

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

# mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



**No Status, No Support**

**Koung Jor Shan Refugees Face Growing Crisis**

**EARTHQUAKE UPDATE**

# mizzima WEEKLY

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.



# WHY DOES THE MYANMAR JUNTA GET SUCH A BAD RAP?

The Myanmar junta has become globally notorious for its extreme violence, repression, and lack of empathy toward its own people. Since the February 2021 military coup, which overthrew the democratically elected government led by Aung San Suu Kyi, the military regime has conducted widespread human rights abuses and this continues even in the wake of the catastrophic 28 March earthquake, including airstrikes on civilian areas, burning villages, arbitrary arrests, and the theft or obstruction of humanitarian earthquake aid meant for displaced or suffering populations.

This brutality raises a fundamental question: why does the junta exhibit such a stark lack of empathy and care for the people it is supposed to govern?

The answer lies in a combination of historical militarism, authoritarian ideology, self-preservation, and deeply entrenched systemic interests. The Myanmar military or Tatmadaw has ruled the country for most of its modern history and views itself not as a servant of the people, but as the guardian of national unity and order. This military ethos has bred a culture of detachment from civilian life, where dissent is treated as a threat to national security rather than an expression of democratic will – despite the brief dallying with “democracy” from 2010 to 2021. The Tatmadaw sees itself as the ultimate authority, above civilian government or public accountability, and its actions reflect this deeply rooted belief.

Empathy is difficult to nurture in such an environment. The generals and soldiers are indoctrinated to see ethnic minorities, activists, and opposition groups as enemies. This dehumanization enables violence without remorse. For instance, the military’s attacks on ethnic regions, such as Kachin, Shan, Chin, Karen, and Rakhine, are part of a decades-long strategy to crush autonomy movements

and maintain control over resource-rich areas. Rather than viewing these communities as citizens, the junta treats them as obstacles or insurgents, which helps justify indiscriminate bombing and displacement.

In addition, the junta is motivated primarily by power and survival. Its leaders face potential prosecution for war crimes and corruption if they lose control. This creates a ruthless logic of domination: they must crush resistance at any cost. Stealing or blocking humanitarian aid is not just a tactic of greed or corruption – it is also a weapon of war. By denying food and medicine to civilian populations in rebel-held areas, the junta seeks to weaken resistance movements by making survival itself a struggle.

There is also a significant economic factor at play. The military controls vast business interests through conglomerates like Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (MEHL) and Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC). These entities profit from mining, logging, construction, and other sectors—often in areas heavily affected by conflict. Maintaining access to these resources is a driving force behind military aggression. Human lives become secondary to wealth and control.

In essence, the junta’s lack of empathy is a symptom of militarized authoritarianism, systemic corruption, and a worldview where power outweighs humanity.

The junta does not see the Myanmar people as citizens with rights and dignity, but as subjects to be ruled or enemies to be crushed. Until the military’s grip on power is broken, the suffering of the Myanmar people will likely continue – not because the junta fails to care, but because it chooses domination over compassion.

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WEEKLY

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**Cover photo of a young Myanmar refugee in the Thai border area by AFP**





Koung Jor Shan Refugee Camp.  
Photo: Antonio Graceffo

# NO STATUS, NO SUPPORT

## KOUNG JOR SHAN REFUGEES FACE GROWING CRISIS

**ANTONIO GRACEFFO**



**T**hey have no legal status, no right to work, no UN protection, no chance of resettlement, and nowhere safe to go—and now, their food rations are being cut.

“The Shan State Refugee Committee (SSRC) provided food assistance until December 2024. Now, there is no external funding, and 70 percent of the camp residents still rely on aid,” said Sai Bee, the boarding house coordinator at KOUNG JOR SHAN REFUGEE CAMP.

Just 500 meters from the Thai-Myanmar border in PIANG LUANG, KOUNG JOR is an unofficial refugee camp that receives no recognition or support from the UN-HCR or any governmental body. Established in 2002, after villagers fled a 32-day conflict between the Shan State Army-South (SSA-S) and Myanmar’s Tatmadaw,

the camp remains unregistered, leaving its residents ineligible for third-country resettlement and unprotected by international refugee law. With no legal right to work or remain in Thailand and no land to cultivate, residents are trapped in limbo—unable to return home due to militarization, forced conscription, crippling taxation by multiple armed groups, landmines, airstrikes, and razed villages, and unable to build sustainable lives where they are. KOUNG JOR is home to approximately 296 people, about a quarter of whom are elderly or children who cannot earn income, even if legal work were permitted.

A small number of residents who possess ID cards have been able to find limited seasonal work on nearby garlic and chili farms. “Over the course of a year, they typically get about two and a half months of work,” said



Sai Liang, former head of the camp.  
Photo: Antonio Graceffo

a resident. “They are paid between 200 and 300 baht per day,”—less than \$9 USD. Garlic and chili are planted at the same time, with garlic harvested first, followed by chili. However, for those without documentation, no legal work is available. “These individuals must rely on humanitarian aid, as well as support from their children and relatives,” said Sai Wijit, the camp leader.

In the past, more residents found work on nearby farms, but one incident changed everything. During a routine return trip, police stopped a truck full of camp workers at a checkpoint and asked for identification. Some passengers had no legal documents. When they said they were from the camp, the police responded, “people from the camp are not allowed to work.” The truck owner was fined for transporting undocumented workers. Since then, farm owners have been unwilling

to hire anyone from Koung Jor. “This has made it even harder for undocumented residents to find work or support themselves,” said Sai Wijit.

For over two decades, Koung Jor’s residents relied on support from NGOs, with The Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC)—later renamed The Border Consortium (TBC)—providing essential food aid. “The primary food needs for people in the camp are rice, salt, and cooking oil,” explained Sai Bee, the camp’s boarding house coordinator. “For over a decade, TBBC was the main provider of food assistance to the camp. TBBC supplied essential items such as rice, cooking oil, soybeans, dried chili, and yellow beans.”

Food rations began arriving from TBBC in 2002 and continued until 2017. However, as international at-



At the camp's entrance.  
Photo: Antonio Graceffo



tention shifted and funding declined, TBBC was forced to reduce its support. “They removed some items considered non-essential,” said Sai Bee.

After TBBC ended its food assistance program in 2017, the Philanthropy Connections Foundation (PCF) provided a short-term extension of support for another year. When that ended, the Shan State Refugee Committee (SSRC) assumed responsibility for food aid. That final source of assistance ceased in December 2024, leaving the camp with no ongoing external support. Today, the majority of residents still depend heavily on aid to survive.

Sai Bee oversees a boarding house within the camp that shelters children from across Shan State—many of whom fled war, violence, and forced recruit-

ment by armed groups. The children live there full-time, eating, sleeping, and studying while attending a nearby Thai school. “Even though the food rations have been cut, the children in the boarding house are still okay because our donor, PCF, continues to fully fund the boarding house,” he said. While the children benefit from this continued support, many others in the camp are far more vulnerable—especially the elderly, disabled, and those living alone.

In Myanmar, public services have all but collapsed, particularly in regions where conflict is ongoing. This has left large swaths of the population without access to medical care, even as the war continues to produce a growing number of amputees—victims of landmines, drone strikes, and government shelling. Some of Burma’s disabled have fled to Thailand in search of safety



Loung Ta, one of the camp's residents.  
Photo: Antonio Graceffo

or basic medical attention, but life in Koung Jor offers few guarantees. Within the camp, three men—Loung Mart, 60; Long Panta, 55; and Loung Seu, 60—live with leg amputations and depend on prosthetic limbs that are now deteriorating from long-term use and urgently need replacement.

Others face similarly dire circumstances. Sai Boy, a 27-year-old man who uses a wheelchair, lives alone and has no family support. “For me, it would be very difficult to survive without aid. When I heard that the food rations were being cut, I felt hopeless about how I would manage to survive,” he said. Sai Oung, 40, also lives alone. He has a non-functional right hand and chronic health issues that prevent him from working. Pi Tun, 48, suffers from mental health problems and lives in isolation. Loung Shwey, 55, struggles with persistent

health issues and is entirely dependent on humanitarian aid to meet his daily needs.

The elderly are especially at risk. Mae Tao Law, an 88-year-old woman who is visually impaired, lives with her son Loung Seu, who also suffers from a disability affecting his leg. While her other children have left the area in search of work, their low incomes make it impossible for them to support her. “Our family relies on aid for about 80 percent of our needs,” she said. “When we heard that the food rations were being cut, we started to worry about how we would manage our daily food and survive.” Loung Panta echoed this concern. “I didn’t worry much about money or regular income as long as we received food rations regularly,” he said. “But now, I’m starting to worry because the food rations have been cut, and we have to buy most of our



Rations are meager at the best of times.  
Photo: Antonio Graceffo



main food items ourselves. It's becoming very difficult to manage food for the family." He explained that in the past, the Shan State Refugee Committee (SSRC) provided each person with 16 kilograms of rice and one liter of cooking oil every three months—staples that have now become unaffordable for many.

"These individuals are among the most vulnerable in our camp," said Sai Wijit, the camp leader. "Without consistent support, their lives become extremely difficult."

With four armed groups positioned just beyond the camp—the Thai Army, Myanmar's SAC junta, the United Wa State Army (UWSA), and the SSA-South—Koung Jor sits amidst the hills, in a fragile pocket of uneasy quiet. At the front gate lies Thailand, the land of

freedom, work, education, and safety—but camp residents are not permitted to cross that line. At the far end of the camp, barbed wire marks the edge of no man's land. Beyond it are landmines, watchful armies, and a war that refuses to end. Gunfire or distant explosions sometimes break the silence, a reminder that the conflict they fled could still come for them. Now, with food rations being cut and no path forward, they are both trapped and forgotten.

*Antonio Graceffo is an economist and China expert who has reported on Myanmar extensively.*



Thai border security. Photo: AFP





Attempting to clean up. Photo: AFP

# RAIN HAMPERS QUAKE AID EFFORTS



**E**arthquake survivors in central Myanmar are facing a deepening humanitarian crisis as heavy rains and junta restrictions hamper aid efforts. Many victims remain in makeshift tents that provide little protection from thunderstorms and torrential downpours. Injured individuals and patients have been forced to stay outdoors, avoiding the risk of collapsing hospital buildings.

The immediate needs are dire—electricity, clean drinking water, food supplies, and medical treatment are urgently required. Medicine is particularly scarce for victims in rural areas, compounding the health crisis in the quake-hit zones.

