

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



**'After I Get a Prosthetic, I'll
Go Back to the Front Line'**

**European Taxpayer Money Inadvertently Funds
Chinese Surveillance Infrastructure in Myanmar**

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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.

SHOOTING GOLDFISH IN A BOWL

Political prisoners in Myanmar's jails are feeling the heat. Since the February 2021 coup, Myanmar's military junta has weaponized its prisons to crush dissent. Through routine torture, solitary confinement, starvation, denial of healthcare, sexual violence, forced labour, corruption, and psychological abuse, the junta seeks to break prisoners physically and mentally.

These are neither isolated incidents nor anomalies - they reflect a systemic campaign of repression and punishment. It's like shooting goldfish in a bowl - there is no way the political prisoners can avoid being targeted.

Facilities like Tharyarwaddy, Insein, Myingyan, Daik-U, and Obo are notorious for widespread torture. Former detainees describe beatings with rubber batons, tasers, slingshots, and forced stress positions, where prisoners must maintain painful postures for hours or days.

At Myingyan Prison, at least 20 political prisoners were placed in solitary confinement with their heads covered, hands bound, tasered, and beaten, reportedly for possessing smuggled phones. Such punishments highlight how isolation serves as a tool for abuse.

Food rations are woefully inadequate - overly polished rice often devoid of essential nutrients, accompanied by weak broth and negligible protein. These conditions lead to chronic malnutrition, vitamin deficiencies, and diseases like tuberculosis, hepatitis, and dysentery. The junta further restricts family-sent food and medicine, crippling prisoners' ability to supplement their diets or access basic treatment.

As Mizzima has reported, political detainees routinely receive no medical care. Facilities often lack doctors, medicine, and proper sanitation. Injured prisoners face delays, are denied hospital transfers, and must pay full medical costs.

As a result, dozens have died in custody in 2024 alone - 31 according to an RFA report.

Female prisoners face sexual harassment, nighttime armed raids, beatings, and even shooting with slingshots after complaining about male guards in bathing areas in Daik-U Prison. Transgender and LGBTQIA+ detainees are reportedly singled out for sexual torture and harassment in Mandalay's Obo Prison.

Detainees are compelled to perform hazardous forced labour - handling sewage and biohazards in fields - with no protective gear. Authorities systematically demand bribes for basic necessities like food, water, sanitation and visits. Refusal leads to beatings, food denial or isolation.

Political prisoners are routinely transferred to distant, high-security facilities with minimal notice, severing contact with lawyers and families. Package restrictions - limiting food and medications - are enforced arbitrarily, intensifying punishment. Legal visits remain restricted - often under the pretext of COVID-19, undermining any semblance of due process.

Overcrowded, unsanitary cells rife with contaminated water, vermin, and disease foster shock, anxiety, depression, and hopelessness. Forced humiliation, such as cleaning feces bare-handed, restrictions on possessions, and constantly threatened violence, compound the trauma.

International calls have intensified for independent investigations, sanctions on jailers, and the release of all political prisoners, including the most high-profile political detainee - Aung San Suu Kyi. This is a key demand that needs to be tackled.

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Cover photo taken from a documentary by Matt Blauer





"After I get a prosthetic, I'll go back to the front line. Keep going until it is over," said the young fighter. Screenshot from the documentary, "Frontline Hospital" by Matt Blauer.

'AFTER I GET A PROSTHETIC, I'LL GO BACK TO THE FRONT LINE'

ANTONIO GRACEFFO

A young fighter lies in a bamboo hut in the jungle, tended by two doctors, former members of the civil disobedience movement, who shine headlamps on his amputated foot while showing him the damage on a laptop screen. The lead doctor explains that the life-saving amputation left additional bone that would make fitting a prosthetic difficult and risk infection, potentially necessitating removal of even more of the leg.

This opening scene from the film *Frontline Hospital*, made by Matt Blauer in cooperation with Earth Mission, depicts the difficulties faced by doctors operating in a jungle environment during wartime. The doctor explains they will perform a spinal block and conduct another operation to remove the excess bone. Once his prosthetic is fitted, the patient should be able to walk fairly normally again.

