

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

# mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight

**SHOCK!**

**Myanmar junta steps up  
drive to forcibly draft  
women into military**

**UN warns Myanmar violence may worsen, four years after coup**

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Analysis & Insight



# DIGITAL MAGAZINE

Our relaunched magazine Mizzima Weekly provides readers with a more focused read on what matters in Myanmar and the wider region, with an emphasis on analysis, insight and providing key talking points.

# MYANMAR ON THE BRINK AS IT MARKS THE FOURTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MILITARY COUP

Saturday 1 February 2025 marked the fourth anniversary of the Myanmar military coup which has done so much horrifying damage to the Golden Land.

Four years on, Myanmar is in a state of chaos and fear, with the situation set to worsen in 2025.

While the Myanmar resistance forces trumpet their successes, the Myanmar military junta is doubling down on attacks with civilians often in their crosshairs. Never a week goes by without reports of an atrocity as the military seeks to sow increasing levels of fear.

Society is breaking down, aided and abetted by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing's despicable junta. Apart from the physical threat of death posed by the military, the economy is in a slump, crime is rampant, and many people are fearful of being caught up in the military conscription dragnet. A significant number of young people have been hastily sent to the military frontlines, only to die a brutal death. Thousands of political prisoners remain incarcerated, including the country's democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi and former president Win Myint.

The Myanmar junta is desperately hanging onto power. But talk of defeat may be premature. Hope may have been sparked recently by the quick exit from power of Syria's autocratic leader Bashar al-Assad. Min Aung Hlaing and his generals, however, are dug in, leaning on the decades of experience the military has racked up in holding on to dictatorial power.

The forces of the opposition National Unity Government (NUG), People's Defence Forces (PDF), and ethnic revolutionary organizations (EROs) have made significant gains over the last three to four years in a committed push-back against the generals – a do-or-die revolution. Key successes have been seen by the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Karen National Union (KNU), and Arakan Army (AA), as well as PDFs and Chin forces. But the military junta continues

to leverage their air force, artillery, and more recently, drones.

For many Myanmar citizens, however, the threat is less the physical attacks and more the lack of food on their plates. Hunger has reached alarming levels with the situation set to worsen

in 2025, according to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP). A staggering 15 million people are expected to face hunger in 2025, up from 13.3 million last year. Those living in active conflict areas, particularly in Chin, Kachin and Rakhine states, as well as Sagaing Region, are experiencing the highest levels of food insecurity in the country. Almost 20 million people – or one in three of the population – will need humanitarian assistance this year, according to the Myanmar Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan.

Michael Dunford, WFP's Representative and Country Director, says growing conflict across the country, access restrictions, a crumbling economy and successive weather-related crises are driving record levels of hunger.

More than 3.5 million people are displaced in Myanmar due to armed conflict and violence, a number projected to increase to 4.5 million in 2025 as conflict takes root and spreads to new areas. Food is the biggest need for displaced people but spiralling costs and rapid inflation have made it unaffordable for many. The cost of basic staples – including rice, beans, oil and salt – has increased by 30 per cent in the past year.

International efforts to sanction the Myanmar junta and call for a halt to the carnage have had limited or no substantial effect, as the Myanmar junta ignores ASEAN's Five-point Peace Consensus – an agreement effectively dead in the water.

In a troubled world, this crisis does not get the attention it deserves. But Myanmar matters. The country is of strategic importance and a core player in ASEAN. More to the point, this is a serious humanitarian crisis that the world needs to get to grips with.

## EDITORIAL

# mizzima

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**Cover photo of military service women by AFP**





Young women are in the Myanmar junta's sights as they ramp up the military draft. Photo: AFP

# SHOCK!

## MYANMAR JUNTA STEPS UP DRIVE TO FORCIBLY DRAFT WOMEN INTO MILITARY

The Myanmar junta appears to be zeroing in on women as part of its efforts to draft people into its war machine.

Residents in multiple townships across Yangon Region, Taungoo Township in Bago Region, and Mawlamyine in Mon State have expressed growing concerns over junta efforts to gather lists of women beyond the official military service age. The collection process, conducted by military-backed ward administration offices, has raised fears of potential forced conscription, locals told Mizzima.

Uncertainty surrounds the moves with the junta providing mixed responses over what appear to be efforts to induct new female recruits.

Authorities have been compiling data on both eligible and over-age women in Yangon's Thaketa, Tamwe, Thanlyin, and North Okkalapa townships, as well as in several villages of Taungoo and Mawlamyine townships.

"The ward administration office displayed posters outlining the age limits for military service. Officials came to my house to collect information for the list. I

will turn 28 in April 2025, so I assumed I wouldn't be included, but I couldn't refuse. I had to provide my details," said a resident of Ward 10 in Thaketa Township, Yangon.

A woman from Taungoo Township shared a similar experience, stating that women over 20 years old in her village were required to register.

"In one household, a family member is in Thailand, yet they were told that someone from their family must enlist in her place. My younger brother has already gone into hiding, and I don't know what to do next. Now, even the girls are being listed, while elderly relatives remain at home," she said.

According to the People's Military Service Law enforced by the junta, the conscription age is set between 18 and 35 for men and 18 and 27 for women. However, for professionals such as doctors and engineers, the age limit extends to 45 for men and 35 for women.

Women can be drafted for a minimum of two years, with the possibility of an extension to five years in times of emergency.



Many young women are worried as the junta starts registering women. Photo: AFP

## TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

Meanwhile, the military has also imposed stricter travel restrictions on individuals eligible for conscription. Those already listed are struggling to leave the country and are living in fear, according to locals.

“At the airport, authorities are preventing new passport holders and those who have never travelled abroad from leaving. Even if you offer them money, they still won’t let you go. I have travelled frequently, so I haven’t faced this issue yet, but I’m very worried about my 19-year-old niece, who is still in school. I fear she could be arrested,” said a resident of North Okkalapa Township.

Since launching the first batch of civilian military service training on 8 April, 2024, the junta has conducted nine rounds of training, though no female draftees have yet been included.

## TROUBLE IN THE RANKS

The overall conscription drive involving men and women shows the military’s desperation to replenish

its ranks amid a series of battlefield defeats and desertions in the country’s four-year civil war.

Last year, the junta enforced a 2010 military conscription law saying men aged 18-35 and single women 18-27 would be eligible for military service.

So far, it has conscripted only men — sometimes by force — but since mid-January, authorities have begun compiling lists of eligible women in the Yangon region, residents in several townships said, suggesting official conscription would begin in the future.

## IN PREPARATION?

The junta told RFA that women had been called up for military service, and a representative from the Chairman’s Office of the Central Body for Summoning People’s Military Servants said authorities were simply taking a headcount of those eligible to serve.

“It is similar to a census — essentially a basic manpower registry,” the representative said told the news service. “There has been no separate call for women for military service at this time.”



Karenni National Defence Forces recruit - fighting for the resistance. Photo: AFP



Myanmar military officer Capt. Zin Yaw, a member of the Civil Disobedience Movement that opposed the military's seizure of power in 2021, said that the listings of women were part of a plan to recruit them for training, but not necessarily send them into combat.

"In the past, junta leader [Sen. Gen.] Min Aung Hlaing has shown interest in involving female officers," Zin Yaw said. "There have also been cases where female military personnel ... were called in and assigned roles."

The junta announced that women meeting the age requirements for military service under the country's military service law will be recruited starting from their fifth week of military training.

Women from all 10 townships in Mon state in Myanmar's south and from Kayin state and Tanintharyi region also have been recruited for military service since mid-2024, according to a survey by the Human Rights Foundation of Monland, which monitors human rights in Mon state.

## MILITIA RECRUITMENT

The Pa-O National Army, a state-sponsored militia that fights alongside junta soldiers against Pa-O rebels, is forcing women and underage girls to join the military service, they said, reports RFA.

Female recruits mostly have been sent to the front lines of armed combat between the junta and Karenni rebels at the Shan-Kayah state border since late last year, a Pa-O Youth Organization official said.

A directive requiring women to undergo military training in areas controlled by the Pa-O National Army could result in girls being deployed in front-line combat, residents and Pa-O organizations said.

Though it is difficult to verify the ages of the women sent to combat areas, it is known that they include women under the age of 18, the official from the Pa-O Youth Organization said.

"We began noticing women being sent to the front lines around the end of 2024, particularly in the fighting along the [Kayah state] and Shan border," said the official. "Their presence in these areas is very evident.

At times, a significant number of soldiers are deployed, and women are among them."

Khun Aung Mann, general secretary of the Pa-O National Liberation Army, an ethnic armed organization that opposes the military regime, told RFA that he has received reports that the Pa-O militia has been training women for military service.

"The current situation is that both the [Pa-O] militia and the military council are in need of manpower," he said. "Therefore, we believe that they will use women if necessary, as we are already witnessing the use of underage children on the battlefield."

There were 15-year-old child soldiers among captured prisoners of war, he said.

For now, fear and uncertainty dog many young women in junta-held townships in Myanmar.

*Reporting: Mizzima, Radio Free Asia*

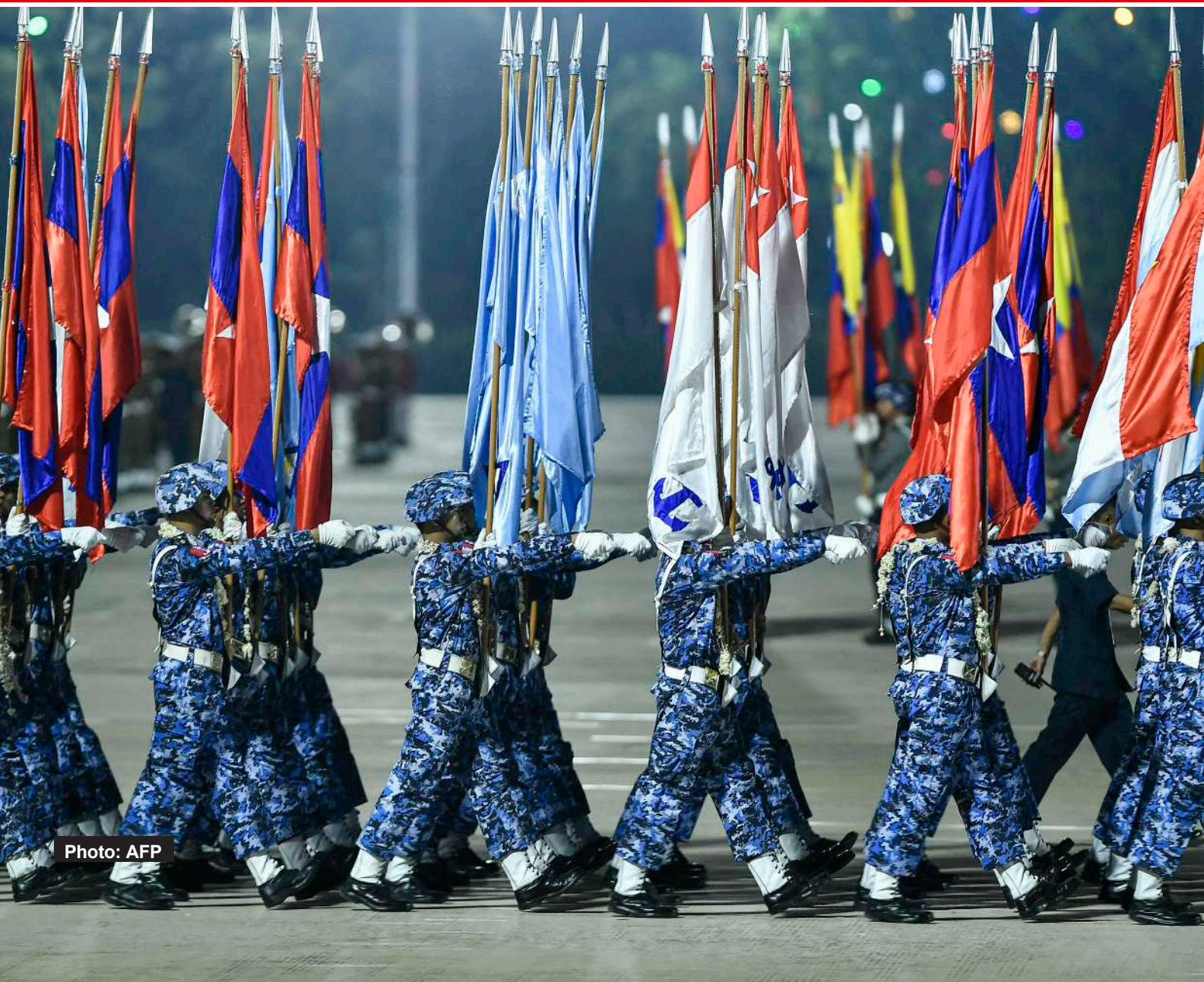


Photo: AFP

# MYANMAR JUNTA'S CONSCRIPTION DRIVE RATCHETS UP A NOTCH

**M**yanmar's military junta has introduced new rules tightening its conscription law, significantly impacting young people traveling abroad. The updated regulations, issued on January 23, reinforce the junta's ability to conscript all adults during a state of emergency—a status the regime has repeatedly extended every six months since the 2021 coup. Even veterans of previous conscription terms are now subject to being drafted again.

