administration must stop acquiescing to fossil fuel companies and enact more meaningful sanctions on Myanmar's gas revenues."

Last February, the EU imposed sanctions

on MOGE. While the U.S. has imposed sanctions on Myanmar's coup leaders, it has to date avoided sanctioning MOGE, citing fears of undermining Thailand's energy security.

But EarthRights published an analysis in September 2021 showing that Thailand was not dependent on Myanmar gas for its energy security and that it is unlikely that U.S. sanctions or the diversion of revenues would lead to gas production stoppage. In fact, Thailand is highly resilient to energy shocks.

Since then, Thailand has become even more energy secure, a trend that is likely to continue.

In June 2022, the Nong Fab LNG import facility came online, increasing Thailand's LNG import capacity by 65 percent. Nong Fab's capacity alone surpasses all imports from Myanmar by at least 50 percent. This shows that when Thailand's LNG imports peaked in 2022, there was sufficient unused capacity to replace Myanmar gas with fuel oil as a further backup.

This large LNG overcapacity reflects Thailand's preparations for the expected declines in Myanmar and Thai gas production and its hope of becoming a regional LNG hub.

Furthermore, in 2022, several Thai power plant operators switched from gas to fuel oil to reduce costs as global energy prices soared. This resulted in a decrease in gas consumption in the country's power sector by seven percent.

"Even if gas revenue sanctions led to the termination of gas exports from Myanmar to Thailand, the only impact on Thailand would be a modest increase in electricity prices—far less than those incurred by countries weaning themselves off Russian gas, added Herbertson.

"Regardless, this concern pales in comparison to those shared by the people of Myanmar experiencing and witnessing human rights atrocities. Protecting them by stopping the illegal flow of funds to the junta should be the U.S.'s and the international community's top priority."

PRICES OF MYANMAR PADDY AND RICE ARE RISING



Photo: Mona Serrato

Myanmar rice traders say the price of rice abruptly rose in the last week of January this year after being stable for few months since the harvesting of new crops.

The price of rice rose abruptly because of lowering stock, rising transport costs and rising commodity prices.

The price of paddy reached a record high of 1.6 million kyat per 100 baskets (one basket = 46 lbs) and the rice traders said that the price of rice also rose starting from the beginning of this year.

The rice traders assume that the production in coming summer and monsoon seasons will be low and then they hoarded paddy and rice as much as they could and then the price of paddy reached record high price since the yield of paddy was too low in the hands of farmers and the demand was high in the market.

The traders predict that the paddy yield and production will be drastically low as lower paddy acreage in the country due to the unrest in some paddy-growing regions and the soaring input costs in the farming. So, the traders bought the paddy by visiting the paddy fields at the price

of 1.6 million per 100 baskets, 500,000 kyats more than the usual price.

The price of good quality paddy was nearly 1.6 million kyat in the first week of January and it rose to nearly 1.8 million kyat in the last week of January. Similarly, the price of low-quality paddy rose to 1.6 million kyats from 1.3 million kyats during this period.

A rice mill owner said that the price rise was caused by the lowering stocks of paddy in the country and also some rice merchants raised the price to a higher level by their price speculation in the market.

The rise of rice prices was reportedly caused by long and frequent power outages after the coup, the rising costs of fuel, transportation, and production.

Mon State has nearly 700,000 acres of paddy acreage and yearly production is over 34,000,000 baskets. The paddy is milled in the State and distributed to other States and Regions.

The people are struggling to cope with the soaring price rise of rice to nearly two-fold after the coup.

Penrose Thitsa

MYANMAR'S TRADE ON THE RISE DESPITE WESTERN SANCTIONS: JUNTA'S OFFICIAL DATA

Myanmar's imports and exports rose 18.47% year on year to more than \$27.19 billion in the first 10 months of the 2022-23 fiscal year starting April 2022, Xinhua reported citing the Burmese junta's official data.

Exports increased 14.25% to more than \$13.36 billion and imports rose 22.85% to more than \$13.82 billion, said the junta's Ministry of Commerce.

The majority of Myanmar's trade, 76.04%, was conducted through sea routes and the rest, 23.96%, was done through land borders.