While neighbouring countries responded swiftly to the disaster, international rescue efforts have been obstructed. A nine-vehicle convoy from the Chinese Red Cross carrying relief supplies was fired upon by Myanmar junta troops in Ohmatee village, Naungkhio Township. Junta spokespersons later admitted that their security forces fired warning shots after the convoy allegedly bypassed diplomatic protocols and refused to stop at a checkpoint.

"We shot into the air three times as a warning when the convoy ignored our stop signal," said the spokesperson, attempting to justify the incident.

At the same time, the junta is placing tight controls on local and international humanitarian groups. Vice Senior General Soe Win, the regime's second-in-command, announced in Naypyidaw that no organization would be allowed to carry out relief operations independently. All rescue teams must obtain prior approval and coordinate with junta-backed authorities.

"All aid must go through the relevant state and regional officials," Soe Win stated. "Rescue efforts will

only be permitted in cooperation with the SAC's own teams."

This policy has already forced some humanitarian groups to halt operations. A Mandalay-based charity told RFA Burmese that they suspended their aid delivery after facing restrictions from the junta.

"They (the junta) are doing nothing while ordinary people are trying to help each other," said a representative of the group. "It breaks our hearts, but under these restrictions, we cannot continue. We want people to know we've had to stop helping."

As aid is delayed and access blocked, fears are growing for the well-being of thousands left vulnerable in the aftermath of the earthquake.

## **China, Russia and India step up to provide aid and rescue**

Russia, India, and China have stepped up to provide vital assistance to Myanmar in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake, each contributing critical medical, financial, and humanitarian support.

A Russian rescue team has opened a fully-equipped portable hospital in Mandalay to treat survivors of the earthquake. The facility includes rebreathing machines, operating rooms, intensive care units (ICUs), general medical wards, and diagnostic capabilities.

Major General Sergey Voroutsov, head of the Russian rescue mission, stated, "We are going to provide treatment for earthquake injuries, internal trauma, and compression injuries." An anesthesiologist from the team added that the hospital is equipped with departments to handle surgeries, trauma recovery, therapies, and care for unconscious patients.

India has deployed humanitarian assistance under its mission "Operation Brahma," delivering 625 metric tons of aid to the affected areas as of April 16. The Indian Army has also set up a 200-bed temporary hospital in Mandalay operated by the 60 Parachute Field Hospital unit. The medical team has treated 2,519 patients over a two-week period.

In addition to medical support, Indian military engineers and disaster assessment teams are working in Mandalay and Naypyidaw, including efforts to evaluate the structural damage of the historic Ava Bridge, which partially collapsed during the quake.

China has pledged financial assistance of \$13.8 million to Myanmar, with plans to increase support up to 1 billion yuan (approximately \$136 million) based on Myanmar's requests. According to Xinhua News Agency, China was the first international responder,

dispatching search and rescue teams that successfully pulled survivors from beneath debris.

Chinese aid includes fuel, prefabricated housing, medicines, vaccines, and essential supplies such as mosquito nets, solar lamps, tarpaulin, blankets, and ready-made food. Experts specializing in sterilization and medical treatment are also being deployed to affected areas. The aid has been delivered via both air and land routes.

As Myanmar continues to recover from the earthquake, which caused significant casualties and infrastructure damage, these contributions from Russia, India, and China have become critical lifelines for the affected communities.



International rescue teams in Mandalay.  
Photo: AFP



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Photo: AFP

# MYANMAR'S EARTHQUAKE CRISIS AND THE ILLUSION OF CEASEFIRE: A CALL FOR TRUTH AND EQUITABLE AID

## COMMENTARY

*Despite a devastating natural disaster, the military junta continues its assault, while UN statements raise serious questions about impartiality and ground realities, writes Igor Blazevic.*

In the aftermath of a devastating earthquake in Myanmar, while communities grieve and struggle to survive, the military junta continues its campaign of terror. Rather than pause its brutality in the face of disaster, the junta has continued attacks on civilians using airstrikes and heavy weapons. Between March 28 at 1:00 PM (earthquake time) and April 8 at 2:00 PM, 92 separate attacks have been verified, resulting in 72 deaths and 91 injuries. These are only the confirmed numbers; the real toll could be higher.

Yet, in a recent statement, Titon Mitra, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) representative in Myanmar, claimed that "fighting has slowed significantly in quake-hit Myanmar since a temporary truce began last week."

reports from the ground. One is left to ask: Is the UNDP representative unaware of what is actually happening? Or does the UN not consider 92 verified military attacks using air power and heavy weaponry as "significant"? Or is the UN representative intentionally downplaying the situation to project a more favourable narrative?

Mitra did acknowledge that military actions have continued even after the junta's announcement of a unilateral ceasefire. Speaking from Mandalay to journalists in Geneva, he conceded, "We're not necessarily seeing a complete cessation of hostilities," but insisted there had been "a very, very significant slowdown." He expressed hope that this would open space for humanitarian access, stating that "aid must be provided impartially."

His words stand in stark contrast to verified

At the same time, Mitra noted that the UN has had



relatively few issues delivering aid in junta-controlled urban areas, while admitting there are obstacles in regions under mixed or resistance control. Although some non-governmental organizations are attempting to operate in those areas, he said, “whether that translates into full and free access, I think it’s too early to say.”

Let us be clear: the junta is selectively allowing UN agencies to deliver aid into areas under its firm control while actively obstructing deliveries to communities outside its grip. Yet this reality is being downplayed by the UN’s own representative, who appears reluctant to characterize such obstructions as “significant.” This is more than diplomatic caution—it is a dangerous misrepresentation that serves political ends at the cost of human lives.

There are reasons behind this soft-pedaling. Following the earthquake, UN agencies and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) secured \$93 million in emergency funding from donor governments. These institutions now have a vested interest in portraying themselves as capable actors, able to deliver assistance throughout the country. They also rely on the junta’s cooperation to obtain visas for their international staff and permission to operate within junta controlled part of Myanmar. To maintain access and preserve the image of effectiveness, they have strong incentives to avoid antagonizing the regime—even if that means distorting the truth.

The so-called “temporary ceasefire” is a fiction. The junta’s military operations have not stopped, even in quake-hit regions. Meanwhile, revolutionary forces have also resumed their liberation effort in non-earthquake zones, as seen in places like Falam and Indaw. The narrative of a “significant slowdown” of violence serves the junta’s interests, not the truth. The junta’s war of terror is ongoing, and the people’s liberation struggle continues.

This mischaracterization has profound consequences. As international attention inevitably

wanes in the weeks following the earthquake, the junta will likely tighten its grip on humanitarian operations, further blocking access to resistance-held regions. UN agencies, being in the “hostage situation” and restrained by their dependence on the junta, will once again fail to deliver aid equitably. Large portions of international assistance risk becoming absorbed into junta-controlled areas, leaving communities outside the regime’s control to fend for themselves.

There are urgent steps the international community must take to prevent this outcome. First, Myanmar’s neighbours—Bangladesh, India, China, and Thailand—must open all border crossings for humanitarian aid and essential trade. Aid cannot flow effectively through channels restricted by the junta’s military authorities. The United Nations and donor governments must exert diplomatic persuasion to make these corridors available.

Second, the \$93 million in earthquake aid must not be funneled primarily through UN agencies operating under the junta’s restrictions. At least half of these funds should be directed through existing local networks run by the NUG, EROs and civil society organizations that are delivering both aid and services in areas beyond the junta’s reach. These groups, operating at great risk and with limited resources, are the lifeline for communities the international system is failing to reach in proportions adequate to needs and urgency.

If the United Nations wants to maintain, or better to say repair, credibility and uphold its commitment to impartial humanitarian action, it must confront the reality of Myanmar’s crisis honestly. Words matter—especially when they obscure suffering, shield perpetrators, and lull the world into complacency. This is not a time for polite euphemisms. It is a time for truth, courage, and action.

*Igor Blazevic is a European democracy activist with many years of experience in Myanmar.*



A monk walks past a collapsed monastery in Mandalay. Photo: AFP

## AN UPDATE ON MYANMAR EARTHQUAKE RESCUE EFFORTS

**PANA JANVIROJ**

**W**ith the Yangon-Mandalay railway line and Mandalay International Airport just reopened, more rescue and medical missions and humanitarian aid are arriving to this region hardest hit by the 28 March earthquake.

This accessibility is in startling contrast to Mandalay's neighbouring city, Sagaing, just 20km away. Out of the 12 earthquake-affected townships in Sagaing Region, only 2-3 townships currently have health partners reporting on health services.

This region already has about one third of the country's internally displaced population, many of whom were already enduring critical shortages in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) needs, and lacked adequate shelter due to the ongoing civil war before the earthquake struck.

Sagaing is served by two bridges across the Irrawaddy River from Mandalay. The 91-year Ava Bridge collapsed during the earthquake, but a more recently constructed bridge sustained only minor damage.

Nonetheless, there are weight restrictions for crossing the bridge, requiring the use of smaller trucks and significantly slowing aid deliveries, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

There is growing concern about a prolonged crisis in Sagaing. Fourteen days after the earthquake, the

chance of survival for those buried under the rubble is very slim, if at all. Rescue missions from overseas are beginning to leave Myanmar including the 80-member Operation Lionheart contingent from the Singapore Civil Defence Force.

The Vietnamese Army's 80-person rescue and relief force with their sniffer dogs has also left Myanmar. With rescue teams unable to reach Sagaing city and 8-9 other townships, there is the continued foul smells of unrecovered bodies and an increasing risk of disease outbreaks.

As recently described by one volunteer monk, "The conditions are terrible. Far beyond what can be described in words. Myanmar soldiers have imposed the strictest inspections. There is no electricity. There is a shortage of drinking water. The various types of assistance are not accessible. Communications are very difficult."

Rains have added to the terrible conditions being endured by the people. Monks and nuns are sleeping in the open air, by the roadside, he added.

Sagaing is suffering not only from the impact of the earthquake but is also an area previously penetrated by resistance forces. From the monk's report, it appears that the continued conflict, as selectively passive as it might seem, is adding to the plight of the local people.

Sagaing is thus struck in a situation that calls for the search and recovery of the remaining dead bodies from collapsed buildings, while the rest of Myanmar's earthquake-hit areas are moving towards a recovery phase. This is evident from junta authorities telling the visiting Malaysian foreign minister over the weekend that the country now needs field hospitals as a priority.

On Monday, Samaritan's Purse, a US aid organization, began setting up an emergency 200-patient-a-day field hospital in Naypyidaw, also hard-hit by the earthquake. It will be a while before such field hospitals get to Mandalay, let alone Sagaing.