Under the new rules, all individuals aged 18 to 35 are eligible for conscription, and those listed for service are banned from leaving the country. This measure has sparked concerns among youths.

"This will impact all young and middle-aged travelers at international airports. It's worrisome. Even now, bribing officials for boarding is widespread. Things will only get worse," said a local airline ticket agent.

In addition to restricting those within Myanmar, the junta has extended its reach to include Myanmar nationals living abroad. Families with sons in the conscription age range are being ordered to register them, regardless of their current location. If enlisted, these individuals must return to Myanmar to fulfill their military service obligations.

Authorities are requiring parents or guardians of conscription-age individuals to sign written commitments ensuring their children will return if drafted. Failure to comply could result in punitive measures against family members.

Moreover, reports from southern Shan State indicate that women between the ages of 18 and 27 are also being included in conscription lists, further expanding the military's recruitment pool.



Myanmar refugees are caught up in the changes taking place in the USA. Photo: AFP

The process is highly restrictive for those seeking exemptions. Individuals must obtain a certificate from the Central Committee of Conscription proving they are not enlisted. However, securing such documentation is nearly impossible for many, particularly those from grassroots backgrounds.

The junta's move to tighten conscription laws comes as its military forces struggle with ongoing resistance from ethnic armed groups and pro-democracy fighters across the country. The new regulations are expected to fuel further discontent and may prompt more young people to evade recruitment by any means necessary.

## Myanmar refugees left in limbo

Thousands of Myanmar refugees seeking resettlement in the United States have been left in

limbo following an executive order signed by former US President Donald Trump on January 20, suspending the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). The suspension has disproportionately affected refugees from the Thai-Myanmar border camps, many of whom had completed most of the resettlement process and were awaiting departure.

According to BBC Burmese, at least 26 refugees from eight families, who had been in the final stages of processing in Mae Sot, had already undergone medical checkups, received vaccinations, and were awaiting their air tickets in Mae Sot, a Thai border town. However, following Trump's order, they were forced to return to their refugee camp, shattering their hopes of starting a new life in the U.S.

"I was asked why they were not allowed to go and when they could leave. But I have no answers. I told



Arakan Army fighters on the move. Photo: AA

them to follow the news and be aware of the current U.S. political situation," a camp official told BBC Burmese.

Life in the refugee camps remains difficult, with numerous restrictions and inadequate support. Many refugees view resettlement in third countries as their only hope for a stable future, particularly for their children. The Irrawaddy also reported that 26 refugees were sent back to Ohn Phyan camp after the U.S. halted refugee admissions.

The suspension has left the affected refugees facing both psychological and financial distress. Many had already transferred or sold their belongings in anticipation of their departure, only to find themselves back in the same camps they had hoped to leave forever.

The uncertainty surrounding their future has caused severe mental stress and depression among the returnees, some of whom had waited years for resettlement. The impact extends beyond Thailand, affecting Myanmar refugees in Malaysia and India, whose scheduled flights to the U.S. were also canceled.

Thousands of Myanmar refugees are still waiting for acceptance into the U.S. resettlement program, but with the current suspension, their future remains uncertain.

## Arakan Army continues to expand their territory

Fierce skirmishes continue daily around Sittway, the Arakan Army (AA) announced on January 27. The clashes involve artillery, snipers, drones, and gunfire, with battles concentrated near Wabo, Minhla, and Nyoyaungchyaung villages on the outskirts of Sittway. Junta troops have retaliated with drone strikes, setting civilian homes ablaze in Wabo village.

The remaining junta forces in Sittway, Kyaukphyu, and Manaung—now their last strongholds in Rakhine—are resorting to indiscriminate artillery fire in an attempt to deter AA offensives. Junta troops in Sittway are bombarding AA-controlled areas in Ponnagyun and Pauktaw daily, forcing residents to flee once again.

"These villagers were already displaced. Now they have to move again due to the junta's reckless shelling," said a Pauktaw resident. "Rakhine State will only see peace once the junta is gone. As long as they remain, civilians will continue to face life-threatening challenges."

Civilians in AA-controlled areas are increasingly worried about junta airstrikes. On January 11, three consecutive days of air raids in Kyauktaw killed nine civilians and wounded over ten others. A similar attack in October 2023 resulted in four deaths and more than twenty injuries. The relentless air assaults have pushed many residents to flee to remote areas for safety.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Taunggok are facing a critical food shortage. Although AA seized the town on December 14, 2024, many residents have been unable to return home due to the ongoing risk of junta airstrikes. Limited humanitarian aid has reached the IDPs, leaving them in dire need of food and essential supplies. Additionally, many are suffering from severe skin diseases, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis.

As the conflict intensifies, civilians in Rakhine State continue to endure hardship, with no clear end to their suffering in sight.



## UN WARNS MYANMAR VIOLENCE MAY WORSEN, FOUR YEARS AFTER COUP

**U**N investigators said Thursday that serious international crimes had been committed in the four years since Myanmar's military coup, warning this would only worsen unless the perpetrators faced justice.

Nicholas Koumjian, head of the United Nations' Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM), said impunity was emboldening the perpetrators to commit further violence.

Myanmar's ruling junta seized power in a February 1, 2021 coup that ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government, ending a 10-year experiment with democracy and plunging the Southeast Asian nation into bloody turmoil and a humanitarian crisis.

"Since then, according to substantial evidence collected and analysed by the IIMM, serious international crimes have been committed across the country," Koumjian said in a statement.

Myanmar has been rocked by fighting between numerous ethnic rebel groups and the army. The civil war has displaced more than 3.5 million, according to the UN.

"Protests against the military regime were suppressed with often lethal violence. Thousands of perceived opponents have been unlawfully imprisoned, where many have suffered torture, sexual violence and other abuses," said Koumjian.

"Increasingly frequent and indiscriminate air strikes, artillery and drone attacks have killed civilians, driven survivors from their homes, and destroyed hospitals, schools and places of worship."

He said that while most of the evidence collected so far concerned crimes committed by the military, investigators were also probing "disturbing" reports of atrocities committed by other armed groups, including rape, killings and torture.

- ICC arrest warrant -

The IIMM was established by the UN Human Rights Council in 2018 to collect evidence of the most serious international crimes and prepare files for criminal prosecution.

In November, the International Criminal Court's prosecutor requested an arrest warrant for junta chief Min Aung Hlaing for alleged crimes committed against the Rohingya minority during clearance operations in 2016 and 2017.

There are no judicial proceedings under way for any serious international crimes committed since the military takeover, said Koumjian.

"We believe that impunity for crimes emboldens perpetrators to commit more violence, and ending this impunity is necessary," he said.

"The mechanism stands ready to assist authorities who are willing and able to investigate and prosecute these cases. Until the perpetrators are brought to justice, violence will continue to spiral."

The UN estimates that 19.9 million people, or more than a third of Myanmar's population, will need humanitarian aid in 2025.

AFP



Photo: AFP

## JUSTICE FOR MYANMAR CALLS ON ASEAN TO TAKE ACTION ON MYANMAR

Justice for Myanmar released a statement on 31 January, calling for ASEAN to act to restrict aviation fuel, arms, and funds to the Myanmar junta. The statement notes that little has been done in the four years since the coup on 1 February 2021.

The text of Justice for Myanmar's statement continues below.

On February 1, 2021, the Myanmar military launched an illegal coup attempt. For four years, the people of Myanmar have courageously resisted a brutal junta and made profound sacrifices to ensure that the military failed to gain control of the country and rule over them.

In retaliation, the Myanmar junta has deployed collective punishment against the people and launched a nationwide campaign of terror, committing war crimes and crimes against humanity with total impunity. As resistance mounted, it desperately intensified

its bloody and indiscriminate air and heavy artillery ground attacks, burning villages, schools, hospitals, and churches to ashes, causing a humanitarian crisis that has displaced over 3.3 million people.

The Myanmar military's decades long atrocity crimes, which include genocide against the Rohingya, are enabled by a network of domestic and international companies, the ongoing supply of weapons and aviation fuel that the military uses in its aerial attacks against civilians, and ASEAN's diplomatic, military, technical, financial, and intelligence support.

Despite Myanmar civil society's repeated calls for ASEAN to end all engagements with the military junta, ASEAN and key members have continued to aid and abet the military's terror campaign, betraying the people of Myanmar and failing its own commitment to "maintain and enhance peace, security and stability and to further strengthen peace-oriented values in the region."

ASEAN has repeatedly awarded legitimacy to the junta, provided training to the Myanmar military as it slaughters civilians, and even allowed war criminals such as the junta's air force and navy chiefs to chair meetings.

While ASEAN partners the USA, Australia, EU, UK and Canada have sanctioned the junta, enterprises under its control, and its associates, ASEAN members have continued business as usual.

Thailand's state-owned oil conglomerate PTT Exploration and Production Public Company Limited (PTTEP), which is publicly listed, operates two major offshore gas projects with the junta, Yadana and Zawtika, and associated pipelines, bankrolling atrocities. PTTEP has continued drilling wells that would keep profits flowing to the junta.

Vietnam remains a major business partner of the junta through the investment of the Ministry of National Defence-owned company Viettel in Telecom International Myanmar, the company behind Mytel, in partnership with the military conglomerate Myanmar Economic Corporation. An analysis of Mytel's own profit forecast shows that the Myanmar military could earn over US\$700 million in the coming years. The junta also uses Mytel for surveillance, supported by Viettel.

Malaysia's richest tycoon, Robert Kuok, is the founder of Shangri-La Group, which operates the Sule Square real estate development on land leased from the Myanmar army. The deal was signed in 1996, the same year that the army brutally crushed student democracy protests. The Kuok family have continued their investment in Sule Square through the military's 2021 coup attempt.

Malaysia, which is the current chair of ASEAN, has failed to prevent its citizens and companies from doing business with the Myanmar military.

Singapore, long the military's international business hub, continues to allow junta cronies and associates to do business, such as Tay Za, who is sanctioned by the USA, UK, EU and Canada.

For the Singapore publicly listed company Interra Resources, the military's coup attempt has been profitable as it keeps extracting crude oil, which the junta uses to power its terror campaign.

Singapore must do more to uphold its public statement that it has worked to prevent the flow of arms and dual use goods into Myanmar, following the UN Special Rapporteur's report exposing Singapore-based entities as the third largest source of weapons materials to the Myanmar military and Justice For Myanmar's exposé of 38 Myanmar arms broker companies in the city state.

Singapore must block the junta's access to funds and aviation fuel.

Other ASEAN governments and their businesses, such as Brunei and Indonesia, are exacerbating the Myanmar people's suffering by exploring and signing new business agreements with the illegal junta and its cronies.

ASEAN and its member states must immediately end their complicity in the junta's international crimes against the Myanmar people by ceasing all legitimisation of the junta and cutting its access to funds, arms, dual use goods, technology and aviation fuel.





## CIVICUS CALLS ON ASEAN TO STOP SUPPORTING MYANMAR JUNTA

On 31 January, CIVICUS, a global civil society alliance, called on ASEAN to stop enabling the Myanmar junta's ongoing brutal oppression of its citizens. Four years into the coup, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), continues to fail to deliver on its public pledges of a political solution.

The text of CIVICUS' statement continues below.

The member states have turned a blind eye, legitimized the junta, and even provided arms, allowing the junta to continue violent and deadly attacks on civilians and a systematic repression of activists and civil society.

"ASEAN member states, especially Malaysia as the Chair, cannot continue to ignore the brutal repression against civilians, activists, and journalists. It must speak up against human rights violations, demand the release of political prisoners, and push for justice and accountability in Myanmar," said Josef Benedict, Asia Pacific Researcher for CIVICUS.