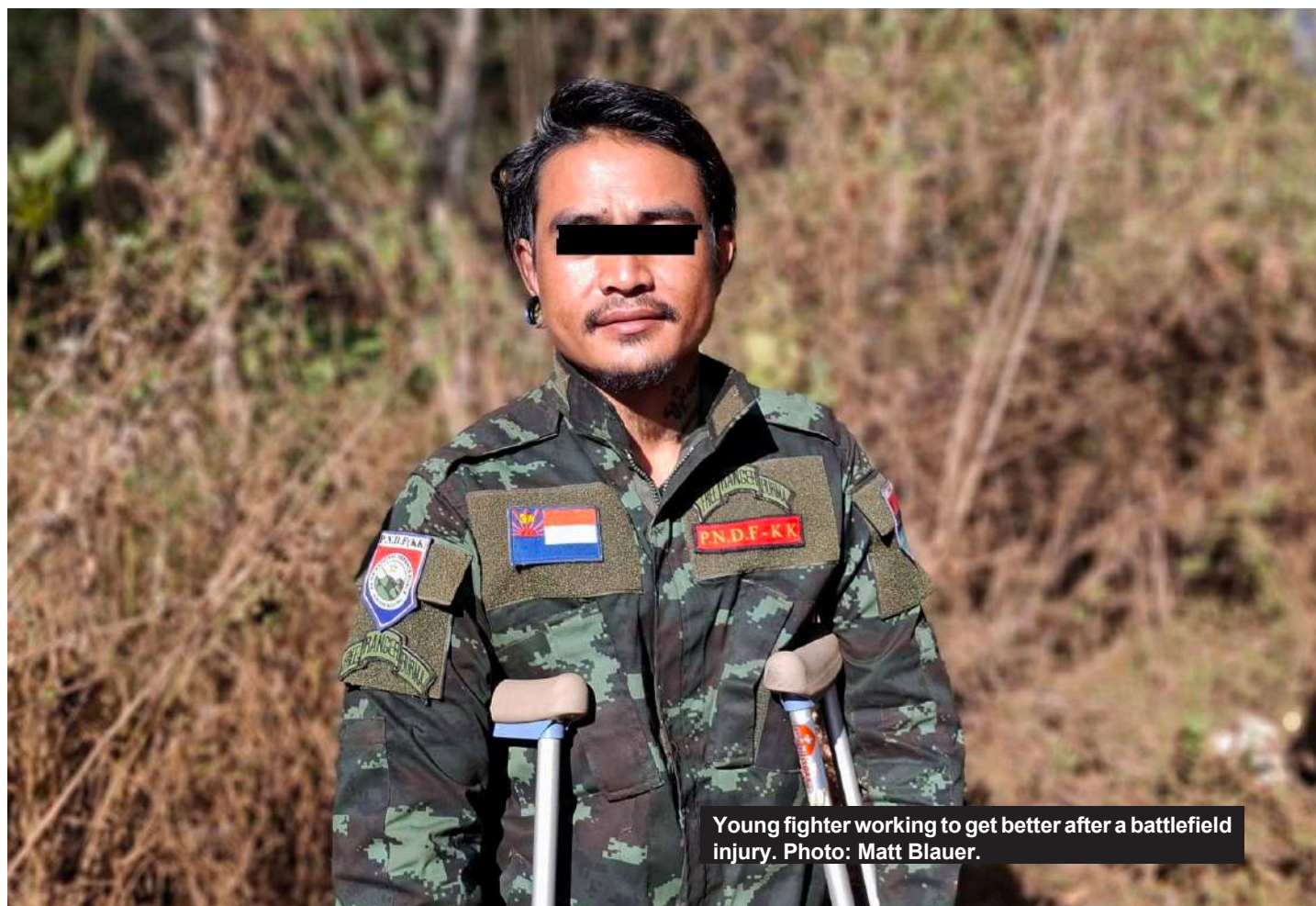
"The good thing is," the doctor says, "because it's below the knee, you will get around normally. The prosthetics are much better now, not like the old ones—quality metal, quite beautiful."

Using a spinal block means the patient will remain awake for the entire procedure. As they carry him into

the operating room, the medical team asks what music he likes, hoping to help him relax during the conscious surgery. The doctors say a prayer in Jesus' name before operating.

Throughout the operation, the hospital remains under threat of airstrikes. Beyond the operating theater, they dare not use generators to light any other part of the facility. According to the lead doctor, the hospital must relocate every few months because the State Administration Council (SAC) actively targets hospitals and clinics. He identified the inability to ensure physical safety as one of the primary operational challenges, with the other being the inability to move patients quickly and safely from the battlefield to the hospital, or from the hospital to Thailand, with trips taking days in either direction.

Once the operation concludes, the generators are shut off, and using headlamps, doctors and nurses carry the patient back to the recovery hut. The next morning, after prayers, they tend to other wounded, nearly all young men with bullet wounds, shrapnel injuries, burns, and amputations.



Young fighter working to get better after a battlefield injury. Photo: Matt Blauer.

For the brave and dedicated Burmese doctors who have been functioning under these tense circumstances since the coup, adaptation has become routine. However, for visiting doctors, volunteers from Europe or the United States, operating in the jungle under combat conditions requires major adjustment.