Sagaing, with its numerous Buddhist monasteries, is an important religious and monastic centre. Many of them are now under the rubble.

In his parting words, the visiting monk was apologetic, "Any communication is very difficult. There is no electricity. No internet. Use of mobile phones in Sagaing are inspected by the soldiers. The photos are therefore not good. There are few of them and delay in sending them because of the prevailing restrictive conditions. Apology to all Buddhist cousins, we have completed the delivery of the donation as warranted. Praise be to you..."





## MYANMAR'S EARTHQUAKE-AFFECTED RESIDENTS FACE INSUFFICIENT TOILETS IN TEMPORARY SHELTERS

**S**ome earthquake-affected areas in Mandalay Region are facing a shortage of toilets, triggering concern about the spread of diarrhoea and other infectious diseases.

Some earthquake-affected residents in Mandalay Region, which was devastated by the powerful earthquake on 28 March, are currently living in temporary shelters due to the damage to their homes.

Consequently, there are insufficient numbers of toilets for the earthquake-affected population in these temporary shelters, leading to difficulties.

"Since there is no electricity, we cannot run the water pumps. So, we have experienced water shortages. With the lack of sufficient useable water, there are difficulties in using the toilets," said a person helping earthquake victims in Mandalay.

Locals said that in some areas where buildings collapsed in the earthquake, people are living in temporary tents on the streets and are having to deal with problems resulting from defecation in a haphazard manner due to the lack of adequate toilets.

Recent unseasonal rains in Mandalay, have caused a foul smell of urine and faeces in areas where earthquake evacuees are living with insufficient toilets.

"As people defecate in random places, it dries up in sunny days, but now that it's raining, the smell of excrement is wafting again, and it's flowing with the rain. The main problem is that we don't have access to toilets," said a local resident.

Local aid groups are presently reported to be working desperately to ensure that earthquake-affected residents have access to adequate toilets in the temporary shelters.

They urge people to donate more basic food and consumer goods, as well as personal hygiene items, which are crucial for the earthquake-affected people.

"Right now, some donors have donated water tanks. We will pump the water as much as possible. After that, we will arrange for toilet to be used and must encourage people to use them cleanly," said a person assisting earthquake-affected residents in Amarapura Township.

They also urged that it is necessary to carry out disinfection around the shelters and surrounding areas in each earthquake-affected township to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

"The earthquakes are still ongoing, so we have to stay in temporary tents. Everything is convenient here, but because the people are crowded together there, we are afraid of infectious diseases and diarrhoea. We don't get enough water to use, so even bathing is quite difficult," said a woman living in a temporary tent.

At the moment, among those whose homes were destroyed by the earthquake in Mandalay, those who can afford it are starting to demolish their homes with their own plans, and most of the shops have reopened, residents said.

Furthermore, the Myanmar Fire Services Department and social welfare organizations are continuing to search and rescue those remaining under the collapsed buildings.

The powerful earthquake that struck on 28 March resulted in 3,645 deaths, 5,017 injuries, and 148 missing persons, the junta announced on the evening of 8 April.

According to the latest information as of 9 April, the magnitude 7.7 earthquake has caused 5,352 deaths, 7,108 injuries, and 538 missing persons across Myanmar.



Fun and games during Thingyan.  
Photo: AFP

## MYANMAR MARKS THINGYAN NEW YEAR FESTIVAL MOURNING QUAKE LOSSES

**T**housands marked the start of Myanmar's water festival on Sunday in the ruins of last month's earthquake, with the country's most raucous holiday muted by the tragedy of the tremor.

The Thingyan festival typically celebrates Myanmar's new year with water-splashing rituals symbolising cleansing and renewal, but the central cities of Mandalay and Sagaing lie devastated from the 7.7-magnitude quake.

Two weeks on from the disaster which killed more than 3,600, hundreds are still living in tent encampments peppered among pancaked apartment blocks, razed tea shops and demolished hotels.

Many still lack working latrines and need to queue for drinking water, and the weather forecast for heavy rains has them fretting over their makeshift homes.

Early on Sunday families were buying clay pots and plant sprigs customarily placed inside homes to welcome the new year -- even though some had nowhere to put them.

"Everyone is in trouble this year," said 55-year-old Ma Phyu, camping with nine family members north of Mandalay's quake-damaged Royal Palace.

"I have to prepare the pot with the flowers because it is our tradition. But my heart is heavy."

The children in her family had been ordered not to splash water in the street for fear their neighbours would criticise them for celebrating as the city mourns.

Myanmar's ruling military junta has commanded the five-day festival to have no music or dance.

Since the March 28 quake Mandalay temperatures have soared up to a parching 44 degrees Celsius (111 Fahrenheit) while at night tent-dwellers are needled by mosquitos before rising at dawn to line up for aid.

More than 5,200 buildings have been destroyed according to official figures, while more than two million people are in need as a result of the earthquake, the UN says.

It has issued an emergency plea for \$275 million, following US President Donald Trump's evisceration of Washington's aid budget which has already hobbled some UN operations in Myanmar.

The World Food Programme says it is being forced to cut off one million people from vital aid this month because donations have dried up.

Myanmar has been riven by a civil war following a 2021 coup which spurred mass poverty and displacement even before the quake.

The tremors were felt as far away as Bangkok, where a high-rise under construction collapsed and trapped dozens of workers.

Despite an announced ceasefire, monitors say Myanmar's military has continued air strikes, while the junta has accused anti-coup guerillas and ethnic armed groups of maintaining their offensives.

"At a moment when the sole focus should be on ensuring humanitarian aid gets to disaster zones, the military is instead launching attacks," said UN Human Rights Office spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani in a statement this week.

AFP





## OVER 100 STAFF HOUSING BUILDINGS COLLAPSED, OVER 500 SEVERELY DAMAGED IN NAYPYIDAW

Out of over 1,500 staff housing buildings in Naypyidaw, 116 collapsed and 507 others were severely damaged in the earthquake, according to a letter submitted by the Construction Ministry's Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Working Committee to the junta's National Natural Disaster Management Committee on 5 April.

Currently, 623 staff housing units need to be rebuilt, while 427 units need major repairs to be habitable again, the letter stated.

Roughly 484 staff housing units were found to be currently habitable.

It is reported that the 427 severely damaged staff housing buildings will be quickly renovated, and staff will be relocated. The engineering departments of the ministries and construction contractors will be assigned to this process.

According to information released by the Naypyidaw Council, staff housing includes dormitories and employee residences. Each dormitory has 48 rooms, and each employee residence has 24 rooms.

The list of collapsed staff housing units, as submitted by the junta's Construction Ministry's Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Working Committee to the National Natural Disaster Management Committee, does not separately categorize dormitories and employee residences.

For ministries without their own construction contractors, the Myanmar Construction Entrepreneurs Federation (MCEF), the Myanmar Licensed Contractors Association (MLCA), and the Myanmar Developer Association (MDA) will be assigned responsibilities.

The strong earthquake with a magnitude of 7.7 on the Richter scale struck on 28 March causing casualties in Naypyidaw, Sagaing, Bago, Magway, Mandalay, and southern Shan State.

In Naypyidaw's Zabuthiri Township, a four-story housing building for junta staff collapsed until only one story remaining, staff and their family members also died.

The earthquake caused significant damage in Naypyidaw, the seat of the military junta, with parliamentary buildings, ministry offices, staff housing, and local residents' homes and buildings collapsing and destroyed.

Junta leader Senior General Min Aung Hlaing said at a meeting held in Naypyidaw on 5 April that 1 million kyats would be provided as aid for each person affected by the earthquake, and assistance would also be provided for damaged buildings depending on the extent of the damage.

It is not yet known when this assistance will be provided, nor has the military leader disclosed the specific amounts allocated for building damage.

All is not tranquil on Inle Lake.  
Photo: AFP

## MYANMAR QUAKE DEEPENS HARDSHIP FOR DISPLACED PEOPLE IN MANDALAY AND INLE LAKE

**A**s conflict continues to displace people in northern Shan State, Sagaing Region, Kachin State, and Karenni State, those in Mandalay and the Inle Lake area are facing even greater hardship in the aftermath of the powerful earthquake that struck on 28 March, according to displaced residents and aid workers.

Heavily affected by the earthquake, Mandalay has become a refuge for displaced people from Kachin State, Sagaing Region and northern Shan State.

"I've had to leave Htilin Town twice. I'm struggling to find a place to stay near Amarapura. Now, after the house next door collapsed onto ours, I have no choice but to live on the street. I've lost my job, my livelihood, and the earthquake has only made things worse," said an internally displaced person (IDP) from Htilin town in Sagaing Region, who fled the conflict to Mandalay.

While fleeing to Mandalay to escape the threat of junta's airstrikes, residents of Kyaukme in northern Shan State are also having to cope with the effects of the recent earthquake, according to a local aid volunteer from the town.

Similarly, a volunteer assisting people on the Mandalay University campus said that 178 residents who fled the conflict in Bhamo, Kachin State, are also in need of support.

"With the rainy season approaching, we're struggling to find adequate shelter. On top of that, there aren't enough machines available to demolish damaged houses," said a relief worker in Mandalay.

Demolition of collapsed buildings in Mandalay is still underway, along with the search for bodies at the Sky Villa condo, while rehabilitation efforts have begun

in other affected areas.

In Heya Ywama village in Inle lake area, Nyaung Shwe Township, southern Shan State, which was also struck by the earthquake, eight out of ten monasteries, including Baindaw, San Ya, Shwe Bon Tha, Phahtama, Kyaung Ni, Thirimingalar (East), and Nan Pan monasteries, collapsed. More than 350 displaced people from Karenni State, who had been sheltering in these monasteries, are now struggling to find accommodation, according to an aid worker.

According to information obtained by Mizzima, the earthquake damaged monasteries and homes across 11 villages in the Inle region, and claimed the lives of 135 people.

Survivors and aid workers say that shelter is the most urgent need for those affected by the earthquake during this recovery period. In addition, residents require financial support to demolish collapsed houses and repair structures that were left leaning.

The powerful earthquake that struck on 28 March impacted 1.5 million of the country's 3.5 million internally displaced people, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

The earthquake may have impacted an estimated 17 million people across nearly 60 of Myanmar's 330 townships, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA Myanmar) on 5 April.

UNOCHA Myanmar also reported that millions of people in the hardest-hit areas are facing limited or no access to electricity, clean drinking water, food, and healthcare.