While several UN member states have spoken up and imposed sanctions on the junta and associated enterprises, there has been little political will by ASEAN leaders to act. The five-point consensus agreement brokered by ASEAN leaders in Jakarta in April 2021 has seen no tangible progress.

Since 2021 February, CIVICUS Monitor has documented junta's assaults on civic space in the country. Thousands of human rights defenders, activists and peaceful protesters are detained on fabricated charges of 'incitement' or 'terrorism' and sentenced

to long prison sentences after unfair trials. Many have experienced torture and ill-treatment in detention, in some cases leading to unlawful deaths in custody, with no one held to account.

Activists have also been targeted online. The junta has orchestrated an online campaign of terror and weaponised social media to harass and incite violence against activists. Digital restrictions block the flow of information in and outside the country. Media has continued to be targeted with at least 35 journalists still in jail. There have been widespread abuses by the military against the Rohingya community with impunity. Aerial attacks have targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Civil society groups have documented how ASEAN member states have been complicit in aiding and abetting the junta by providing them with weapons and aviation fuel. The regional body has also provided legitimacy to the regime by either attending junta-hosted conferences or inviting them to attend regional ASEAN events. The junta is now planning for sham elections in 2025.

"ASEAN must end complicity with the Junta. It should engage with the National Unity Government and civil society to support the Myanmar people's goals. That is to fully dismantle the junta and restore democracy in Myanmar and hold the junta accountable for its continuing atrocities," said Rajavelu Karunanithi, Asia Advocacy & Campaigns Officer for CIVICUS.



Photo: AFP

## SAC-M CALLS FOR INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR RESISTANCE-LED NATION-BUILDING EFFORTS IN MYANMAR

The Special Advisory Council for Myanmar (SAC-M) released a statement on 29 January calling for urgent action by the international community to protect civilians from severe military atrocities as the military's grip on the country weakens. As a way forward, the SAC-M requests support for ongoing resistance-led nation-building efforts in Myanmar.

The text of SAC-M's statement continues below.

The people's revolution that emerged in response to the Myanmar military's ill-fated coup attempt on 1 February 2021 has fundamentally transformed Myanmar. A diverse coalition of forces united in resistance to Myanmar military dictatorship has inflicted unprecedented losses on the junta's ground forces in the four years since. Vast, contiguous areas of the country are now under the effective control of resistance actors.

De facto authorities in newly liberated areas are building participatory governance systems to serve the basic needs of local populations. Long-standing ethnic authorities have strengthened and expanded their administrations as the junta has been expelled from ethnic heartlands.

Irreversibly weakened, the junta is escalating its use of airstrikes and artillery to carry out a strategy of total destruction in the areas it no longer controls, which are now the majority of the country. Daily junta airstrikes on homes, camps for the displaced, hospitals, schools, markets and places of worship are deliberate attacks on Myanmar's most vulnerable and the local networks that provide them with critical support.

At least 3.2 million people have been internally displaced since the coup began. Junta blockades on humanitarian assistance, especially to areas outside its control, prevent lifesaving aid from reaching the tens of millions who need it. Vital resistance-led humanitarian networks are being stretched to breaking point.

Despite these grave challenges, the resistance-led process to dismantle the military and build a federal democratic Myanmar is well underway and cannot be stopped. The international community must step up support for this process while acting to prevent the junta inflicting more suffering on the Myanmar people in the meantime.

SAC-M urges States to take immediate action to cut the junta's access to weapons, through coordinated sanctions on arms, dual-use goods, component

## CORE DEVELOPMENTS

parts and materials, including aviation fuel. SAC-M emphasises that States and private firms providing arms, munitions and military equipment to the junta may be complicit in the commission of war crimes, which is itself an international crime, and should cease these activities immediately.

Myanmar's neighbouring States, United Nations agencies and international donors must coordinate with resistance authorities, including the legitimate National Unity Government (NUG), Ethnic Resistance Organisations (EROs) and broader civil society, to deliver urgently needed humanitarian assistance to populations in liberated areas.

At the same time, international support should also be directed to the resistance-led political processes, including those of the NUG, EROs, National Unity Consultative Council, federal units and interim governance systems, and broader civil society, that are already laying the foundations for Myanmar's federal democratic future. These efforts reflect the democratic will and aspirations of the Myanmar people and should be supported by international actors, without being co-opted.

The junta's planned 2025 sham election is an absurd PR stunt that should be rejected by the international community. An unfair, undemocratic and illegal sham vote conducted in less than half of the country will neither end the junta's illegitimacy nor save junta leader Min Aung Hlaing. It will only prolong Myanmar's instability.

Only by ending the impunity at the root of Myanmar military violence can lasting peace and stability be achieved. The November application by the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) for an arrest warrant for Min Aung Hlaing for his role in crimes against humanity committed against the Rohingya was an historic step forward. SAC-M urges the judges of the ICC to issue an arrest warrant for Min Aung Hlaing without further delay. SAC-M also urges the Prosecutor to extend his investigations into the crimes of the Myanmar military and seek more arrest warrants against those responsible.

# mizzima WEEKLY

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## NINE COUNTRIES AND THE EU CONDEMN MYANMAR MILITARY'S ONGOING ATROCITIES, CALL FOR ACTION

On 1 February, four years after the military coup in Myanmar, a joint statement was issued by Australia, Canada, the European Union, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The statement is as follows:

Today marks four years since the Myanmar military regime overthrew the democratically elected government in Myanmar, creating one of the largest crises in the Indo-Pacific. Since the coup, the people of Myanmar remain subject to military rule that has deprived many of their rights, democratic aspirations and, for thousands, their liberty and their lives.

We condemn in the strongest terms the Myanmar military regime's escalating violence harming civilians, including human rights violations, sexual and gender-based violence, and systematic persecution and discrimination against all religious and ethnic minorities. The military's airstrikes are killing civilians, destroying schools, markets, places of worship and medical facilities; with almost a 25-fold increase since 2021 this represents an average of three airstrikes per day. The rise in airstrikes in areas with no active conflict has marked a clear escalation by the military.

We call on the Myanmar military regime to immediately de-escalate violence, ensure unhindered and safe humanitarian access across the country, and we urge all parties to prioritize the protection of civilians and fully adhere to International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law.

As of 2025, humanitarian needs have increased twenty-fold since the coup. Over one-third of the population, 19.9 million people, are now in need of humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs. An estimated 15.2 million people are in need of food assistance and cases of preventable diseases are on the rise.

Increasing needs and ongoing conflict have displaced up to 3.5 million people internally – an increase of nearly one million in the last year. Many more people are forced to flee across Myanmar's borders. Rising transnational crime, including narcotics production and trafficking, scam centres and human trafficking, harm the people of Myanmar and affect neighbouring countries, risking instability in the broader region.

The current trajectory is not sustainable for Myanmar or the region. Now is the time for the Myanmar military regime to immediately change course. We strongly urge the Myanmar military regime to cease violence, including harming civilians and civilian infrastructure, release all political prisoners, and engage in genuine and inclusive dialogue with all stakeholders. These are essential first steps towards any peaceful, democratic transition, reflecting the will of Myanmar's people.

We reiterate our support for the central role of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Five Point Consensus, including the ASEAN Chair's Special Envoy, in addressing the Myanmar and resultant refugee crisis. We strongly welcome collaboration between the ASEAN and United Nations (UN) Special Envoys. We call on the international community to continue to support the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2669 (2022). We underline the need for accountability for all atrocities committed in Myanmar, human rights must be safeguarded, violations and abuses must be prevented.

We will continue to stand in solidarity with the people of Myanmar and support their vision for an inclusive, peaceful and prosperous future.



Photo: AFP

## 46 ORGANIZATIONS DEMAND JUSTICE FROM THE MYANMAR JUNTA FOR ATROCITIES ON COUP ANNIVERSARY

The international community must take urgent action to ensure accountability for atrocities committed in Myanmar 46 organizations said in a statement marking the four-year anniversary of the 1 February 2021 military coup.

The following is the statement by Fortify Rights and four dozen Myanmar and international rights organizations:

This year represents a turning point for accountability in Myanmar. While the military remains in control, they are losing ground in many areas. Amid rapidly evolving patterns of hostilities and changing political dynamics, renewed efforts must push for justice and ensure a future built on a lasting culture of respect for human rights.

Since the 2021 coup, Myanmar's military junta has killed more than 6,000 people, arbitrarily detained more than 20,000, and renewed judicial executions. More than 3.5 million people are internally displaced. Human rights groups have documented the military's torture and other ill-treatment of detainees, indiscriminate attacks, and the denial of humanitarian aid, which may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Myanmar's military junta has carried out widespread and systematic attacks against the civilian population nationwide, bombing schools, hospitals, and religious buildings with total impunity. Armed groups fighting the military have also committed human rights violations. While some have pledged to hold perpetrators accountable, it remains to be seen whether these efforts are genuine and can meet international standards.

Last year, 2024, also marked the worst year of violence against the Rohingya community since 2017, with men, women, and children dying in bombings while being trapped in the middle of the armed conflict between the Myanmar military and the armed group the Arakan Army in Rakhine State.

At the same time, Myanmar's military has lost an unprecedented amount of territory across the country to a loose coalition of ethnic armed groups, which have captured two regional commands, high-ranking military officers, dozens of towns, and border crossings. These groups have also been implicated in human rights abuses.

In areas controlled by ethnic armed groups or overseen by the National Unity Government—formed by democratically elected lawmakers and officials ousted in the 2021 coup—local structures of governance and civil society are emerging. These include schools, hospitals, administrative offices, prisons, police stations, and courts.

Our undersigned organizations call on all parties to the armed conflict in Myanmar to comply with international humanitarian law and engage with international justice mechanisms, including the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar. All countries, including regional actors in ASEAN and neighboring states, must increase pressure on the junta by blocking arms shipments, suspending aviation fuel shipments and supporting international justice mechanisms, including by prosecuting or extraditing any suspected perpetrators. ASEAN must move beyond its failed Five-Point Consensus and take decisive action to hold the junta accountable. We also urge the international community to commit to a coordinated, long-term international justice strategy.

Globally, some highly anticipated international justice efforts are moving forward. In November 2024, the International Criminal Court's (ICC) Office of the Prosecutor requested an arrest warrant for Myanmar's Senior General Min Aung Hlaing for the crimes against humanity of deportation and persecution of the Rohingya committed in Myanmar and in part in Bangladesh between August and December 2017. Requests targeting other senior military officials are expected.

If these requests are granted, authorities in ICC member states must urgently comply with an arrest warrant for a suspect present within their jurisdiction and hand the person over to the ICC to face their accusers in a fair trial for alleged crimes under international law. The international community must deny safe haven to those accused of serious crimes by ensuring their immediate arrest and transfer to the ICC. The world must not allow perpetrators to evade international justice.

While the present arrest warrant request is a welcome step, it remains limited in scope, location, and time and does not cover any alleged crimes after the 2021 coup. The ICC Prosecutor should demonstrate further progress in his investigation, including

considering crimes under international law committed after 2017 and in the four years since the coup. The UN Security Council and Member States of the ICC must refer the full situation in all of Myanmar to the ICC to ensure justice for all victims.

Governments, donors, and international agencies should support and pursue a wide variety of accountability efforts, including universal jurisdiction, and the potential creation of 'hybrid' or similar tailored justice mechanisms. The international community must also impose a global arms embargo, suspend jet fuel exports, and engage with all relevant national stakeholders, including civil society and those most affected by crimes.

The UN Human Rights Council resolution from April 2024 stressed the need for "close and timely cooperation" between the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, a body established by the UN Human Rights Council to collect and preserve evidence of atrocity crimes in Myanmar for future prosecutions, and "any future investigations or proceedings by national, regional or international courts or tribunals, including by the International Criminal Court or the International Court of Justice."

It also requested the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to maintain a focus on accountability regarding international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and the rule of law and submit a future report on ways to "fulfil the aspirations of the people of Myanmar for human rights protection, accountability, democracy, and a civilian government."

Myanmar will be discussed at the upcoming UN Human Rights Council session from 24 February to 4 April 2025. UN member states must use this opportunity to take a bold and innovative approach on Myanmar and adopt a resolution aimed at breaking the cycle of impunity for atrocity crimes. The international community must also amplify the voices of survivors, activists and the people of Myanmar who continue to resist oppression at great personal risk.