In Karenni State, I spoke with Dr. Tom Avery, a 36-year-old volunteer surgeon born in the US but educated and practicing medicine in Europe. He volunteers in general surgery with the Free Burma Rangers (FBR).

"You're going to be faced with very difficult situations that you just don't encounter back home in a civilian setting, especially not in Germany," he said. "There's not a lot of gun violence. We don't have many stabbings."

When asked whether his medical training included procedures like bullet or shrapnel removal, Avery replied, "No, it's like learning on a case-by-case situation."

He also noted the absence of mass casualty situations in Western Europe, no earthquakes, natural disasters, or warfare, meaning he had never learned extensively about triage: organizing and sorting multiple patients to decide treatment priority and how to effectively distribute limited resources in terms of medical personnel, medicines, and equipment.

Avery described the battlefield medical structure: "The concept during a battle is that there is a front line

CCP [Casualty Collection Point], where casualties are collected, stabilized, and resuscitated, if there is time and opportunity. Mostly I was situated two to three kilometers away from the front lines in what's called a forward surgical unit."

The mission involves stabilizing patients before evacuation to hospitals, but the team faced extremely long evacuation times. "On average, I would say at least six to eight hours of evacuation time from the surgical unit to the next hospital," Avery explained. "We were risking not just lives, but also limbs, because we had so many casualties come in with tourniquets placed."

Tourniquet management became a critical skill rarely required in European civilian medical settings. Frontline medics, unable to distinguish between venous and arterial bleeding, apply tourniquets as a precaution. However, determining whether a tourniquet is truly necessary requires an experienced medical team.

"It takes a team—a medical team with surgeons, doctors, ER nurses, ICU nurses—to work together and figure out: is this tourniquet really required? Can we do something to release this tourniquet?" Avery said. Leaving a tourniquet in place for eight hours significantly increases the likelihood of amputation.

During the biggest battle Avery's team supported, occurring on his second or third day in the field, he found himself operating on a tarp under a rock over-



hang. "Before that, I still had the illusion that most of the time I would operate from at least a tent or some sort of building," he recalled.

Without electricity or generators, the team relied on headlamps and natural lighting. All equipment had to be battery-powered, including cauterizing devices and monitoring equipment for blood pressure and oxygen saturation. For suction, they used hand-driven pumps, and for ventilation, manual bag-valve masks (Ambu bags).

Anesthesia options were severely limited. Despite the irony of operating in a region surrounded by opium fields, obtaining medical opiates or strong sedatives proved extremely difficult. "We had to work with ketamine primarily," Avery said. "It was our go-to sedative and analgesic agent."

The harsh realities of battlefield medicine meant that many severely injured patients never reached the surgical unit alive. Long transport times, sometimes 45 minutes just to carry someone from the front lines to the surgical unit, proved fatal for those with injuries to vital organs or severe abdominal trauma.

"If somebody sustained severe injuries to the cardiac box, the central vital organs, or large injury to the abdominal cavity, they would exsanguinate (bleed out) on the way," Avery explained. "So many of the casualties arrived dead."

The injuries that did make it to the surgical unit were often extremity wounds where tourniquets had kept patients alive, or penetrating chest injuries that didn't affect major vessels or the heart. While frontline medics attempted to pack large wounds with gauze before transport, this technique proved difficult to execute correctly, especially with major arterial bleeding. "Arterial bleeds really need either a tourniquet or a clamp," said Avery.

In war, everyone deals with death and suffering daily—from temporary volunteers and doctors to permanent medical staff at facilities like the Earth Mission hospital, to soldiers, wounded civilians, displaced families, and those grieving the loss of loved ones.

Dr. Avery identified another critical gap in care: "One other big issue is that there is, at this moment, absolutely no psychological or psychiatric care available for all these casualties and people who have gone through immense emotional trauma—anxiety, depres-

sion, PTSD, you name it." He paused before adding, "According to the textbook, every single person here is in need of therapy or some type of psychological intervention. Everybody. Nobody is without trauma."

Back at the Earth Mission hospital, the head doctor, who has been in the conflict since the coup, spoke about the pain of losing family and friends and the constant grief that medical staff and soldiers endure. Recently, two soldiers brought their wounded comrade to the hospital, but the young man died before they arrived. His friend sat next to the body and cried for two days.

The doctor understood completely. "This is something we often face here," he said. "It is hard to express in words, when these things happen in this war, our feelings, our hearts, our emotions, our appearance, everything changes. The pain and the sorrow... the person before the war and after the war are different."

The young soldier who had his leg amputated was only a teenager when the coup took place and has lived about a quarter of his life in war. When asked why he joined the resistance, he replied simply: "The dictators are oppressing the people. I couldn't stand it. So, I joined."