Family camps out in Mandalay.  
Photo: AFP

## SOME MYANMAR INSURANCE COMPANIES TEMPORARILY HALT NATURAL DISASTER COVERAGE FOLLOWING QUAKE

Following significant damage caused by the earthquake centred near Sagaing Town in Sagaing Region, some insurance companies have temporarily suspended the sale of natural disaster insurance starting from 10 April, according to insurance companies.

Among the companies halting natural disaster insurance are AYA Sompo Insurance Company, owned by Zaw Zaw, the chairman of Ayeyarwady Bank, and KBZMS Insurance Company, under the KBZ Group.

"For those who are just starting new policies, the sale of this natural disaster coverage is temporarily suspended for now," said a staff from AYA Sompo Insurance Company on 11 April.

A KBZMS General Insurance Company employee also stated that all sales of coverage for natural disasters for vehicles have been suspended. While for home insurance, coverage for floods, storms, and landslides can still be purchased, the sale of fire, earthquake, and war insurance has been stopped.

"We don't sell fire insurance because of riots, earthquakes and wars. Other types of coverage can still be purchased," said the KBZMS General Insurance Company employee.

A representative from another insurance company, GGI Nippon Life Insurance Company, also said that instructions have been given to suspend all types of insurance, including auto, home, and life insurance from yesterday 10 April.

"Currently, during the ongoing natural disaster, this (natural disaster insurance) has been temporarily suspended. It not just us, other insurance

companies have also temporarily suspended," said the representative from GGI Nippon Life Insurance Company.

However, an official from the Myanmar Insurance Association said that there were no instructions to suspend the sale of natural disaster insurance, and that given this current period is a crisis period following the earthquake, companies should sell more earthquake insurance in particular.

"At this time like this, they should be selling more and providing more protection. At a meeting the other day, they said they would continue selling. I don't know how each company handles risk. We don't have the authority to order them," said the official from the Myanmar Insurance Association.

Insurance companies stated that they have suspended new purchases of natural disaster insurance, but have allowed existing natural disaster insurance policies to be renewed and extended. The companies noted that the suspension is temporary, though they could not specify when sales might resume.

Many people are criticizing the insurance companies for suspending the sale of natural disaster insurance at a time when many homes and buildings have collapsed and been damaged due to the earthquake, and when there is great concern about personal property.

On 11 April, the Myanmar Alin newspaper reported that the strong earthquake that centered near Sagaing City on 28 March damaged over 60,000 homes, 2,366 schools, 3,514 monasteries and nunneries, and 291 hospitals and clinics across the country.

## MYANMAR JUNTA'S ATTACKS KILL 72 CIVILIANS AMID EARTHQUAKE CRISIS

**A**t least 72 civilians, including six children and 30 women, were killed by airstrikes and artillery shelling carried out by Myanmar's military junta over the past week, according to a statement from the Human Rights Department of the National Unity Government (NUG) issued on 9 April.

Based on verified data collected between 28 March, the day a major earthquake struck Myanmar, and 8 April, the junta reportedly launched more than 90 assaults, killing six children under the age of 18 and 30 women, primarily targeting areas controlled by ethnic armed organisations and the People's Defence Forces (PDF), the NUG said.

This wave of violence comes despite the junta's announcement of a temporary nationwide ceasefire from 2 to 22 April. Statements from the NUG and various ethnic armed groups indicate that hostilities have persisted in regions including Rakhine State, southern Shan State, and Mandalay, Sagaing, Magway, Bago, and Tanintharyi Regions.

Padoh Saw Taw Nee, spokesperson for the Karen National Union (KNU), criticized the junta's ceasefire declaration, calling it unreliable and inconsistent with its actions. He suggested the declaration was aimed more at gaining international legitimacy than demonstrating a genuine commitment.

In contrast, on 5 April, junta spokesperson Major General Zaw Min Tun accused several resistance groups including the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), Arakan Army (AA), Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), and the PDF of violating the ceasefire and launching attacks on military positions.

Human rights organizations have condemned the junta's continued use of airstrikes and heavy weaponry during the declared ceasefire, warning that the killing of civilians, especially women and children, underscores a deepening humanitarian crisis in the country.



## MYANMAR JUNTA COMMANDER AND TROOPS FLEE CAMP FOLLOWING INTENSE BATTLE IN INDAW TOWNSHIP

The National Unity Government's (NUG) Ministry of Defence announced that resistance fighters executed a final assault on the Japanese Cave on the night of 7 April, taking control of the last significant stronghold held by the junta in Indaw Township, northern Sagaing Region. The commander of Light Infantry Division 77 and his troops managed to escape the area.

According to the NUG's Ministry of Defence, the revolutionary forces began their campaign to reclaim Indaw Township last August, ultimately succeeding after eight months of intense conflict.

The prolonged fighting resulted in heavy casualties and supply shortages, making it unsustainable for the junta to hold their position any longer. As a result, the division commander and his team vacated their last base at around 9:00 pm on 7 April.

Indaw Township served as the primary headquarters for the junta's Light Infantry Division 77. During this battle, resistance forces reportedly seized a significant cache of weapons and ammunition from the junta, including two howitzers, two 120 mm mortars, and various small arms.

The operation in Indaw Township was carried out under the supervision of the NUG Ministry of Defence's Military Region 1 and involved collaboration between multiple units, including the People's Defence Force (PDF) from Katha District and various special operations and drone forces from different regions, highlighting a broad coalition against the junta's forces.



Junta chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing seen casting his vote in the 2020 general election. Photo : CINADS

## MYANMAR JUNTA'S ELECTION COMMISSION CONFIRMS ELECTION TO TAKE PLACE IN DECEMBER

The Union Election Commission (UEC), formed by Myanmar's military junta, announced on 8 April that the elections promised by the junta chief will be held in December 2025.

The commission stated that, as the election is scheduled for that period, those wishing to apply for party registration must do so by 9 May.

The statement explained that this notification aims to ensure the completion of party establishment, registration, and mergers before the election, while also providing parties with sufficient time to carry out election-related processes and campaign activities.

Additionally, the junta announced on 8 April that it has appointed commission member U Than Soe as vice-chairman to enhance the effectiveness of the UEC's operations and to assist the chairman.

Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing stated in March that the election is planned to be held in four phases: the

third and fourth weeks of December this year, and the first and second weeks of January 2026.

More than 50 political parties, including the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), have re-registered with the UEC under the Political Parties Registration Law, which was enacted in 2023 following the military's seizure of power, citing voter fraud.

Forty political parties, including the National League for Democracy (NLD), which won the 2020 election by a landslide, have not re-registered with the UEC.

Regarding the election, the junta conducted field surveys of the population aged 18 and over in certain townships from February through the end of March.

The junta's UEC announced that elections would be held in December, despite widespread damage and a high death toll from the powerful earthquake on 28 March.



## PRELIMINARY TALKS BEGIN FOR MEETING IN MYANMAR BETWEEN CENTRAL COMMITTEES OF THE KIO AND TNLA

According to the Kachin Independence Organization/Kachin Independence Army (KIO/KIA), the negotiating teams began preliminary talks on 9 April in an effort to bring about a central-level meeting between the KIO/KIA and the Palaung State Liberation Front/Ta'ang National Liberation Army (PSLF/TNLA) in order to resolve the frequently occurring clashes resulting from territorial disputes between the two ethnic armed groups.

"In order to facilitate the meeting between the KIO and the PSLF, the negotiation teams began the preliminary discussions. The meeting at the central committee level has not yet occurred. At this point, the negotiating teams are holding discussions on the date, location, and format of the central-level meeting. The negotiating teams have begun their initiatives," said Colonel Naw Bu, the KIA's information officer.

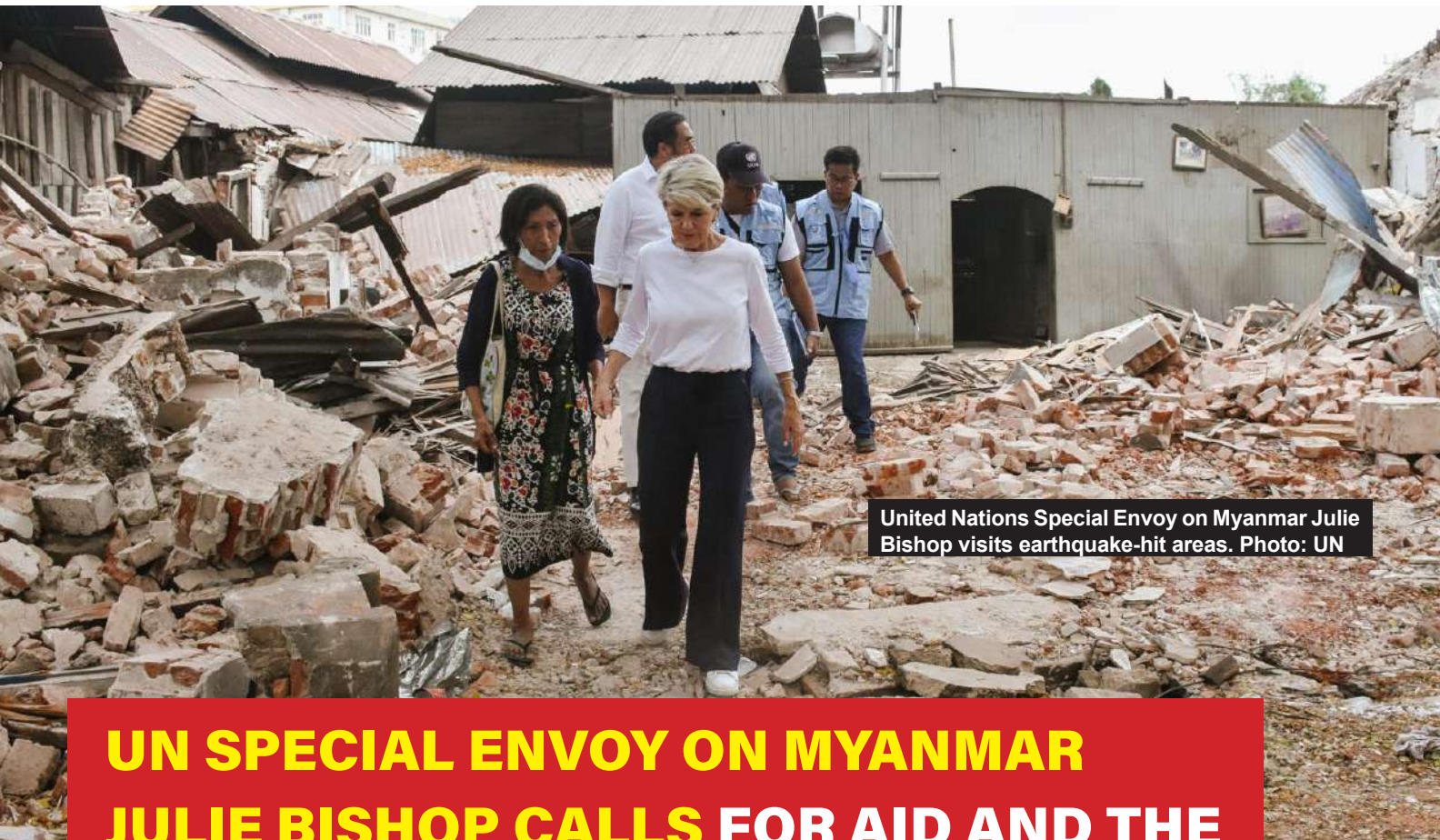
Meanwhile, the KIO/KIA Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Gun Maw, said on his social media page that initial talks are underway for a meeting between the KIO and the PSLF. He expressed his hope that the local population in the respective areas would understand

and support the initiative, and that media outlets, online users, and those who want to make recommendations would all support the process positively.