Myanmar's human rights crisis did not begin with the coup. Decades of oppression have led to this moment. Ending impunity requires bold and adapted solutions and long-term political and financial commitment. The world must act now.



## MYANMAR JUNTA EXTENDS STATE OF EMERGENCY FOR SEVENTH TIME AMID MILITARY SETBACKS

On 31 January, the Myanmar military junta convened a National Defense and Security Council (NDSC) meeting and announced an extension of the state of emergency for another six months. This decision coincided with the expiration of the previous extension.

Junta chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing proposed the extension, citing the need for national stability and further election preparations. The NDSC members, including Min Aung Hlaing, unanimously approved the extension under Article 425 of the 2008 Constitution.

Since seizing power on 1 February, 2021, after alleging electoral fraud, the junta has repeatedly prolonged emergency rule every six months, making this the seventh extension.

In previous extensions, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing has consistently justified the need for prolonging emergency rule by citing the necessity of ensuring regional stability and conducting a national census in preparation for elections.

The NDSC, operating under the 2008 Constitution, includes president, vice presidents, the speaker of the

Pyithu Hluttaw, the speaker of the Amyotha Hluttaw, the commander-in-chief, the deputy commander-in-chief, and ministers from the ministries of defense, home affairs, border affairs, and foreign affairs.

Following the 2021 coup, the junta detained then-President Win Myint and installed Vice President Myint Swe as acting president. However, in July 2024, the regime disclosed that Myint Swe was suffering from a neurodegenerative illness, allowing Min Aung Hlaing to assume both the acting presidency and his role as commander-in-chief.

Meanwhile, the junta faces escalating military losses, having lost control of over 90 townships nationwide, including critical areas in northern Shan and Rakhine states, as resistance forces intensify their offensives.

Despite these setbacks, Min Aung Hlaing has reiterated plans to hold elections in 2025.

In December 2024, the regime published preliminary census data, revealing that only 145 out of 330 townships were fully surveyed.



Journalists under threat. Photo: AFP

## **MYANMAR MILITARY'S CRACKDOWN ON JOURNALISTS CONTINUES**

The Independent Press Council Myanmar (IPCM) has reported that since the military coup, seven journalists have been killed, and more than 200 have been arrested, with 43 still behind bars.

In a statement issued on 26 January, IPCM detailed the arrests of journalists by the junta between February 2021 and 25 January 2025. It revealed that the junta was responsible for the deaths of seven journalists through torture and extrajudicial killings. Among the 43 currently imprisoned, 11 are serving long-term sentences, including life imprisonment, while the rest face prison terms ranging from three to ten years.

A female journalist expressed concerns over the treatment of imprisoned reporters said, "There are also female journalists among the prisoners. We have heard that they are facing difficulties in prison. Everything is worrying."

The IPCM highlighted that the military has targeted journalists under various laws, including sections 505(a), 505(b), and 124(a) of the Penal Code, the

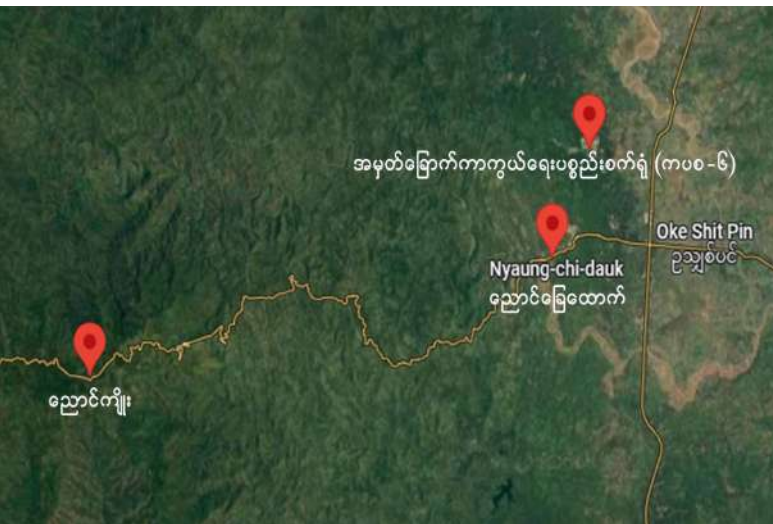
Unlawful Associations Act, the Telecommunications Act, and the Anti-Terrorism Act.

The junta has also revoked the licenses of 15 media outlets and unilaterally amended media laws.

According to IPCM, the junta's severe crackdown on independent media directly undermines press freedom and places Myanmar among the worst countries for media repression. The organization urged international bodies to take action to protect journalists and ensure accountability for those responsible for media suppression.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has ranked Myanmar as the world's second-worst jailer of journalists, while Reporters Without Borders (RSF) placed the country among the ten worst nations for press freedom in its 2024 report.





# ARAKAN ARMY CAPTURES JUNTA CAMP IN ADVANCE TOWARD KEY MILITARY SITES IN BAGO REGION

The Arakan Army (AA) announced on 27 January that it had successfully seized the Moehtitaung junta camp, a key outpost located on the Rakhine Yoma mountain range near the Rakhine State-Bago Region border.

The capture followed a five-day offensive launched by the AA and its allied forces, culminating in the camp's fall on 26 January after the intense battle of Taung Pong Gyi. According to CDM Captain Zin Yaw, Moehtitaung was not a permanent military base, but a defensive outpost positioned at the entrance to Bago Region.

Following this victory, the AA advanced to Nyaungkyo village in Padaung Township, western Bago Region, where clashes with junta forces are ongoing, according to a People's Defence Forces (PDF) source in Bago Region.

"The fighting is taking place at the Nyaungkyo checkpoint in Padaung Township. The junta is using heavy artillery from a school in Bagan Kwe village," a PDF military source said.

Junta troops resisting the attack in Nyaungkyo have received reinforcements from Taung Pong Gyi, Moehtitaung, and Nyaung Chay Htauk camps, as well as additional forces from Pyay Township.

Nyaungkyo village is approximately 10 miles from Moehtitaung and just 15 miles from Nyaung Chay Htauk, home to the regime's No. 6 weapon factory.

Nyaung Chay Htauk houses both the No. 6 Weapon Factory and Artillery Regiment 106. The factory plays a crucial role in the junta's defence industry as the primary iron and steel production facility supplying raw materials to other military factories.

"No. 6 Weapon Factory is the key iron smelting facility for all other defence industries. I have personally been there and have inside sources confirming that production has been disrupted since the Taung Pong Gyi battle," said CDM Captain Zin Yaw.

The factory spans over 3,000 acres and is defended by approximately 900 soldiers and additional personnel, according to available records.

Additionally, Padaung township is home to other junta weapon factories, including the No. 3, No. 5 and No. 9 factories. No. 3 Weapon Factory is located in Sintae village, Padaung township.

No. 3 Weapon Factory, in Sintae village, produces 500-pound bombs, incendiary bombs, artillery shells, armour-piercing rounds, and grenades. No. 5 Weapon Factory, at Pyin Gyi village, is a gunpowder production facility. No. 9 Weapon Factory manufactures ammunition of various calibres used in the MA-series rifles.

The junta relies heavily on its 25 domestic weapon factories, seven of which are in western Bago Region. These facilities supply nearly 90% of the regime's weaponry for ongoing military operations nationwide.

A People's Defence Battalion from Bago Region joined the AA-led offensive, operating under the AA's military command, according to Tin Oo, a company commander from NUG-MOD Military Region 2.

The AA previously seized Taungup Town in Rakhine State in December 2024. In response, the junta reinforced its positions in nearby villages in Padaung Township, deploying additional troops, setting up artillery positions, and intensifying shelling, according to local sources.

As of January 2025, the AA has expanded its operations beyond Rakhine State into Bago, Ayeyarwady, and Magway Regions. The AA has reported ongoing battles in Shwe Thaug Yan and Pathein Township in Ayeyarwady Region, as well as along the Ann-Padam Road in Ngape Township, Magway Region.

## FIGHTING IN MYANMAR'S SAGAING REGION PROMPTS THOUSANDS TO FLEE TO INDIA BORDER

Intense fighting between Myanmar's military and rebel forces in Sagaing region near the country's border with India has forced more than 3,000 civilians to flee their homes and led to heavy casualties on both sides, according to sources.

The fiercest fighting in Tamu township began on Monday, as rebel fighters launched an offensive targeting temporary military camps in the area, prompting the military to reinforce its troops with airstrikes and drone bombs, residents, aid workers and anti-junta groups said.

Tamu is in Sagaing, a heartland region populated largely by members of the majority Burman community that has been torn by violence since democracy activists set up paramilitary groups to battle the military after the 2021 coup.

Since early January, more than 3,000 residents of Tamu township have fled some 24 kilometers (15 miles) to the border separating Sagaing region and India's Manipur state, said aid workers.

Fighting continued on Thursday at a military camp between Tamu's Htan Ta Pin and Pan Thar villages, an official from the anti-junta Tamu Township People's Defense Force, or PDF, told RFA Burmese.

The PDF official called the military camp "significant," noting that around 400 pro-junta fighters are stationed there, including from the Pyu Saw Htee militia.

"We're first attacking junta forces in Htan Ta Pin, and then we will advance toward Pan Thar," said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity due to security concerns. "After Pan Thar falls, we could seize Tamu without difficulty."

"Many junta soldiers" have been killed in the fighting, as well as 10 rebel fighters, he said.

RFA could not independently confirm the exact number of casualties on both sides.

### Displaced 'in dire need'

A civilian who fled the fighting in Tamu told RFA that the displaced are "in dire need" of food and clothing.

"We have been here for two weeks, taking refuge on the Manipur side of the border, not far from Tamu," he said. "Those who can afford to, rent houses, while others live in tents. We rely on borrowing from others to survive."

The junta has repeatedly used airstrikes to pound Tamu's Khampat town and Ka Nan village, which are under the control of Myanmar's shadow National Unity Government, or NUG, prompting an exodus of civilians, according to aid workers and residents.

An airstrike on Jan. 16 killed two civilians, including a child, residents of Tamu said. The junta also conducted airstrikes on the nights of Jan. 20 and 21, they said.

Only about one-third of residents are left in Khampat town, an aid worker told RFA.

"Everyone is on high alert, constantly watching the sky with fright and exhaustion," said the aid worker, who also declined to be named. "We also keep our eyes on our mobile phone connections — the moment the signal drops, we immediately take cover in underground shelters. We've come to understand that a loss of communication signals an impending airstrike."

Posts on pro-junta pages on the social media platform Telegram said that on the evening of Jan. 28, the military attacked PDF fighters around Tamu's Kyun Pin Thar village with artillery, airstrikes, and drones. They claimed that junta forces discovered the bodies of seven rebels and ammunition there.

Attempts by RFA to contact the junta's spokesperson for Sagaing region by telephone went unanswered Thursday.

*Courtesy of Radio Free Asia*



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presidentoffice@nugmyanmar.org

ကြားကာလဖက်ဒရယ်ပညာရေးကောင်စီ (iFEC) ဖွဲ့စည်းသည့်အပေါ်ဝမ်းမြောက်စွာကြိုဆိုကြောင်း  
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# NUG ACKNOWLEDGES AND WELCOMES THE FORMATION OF THE INTERIM FEDERAL EDUCATION COUNCIL

The National Unity Government (NUG) released a statement on 29 January 2025, to welcome the formation of the Interim Federal Education Council (IFEC).

The statement is as follows.

We were pleased to learn that the Federal Democratic Education Policy (FDEP) was approved and announced by the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) on 8th May 2023.

On 14th June 2024, a call to action was issued urging all ethnic brotherhood political forces, educational organizations, and stakeholders to collaborate in establishing the Interim Federal Education Council (iFEC) to implement the Federal Democratic Education Policy.

We warmly welcome the formation of the Interim Federal Education Council (iFEC) on 3rd December 2024, which includes the National Unity Government's Ministry of Education, State/Federal Unit Education Departments, Ethnic-based Education Departments, Teacher Unions, Student Unions, and educational experts.

We urge the Interim Federal Education Council (iFEC) to commence efforts immediately to operationalize the Federal Democratic Education System across the entire Union until the Federal Democratic Union is fully realized.



## PIA AND NUG AGREE TO COLLABORATE ON MILITARY AND ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS

The People's Independence Army (PIA) announced on 29 January that it has reached an agreement with the National Unity Government (NUG) to cooperate on military and public administration matters.