His plans after recovery remained unwavering: "After I get a prosthetic, I'll go back to the front line. Keep going until it is over."

The head doctor reflected on the broader meaning of their struggle. "People think we are just fighting a war. It's not just fighting a war. It's fighting against injustice, resisting the dictator. It's not a war without reason. It's not a meaningless conflict to seize power or to take what belongs to others." His voice grew more resolute: "All these young people are fighting for truth and justice. That's why we should help them. If we don't strongly support them, it's like telling them to die for nothing."

You can watch Matt Blauer's film, [Frontline Hospital](#) on Youtube.



Photo: AFP

MYANMAR JUNTA DEMANDS QUAKE FOOD REFUND FROM JUNTA EMPLOYEES

Myanmar's military regime is demanding government employees repay part of the emergency food aid they received following the powerful earthquake that struck central Myanmar in May. According to local reports, staff members in Naypyidaw are being asked to return over 70,000 kyats - the cost of a one-month ration - by July 7.

The aid, which included rice, oil, salt, beans, and fish paste, was distributed twice - once through respective ministries and once through the Naypyidaw Council - a total of two months. Junta officials now claim that staff members who received both allocations must reimburse the cost of one, totaling 70,043 kyats.

"We just gave the name list as they asked," a government staff member told Ayeyarwaddy Times. "Now, they say we received it twice and demand repayment. We have no choice but to return it."

The move has sparked frustration among civil servants still recovering from the disaster, which left widespread damage in Naypyidaw and surrounding regions.

Meanwhile, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Mr. Tom Andrews, criticized the junta for blocking humanitarian aid to areas controlled by revolutionary forces. Speaking at a press conference following the 59th UN Human Rights Council session on June 25, he said the regime has also restricted private charities attempting to directly assist earthquake victims. "The junta is using aid as a weapon of war," Andrews emphasized.

At the same time, authorities in Naypyidaw have begun demolishing quake-damaged government housing in Zabuthiri Township as part of the cleanup process. Using backhoe excavators, the junta has



IDPs in Shan State. Photo: AFP

started clearing buildings categorized under a colour-coded damage scale: Red for demolition, Orange for major repairs, and Green for buildings deemed habitable.

The earthquake response continues to highlight the regime's control over aid distribution and its punitive approach toward government staff, even amid ongoing recovery efforts.

Shan and Karenni state conflict at boiling point as monsoon rain falls

Intense clashes have escalated in recent weeks across Southern Shan and Karenni States, as resistance forces and the junta engage in fierce battles for control of strategic towns and military outposts.

On July 6, Myanmar's military regime announced it had retaken control of Moby, a frontline town in southern Shan State that had previously been under the temporary control, over one year, of anti-junta forces. The junta claimed its forces had "cleared out terrorists" from the town and accused international aid groups - specifically Free Burma Rangers - of supporting the Karenni Nationalities Defense Force (KNDF) under the guise of humanitarian assistance.

During the fighting in Moby, the Buffalo Horn Company, a unit under the KNDF, reported that four of its members - each around 20 years old - had been killed in June. The group publicly mourned their loss while vowing to continue the resistance.

Meanwhile, in Hpasawng Township of Karenni State, a major breakthrough occurred when resistance forces overran the junta's No. 134 Regiment on June 30. The capture was only publicly announced on July 3,

a deliberate delay meant to protect against anticipated junta airstrikes and counterattacks.

According to the KNDF, more than 50 junta soldiers were taken prisoner, along with a significant cache of weapons and ammunition. Speaking to Kantarawaddy Times, a KNDF spokesperson stated: "The administration is managing the prisoners of war and their families with care. More details will be provided soon."

The successful assault leaves only Regiment No. 135 remaining in Hpasawng. Resistance forces say they are continuing operations to seize full control of the township.

Adding to the turmoil, a junta fighter jet reportedly went missing on July 1 during a night training flight in the Hpasawng area. The military initially cited mechanical failure or weather conditions as possible causes, announcing the disappearance in state-run newspapers on July 2 - a rare move prior to any statement from resistance groups.