Regarding this matter, Mizzima is still trying to contact PSLF/TNLA spokesperson Lway Yay Oo.

Clashes have occurred between the KIA and TNLA in northern Shan State during the first three months of 2025, notably in Momeik and Mantong townships, Nanpheka in Kutkai Township, and Mongwi village in Namtu Township. In one case, troops from each side were involved in a fistfight. However, there have been no reports of using arms in clashes between the two ethnic armed groups so far.

According to locals and KIA information officers, these clashes stem from territorial disputes between the ground troops of the two ethnic armed groups. In order to keep the clashes from getting worse, political analysts and local residents have suggested that a central-level meeting or dialogue between the officials from both sides is desperately needed.



United Nations Special Envoy on Myanmar Julie Bishop visits earthquake-hit areas. Photo: UN

## UN SPECIAL ENVOY ON MYANMAR JULIE BISHOP CALLS FOR AID AND THE CEASEFIRES TO HOLD

**D**uring her visit to Myanmar, the United Nations Special Envoy on Myanmar Julie Bishop reflects on nearly a year of intensive engagement with a broad range of stakeholders to help address Myanmar's protracted crisis, according to a report issued 10 April.

She describes the situation on the ground as heartbreaking, with communities showing remarkable resilience amid devastation. The Special Envoy emphasizes the urgent need for a ceasefire to enable humanitarian response and recovery, underscores the international community's responsibility to keep Myanmar on the global agenda and provide sustained support. ASEAN remains a key partner in her mandate, with ongoing collaboration to find inclusive, regional solutions.

The following is an interview with her:

**Almost a year ago, the Secretary General announced your appointment as Special Envoy of Myanmar. Can you share what this experience has been like for you so far since your appointment?**

I have engaged with all the stakeholders, all the voices of Myanmar, to try and find a way through the challenges the people of Myanmar currently face. The conflict is longstanding, it is complicated, it is multi-layered, and there are many countries with an interest in helping Myanmar. So, I have engaged with the Security Council members, and other members of the United Nations, the ASEAN countries, the Southeast Asian neighbours and other neighbours, as well as NGOs and Civil Society Organizations to try and find a pathway to a sustainable and peaceful solution for the people of Myanmar. It will need to be Myanmar-led and all-inclusive so that we can have a sustainable piece.



### **What were your impressions from the visit today and how are the affected communities coping?**

The sheer scale of the devastation was heartbreaking. There are so many people who have lost everything. The number of fatalities is increasing, the number of injured is increasing, and the level of damage and destruction is still being assessed. I was particularly struck by those who have lost their homes but are determined to rebuild amid the rubble. They were talking positively about gathering up bricks and wood and starting to rebuild as their spirit has not been diminished.

### **How can the international community support long-term recovery for the people of Myanmar?**

We need to continue to urge for a ceasefire, to stop the killing, stop the conflict so that the humanitarian workers, the search and rescue workers and those who are helping with the rebuild and the reconstruction of Myanmar have the space to operate safely and securely. And the people of Myanmar want peace. The international community must continue to use its influence to ensure that their ambitions are upheld.

### **As Myanmar's crisis continues with no end in sight, many feel the world is looking away. As a Special Envoy, how do you view your role in ensuring the country's plight remains on the international agenda?**

It is part of my role to maintain global focus on the conflict and challenges in Myanmar, and now with this devastating earthquake compounding the challenges the people of Myanmar already face, this conflict, these dire circumstance cannot be forgotten. We owe it to the people of Myanmar to continue to focus on their needs and their future.

### **What message do you have, firstly, for the people of Myanmar and secondly, to the international community?**

The people of Myanmar must not give up hope. Despite the challenges, they must continue to hope for a better life and do all they can to help stop the fighting, stop the conflict and focus on ensuring that they're building towards a peaceful future. They are united in grief, they need to unite in peace.

The international community has a significant role to play in supporting additional funding, in providing assistance during this particular time of need but also using their influence to ensure that all of the stakeholders, all of the actors in this conflict put down their arms and focus their efforts on restoring the shattered lives of the people of Myanmar.

### **Can you speak about ASEAN's role and what does corporation mean for you?**

It is part of my mandate to cooperate and collaborate with the ASEAN countries as Myanmar is a member of ASEAN. I have been working closely with the ASEAN Special Envoy from Malaysia, as Malaysia is the chair of ASEAN for 2025. I have visited the ASEAN chairs that rotate each year, and I have met with the Special Envoys, past and present. I'm working very closely with ASEAN to ensure that we can find a way to support the Myanmar people throughout this crisis.

## POWER PLANT SUPPLYING MYANMAR JUNTA'S MILITARY FACTORIES HIT BY PDF ATTACK

**R**evolutionary forces carried out a major attack on the Tanyaung Power Plant in Salin Township, Magway Region, which supplies electricity to the junta's Defence Product Industries including Military Weapons Factories No. 20, 21, 25, as well as Air Defence Command Centre No. 9. The attack caused an estimated 80% destruction to the facility, according to sources from the resistance.

"They (the junta) had full security and were conducting maintenance work urgently. They're trying to repair it, but it's not something they can fix quickly. The power plant was heavily damaged," said a representative of the Daung Sit Aung resistance force.

The assault took place at around 5 am on 31 March. During the operation, 30 junta soldiers and two plant managers were reportedly killed, with many others injured. The Bamar Army released this information in a statement on the evening of 6 April.

The battle lasted more than four hours. According to the Bamar Army, over 80 transformers supplying electricity to nearby military factories were destroyed in the attack.

Speaking to Mizzima, a Daung Sit Aung representative said, "Currently, the factories cannot operate due to the power outage."

In response to the attack, the junta launched airstrikes the same day using three aircraft, targeting

the Tanyaung Power Plant area and surrounding villages. The strikes forced more than 2,000 civilians to flee their homes.

Subsequently, a military convoy of over 100 troops from Seikphyu Township reinforced the remaining junta forces at the plant and began operations in nearby areas.

"They marched into Sinphyu Kyun and Salin, and clashed with us again on 6 April," a resistance fighter said.

According to resistance groups, Factory No. 20 in Sedoktaya Township produces bombs used in airstrikes. Military Weapon Factory No. 21 is located in Seikphyu Township, while Factory No. 25 is situated in Saw Township. They are major industrial sites of Myanmar military junta.

The coordinated attack on the Tanyaung Power Plant was conducted by forces under the command of the Bamar Army's No. 3 Battalion. Participating units included Bamar Army's Battalion No. 707, Southern Pakokku Medical Corps, Daung Sit Aung Local People's Defence Force (PDF), Minbu District Battalion No. 1, Gangaw District Coalition Forces, Salin Township People's Defence Forces, Seikphyu Township PaKaHpa Forces, the Magway Region Drone Unit, and the Minbu District Armaments Unit.





Photo: AFP

## CHILD RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN MYANMAR SURGE SINCE COUP: UN

**U**N chief Antonio Guterres, in a report released Friday, denounced a dramatic surge in the abuse of children's rights in Myanmar since the country's 2021 coup, particularly through forced recruitment by the military.

The report, which covers the period from July 2020 to the end of 2023, confirmed over 5,140 "grave violations" committed against more than 4,000 children, some as young as three months old.

The figures mark a 400 percent increase over the previous period of September 2018 to June 2020, with a sharp rise since the military overthrow of the government in February 2021 and the subsequent resumption of fighting between the army and various armed ethnic groups.

The report attributed the vast majority of the abuses to Myanmar armed forces and affiliated groups.

"I am deeply alarmed by the surge in grave violations against children and the multiplication in the number of armed actors," Secretary-General Guterres said in the report.

"I am appalled by the scale of recruitment and use and by the surge in the killing and maiming of children, notably as a result of the widespread use of indiscriminate air strikes and firearms, explosive ordnance, in particular landmines, and the rise in attacks on schools and on hospitals by all parties to the conflict, in particular by the Myanmar armed forces," he added.

Guterres also called on all parties "to release all children from their ranks."

Cases of child recruitment accounted for about 40 percent of the violations, the report stated, with the phenomenon expanding to all states and regions following the coup.

The number of abductions of children also sharply increased, by nearly 3,000 percent, with many of those abducted being forced to undertake military training.

The report found that minors were also used to recruit other children, gather information or extort money, and serve as human shields for military forces.

AFP





Earthquake People's Defense Force.  
Photo: Supplied

## MYANMAR JUNTA VEHICLE ATTACKED IN MAGWAY'S PAKOKKU, KILLING TWO INDIVIDUALS, INCLUDING A MAJOR

A vehicle carrying Major Thaw Zin Oo from the Military Council's weapon factory No. 24 was attacked in Pakokku, Magway Region, killing the major and another passenger, according to the Earthquake People's Defense Force.

The Earthquake People's Defense Force stated that the shooting occurred around 9 pm on 10 April near the Industrial Zone train station and White House KTV in Pakokku.

During the attack, Ko Myint Oo the owner of White House KTV was also killed while riding in the vehicle with Major Thaw Zin Oo. An official from the Earthquake People's Defense Force said the driver fled with Major Thaw Zin Oo's bag, and while no weapon was recovered, the vehicle was confiscated.

"We had been waiting for about a week. We held back in previous attempts, but last night (April 10), we struck with precision," a spokesperson for the Earthquake People's Defense Force said.