The agreement followed an in-person meeting between Ko Moe Nay La, a PIA Central Committee member operating along the Magway-Rakhine border, and U Yi Mon, the NUG's Union Minister of Defense.

According to a statement issued by the PIA, the discussions took place on 23 December 2024 in a liberated area.

The two sides reportedly deliberated on the formation of a future federal army and maintaining military discipline during the ongoing revolution.

The People's Independence Organization (PIO)/ People's Independence Army (PIA) was established

in December 2021 after undergoing military training under the Arakan Army (AA).

The AA has seized control of 14 townships in Rakhine State, excluding Sittwe, Kyaukphyu, and Manaung—towns where Chinese-backed projects are situated.

Since its formation, the PIA has been involved in major operations, including Operation 1027 and Operation 1111, while also deploying troops in parts of central Myanmar, according to Ko Moe Nay La.

On the 104th National Victory Day, the NUG reaffirmed its commitment to working alongside allied ethnic forces to fight against military dictatorship and establish a federal democratic state. It also extended an invitation to dispersed revolutionary groups to coordinate with battalions of the People's Defence Forces (PDF).



## INDONESIA LETS 76 ROHINGYA REFUGEES DISEMBARK FOR RELOCATION

**D**ozens of Rohingya refugees who arrived by boat at a tourist beach in western Indonesia have been relocated to a temporary shelter after locals allowed their landing, an official said Thursday.

The mostly Muslim ethnic Rohingya are heavily persecuted in Myanmar and thousands risk their lives each year on long and dangerous sea journeys to reach Malaysia or Indonesia.

The latest group of 76 refugees, including four children, were moved to tents on a football field in East Aceh town of Aceh province on Wednesday night, hours after arriving the beach.

Authorities initially blocked the refugees from disembarking to prevent them from escaping and because some local residents opposed their presence in town, according to local administration official Iskandar, who like many Indonesians goes by one name.

After several hours, "a consensus was reached... to allow the refugees to disembark," Iskandar told AFP.

Representatives from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration had travelled to the area to negotiate with local residents and authorities.

Iskandar said that while the temporary shelter's capacity was limited, it was still "adequate as a temporary refuge".

The refugees, who appeared exhausted but not in critical condition, said they had travelled for days by sea from Myanmar, he added.

Rohingya arrivals in Indonesia tend to follow a cyclical pattern, slowing during the stormy winter months and picking back up when sea conditions calm down.

More than 260 Rohingya refugees arrived on a beach in Aceh earlier this month.

Indonesia is not a signatory to the UN refugee convention and says it cannot be compelled to take in refugees from Myanmar, calling instead on neighbouring countries to share the burden and resettle the Rohingya who arrive on its shores.

Many Acehnese are sympathetic to the plight of their fellow Muslims but others decline their presence, claiming the Rohingya consume scarce resources and occasionally come into conflict with locals.

AFP



# JUSTICE FOR MYANMAR CALLS OUT INTERRA RESOURCES FOR SUPPORT TO MYANMAR JUNTA

Justice for Myanmar released a statement on 29 January calling out Singapore-listed Interra Resources for supplying the Myanmar junta with valuable resources for its terror campaigns against its own citizens.

The text of the statement is as follows.

Since the Myanmar military's February 2021 illegal coup attempt, Singapore-listed Interra Resources' operations in Myanmar have supplied the junta with over two million barrels of oil, worth more than US\$150 million, fuelling its campaign of terror.

Interra Resources Limited owns 60% of Goldpetrol Joint Operating Company Inc., which supplied 2.3 million barrels of oil to Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) from January 2021 to the end of 2023. Following the military's coup attempt, MOGE was sanctioned by both the European Union and the United States.

The oil was extracted from Goldpetrol's two onshore fields, Chauk and Yenangyaung, in the Magway region, where the junta is committing war crimes and crimes against humanity.

During this period, Interra Resources reported over \$55 million in revenues from its Myanmar operations, according to the company's own stock exchange disclosures and leaked financial reports analysed

by Justice For Myanmar and the UK journalism organisation Finance Uncovered.

The oil was refined at the Mann Thanbayarkan petrochemical complex, which is operated by Myanma Petrochemical Enterprise (MPE), another part of the energy ministry that is illegally under junta control.

Faced with international sanctions on its aviation fuel supply chain, the junta has been scrambling to find fuel as it wages war against the Myanmar people. The Mann refinery makes diesel and jet fuel, which the military needs to power the aircraft, trucks, and tanks used in its commission of war crimes against civilians.

Until August 2023, Interra Resources was chaired by Indonesian billionaire Edwin Soeryadjaya, who owned more than 10% of its shares alongside Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno, the former minister of tourism and creative economy in the Indonesian government of Joko Widodo. Uno was deputy chairperson of Interra Resources until 2016 and remained a minor shareholder until recently.

The company's joint venture partner in Goldpetrol is North Petroleum International Co. Ltd., part of China ZhenHua Oil Co. Ltd. which is a subsidiary of the Chinese state-owned conglomerate NORINCO, a major arms supplier of the Myanmar military.

Justice For Myanmar calls for Interra Resources to immediately cease supplying oil to the military junta.

We urge the Singapore stock exchange to take regulatory action against Interra Resources for its continued business with a sanctioned entity and its complicity in the junta's international crimes.

We call on governments to impose coordinated sanctions on MOGE, MPE and junta-controlled banks, which facilitate Interra Resources' transactions with MOGE.

Singapore, as an ASEAN member, bears particular responsibility to prevent companies and citizens in its territory from materially supporting the military junta and prolonging the crisis in Myanmar. It must take action to end Interra Resources' complicity in the junta's war crimes.

## NEGOTIATIONS UNDERWAY BETWEEN KIA AND TNLA TO ADDRESS TERRITORIAL DISPUTES IN NORTHERN SHAN STATE



Colonel Naw Bu, spokesperson for the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), announced that discussions are ongoing among allied groups to address territorial disputes with the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) in northern Shan State.

A video circulating on social media on 26 January depicted rising tensions between the two organisations, reportedly showing an incident near a KIA checkpoint in Namhpatka Town, Kutkai Township. The video follows reports of clashes in Mongmit, Namtu, and Mongwi villages in Namhkam Township.

Colonel Naw Bu stressed that both sides are committed to resolving these issues through dialogue.

"The clashes mainly stem from disagreements among frontline troops, such as restrictions on movement or territorial control. Independent actions by younger soldiers have contributed to the tensions. However, Brigades 4, 6, and 10 of the KIA are active in the area, and responsible committees are working on resolving the conflicts," Colonel Naw Bu said.

He also reiterated the KIO government's ongoing commitment to achieving territorial and administrative autonomy via political dialogue.

Kutkai, Namtu, and Mongmit towns remain under TNLA control following Operation 1027, while Namhpatka is governed by the KIA.

A resident of Kutkai remarked that disputes often arise when one group blocks the other's movement or when disagreements occur over the establishment of checkpoints. While leaders of both groups maintain mutual understanding, tensions frequently flare among lower-ranking troops.

"These clashes should not be based on ethnic divisions. Leaders need to guide their forces better, as such conflicts undermine local security, with civilians relying on these groups for protection," the resident said.

Mizzima is working to reach TNLA General Secretary Tar Bhone Kyaw and spokesperson Lway Yay Oo for more details on the ongoing negotiations.

In a 12 January speech marking Ta'ang National Revolution Day, PSLF/TNLA Chairman General Tar Aik Bong underscored the importance of resolving internal disputes through peaceful political means, emphasizing unity among ethnic groups to combat divide-and-conquer strategies employed by common adversaries.

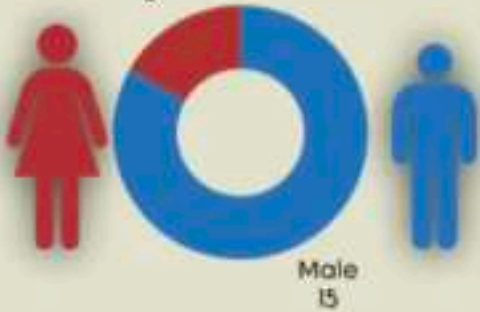
Despite these efforts, territorial disputes between allied groups continue to burden civilians, who already face the threat of frequent military airstrikes in areas controlled by the KIA, TNLA, and other resistance forces.

Currently, the KIA controls Namhpatka and Mabane in northern Shan State, alongside several areas in Kachin State, including Sumprabum, Injangyan, Sadung, Chipwi, Tsawlaw, Phimaw, Pangwa, Dawthphoneyan, Hsinbo, Myohla, Moemauk, and Lweje. The KIA is also engaged in battles to seize Bhamo Town. During Operation 1027, the TNLA captured territories in northern Shan State, including Namhsan, Mantong, Namhkam, Kutkai, Namtu, Mong Ngaw, Mong Long, Kyaukme, Nawngkhio, Mongmit, and Hsipaw, as well as Moegok Township in Mandalay Region.



## Military Junta Launches Airstrike on Singwat Village, Myingyan Township, Mandalay Region

**Civilian Deaths**  
Female 3



A family involving two children aged four years and five months were killed.

Eight members of the village PaKhaPha/PDTs, three members of the township PaKhaPha/PDTs, and a female member of PaKhaPha/PDTs were killed, bringing the **total number of fatalities to 18**, while **others four** were injured and are receiving medical treatment.



**Civilian Injuries**  
4

Detailed information about victims were not disclosed over security concerns, but will be used in judicial processes



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# NUG MINISTRY OF HUMAN RIGHTS CONDEMNS DEADLY AIRSTRIKE BY MYANMAR JUNTA IN MINGYAN TOWNSHIP

The Ministry for Human Rights of the National Unity Government (NUG) released an infographic report on 29 January detailing a deadly airstrike by the Myanmar junta on Singwat village in Myingyan Township, Mandalay Region on 26 January.

According to the Ministry of Human Rights, at approximately 7:50 am on 26 January jet fighters dropped two 500-pound bombs on Singwat village. Mi-35 helicopter gunships participated in the airstrike. A school, residences, and unarmed civilians were targeted in the 30-minute attack on the village along the Semi Khon Road.

Eighteen people were killed in the attack including 12 members of the village and township People's Defence Teams and 6 civilians. Another 4 people were injured and receiving treatment.

Detailed information on the killed and injured was not immediately available due to security concerns.



## TRAVELERS FACE 5 MILLION KYAT 'FACILITATION FEES' TO DEPART YANGON AIRPORT

Travellers at Yangon airport. Photo: AFP

Young people attempting to travel abroad on visit visas report being forced to pay up to 5 million kyats (approx. \$2,300) at Yangon International Airport to ensure smooth passage through immigration and other official procedures.

Out of seven travelers interviewed, three confirmed that airport personnel had demanded money before their flights. A facilitator involved in the process told Mizzima that the average fee is around 5 million kyats.

This under-the-table payment, commonly referred to as a "facilitation fee" or "VIP Pass," involves junta soldiers, police, and brokers working together to assist young travelers in clearing immigration, provided they pay the required sum.

"I had my tickets canceled twice. Even though I contacted them, they didn't do anything for me at the airport. My friend and I had to handle everything on our own, and when my friend was allowed to leave, these people asked him for money. They didn't say a word to me or help me because I was not allowed to leave the country," said a young man who was denied permission to travel.

Reports of such payments surfaced after restrictions were imposed in September 2024, preventing some travelers on visit visas from departing Yangon International Airport.

A person offering the service revealed that first-time female travelers are charged around 4 million kyats, while first-time male travelers pay 4.5 million kyats. Those traveling for a second time are charged over 5 million kyats.

"We provide a service so they don't have to turn back from the airport. We don't ask for money upfront; they only pay after completing all procedures and waiting to board the plane. I can't disclose the officer providing the service, but if someone is denied departure once and tries again, the next attempt will cost more than 5 million kyats," he said.

The cost of these facilitation fees at Yangon Airport has reportedly increased fivefold since the junta enforced the People's Military Service Law.

The law prohibits individuals who have received military service orders and passed medical tests from traveling abroad without official permission if they seek exemption, reduction, or postponement of service.

Due to these restrictions, overseas labor service providers are experiencing shortages, forcing them to screen workers more carefully.