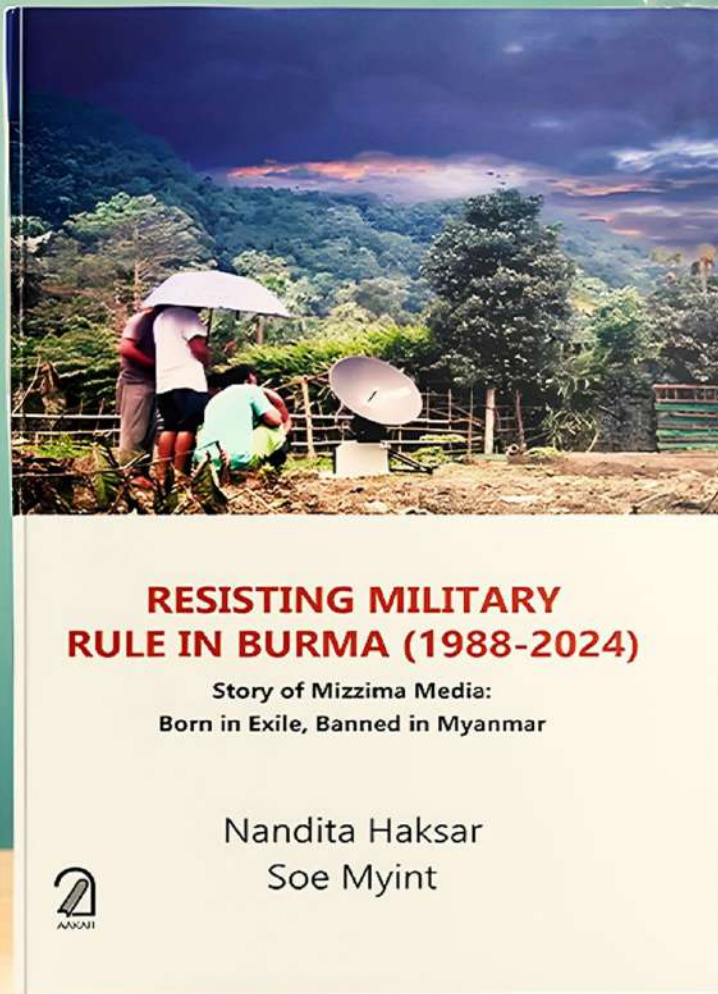
However, on July 3, revolutionary forces claimed responsibility for shooting down the jet, later releasing images and video clips of the wreckage as evidence. If confirmed, this marks at least the 14th military aircraft downed by resistance forces since the 2021 military coup.

The latest developments underscore the growing strength and coordination of resistance forces in the Karenni region, as well as the junta's increasing reliance on airpower and heavy reinforcements to retain control in contested areas.

RESISTING MILITARY RULE IN BURMA (1988-2024)

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

by *Nandita Haksar and Soe Myint*



RESISTING MILITARY RULE IN BURMA (1988-2024)

Story of Mizzima Media:
Born in Exile, Banned in Myanmar

Nandita Haksar
Soe Myint



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**EUROPEAN TAXPAYER
MONEY INADVERTENTLY
FUNDS CHINESE
SURVEILLANCE
INFRASTRUCTURE IN
MYANMAR
ANTONIO GRACEFFO**



An investigation has revealed that development funds from the United Kingdom, Norway, and Denmark have invested at least \$40 million in Frontiir, Myanmar's largest internet service provider, despite evidence it hosts sophisticated Chinese surveillance technology. These systems are capable of intercepting communications and blocking virtual private networks (VPNs), potentially aiding the military junta's crackdown on dissent.

Since the February 2021 coup, the junta has dramatically expanded its digital repression, using Chinese-supplied tools to monitor, track, and arrest thousands of pro-democracy activists and ordinary citizens, now with inadvertent support from European taxpayers.

Since 2019, three European development finance institutions have funneled nearly \$40 million into Frontiir, Myanmar's largest internet service provider, through taxpayer-funded investment arms: British International Investment (BII) contributed \$26 million, Norway's Norfund added about \$3 million, and Denmark's IFU invested roughly \$10.5 million.

These funds, delivered via Myanmar Opportunities Fund II and direct stakes, were intended to expand internet access for underserved communities and played a key role in Frontiir's rapid rise, particularly through its Myanmar Net brand. Ironically, the investments continued even amid growing censorship concerns, BII added another \$3 million in July 2020, just one month after UK Parliament raised questions about Frontiir's compliance with junta censorship orders.

According to Finance Uncovered, Frontiir's Yangon data center hosts surveillance equipment from Geedge Networks, a Chinese cybersecurity company founded by Fang Binxing, the architect of China's notorious "Great Firewall." Geedge's two core products, the Tiangou Secure Gateway (TSG) and Cyber Narrator, form the backbone of Myanmar's digital surveillance system. TSG, described by Geedge as a "one-stop solution for network perimeter security," uses deep packet inspection (DPI) to monitor internet traffic at a granular level. It can intercept and decrypt traffic normally protected by SSL and TLS encryption, protocols that secure "https" websites and encrypted apps, exposing private user data to state surveillance. TSG also blocks applications and websites based on

behavior and prevents the use of VPNs.