Following the attack, Military Council forces arrived at the scene, conducted searches in the surrounding area, and fired heavy weapons into nearby neighbourhoods, according to an official from the Earthquake People's Defense Force.

Major Thaw Zin Oo was reportedly on leave and visiting a KTV venue and other locations in Pakokku when the shooting took place, according to the Earthquake People's Defense Force.

In response to escalating military activity in Pakokku, revolutionary forces have urged the public to avoid Military Council camps and personnel.

The attack was a joint operation involving the Earthquake People's Defense Force, Thu Rein TR, Six Senses Guerrilla Force, Justice Revolution Force, Hunter PKU, Black Cheater, Pakokku District Battalion-2 (The Red Revolvers), Myaing PDF Battalion 3, Company 4, and the Shwe Nyar Myay Force (Pakokku).





Myanmar junta chief Min Aung Hlaing.  
Photo: AFP

## MYANMAR JUNTA CHIEF CALLS FOR UNITY AHEAD OF DECEMBER ELECTIONS AMID EARTHQUAKE CRISIS

**D**uring a visit to the Pa-O Self-Administered Region on 10 April, Myanmar junta chief Min Aung Hlaing stressed the importance of unity in order to carry out the planned December election, despite the ongoing earthquake crisis.

He made the remarks while meeting with state, district, and township-level departmental staff during a visit to Hopong town, located in the earthquake-hit Pa-O Self-Administered zone of southern Shan State.

The junta plans to hold the election in four phases: during the third and fourth weeks of December this year, and the first and second weeks of January 2026, according to the junta chief's announcement in March.

Critics claim the election will be a sham and have called for a boycott.

On 8 April, the junta-appointed Union Election Commission (UEC) announced that election will be held in December, while the Military Council reported that more than 3,600 people have died and widespread damage has been caused by the 7.7-magnitude earthquake.

Therefore, the UEC has called on those wishing to establish political parties to submit their applications by 9 May.

Myo Kyaw, general secretary of the Arakan League

for Democracy (ALD), which has not yet registered with the junta's UEC, told Mizzima that the election commission was reconstituted after the military seized power and is now being compelled to carry out the election process.

"On the one hand, there are IDPs and ongoing civil wars; on the other, natural disasters. Meanwhile, the Military Council's efforts to hold elections are a tradition of dictators. However, the UEC, which is attempting to organize the elections, is currently operating from a temporary office covered with a tarpaulin. So, how can elections be possible under these conditions? It's clear, even just by looking at their circumstances, whether they are possible or not," Myo Kyaw said.

The junta has repeatedly promised to hold elections following the coup and conducted surveys of the population aged 18 and over in several townships between February and March this year.

A powerful earthquake that struck on 28 March caused extensive damage throughout central Myanmar, including in Naypyidaw, Mandalay, and Sagaing. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA Myanmar) stated on 5 April that the earthquake has impacted an estimated 17 million people. The total death toll has yet to be ascertained.

## PEN CALLS FOR RELEASE OF IMPRISONED MYANMAR FILMMAKER SHIN DAEWE



Image of film maker Shin Daewe supplied.

**A**merican NGO PEN is calling for the release of Myanmar filmmaker Shin Daewe, saying it is an essential step in the battle for free expression in Myanmar.

The following is PEN's statement issued on 11 April:

Shin Daewe is one of 11 imprisoned writers with ties to outlets defunded by the current U.S. government administration.

Shin Daewe's documentaries took her to some of Myanmar's most remarkable and most devastated areas. In her pursuit for the truth, she could be seen walking through farmland destroyed by mining, and standing on top of the only part of a village not covered in flood waters.

With Myanmar still reeling from a devastating earthquake, the fact the dedicated environmental filmmaker and screenwriter is sitting in a cell in the infamous Insein prison in Yangon – unable to cover the impact of the disaster – is emblematic of the junta's grip on free expression in the country.

Shin Daewe was arrested in 2023 for having a drone, which she had bought to shoot some aerial footage for a new documentary. She was initially sentenced to life in prison on terrorism charges, and her husband, Ko Oo, reported that when she was transferred to the prison it looked like she had been tortured. Earlier this year, her sentence was reduced to 15 years as part of a larger prisoner amnesty marking the country's independence day. Another amnesty – for the traditional New Year – is starting on April 13, and this time Myanmar's junta should free Shin Daewe and drop all charges against her.



She is one of two journalists imprisoned in Myanmar who have ties to news outlets funded by the now slashed US Agency for Global Media (USAGM). Up until an executive order signed by Donald Trump last month, USAGM funded several decades-old news outlets including Middle East Broadcasting Networks, Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, and Radio Free Asia – where Shin Daewe contributed reporting on environmental and human rights issues.

These outlets were serving as a critical platform for free expression and crucial sources of news and information. With the stroke of a pen, the US president has all but wiped the outlets out, and endangered the journalists and other writers working for them under some of the world's most authoritarian regimes.

Now, Shin Daewe and at least 10 other imprisoned journalists around the world who have ties to the struggling or shuttered outlets are left abandoned, without institutional support during the fight for their freedom. In addition to Myanmar, PEN America is aware of USAGM-funded staffers in prison in Vietnam, and in Russian-occupied Crimea.

It is not only imprisoned writers left vulnerable by the shuttering of these outlets, which have been a consistent voice in the fight against tyranny since World War 2. Some writers reported on politically sensitive or dangerous stories happening in their home countries while based in the United States, where they had fled for fear of their safety. Now, they face visa issues and deportation back to their country of origin where they risk suffering extreme consequences for their bravery.

Some countries and territories where journalists are particularly at risk include: Belarus, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Vietnam. PEN

America is currently aware of at least fifteen journalists from Radio Free Asia and eight from Voice of America facing serious risk of being immediately arrested upon arrival into their home country, while another 84 from both media outlets are at risk of surveillance, harassment, or other threats.

These writers risked everything to defy authoritarianism and keep the public informed. The least we can do now is keep them safe in the face of a seemingly global onslaught against free expression and press freedom. PEN America, alongside nearly 40 human rights organizations, urged Congress to take immediate action to protect these journalists in a joint letter earlier this month.

The imprisonment of Shin Daewe was a major miscarriage of justice that should never have happened, and her freedom will not be the end of the struggle for these writers and journalists abandoned by the U.S. government, but it could be the start we need.



## **MISSION ABORTED**

### **INSIGHT MYANMAR**

**"W**hen (US) President (George W.) Bush called that morning and said, 'Pull back [away from Myanmar],' I just couldn't compose myself. I broke down in front of all the Marines, and so I had to run into the bathroom and I just cried and cried because," Mie Mie Winn Byrd tells the Insight Myanmar Podcast. "I knew we had all the capability to help them, to relieve suffering and provide aid, but there was nothing I could do. It was heartbreaking for me at that moment... And I can't be breaking down in front of the Marines! So I had to run into the bathroom, and I had a good cry, and I called my husband from there, and I said, 'the President just called it off! The people are waiting for us, and they need our help. I feel so helpless.'"

In a profoundly moving and insightful conversation, Mie Mie Winn Byrd, a retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel, recounts her experiences during Operation Caring Response, a U.S. military-led humanitarian relief mission in the wake of the Cyclone Nargis in 2008. This natural disaster, compounded by military indifference, claimed the lives of over 135,000 people and displaced more than two million in Myanmar's Delta region. She draws parallels between that disaster and the

devastating, 7.7 magnitude earthquake that recently struck central Myanmar. Through her firsthand account and expert analysis, Byrd sheds light on how the junta has systematically weaponized aid and obstructed assistance, compounding the suffering of its people.

## **REGIONAL EXPERTISE**

In Operation Caring Response, Byrd was uniquely positioned as a U.S. Army officer with critical regional expertise, as she was born in Burma before immigrating to the U.S. She joined the task force at the request of U.S. military leadership, serving as an advisor to General John F. Goodman, who oversaw the operation. Though the U.S. had substantial assets nearby, Myanmar's ruling junta allowed only five C-130 cargo flights per day and restricted deliveries to Yangon's airport, preventing supplies from reaching the most affected areas. Over a period of two weeks, Byrd and her team watched in dismay as aid piled up on the tarmac and then began to disappear—not into the hands of victims, but likely into corrupt networks affiliated with the military. Despite persistent negotiation attempts, the military refused to allow the humanitarian aid team broader access,



ultimately leading President George W. Bush to call off the mission.

Throughout the conversation, Byrd reflects on the mindset of the Burmese military that underpinned such callous indifference to the suffering of their own people. For example, her direct negotiations with senior junta officers, including General Myint Swe (now Acting President), revealed a deep and pervasive paranoia. She remembers Myint Swe visibly shaking during their meeting, terrified by the presence of the physically imposing American General Goodman, a former NFL player for the New Orleans Saints. Myint Swe was also consumed with irrational fears of a U.S. invasion despite repeated reassurances from American forces that they had purely humanitarian intentions. In addition, she explains that the Burmese military is trained to sever emotional ties with the civilian population, which engenders an elitist, detached mentality. In their worldview, the army does not serve the people, it rules over them, thus putting humanitarian assistance very low on the priority list. "They no longer have that [empathy]. And then it's just reinforce, reinforce and reinforce... and they become monsters."

## LATEST DISASTER

The consequences of that conditioned inhumanity are painfully evident again in the aftermath of the recent earthquake, as a familiar script is playing out as was witnessed after Cyclone Nargis. Byrd draws a direct line between the military's systemic cruelty then and now, including their practice of blocking relief, arresting young men and doctors, and even carrying out offensive operations in areas hit hard by the natural disaster.

Moreover, Byrd makes it clear that, in her opinion, the current military junta is neither a legitimate government—nor even a professional army. It is more a Mafia-like, organized crime syndicate. Rather than deliver aid, they hoard or repurpose it for their own use, and employ air power not in rescue missions, but in bombing runs. She talks about the military conscripting

doctors and bombing disaster zones. In a particularly heinous act, following Cyclone Mocha in 2023, they deliberately released dam water at night in order to drown villages under the cover of darkness! This is just one example of how they weaponize natural disasters to punish, control or even eliminate populations they view as unsupportive.