An entrepreneur from an overseas employment agency said, "We now have to investigate every worker thoroughly. They must be transparent about whether they are on the military service list and have passed the medical test. If not, it creates unnecessary problems for everyone. Honestly, it's getting extremely difficult for agencies, there are no more workers to send abroad."

The junta has already conscripted nine batches for military service training, each targeting 5,000 recruits. According to the People's Military Service Law, priority is given to volunteers, but if recruitment targets are not met, a lottery system will be used to select those required to serve.



Chinese tour guide with tourists. Screenshot

## FEARS OF SCAM CENTRE KIDNAPS KEEP CHINESE TOURISTS ON EDGE IN THAILAND

Chinese tourists visiting Thailand for Lunar New Year are worried about being kidnapped by gangsters to work in hellish scam centres, despite efforts to reassure them.

Chinese nationals topped the list of visitors to Thailand last year, with nearly seven million making the trip to Thailand in 2024.

But high-profile kidnappings on the Thai-Myanmar border have sent a chill through the market at a peak period, with a reported 10,000 trips cancelled during the Lunar New Year holidays.

Thai aviation chiefs say they expect arrivals from China over the January 24 to February 2 period to be down on 2024, despite higher traveller numbers overall.

Even those who have brave the trip are uneasy.

"I didn't dare to tell my family, so I came here secretly," Gao, a 29-year-old tourist from Hainan province who gave only one name, told AFP at Wat Pho, the Thai capital's Temple of the Reclining Buddha.

Fears were heightened after Chinese actor Wang Xing was rescued from a cyber fraud centre in Myanmar earlier this month.

Wang said he was lured to Thailand on the promise of an audition, only to be whisked off and smuggled across the border.

The fact that kidnappings appear to be carried out by Chinese speakers is making tourists wary.

"When we are here, we try not to talk too much to people who speak Chinese," Hu Yangfan, a 25-year-old tourist from Zhejiang in eastern China told AFP near the Grand Palace, one of Bangkok's most famous landmarks.

### Chinese cancellations

China is a hugely important market for Thailand as it seeks to rebuild its crucial tourism sector after the devastating impact of travel shutdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tourism generated more than \$50 billion in 2024, according to the Tourism Authority of Thailand, equivalent to around 10 percent of GDP.

Of that, travel over the Lunar New Year period accounted for more than \$1 billion as Chinese visitors sought shopping bargains and cultural experiences.

However, following kidnapping reports, public broadcaster ThaiPBS said around 10,000 Chinese tourists had cancelled flights, citing Airports of Thailand (AOT), which runs the kingdom's main international terminals.

Kasikorn Bank said in a research note Friday that Chinese visitor numbers could be down by as much as 17.5 percent during this year's holiday period compared with 2024.

The government is deeply concerned and took the highly unusual step last week of publishing an AI-generated video of Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra insisting -- in Mandarin, a language she does not speak -- that the kingdom was safe for Chinese tourists.

"The bad situation isn't caused by Thai people, but sparked concerns among Chinese tourists visiting the country," she said on social media platform X.

A junior Chinese security minister visited Thailand to press the government to do more to crack down on the gangs running scam compounds.

And Paetongtarn said she would use talks with Beijing next week to try to allay fears.

### Tour guide fears

Those on the front line of the Thai tourism industry are feeling the effects.

Back at the Grand Palace, tour guide Buri Chin eyed the thinning crowd of Chinese tourists with unease.

Fluent in Mandarin, Buri has spent decades guiding Chinese visitors around Bangkok's historic sights but said the mood had changed lately.

"When I ask if they need a Chinese-speaking guide, many seem scared. They don't even want to talk to strangers," he told AFP.

He said he was bracing for a tough season.

"The number of Chinese tourists will definitely be lower this year," Buri said.

"Many Chinese-speaking guides I know are heading back to their hometowns instead of working during the holidays," he added.

Not all visitors are worried.

A 65-year-old man from Shanghai who gave his name only as Li dismissed safety concerns.

"Tourism is their lifeline. If Thailand was truly dangerous, its reputation would collapse," Li told AFP.

"We walk around in the evening and it's very safe."

AFP



# KIA CLAIMS ATTACK ON BHAMO AIRPORT AND ARTILLERY BATTALION

**A**s KIA has stormed the Bhamo airport and an artillery battalion base as fighting continues throughout the city. The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) is trying to capture Bhamo, the second largest town in Kachin State.

A video file showing KIA and joint forces walking on the Bhamo airstrip surfaced on 26 January. It comes at the same time news is spreading of the capture of Field Artillery Battalion 366 based in Bhamo town.

Although that news could not be confirmed, the fact is KIA fighting forces have stormed the city, Colonel Naw Bu, who is authorized to speak to the KIA, told Mizzima.

"We cannot yet to confirm the status of Bhamo Airport and the capture of Field Artillery Battalion 366.

However, the frontline forces have been able to control the area. The airport has not been able to receive air traffic for a long time," Colonel Nawbu said.

The Bhamo Scout Team, which provides information about the Bhamo area, said on 26 January that KIA joint forces control the Field Artillery Battalion 366 base and are still trying to gain full control over Bhamo Airport.

The battle to capture Bhamo town, more than 100 miles away from the Kachin State capital of Myitkyina, began on 4 December 2024. After the fighting intensified, military junta troops and families retreated from other military camps in the city and gathered at the Military Operations Commands 21 (MOC 21) headquarters and the Light Infantry Battalion 47 (LIB 47) camp.

According to Colonel Nawbu, the fighting between the two sides is still fierce around the MOC 21 and LIB 47 camps on 27 January.

The KIA also said on 25 January that KIA and joint forces captured seven armoured vehicles from Armoured Battalion 7006 in Bhamo.

The military junta has carried out airstrikes many times during the ongoing fighting to prevent Bhamo from being lost, said Kachin residents.

The military junta has not release information about the fighting. Telegram channels supporting the junta are reporting that the fighting in Bhamo is continuing and airstrikes are being carried out on the town.

The All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF), Battalion 10 of Military Column 2, and local defence forces are fighting together with KIA in the battle to capture Bhamo town.



## CIVILIANS FLEE AS MILITARY JUNTA SHELLS VILLAGES NEAR WEAPON FACTORY IN SEIKPHYU TOWNSHIP

**A**round 1,000 residents from villages near the junta's No. 22 Weapon Factory in Seikphyu Township, Magway Region, have been forced to flee due to ongoing artillery shelling, local resistance forces reported on 30 January.

According to an official from the Seikphyu Northern People's Defense Force (PDF), heavy weapons have been fired almost daily since 26 January, resulting in civilian casualties and mass displacement from two villages near the factory.

Local revolutionary groups also revealed that another military facility, No. 21 Weapon Factory in Seikphyu, was hit by rocket attacks on 18 January, causing severe damage. Since then, junta forces have ramped up defenses around No. 22 Weapon Factory and intensified artillery attacks on nearby villages out of fear of further strikes.

"The military has increased its presence at the No. 22 Weapon Factory and continues to fire artillery at surrounding villages, forcing residents to flee in fear," the official said.

Resistance forces reported that approximately 100 junta reinforcements are stationed at the factory in Shwe Bo Kyun village and actively monitoring movements in the area.

"Due to the possibility of ground patrols by the Military Council, we are closely observing the situation and coordinating with our allies while patrolling around north of Shwe Bo Kyun village," said a member of the local resistance force.

The People's Defense Force of Northern Seikphyu confirmed that while no damage was reported from the latest shelling on 29 January, artillery shells have been fired almost daily from the factory.

On 26 January, however, an artillery shell struck Kin Moon Khong village at around 5:30 pm, killing four five-year-old twin children, two couples in their 50s, and an 80-year-old woman.

# MYANMAR MILITARY 'SUICIDE DRONES' STRIKE NEAR KNU HEADQUARTERS ON KAREN REVOLUTION DAY

Photo: Supplied

**T**wo suicide drones targeted an area near the Karen National Union (KNU) headquarters in the 7th Brigade territory, landing at a parade field close to the headquarters, according to the Karen Information Center, a local news outlet.

The attack, which occurred at 7:30 am on 31 January, injured one person and caused damage to a building and a vehicle, according to the Karen Information Centre.

The site of the drone strike was previously used for the 70th Karen Revolution Day celebration in 2019.

31 January marks the 76th anniversary of Karen Revolution Day, with commemorative events taking place in various locations in Karen State, based on security conditions, plus in Karen diaspora communities around the world.

Preliminary investigations suggest that the attack was carried out by the Military Council using a kamikaze drone. Images circulating online depict a makeshift building with its roof torn off, metal sheets scattered, and debris littering the area.

For the first time, this year's Karen Revolution Day was also celebrated in Manerplaw area, the former KNU headquarters, which had been under junta control for more than 30 years.

On 16 December, 2023, Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and Karen National Defense Organization (KNDO) forces launched an offensive, capturing key military bases and reclaiming Manerplaw in Karen State.



Photo: AFP

# POST-IMPRISONMENT CHALLENGES IN MYANMAR HIGHLIGHTED IN NEW REPORT BY AAPP AND DIGNITY

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) and DIGNITY launched a new groundbreaking report on 28 January on post-imprisonment difficulties faced by former political prisoners in Myanmar.

The text of the press release continues below.

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners of Burma (AAPP) and DIGNITY today unveiled a powerful new report, *Struggle for Survival: Resilience in the Face of Prison's Aftershocks*, which sheds light on the enduring trauma and systemic challenges faced by Burma's former political prisoners. The report highlights the compounding impact of arbitrary arrest, torture, imprisonment, and post-release oppression under Burma's military junta. Please see the file attached.

Building on AAPP's earlier findings in *The Flow of Injustice* (2023), this report draws from 30 interviews with former political prisoners and examines the severe consequences of imprisonment. The findings underscore how released political prisoners continue to grapple with trauma, surveillance, economic and health hardships, and displacement.

Ko Bo Kyi, Joint Secretary of AAPP, stressed the urgency of international intervention:

"Political prisoners in Burma endure unimaginable suffering, both during and after imprisonment. Their resilience is extraordinary, but their struggle continues in silence. This report amplifies their voices and calls

for global action to end these atrocities and support survivors."


The report reveals that nearly four years after Burma's 2021 coup, over 28,000 political prisoners have been detained, many subjected to torture, sexual violence, and arbitrary imprisonment. Even upon release, their suffering persists as they face social ostracization, economic deprivation, physical and mental trauma, and threats of re-arrest.

DIGNITY's CEO, Rasmus Grue Christensen, emphasized the report's international implications:

"This is not just a Burma issue—it is a human rights crisis. The international community must step up to hold perpetrators accountable and provide tangible support to survivors. Transitional justice, mental health care, and livelihood assistance are urgently needed."

Key recommendations from the report include:

- Immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.
- Comprehensive support for livelihoods, healthcare, and education for former political prisoners and their families.
- International action to gather evidence of human rights violations for accountability in a transitional period.



Yangon smog. Photo: AFP

## YANGON FACES UNHEALTHY AIR POLLUTION; DOCTORS URGE PRECAUTIONS

**D**octors are advising residents to wear masks when going outdoors due to recent smog and air pollution in Yangon. Individuals with respiratory conditions are particularly urged to stay indoors to avoid exacerbating their health issues.

According to IQ Air, a global air quality monitoring group, Yangon ranked eighth in the world on 27 January with an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 165, classified as an unhealthy red-level alert.

IQ Air also reported that Yangon, Bahan, and Dagon townships were at the red level, while Kamaryut Township was at the orange level.

The Air Quality Index (AQI) categorizes air quality as follows: 0 to 50 (good, green), 51 to 100 (moderate, pink), 101 to 150 (unhealthy for vulnerable people, orange), 151 to 200 (unhealthy, red), 201 to 300 (very unhealthy, purple), and 301+ (hazardous). Cities in Pakistan, India, China, Bangladesh, and Uganda are reported to have worse air pollution than Myanmar, according to IQ Air.

Air pollution is also a significant concern in neighbouring Thailand. On 24 January, Bangkok's air pollution ranked seventh globally. In response, the Thai government closed 352 schools across 31 provinces and provided free public transport to reduce pollution levels. As a result, Bangkok's AQI improved to 46, according to IQ Air.

A female CDM doctor emphasized the need for extra precautions for individuals with lung diseases,

chronic asthma, chronic bronchitis, as well as stroke and heart disease patients.

"The elderly and children are more vulnerable than middle-aged adults. It's better to stay at home if possible. If going outside is unavoidable, wearing a mask is necessary," the doctor said. She also recommended using public transport more frequently to help reduce pollution caused by private cars and taxis.