Cyber Narrator complements TSG by performing real-time traffic analysis and OTT (Over-The-Top) tracking, identifying which apps and websites users access. It provides analytics dashboards that show usage patterns and ratios, helping authorities detect and flag perceived threats, such as attempts to bypass censorship. These tools feed directly into Myanmar's security apparatus, enabling law enforcement and military operations based on digital behavior patterns.

The junta has modeled much of its surveillance architecture on Chinese digital policing practices. All SIM cards must be registered to national IDs, allowing authorities to link online activity to specific individuals. Automated systems conduct keyword scanning of digital communications, flagging terms like "revolution" or "protest." Once flagged, users can be geolocated through cell tower triangulation. Platforms like TSG and Cyber Narrator integrate this surveillance with real-time location tracking, content monitoring, and data harvesting.

These capabilities are bolstered by additional systems such as the Myanmar Advanced Passenger Processing System (MAPPS), which collects digital travel data at airports, and new platform regulations requiring extensive user data retention and reporting. The junta's Cybersecurity Law, passed after the 2021 coup, criminalizes VPN use, punishable by up to six months in prison and fines up to 10 million kyats, while permitting extraterritorial prosecution, online speech restrictions, and broad content blocking under vague terms such as "threats to unity or stability." In May 2024, the regime escalated censorship by upgrading VPN restrictions to a full ban, cutting off access to independent news, social media, and secure communication tools.

The Frontiir case exemplifies how China's brand of digital repression is being exported globally through opaque corporate partnerships. Geedge Networks has rapidly expanded from \$11.1 million in revenue in 2018 to \$18.5 million in 2021, marketing its "encrypted traffic visibility" technology to broadband providers worldwide. The company operates under China's Belt and Road Initiative, while its founder maintains ties to China National Electronics Import and Export Corporation (CEIEC), the same state-owned enterprise

sanctioned by the US in 2020 for providing Venezuela with China's surveillance firewall technology.

CEIEC now serves as Myanmar's "long-standing supplier" of air defense radar systems, command and control systems, and location tracking technology, while China has doubled down with military aid including combat aircraft and drone technology. The junta's Social Media Monitoring Team (SMMT) now operates as an opaque enforcement body, using this Chinese-supplied surveillance infrastructure to identify dissidents, map social networks, and enable targeted crackdowns. Beijing has even established a joint security company to protect Chinese investments under the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, effectively militarizing its Belt and Road infrastructure. Together, these interconnected systems create a comprehensive template for digital authoritarianism combined with physical repression that China is refining and tightening as the civil war drags on.

Meanwhile, European firms are inadvertently bankrolling the military junta through misguided trade and investment relationships. The EU's garment trade with Myanmar channels vital foreign exchange directly through the junta-controlled Central Bank, effectively funding weapons purchases. Despite mounting criticism, the EU continues supporting the controversial \$3.3 million USD "MADE in Myanmar" project, which labor unions argue legitimizes military-controlled labor relations while major European fashion brands continue sourcing from factories where over 556 human rights violations have been documented. This creates a disturbing dynamic where European taxpayers and consumers simultaneously sanction Myanmar's military while providing it the foreign currency lifeline essential to sustaining both its China-backed surveillance apparatus and broader repressive machinery.

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



NUG SAYS JUNTA-ALIGNED PARTIES LACK PUBLIC SUPPORT AHEAD OF PLANNED MYANMAR ELECTION

U Nay Phone Latt, spokesperson for the Prime Minister's Office of the National Unity Government (NUG), has dismissed the upcoming election planned by the military junta as a political farce, saying the participating parties have no real public support.

Speaking on 1 July during the NUG's televised program Message to the Public and International Community, U Nay Phone Latt said that the parties expected to compete in the election failed to win even 10 percent of the seats in the 2020 general election, even when their results were combined.

"These parties were rejected by the public in 2020. The upcoming sham election is not a viable solution to Myanmar's crisis. The revolutionary forces will continue to adhere to the Federal Democracy Charter and follow our political roadmap," he said.

He reaffirmed that the results of the 2020 general election remain politically legitimate and said that both the legislative and administrative branches of the elected government remain intact under the NUG.

U Nay Phone Latt also reiterated that since the Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) officially abolished the 2008 Constitution on 30 March 2021, any political actions taken by the junta under that constitution are unlawful and lack legitimacy.

He added that 80 political parties including major forces such as the National League for Democracy (NLD) and the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) have refused to re-register with the junta's Union Election Commission (UEC).

On 7 June, the UEC announced through military-run media that elections are planned in 267 townships, though no details were provided about the specific regions. According to UEC records, 77 parties have applied for registration with the junta-controlled body, and 56 have so far been approved.