Yet at the heart of Byrd's message is also the courage, compassion, and organization of the Burmese people. In spite of the military's sabotage, she has seen how they consistently rise to meet the challenge. For example, following Cyclone Nargis, the widespread civic mobilization that emerged then became a watershed moment for Myanmar's civil society, laying the foundation for grassroots activism and opposition to military rule that continues today. In the current crisis, it is once again ordinary citizens, PDFs (People's Defense Forces), and local volunteers who are delivering help, sometimes even using elephants to clear rubble due to lack of equipment ... even as the military uses its helicopters to bomb civilians or reinforce its own facilities. She also praises the efforts of the National Unity Government (NUG), noting that within hours of the earthquake, they had convened emergency meetings, issued guidance, and allocated relief funds, even while operating under extreme constraints.

## CALL TO EMPOWER

Echoing comments made by recent guests on the podcast, Byrd urges the international community to empower and resource Myanmar's diaspora and civil society networks for distributing humanitarian assistance. These groups, she argues, have proven themselves capable of delivering aid to those in need, often at great personal cost, even to the point of selling their homes or working overtime in janitorial jobs just to fund resistance efforts. She says, "They open up their hearts, their purse, and they're doing it again! I'm just so amazed and admire the Myanmar diaspora." In sharp contrast, she warns that delivering well-intentioned assistance through the military is not only ineffective but actively harmful, as it only serves to boost the junta's corruption, matériel, and its hunger

for legitimacy. “If it goes through the military, it will be siphoned off, plundered... right now, the majority of the relief that is coming from overseas is all in Naypyidaw... and not so much to the areas that really need it.”

She also highlights a previously unavailable opportunity: two airports are now controlled by the opposition in Lashio and Thandwe, and these can provide entry points for international aid without needing to go through military-controlled Yangon. She calls on humanitarian agencies and foreign governments to seriously explore alternatives such as these, which have not existed in past disasters.

Byrd discusses the lack of “political will” in the international system to act boldly regarding Myanmar. Bureaucratic inertia, a lack of understanding and a fear of disrupting established diplomatic protocols often prevent effective intervention. She notes that even many global policymakers don’t know where Myanmar is on a map, let alone comprehend its complex dynamics and tumultuous recent history. Amid this ignorance and timidity, the military exploits international systems to legitimize itself.

## MEDIA COVERAGE

Byrd does see some glimmers of light, however, in some media coverage, such as stories by Al Jazeera’s Tony Cheng. He managed to report from inside Myanmar after the quake, and she believes that with more reporting like his, public awareness can build pressure to change the political calculus.

Byrd turns to the geostrategic implications of Myanmar’s instability for the Indo-Pacific region. With its location at the intersection of South Asia, Southeast Asia, and China, she argues that a stable, democratic Myanmar is crucial for broader, regional peace. She warns that unchecked chaos leads to transnational crime, trafficking rings, and other malign forces taking root. And she singles out an important regional neighbor, Thailand, describing how Myanmar’s generals privately

look down on Thai forces as inferior, despite their professional relationship. So she cautions Thailand’s military not to be used or manipulated by Myanmar’s junta, which exploits and ultimately disrespects even those who try to support it diplomatically.

## CLOSE TO TURNING THE TIDE

Ultimately, Byrd’s core argument is that the resistance in Myanmar—powered by everyday people and supported by a courageous diaspora—is astonishingly close to turning the tide. Despite being pitted against a military propped up by the Chinese and Russians, the population has maintained morale, expanded control over territory, and seen growing defections from within the armed forces. The regime is crumbling under the weight of its corruption and brutality.

What the people of Myanmar need now, Byrd argues, is not weapons so much as humanitarian support and communication tools. Reliable, secure communications are critical for coordination and survival. Aid that avoids military channels and empowers grassroots networks can be the tipping point!

Byrd closes with an emotional call for international solidarity: “If the international community could just help them a little bit, I think that we can get to the end state.”

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<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2025/4/3/episode-330-mission-aborted>





## FLOWERS IN THEIR HAIR: SHAN BOYS ORDAINED INTO BUDDHIST MONKHOOD

Photo: AFP

**D**ressed in flowers, finery and makeup, scores of boys were paraded around a temple in Thailand after having their heads shaved -- a symbolic start to a centuries-old Shan monkhood ordination.

The Buddhist celebration is unique to the Shan people of northeastern Myanmar, hundreds of thousands of whom have moved to Thailand during their country's decades of dictatorship and turmoil.

Monks ritually shaved more than 40 boys' heads with razors, tufts of hair falling onto lotus leaves.

In shimmering robes, jewellery and colourful floral headpieces, they were carried around the Ku Tao temple in Chiang Mai three times on relatives' shoulders, to the rhythmic beat of traditional gongs.

"I've made this decision myself... I am glad and happy," said nine-year-old Donlaphat Lungta, whose parents migrated from Myanmar and was born in Thailand, where the Shan are known as Tai Yai.

The Poy Sang Long tradition, meaning, "ordaining beloved sons" is a vibrant three-day ritual before the boys enter monastic life for between three days and one month -- a rite of passage believed to bring merit and good fortune.

"Boys who take part in this tradition are considered students of Buddha. It is a deeply meritorious event," said Chaiya Kongcheun, president of the Tai Yai Education and Culture Association, which works to preserve Shan culture in Thailand.

The elaborate attire symbolises a prince from Myanmar's history, explained Chaiya, while being carried on someone's shoulders represents power and a semi-divine status.

For Donlaphat's father, Nu Lungta, the ceremony was a valuable investment in his son's future, years after he underwent it himself.

The 40-year-old who works as a vegetable delivery driver estimated his spending on the celebration at 150,000 baht (\$4,300), including food and decorations.

Around 50 of his relatives helped cover the costs, he said, watching a monk shave his son's head, adding that he would have delayed if he could not afford to celebrate appropriately.

"I hope he grows into a good man and helpful, never taking advantage of others," he told AFP.

Each night, the boys -- aged between seven

and 12 -- and their families sleep in booths at the temple, surrounded by colourful balloons and rainbow ornaments.

Before dawn, Donlaphat put on shimmering white robes and was lifted onto a succession of relatives' shoulders for the procession, while his parents walked alongside him.

### Shan heart

Myanmar's political instability and decades of conflict have forced many in the Shan community to seek refuge in neighbouring Thailand, drawn by cultural and linguistic similarities.

Chaiya said the kingdom saw a surge in Shan immigration following Myanmar's 2021 military coup and the subsequent civil war, with Shan state one of the worst-affected regions.

The procession drew hundreds of onlookers, with scores of police present to maintain security.

"Tai Yai people fled war to find peace in Thailand," said Chaiya.

The Poy Sang Long ceremony is now held in March and April in various locations in northern Thailand, and

Chiang Mai is home to one of the country's largest Shan communities.

Father Nu said he feels fully integrated into Thai society.

"For me, Thailand is my home... my son was born here," he said.

But for many Shan, the connection to their homeland remains strong.

Mokam Lungkuna, a 35-year-old construction worker who took her nine-year-old son Thanwa to be ordained, has lived in Thailand for two decades.

"My heart is in Shan State," she told AFP, speaking over the sound of drum rolls echoing through the ceremony.

"It will always be our culture."

AFP



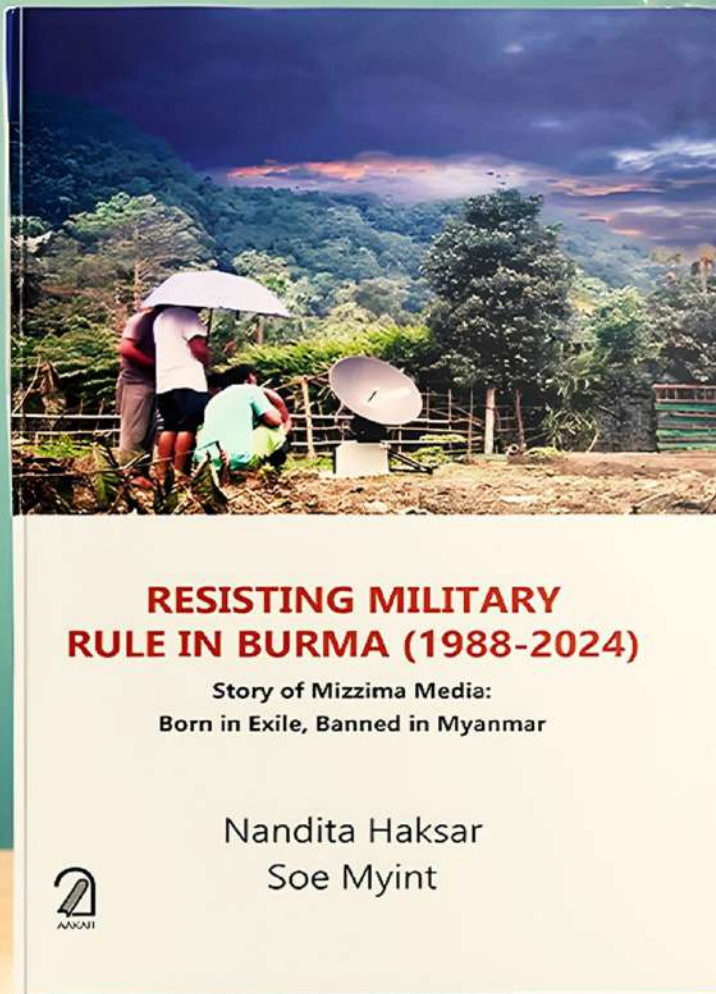
A boy taking part in Shan monkhood ordination. Photo: AFP



RESISTING MILITARY RULE IN BURMA (1988-2024)

# STORY OF MIZZIMA MEDIA: BORN IN EXILE, BANNED IN MYANMAR

by *Nandita Haksar and Soe Myint*



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US soldiers. Photo: AFP

# TRUMP CARVES UP WORLD AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER WITH IT

**B**y casting doubt on the world order, Donald Trump risks dragging the globe back into an era where great powers impose their imperial will on the weak, analysts warn.

Russia wants Ukraine, China demands Taiwan and now the US president seems to be following suit, whether by coveting Canada as the "51st US state", insisting "we've got to have" Greenland or kicking Chinese interests out of the Panama Canal.

Where the United States once defended state sovereignty and international law, Trump's disregard for his neighbours' borders and expansionist ambitions mark a return to the days when the world was carved up into spheres of influence.

As recently as Wednesday, US defence secretary Pete Hegseth floated the idea of an American military base to secure the Panama Canal, a strategic waterway controlled by the United States until 1999 which Trump's administration has vowed to "take back".

Hegseth's comments came nearly 35 years after the United States invaded to topple Panama's dictator Manuel Noriega, harking back to when successive US administrations viewed Latin America as "America's backyard".