Myanmar mostly conducts its foreign trade through sea routes due to its long coastline and has border trade with China, Thailand, Bangladesh, and India.

Myanmar exports various goods including agricultural products, animal products, minerals, and manufacturing goods and imports capital goods, intermediate goods, and consumer goods.

However, Myanmar has been placed under Western sanctions following the military coup in Myanmar.





Making merit

People putting gold on the footprint of buddha during the Mann Shwe Sat Thaw Pagoda Festival at Min Bu township in Magway Region. Devotees are returning in greater numbers to a central Myanmar temple, built around the gold-lined footprints of Buddha, after the Covid pandemic and a military coup curbed the annual pilgrimage.

Photo: AFP

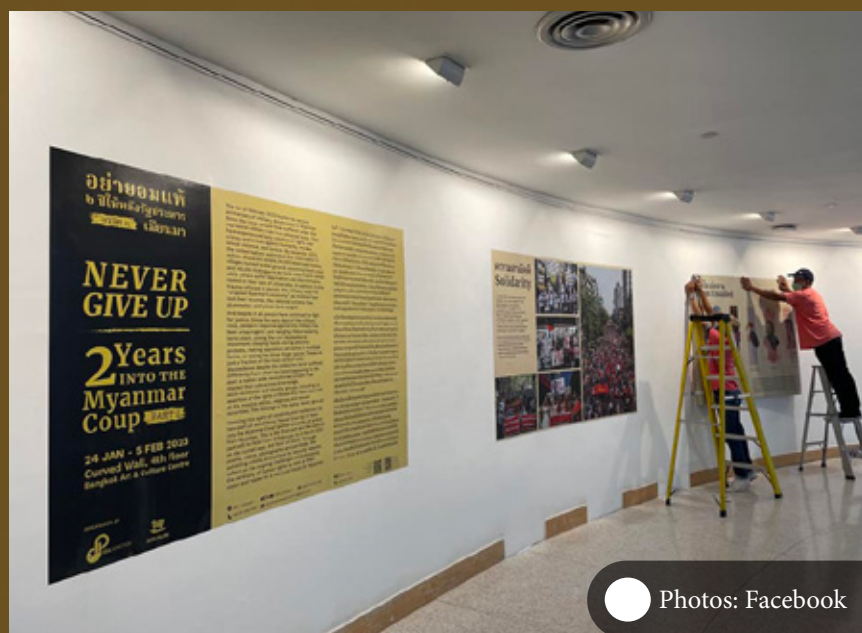
NEVER GIVE UP ART EXHIBITION

An important art exhibition entitled “Never Give Up: 2 Years into the Myanmar Coup” is being held 28 January to 5 February at the SEA-Junction, 4th Floor, Bangkok Art and Culture Center.

Photos, videos and artworks of Myanmar artists are on show to highlight the Myanmar crisis two years after the military coup.

The opening ceremony included Rosalia Sciortino, Founder and Executive Director, SEA Junction, Laddawan Tantivitayapitak, Chair, Thai Action Committee for Democracy in Burma, Thinzar Shunlei Yi, Democracy Advocate, Chris Sidoti, Special Advisory Council on Myanmar (SAC-M), Aung Myo Min, Human Rights Minister, NUG Burma, Naruemon Thabchumpon, Political Science Academic, Chulalongkorn University, Debbie Stothard, ALTSEAN Burma, Phil Robertson, Human Rights Watch, and Kasit Piromya, Former Thailand Minister of Foreign Affairs, ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR).

The event is organized by Alliance for Free Burma Solidarity, Asian Cultural Forum on Development (ACFOD), Asian Research Center for Migration (ARCM), Campaign for Popular Democracy (CPD), Diplomacy Training Program (DTP), Peoples Plan for the 21st Century (PP21), Thai Action Committee for Democracy in Burma (TACDB), SEA Junction, and Solidarity Network.



Photos: Facebook



SEA JUNCTION



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NEVER GIVE UP

**24 JAN -
5 FEB 2023**

**10 AM - 8 PM
Curved Wall, 4th floor
Bangkok Art & Culture Centre**

ART EXHIBITION

2Years INTO THE Myanmar Coups **PART I**

LAUNCH EVENT
at SEA Junction

**28 JAN 2023
5.30-7.00 PM**



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