Junta leader Min Aung Hlaing has declared that the elections will be held over four weeks between December 2025 and January 2026.



Photo: AFP

NUG URGES MYANMAR NATIONALS IN THAILAND TO STAY AWAY FROM PROTESTS

On 2 July, the National Unity Government (NUG) Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement appealing to Myanmar nationals residing in Thailand to avoid Thai political protests, respect local laws and customs, and continue living peacefully.

The statement is as follows.

Appeal to Myanmar Nationals Residing in the Kingdom of Thailand

In light of the current political situation in the Kingdom of Thailand, all Myanmar citizens residing in the country, particularly those who have sought refuge due to the violent repression by the military junta, are respectfully urged to avoid areas where Thai nationals are staging protests and are strongly advised to refrain from engaging in any political activities related to Thailand.

Given the ongoing crisis in Myanmar, many citizens have been compelled to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. In this context, it is vital that they respect and live in harmony with the laws, customs, cultures, and societies of their host countries. Myanmar nationals in the Kingdom of Thailand are therefore encouraged

to contribute positively and support their host communities in any way they can.

The National Unity Government would like to express its sincere gratitude, on behalf of the Myanmar citizens residing in the Kingdom of Thailand, to His Majesty the King of Thailand, the Royal Thai Government, the Royal Thai Parliament, the Royal Thai Armed Forces, and the Thai people for their continued compassion and support.

Myanmar citizens who have fled their homeland due to the brutal oppression of the military junta pose no threat to Thailand's national interests. They are ordinary people who aspire to return home once the military dictatorship has come to an end.

The National Unity Government reaffirms its commitment to respecting Thai society, culture, and traditions, and to ensuring that Myanmar citizens live peacefully and responsibly during this temporary period of refuge. The National Unity Government respectfully appeals for the continued support and protection of Myanmar nationals residing in the Kingdom of Thailand, in the spirit of humanitarian consideration.



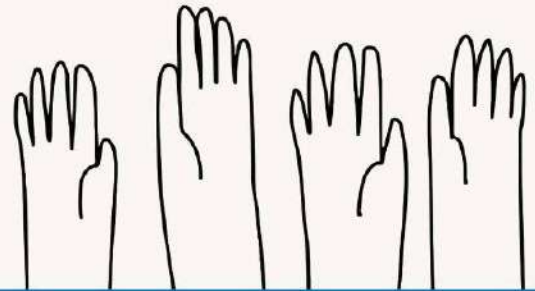
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NUG WELCOMES UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSION ON MYANMAR

On 30 June, the National Unity Government's Ministry of Human Rights released a statement welcoming the UN Human Rights Council's discussion on Myanmar, supporting the High Commissioner's report and the Special Rapporteur's update.

The press release of the Ministry of Human Rights is as follows.

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, as represented by the National Unity Government, welcomes the Human Rights Council's interactive dialogue on the High Commissioner's report and the oral update of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar. We also extend our gratitude to the distinguished civil society panellists.

The High Commissioner's latest report on Myanmar is a ground-breaking production. Based on consultations "with people from all ethnic communities, across all ages and walks of life in Myanmar", the report affirms a united message: "that the military must play no role in public life. People yearn for a peaceful, inclusive and democratic society, grounded in accountability and human rights."

Myanmar supports the four pathways set out by the High Commissioner to achieve these aspirations:

- pursuing accountability and justice, including through a Security Council referral of the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court

- good governance and civic space
- an economy that serves the people, and
- sustained engagement at the regional and international levels, including through the National Unity Government, ethnic armed groups, and the democracy movement including women's groups, youth and civil society.

Myanmar is also deeply grateful to Tom Andrews, the Special Rapporteur on Myanmar. Mr Andrews's update to the Council highlighted priority concerns, including the:

- military junta's cynical denial of aid and escalating airstrikes in the wake of the catastrophic Sagaing earthquake
- illegitimacy of the junta's planned sham election
- devastating impact of funding cuts on health services and food distribution for displaced Myanmar communities including the Rohingya, with the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis Joint Response Plan currently only 22% funded.

Lastly, Myanmar welcomes the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation's tabled draft resolution on the situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar, particularly its new references to accountability.

In closing, Myanmar extends its full support to OHCHR and to Mr Andrews and his mandate.



Photo: AFP

NUG ESTABLISHES OVER 1,100 HEALTHCARE FACILITIES NATIONWIDE DURING MYANMAR'S SPRING REVOLUTION

The Ministry of Health under Myanmar's opposition National Unity Government (NUG) announced on 3 July that it has established a total of 1,106 healthcare facilities across Myanmar over the four-year course of the Spring Revolution.