A woman from South Okkalapa Township expressed concern about the low public awareness of air pollution in Yangon, with many mistaking the smog for regular winter fog.

"In the early mornings, we see fog we've never seen before. Some think it's just winter fog, as they're unaware of the air pollution. Many don't wear masks and continue their daily activities as usual. But they're experiencing symptoms like runny noses and persistent coughing," she said.

Both the National Unity Government (NUG) and the junta have issued warnings urging people to wear masks, as Yangon's air pollution remains at a red-level alert.

The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that 99% of the global population breathes poor-quality air, with air pollution contributing to 7 million premature deaths annually.





Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing with his wife. Photo: AFP

## MYANMAR JUNTA CHIEF EXPRESSES GRATITUDE TO CHINA, VOWS TO STRENGTHEN BILATERAL TIES

**M**yanmar's junta chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, expressed his appreciation to China for its support in maintaining Myanmar's stability and sovereignty.

Speaking at a Chinese New Year celebration held on 25 January at Thuwunna Stadium in Yangon, he acknowledged China's backing in Myanmar's peace efforts. The event was attended by representatives from both nations, including the Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar.

Min Aung Hlaing credited China's support for enabling the junta to advance its roadmap toward democracy. He also requested continued Chinese assistance in Myanmar's peace process and national development efforts.

Referring to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and economic corridor projects, the junta leader stated that Myanmar would create a conducive environment to accelerate joint projects with China.

He reiterated the junta's commitment to strengthening bilateral relations and deepening the

friendship between the two countries' citizens. He further emphasized Myanmar's dedication to remaining a trusted and close ally of China.

Since the 2021 coup, the military regime has faced growing international isolation but has maintained strong ties with Beijing.

In November 2024, Min Aung Hlaing made an official visit to China, further solidifying relations.

Additionally, in July 2024, the junta declared Chinese New Year a public holiday in Myanmar. The junta chief described it as a demonstration of support for China and its position on Myanmar.

Min Aung Hlaing also claimed that certain internal and external forces were attempting to undermine the relationship between China and Myanmar. He urged authorities and citizens of both nations to remain vigilant against efforts to create division.

# SEEKING LIGHT IN DARK TIMES FOUR YEARS AFTER MYANMAR COUP



Food stall at night in Yangon. Photo: AFP

Yangon resident Aung Ko Gyi browses stalls for a solar power kit he can use to weather the blackouts that have become a constant feature of life in Myanmar four years on from a military coup.

"I need power supply to use in night, to use computer for my business and to use for internet connection," the 64-year-old told AFP at the country's biggest annual solar exhibition.

Power outages are common in his township, a result of rolling blackouts scheduled by the junta government as it battles for control of areas seized by rebel groups.

Aung Bo Bo, another Yangon resident, bemoaned the power cut timetable that can see houses plunged

into darkness 12 hours a day.

He has to wake up at midnight to cook and pump water when the electricity comes on, he told AFP.

"We're getting no sleep," he said.

Yin Kay Thwe, an office worker in Yangon, said the situation is especially difficult for families with children.

It would be better for power cuts to happen during office hours, she told AFP, not in the evenings until past midnight.

"How can we live with that?" she said.

## 'Struggling' daily

Myanmar is mired in a civil war that has killed thousands, triggered when the military ousted the elected civilian government of democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi four years ago Saturday.

Myanmar has oil, gas and coal reserves as well as strong hydroelectric and solar potential, but is crippled by political instability, investor flight, poor policy and a lack of infrastructure.

A Ministry of Electric Power report from January said that of the 7,000 megawatts (MW) of daily installed capacity, in normal times the power system could distribute around 4,000 MW.

Average daily electricity production has plummeted to 2,200 MW, it said, with only half of that being distributed.

The junta has blamed the worsening outages on rising gas prices and attacks on infrastructure by anti-coup fighters.

Around a third of firms surveyed by the World Bank in April last year reported power outages as their primary challenge, up from 12 percent in September 2023.

Only 48 percent of the population had access to electricity in late 2024, according to the UN - the lowest rate in Asia.

And the crisis is having a major impact on both the economy and civilians' well-being.

"We can't cook with charcoal or wood in Yangon's small rooms. So we only rely on gas for cooking but... we also face gas shortages," Yin Kay Thwe said.

"We are struggling with cooking every day."

## 'Energy from nature'

The uncertain outlook has seen a surge in the use of alternative energy sources, particularly solar - much of which comes from Myanmar's northern neighbour, China, the world's top producer of the renewable.

"Long-term solutions are being explored through renewable energy sources such as hydropower, solar, and wind, in alignment with the country's natural resources," the Ministry of Electric Power's report said.

A World Bank report found that 17 percent of Myanmar firms surveyed had invested in off-grid solar power.

Zaw Htay Aung, the director of Sun Solar Myanmar Company, said he has seen a rise in the number of households installing solar panels as electricity and fuel shortages bite.

"People follow the solar energy trend these days because solar is more convenient to solve electricity shortages in Myanmar," he told AFP, adding that home solar panels can be installed from around \$570.

Resident Aung Kyo Gyi encourages others to switch to solar power to make it through the dark times.

"It's not noisy and we use the energy from nature," he said.

"Perhaps solar panels are expensive than others at first but it's way better for long term."

AFP



Photo: AFP

# MYANMAR AID GROUPS STRUGGLE WITH FREEZE AS UN WARNS OF 'STAGGERING' HUNGER

Groups helping victims of Myanmar’s turmoil are struggling to provide assistance after the U.S. put a 90-day freeze on nearly all foreign aid, one organization said on Thursday, as the U.N. warned of looming hunger five years after the military ousted an elected government.

More than 3.5 million people have been displaced in Myanmar due to war between a junta that seized power in 2021, which is backed by China and sanctioned by Western governments, and a loose alliance of pro-democracy and ethnic minority groups battling to end military rule.

In the 2024 fiscal year, which ended on Sept. 30, the U.S. provided \$141 million in humanitarian aid to Myanmar, much of which is channeled through groups working on the Thai-Myanmar border.

The U.S. State Department on Friday announced the freeze on nearly all aid in order to give the State Department time to review programs “to ensure they are efficient and consistent with U.S. foreign policy under the America First agenda.”

In the days since, stop-work orders have been sent by the U.S. Agency for International Development, or USAID, to implementing partners ranging from media organizations to clinics.

One aid worker, who declined to be identified, said about 20 relief groups providing healthcare with USAID assistance along the Thai-Myanmar border were at risk of being suspended.

Nai Aue Mon, program director of the Human

Rights Foundation of Monland group, which documents human rights violations, said communication and travel costs, salaries and stipends would be hit.

"To be honest, it's widespread, it's huge," Nai Aue Mon said of the impact of the aid freeze on humanitarian groups in areas under the administration of the anti-junta Karen National Union in Kayin state and to the south in Mon state, affecting thousands of people.

"It significantly impacts those groups ... nearly every organization is more or less impacted by this executive order."

Groups might have some funds in reserve and were scrambling for other sources of donations but the outlook was grim, he said.

"As far as I know, my organization, we still have some resources but we don't know after that," Nai Aue Mon said. "We're definitely struggling a lot."

### Thailand to try to fill the gap

Some 100,000 ethnic Karen people from eastern Myanmar war zones have lived in camps on the Thai side for decades and people fleeing more recent repression in Myanmar's towns and cities have also sought shelter on the border.

Refugee camp hospitals were having to discharge patients because health workers had been suspended from duties, a health worker speaking on the condition of anonymity for security reasons told RFA.

Thailand will help fill the gap in funding for the camps on its soil, at least for the time being, a government minister said, according to The Bangkok Post.

"We cannot abandon or chase them away since they have lived here in the camps for a long time," Thai Public Health Minister Somsak Thepsutin told the newspaper.

"We cannot just talk about refugees who have been affected ... All kinds of healthcare and assistance must be provided to other groups of people who live in this country."

The freeze in U.S. aid comes as Myanmar is spiraling into a humanitarian crisis, aid groups say.

"A staggering 15 million people are expected to face hunger in 2025, up from 13.3 million last year," the World Food Programme said in a report on Wednesday.

Almost 20 million people, or nearly one in three people in Myanmar, will need humanitarian assistance in 2025, the U.N. food agency said.

"Growing conflict across the country, access restrictions, a crumbling economy and successive weather-related crises are driving record levels of hunger," said the WFP Country Director Michael Dunford.

"The world cannot afford to overlook Myanmar's escalating crisis. Without immediate and increased international support, hundreds of thousands more will be pushed to the brink."

*Courtesy of Radio Free Asia*

A refugee camp in Thailand.  
Photo: Mizzima

## U.S. AID FREEZE LEAVES OVER 80,000 REFUGEES WITHOUT HEALTHCARE ALONG THAI-MYANMAR BORDER

**H**ealthcare services in at least eight refugee camps along the Thailand-Myanmar border have been suspended following the U.S. government's 90-day freeze on foreign aid programmes, according to camp officials.

"We can't use medicines or medical equipment. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) is still in discussions with its higher officials. We've requested permission to resume services, but so far, the answer has been no," said the Secretary of the Karen Refugee Committee.

The affected camps include Mae La, Nupo, Ban Don Yang, Tham Hin, Umpiem, Mae La (Beh Klaw), Karenni Refugee Camp 1, and Karenni Refugee Camp 2, all of which rely on the IRC for healthcare services. Since 27 January, outpatients have been discharged, and critically ill patients are expected to be released by 31 January.

"There are no more medical treatments, no patient transfers, and even IRC staff have stopped working. Pregnant women, emergency cases, and chronically ill patients are all at risk. We don't know what to do if something happens. We're not allowed to leave the camp, so we depend entirely on the camp clinic," said a representative from Karenni Refugee Camps 1 and 2.

At Umpiem Refugee Camp in Phop Pra District, some pregnant women and hospitalized patients have been sent back home due to the suspension of treatment. Aid workers from Mae Sot reportedly stepped in to transport them to Phop Phra Hospital for care.

"Refugees aren't allowed to seek treatment outside the camp, but when the clinic is shut down, we have no choice. Last night in Umpiem, there were two pregnant women, one managed to go on her own, while the other had to be transported by a Thai official's vehicle to Phop Phra hospital," the Karen Refugee Committee Secretary said.

At Mae La (Beh Klaw) Refugee Camp, more than 60 patients were receiving treatment, but on 27 January, all except nine critically ill patients on oxygen support were discharged. By evening, that number dropped to four, and they, too, are expected to be discharged by 31 January.

While some camps, such as Mae La Oon and Mae Ra Ma, continue to receive healthcare support from other donors, the remaining camps rely entirely on the IRC. The funding suspension has left these camps without any medical services.

Karenni Refugee Camps 1 and 2 house over 13,000 refugees, while the Karen refugee camps including Mae La, Nupo, Ban Don Yang, Tham Hin, and Umpiem, shelter between 60,000 and 70,000 people. In total, more than 80,000 refugees now face a dire healthcare crisis with no immediate solution in sight, camp officials explained.

On 20 January, U.S. President Donald Trump ordered a 90-day freeze on nearly all foreign aid funding. As a result, the IRC, which provides healthcare services in these camps through U.S. government funding, has been forced to halt operations, leaving thousands without access to medical care.



## **US GOVERNMENT'S DOGE SUSPENDS \$45M SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME FOR MYANMAR**

**T**he Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) in the United States has officially announced the suspension of the Diversity and Inclusion Scholarship Program (DISP) by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

This program previously provided annual scholarships of \$45 million (200 billion kyats) to students from Myanmar.

The suspension was confirmed by DOGE, now led by Elon Musk, who was appointed as its new director by the newly inaugurated Trump administration.

The DISP aimed to support over 1,000 students from Myanmar in pursuing higher education opportunities in South and Southeast Asia. The program was scheduled to run for five years and was launched on 29 February 2024 in Bangkok, Thailand.



## NUG'S DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS: U.S. AID SUSPENSION WILL NOT HALT MYANMAR'S REVOLUTION

**M**oe Zaw Oo, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for the National Unity Government (NUG), stated that the U.S. government's temporary suspension of international project funding will not directly impact Myanmar's ongoing revolution.

Speaking at a press conference held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 29 January, Moe Zaw Oo responded to Mizzima's inquiry, emphasizing that the revolution will persist regardless of international aid.