"The Trump 2.0 administration is largely accepting the familiar great power claim to 'spheres of influence'," Professor Gregory O. Hall, of the University of Kentucky, told AFP.

Indian diplomat Jawed Ashraf warned that by "speaking openly about Greenland, Canada, Panama Canal", "the new administration may have accelerated the slide" towards a return to great power domination.

## The empire strikes back

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has posed as the custodian of an international order "based on the ideas of countries' equal sovereignty and territorial integrity", said American researcher Jeffrey Mankoff, of the Center for Strategic and International Studies.



But those principles run counter to how Russia and China see their own interests, according to the author of "Empires of Eurasia: how imperial legacies shape international security".

Both countries are "themselves products of empires and continue to function in many ways like empires", seeking to throw their weight around for reasons of prestige, power or protection, Mankoff said.

That is not to say that spheres of influence disappeared with the fall of the Soviet Union.

"Even then, the US and Western allies sought to expand their sphere of influence eastward into what was the erstwhile Soviet and then the Russian sphere of influence," Ashraf, a former adviser to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, pointed out.

But until the return of Trump, the United States exploited its position as the "policeman of the world" to ward off imperial ambitions while pushing its own interests.

Now that Trump appears to view the cost of upholding a rules-based order challenged by its rivals and increasingly criticised in the rest of the world as too expensive, the United States is contributing to the cracks in the facade with Russia and China's help.

And as the international order weakens, the great powers "see opportunities to once again behave in an imperial way", said Mankoff.

## **Yalta yet again**

As at Yalta in 1945, when the United States and the Soviet Union divided the post-World War II world between their respective zones of influence, Washington, Beijing and Moscow could again agree to carve up the globe anew.

"Improved ties between the United States and its great-power rivals, Russia and China, appear to be imminent," Derek Grossman, of the United States' RAND Corporation think tank, said in March.

But the haggling over who gets dominance over what and where would likely come at the expense of other countries.

"Today's major powers are seeking to negotiate a new global order primarily with each other," Monica Toft, professor of international relations at Tufts University in Massachusetts wrote in the journal Foreign Affairs.

"In a scenario in which the United States, China, and Russia all agree that they have a vital interest in avoiding a nuclear war, acknowledging each other's spheres of influence can serve as a mechanism to deter escalation," Toft said.

If that were the case, "negotiations to end the war in Ukraine could resemble a new Yalta", she added.

Yet the thought of a Ukraine deemed by Trump to be in Russia's sphere is likely to send shivers down the spines of many in Europe -- not least in Ukraine itself.

"The success or failure of Ukraine to defend its sovereignty is going to have a lot of impact in terms of what the global system ends up looking like a generation from now," Mankoff said.

"So it's important for countries that have the ability and want to uphold an anti-imperial version of international order to assist Ukraine," he added -- pointing the finger at Europe.

"In Trump's world, Europeans need their own sphere of influence," said Rym Momtaz, a researcher at the Carnegie Endowment for Peace.

"For former imperial powers, Europeans seem strangely on the backfoot as nineteenth century spheres of influence come back as the organising principle of global affairs."

AFP



Photo: AFP

## ASEAN CHIEF URGES 'BOLDLY' INTEGRATING REGION'S ECONOMIES AMID US TARIFF WORRIES

**A**SEAN must "act boldly" to accelerate regional economic integration as sweeping US tariffs leave much of the world caught in the middle of a devastating trade war, the bloc's chief said Wednesday last week.

The 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which count on the United States as their main export market, were among those slapped with the toughest levies by President Donald Trump.

"To remain relevant and resilient in a world where economic chaos is fast becoming the new normal, we must act boldly, decisively, and together to reaffirm ASEAN's commitment to a stable, predictable, and business-friendly environment," ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn told an investment conference.

He was speaking on the eve of a meeting of ASEAN economic and finance ministers as well as central bank governors in the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur to discuss how to respond to the US tariffs.

ASEAN governments have chosen not to the retaliate against Washington, preferring dialogue.

But their export-oriented economies risk being hurt by a global trade war after China -- another key market -- imposed its own tariffs on the United States.

"Without urgent and collective action to accelerate intra-ASEAN economic integration and diversify our markets and partnerships, we risk ceding our place in a fractured and fast-evolving global economy," Kao said.

Manufacturing powerhouse and ASEAN member Vietnam was hit with a 46 percent tariff on exports to the United States, while neighbouring Cambodia -- a major producer of low-cost clothing for big Western brands -- was slapped with a 49 percent duty.

Other ASEAN nations hit with hefty tariffs are Laos (48 percent), Myanmar (44 percent), Thailand (36 percent), Indonesia (32 percent).

Malaysia, Southeast Asia's third-largest economy, was hit with lower tariff of 24 percent.

Brunei also faces a 24 percent tariff while the Philippines was hit with 17 percent and Singapore 10 percent.

The bloc has a combined population of more than 650 million but its members are at different stages of economic development, ranging from poorer countries like Laos and Cambodia to rich ones like financial centre Singapore.

AFP





## FAULT LINES

"Every country could face disaster, but every country also has plans to respond to those kind of like devastating events. But our country is not like others! We don't have the manpower, we don't have the techniques, we don't have the preparation and equipment. So usually, what we most rely on is volunteers and the unity of the whole country," Kyaw Kyaw tells the Insight Myanmar Podcast. "But now this time, it is not happening, since all the volunteers and the technicians and the experts, they are in prison or in the other countries."

In a deeply sobering interview, Kyaw Kyaw, a former military pediatrician and CDM defector, paints a harrowing picture of the aftermath of the recent 7.7 magnitude earthquake in Myanmar, which struck between the Mandalay and Sagaing regions. While the junta's official death toll stands at 1,700, Kyaw Kyaw says this figure "barely scratches the surface." Local witness accounts and volunteer interviews point to at least 10,000 dead in both Mandalay and Sagaing alone, with widespread destruction extending into Magway, Myingyan, and other towns.

Kyaw Kyaw describes this as the worst natural disaster in Myanmar since Cyclone Nargis in 2008. Entire cities are nearly annihilated, and the humanitarian situation is worsening by the hour. In the absence of a coordinated state response, overwhelmed local charity groups and volunteers have scrambled to take the lead in rescue operations. However, most lack proper training, tools, or even the manpower needed to safely extract people from collapsed buildings. Rescue efforts are painfully slow, often requiring one or two days to

recover a single trapped person. Some rescue attempts inadvertently cause further collapses. Survivors have been left to endure agonizing waits under rubble while the cries of those buried nearby gradually fade to silence.

But the emergency has expanded beyond rescue. With dead bodies trapped under debris and decomposing in the streets, entire towns are becoming hazardous to public health. Survivors are forced to live beside the stench of the dead, often with no shelter, and exposed to the risk of infection. Kyaw Kyaw says that local people are now begging, not for rescue of the living, but for removal of the dead. Even that has proven impossible for many areas due to a lack of backhoes, crematoriums, or even sufficient burial space.

The situation is exacerbated by the military's approach. Instead of mobilizing its vast machinery and personnel for humanitarian relief, Kyaw Kyaw says the junta has prioritized protecting its own assets in Naypyidaw, where military headquarters and top brass residences were swiftly cleared and repaired. International rescue teams from China and India were first taken to Naypyidaw before being selectively deployed elsewhere. Aid has been largely blocked from entering Sagaing—the most devastated area—under the guise of security. Checkpoints, curfews, and restricted movement have prevented urgent help from reaching victims. Foreign journalists have been barred from entering the country, and domestic internet restrictions remain in place.

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## MILITARY PROPAGANDA VS. REALITY: MYANMAR JUNTA'S FALSE PROMISE OF EARTHQUAKE RELIEF

While the junta leader Min Aung Hlaing tours earthquake-damaged sites for state media, evidence suggests the junta's focus remains on suppressing opposition through violence, even amidst a natural disaster.

State media reported the Senior General's inspection of damaged infrastructure and his visit to a mobile hospital established by the US-based Samaritan's Purse. He expressed appreciation for the assistance, a seemingly positive gesture. However, this carefully crafted image clashes starkly with reports of ongoing junta airstrikes and artillery shelling in various regions.

According to the opposition government National Unity Government (NUG), the junta launched more than 90 airstrikes between March 28 and April 8, killing at least 72 civilians, including children and women. These attacks reportedly continued even after the junta declared a temporary ceasefire for earthquake relief.

The devastating humanitarian crisis, particularly in regions outside the military regime's authority, has reached dire levels, according to U.N. human rights spokesperson Ravina Shamdasani.

The powerful 7.7 magnitude earthquake, among the most severe to strike Myanmar in decades, impacted homes across a population of 28 million, causing buildings to collapse, destroying entire communities, and leaving countless residents struggling without basic necessities like food and water.

The confirmed fatalities surpassed 3,000 one week after the quake.

"The continuation of airstrikes is both deeply concerning and appalling—they must cease immediately, with efforts redirected toward humanitarian relief," Shamdasani said.





## SOCIAL MEDIA USERS CELEBRATE RESISTANCE TROOPS' VICTORY IN SAGAING REGION'S KALAY TOWNSHIP

**S**ocial media erupts with celebration as users react to resistance forces victory in Kyantha Village in southern Kalay Township, Sagaing Region.

The Chin National Army (CNA) reported that a coalition of resistance forces successfully captured a military outpost in Kyantha Village where Myanmar military junta troops and their allied Pyu Saw Htee militiamen were stationed, following a battle that concluded on April 11. The fighting left 15 soldiers and militiamen from the junta's side dead and others wounded, while the resistance forces suffered seven casualties.

A Facebook user wrote, "I'm excited, satisfied, and happy," reflecting the widespread support for the resistance victory despite the losses.

Another Facebook user commented, "Although it's a victory, I'm saddened that seven resistance comrades had to sacrifice their lives," adding prayers for continued success and safety for resistance fighters.

A third Facebook user remarked, "The resistance forces' continuous victories are encouraging, but there's also a price to pay. I pray for minimal casualties and respect the fallen heroes. May they continue achieving victories."

This area is strategically important at the edge of Sagaing Region, near Magway and Chin borders, crucial for military logistics, according to the CNA.

Resistance forces had previously captured other strategic locations in the area, including the Kanbarni Bridge outpost and three Pyu Saw Htee-based villages, in February.

The coordinated attack involved multiple resistance groups including the CNA and various Chin resistance forces, as well as People's Defense Organizations (PDOs) operated under the opposition government National Unity Government (NUG).

# mizzima WEEKLY

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.