"Such changes cannot have a direct impact on our revolution. Our revolution will continue no matter what. The revolution will not stop. Aid will continue, whether the international community provides it or not," he said.

He further explained that international assistance is not provided directly to the NUG but is channelled through specific organizations.

Meanwhile, the suspension of U.S. aid has already affected humanitarian operations along the Thai-Myanmar border. According to camp officials, healthcare services have ceased in at least eight refugee camps following the U.S. government's 90-day halt on foreign assistance programs.

On 20 January, President Donald Trump issued an executive order temporarily freezing all U.S. foreign aid programs for 90 days to evaluate their alignment with his administration's policy goals.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio subsequently issued a cable on 24 January to all U.S. diplomatic posts, outlining the decision.

According to CNN, this move puts billions of dollars in funding from the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) at risk worldwide.





Volker Turk. Photo: AFP

## UN RIGHTS OFFICE APPEALS FOR \$500 MILLION FOR 2025

The UN rights chief said 30 January his office would need \$500 million on top of its regular budget to help face towering rights challenges around the world this year.

"Lives are at stake if we don't invest in human rights," Volker Turk said as he launched his office's 2025 appeal.

Speaking to country representatives at the United Nations in Geneva, he pointed to the vital work done by his staff in crisis-hit 2024 and warned that "in 2025, we expect no let-up in major challenges to human rights".

"In this divided and polarised world, human rights assume even greater importance and must be one of the top priorities across the globe," he said.

In 2024, Turk said his office had raised the alarm

over grave violations and abuses in a long line of places, from Gaza to Ukraine to Sudan and Myanmar.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said his 2,000 staff members working across 92 countries had undertaken around 11,000 human rights monitoring missions and had observed nearly 1,000 trials.

The office's advocacy last year had contributed to the release of around 3,145 arbitrarily detained people, he said.

Its staff had also documented some 15,000 situations of rights violations, supported more than 10,000 survivors of contemporary forms of slavery and more than 49,000 survivors of torture and their families, he added.

Turk said his office had determined that it would need \$500 million on top of the resources it receives through the UN's regular budget to do its work in 2025.

It had requested the same amount last year but had received just \$269 million of that, he said.

That was "four percent less than in 2023", he said, adding that the office had been forced "to spend our reserves in order to make it through the year".

A number of countries voiced their support and vowed continued funding for the UN rights office during Thursday's event.

The United States, which has sparked concern over recent decisions that could impact the funding of UN agencies, was not among them.

On returning to office last week, President Donald Trump said the United States -- the world's largest foreign aid donor in dollar terms -- would temporarily freeze almost all foreign aid pending a review.

Washington provided \$36 million in voluntary support to the UN rights office last year, on top of its contribution to the regular UN budget.

UN rights office spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani told AFP on Thursday that the agency had received no information so far on US funding plans for 2025, "but we do of course remain hopeful that the US will continue its support".

AFP

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Omdurman in Sudan. People queue for water. Photo: AFP

## FOR WORLD'S POOREST, FEARS FOR LONG-TERM SETBACKS AFTER US AID CUT

AFP

In Uganda, millions of schoolchildren have benefitted from a universal education program backed by the United States. In South Sudan, US assistance has helped thousands of flood victims at risk of cholera.

With one swoop of the pen, President Donald Trump froze the bulk of US foreign assistance for three months on returning to office, demanding a review to ensure all money meets his "America First" principles.

The Trump administration has since issued waivers for food and other humanitarian aid. But aid workers say uncertainty reigns -- and that the impact is already being felt by some of the world's most vulnerable.

Even if US assistance returns after the 90-day review, aid workers fear long-term consequences from the cutoff, and some observers see a lasting blow to US credibility as China and other powers woo the

developing world.

"Even if the funding eventually turns back on, great damage will have been done," said Peter Waiswa, an accountant in Kamuli, Uganda who coordinates aid as part of a network known as the Compassion Connectors.

"Missing drugs for days for the HIV/AIDS patients can cause death," he said.

Waiswa said that some schools in the universal education program that relied on US assistance have already given notices for children not to report to school.

In Aweil in the northern reaches of impoverished South Sudan, orphanage teacher James Akoon Akot said that 3,000 people who lost their homes in floods

were promised relief by international groups backed by US assistance.

"The problem is that aid is used for both immediate relief and reconstruction," he said.

"If this decision to cut off funds is not reconsidered soon, there is a very real possibility that people will begin to die of hunger and diseases in South Sudan," he said.

### Uncertainly reigns

The United States has long been the world's largest provider of development aid, giving \$64 billion in 2023.

Among its most prominent programs is PEPFAR, the anti-HIV/AIDS initiative started under former president George W. Bush that is credited with saving some 26 million lives.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio in a memo signed on January 24 froze all US assistance with waivers for "emergency food" and, outside of development, weapons for Israel and Egypt.

In a follow-up memo, he exempted other humanitarian assistance including shelter and medicine, appearing to give the greenlight for anti-retroviral drugs funded by PEPFAR.

But Suzy Dzimbiri, a nurse in Zumba, Malawi, said she heard of people stockpiling whatever medicine they can and that one local charity that administered HIV/AIDS treatment, named Lighthouse, quickly closed down.

In Washington, a congressional aide who follows humanitarian assistance said that even a nine-day shutdown in theory affects one million daily doses of HIV/AIDS medication -- and that guidance was still murky.

"It sounds like people expect PEPFAR to go ahead, but we have nothing in terms of specifics," the aide said.

"We do know of cases where there has been medicine sitting on the shelf and ready to go and

that it's been ordered to stay on the shelf" pending guidance from Washington, the aide said on condition of anonymity.

"PEPFAR was supposed to be our Marshall Plan. The idea that we would just flip a switch and it would all turn off shows us to be capricious -- we don't actually care -- and that going forward they probably do need to look to countries like China," the aide said.

### 'We don't want to see people die'

Explaining his decision to issue further waivers, Rubio said, "We don't want to see people die and the like."

But he said that the waiver process was rightfully forcing groups to justify spending as "historically we've gotten very little cooperation."

"We have this thing that I've called the foreign aid industrial complex -- all of these entities around the world that are getting millions and millions of dollars from the United States," Rubio said in an interview with SiriusXM.

"We have to make sure that it's aligned with our national interest."

A senior official from a US-based organization feared that the priority on "emergency" assistance was part of a broader plan to say eventually that the United States need not fund anything else.

"Even the term 'emergency food' is a contradiction in terms. You go without food for a few days, and I'll tell you what emergency food looks like," said the official, who requested anonymity so as not to upset US government contacts.

The official said that the most affected by the cutoff were local groups that did not have financial reserves -- exactly the types of organizations that US officials want to build up.

"This is essentially like burning down the foundations with the professed aim of renovating your house."

AFP



## HAGAR THE WONDERFUL

"When Hagar started in 1994, it was right after the Khmer Rouge, when the UN forces were in Cambodia and Phnom Penh, and keeping the peace. So there were still fighting. There was no infrastructure. All of the elite had been killed, and it was sort of this rebirth. It started with a woman who had been abused by her employer and had a baby, and sort of grew organically from people knowing that this person was helping, and then realizing there was a need to actually make this into an NGO."

Hagar International, initially established in Cambodia by Pierre Tami in 1994, is a humanitarian organization that focuses on providing comprehensive recovery, empowerment and reintegration services to individuals who have suffered from extreme human rights abuses such as trafficking, slavery, and domestic violence. The organization's name, inspired by the biblical figure Hagar, symbolizes resilience and refuge. In this episode, the Insight Myanmar Podcast is joined by Catherine Kirkendall, Executive Director of Hagar's U.S. office, who talks about the evolution of Hagar from its inception in Cambodia to its present, multinational presence, including in Myanmar, as a force for good.

Kirkendall begins by providing historical context about Cambodia in the early 1990s. It was then a nation just emerging from the devastation of the Khmer Rouge era, riddled with extreme challenges. It had been left socially and politically unstable, with virtually non-existent infrastructure, leaving the most vulnerable—women and children—to fend for themselves. Hagar's humble beginning quickly evolved as the widespread need for systemic, institutional support in Cambodia became evident.

During the early 2000s, Hagar moved away from institutional care, adopting more supportive family- and community-based care models to ensure stability and foster intimate, nurturing environments. This shift aligned with a broader global recognition of the negative impacts institutional care can have on children's well-being, including developmental delays, emotional detachment, and a lack of personalized attention. Embracing family-based care, Hagar aimed to provide children with consistent emotional support, stronger community connections, and a profound sense of belonging—factors essential for healthy development. In partnership with the Cambodian government, Hagar played a pivotal role in transitioning from institutional dependency to foster care, a gradual, multi-year effort that led to lasting and meaningful change.

Prior to this point, Cambodia had been promoting the infamous policy of "orphanage tourism." In this exploitative system, orphanages deliberately kept children in neglected states to appeal to tourists seeking emotionally gratifying experiences, with some institutions even resorting to abduction to maintain a steady flow of children. The issue flourished due to international ignorance, with well-meaning tourists unknowingly contributing to harm by visiting orphanages or donating money, believing they were helping. Over time, however, increased awareness and concerted efforts by the Cambodian government and NGOs led to the dismantling of this harmful system, steering the focus toward family- and community-based care.

Kirkendall also describes Hagar's efforts to change cultural narratives in Cambodia. Traditionally, boys were characterized as "steel"—resilient and unbreakable—as opposed to girls, who were likened to "white cloth," that is, easily tainted and devalued by abuse. This cultural backdrop made it particularly challenging to work with male survivors of abuse, who faced entrenched social stigma. Over the years, Hagar has worked to change this narrative, promoting the idea that boys are also vulnerable, and that a girl's value is not diminished by abuse.

### CATCH THE PODCAST

Read more or listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast which includes discussion of Hagar's work involving Myanmar:

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2025/1/1/hagar-the-wonderful>



KIA fighters. Photo: AFP

## JUNTA LOSES KEY ARTILLERY BASE AS KIA ADVANCES IN KACHIN'S BHAMO TOWNSHIP

Myanmar's military junta suffered another major blow as its Artillery Battalion 366 fell to Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and its allied forces in Bhamo Township on February 2, leaving the regime's Military Operations Command 21 (MOC-21) increasingly vulnerable, according to Myanmar news outlets.

The loss of Artillery Battalion 366, the junta's key defensive position near MOC-21, marks the junta's latest setback in the strategic Kachin State city.

KIA spokesperson Colonel Naw Bu confirmed that intense fighting continues around MOC-21, particularly at Infantry Battalion 236.

Local sources reported the junta has resorted to airstrikes and artillery attacks in Bhamo city, causing damage to residential areas, as KIA and allied forces have cut off their ground supply routes.

This defeat follows the junta's earlier losses of Armored Battalion 7006 and Bhamo Airport in late January. Military analysts suggest MOC-21's position is becoming untenable, with only Infantry Battalion 47 remaining as the regime's last major stronghold in the city.

The fighting has forced an estimated 100,000 Bhamo residents to flee to nearby towns and religious buildings.



Photo: ONE Championship

## SOCIAL MEDIA BUZZING AFTER MYANMAR FIGHTERS' MIXED NIGHT AT ONE FRIDAY FIGHTS 95

**F**ight fans took to social media to share their reactions following an action-packed night for Myanmar's martial art warriors at ONE Friday Fights 95 in Bangkok's Lumpinee Stadium, with mixed results drawing varied responses from supporters.

Super Yay Chan's explosive first-round knockout victory over Dunk Lukporphrayasua garnered widespread praise, with fans particularly impressed by his aggressive style. Social media comments highlighted his relentless combination striking, with one supporter noting "Super's fighting style is impressive" and another emphasizing his potential if he continues developing his power and technique.

Moe Htet Aung's performance against Samingdam NF Looksuan sparked debate among viewers. While some fans expressed disappointment with what they

perceived as a hesitant showing, others defended him, attributing the loss to the size difference between the fighters. "Moe Htet Aung seemed reluctant and unmotivated," one fan commented, while another argued "Moe Htet Aung fought well, he just faced a bigger opponent."

Eh Mwi's remarkable comeback victory against Muga Seto had fans on the edge of their seats. Several comments revealed that supporters had initially written him off after a challenging first round where he suffered two knockdowns. "I thought Eh Mwi was finished in the first round when he was getting knocked down," a fan admitted, making his second-round knockout victory all the more impressive to viewers.

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