The figures, spanning from April 2021 to April 2025, were outlined in a detailed performance report released by the ministry.

According to the report, the healthcare infrastructure includes 106 hospitals, 808 clinics, and 192 mobile clinics, collectively serving 190 townships nationwide.

Currently, 5,098 healthcare professionals are providing medical services across the country. Their efforts are coordinated by 325 health administrators, comprising 69 central ministry staff, 29 regional health officers, and 227 township-level officials, according to the report.

However, the Ministry of Health noted that these numbers reflect only around one-third of the total health infrastructure established on the ground, suggesting the actual number of healthcare workers may be three times higher than officially recorded.

In the Sagaing Region, a central conflict zone, the number of people receiving medical care reportedly rose dramatically from over 10,000 to nearly 150,000 over the past four years, underscoring both the growing demand and expanding reach of services under NUG's parallel administration.

To protect healthcare workers and patients from aerial bombardments and artillery attacks, the NUG has begun constructing bomb-resistant underground hospitals.

According to NUG spokesperson Nay Phone Latt, who spoke to Mizzima on 10 June, two such facilities are already under construction.

He added that the NUG aims to build up to eight underground hospitals in areas under its control. However, he declined to disclose specific locations, citing security concerns.

These efforts have been bolstered by a recent crowdfunding initiative titled "Safe Hospital, Safe Healthcare", which ran from 24 May to 30 June. The campaign raised over US\$400,000, surpassing its original goal and providing crucial funding for medical infrastructure in active conflict zones.

Photo: Supplied

MALARIA OUTBREAK SPREADS IN KNU-CONTROLLED AREAS OF SOUTHEAST MYANMAR AMID ONGOING CONFLICT

A sharp rise in malaria infections is affecting both civilians and resistance fighters across territories controlled by the Karen National Union (KNU), as the rainy season intensifies and mosquito populations surge, according to the KNU's central spokesperson and district-level health officials.

The Karen Department of Health and Welfare (KDHW) reported that malaria is now one of the most pressing health threats in the KNU's seven administrative district areas. These zones span parts of eastern Bago Region, Thaton District in Mon State, most of Karen State, Tanintharyi Region, and areas along the Thai-Myanmar border.

"Based on data from our health department, malaria is currently one of the major health challenges during the rainy season. Mosquitoes are extremely prevalent during this time. As a result, both civilians and members of our resistance forces are facing malaria as a serious health issue," said Padoh Saw Kler Say, the KNU's central spokesperson.

Health officials confirmed that malaria outbreaks have been detected in Brigades 1, 3, 4, and others. While specific case numbers remain unverified, the illness is spreading rapidly among displaced populations and armed resistance forces, including fighters from the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA).

"In the Tanintharyi Region, especially along the Thai border, malaria has become increasingly common since early 2025. Previously, cases were rare, but now it's widespread. Both internally displaced persons and

soldiers are being affected. In hospitals and clinics, malaria is the most common illness," said Padoh Saw Aung Na, district secretary of the KNU Myeik-Dawei District.

Although treatment is being provided through KDHW programs and international humanitarian assistance, there is a growing shortage of essential supplies. Medicines and malaria diagnostic kits are running low, forcing medics to treat patients based on symptoms rather than confirmed test results.

"Some people are being bitten by malaria-carrying mosquitoes, while others are infected with the flu. There aren't enough medicines, and supplies are running low. Since test kits are unavailable, many are being treated based on symptoms alone," said a resistance fighter stationed in the Brigade 1 area.

In addition to malaria, cases of dengue fever are also being reported, though they remain less widespread.

The ongoing armed conflict in KNU-administered territories has severely disrupted healthcare services. Medical clinics and field hospitals are frequently relocated to avoid airstrikes and artillery attacks by the junta, leaving many without consistent access to care.

According to Karen civil society groups, more than 1.17 million people have been displaced in KNU territories due to conflict-related violence. These communities urgently require humanitarian support, including shelter, medical supplies, and food.



Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKE ON TNLA-HELD VILLAGE KILLS THREE CIVILIANS IN NORTHERN SHAN STATE

Three civilians were killed and another injured when Myanmar's military junta carried out an airstrike on Thone Se village in Nawnghkio Township, northern Shan State, according to a statement from the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) released on 1 July.

The attack, which occurred around 3 pm on 1 July, involved four bombing raids that dropped a total of 11 bombs, the TNLA said. The strike destroyed two houses and two monasteries in the village, which is under TNLA control.

The airstrike is part of a broader campaign by the junta targeting areas administered by the TNLA after Operation 1027. The assault on Thone Se follows a string of aerial attacks that have left civilian casualties and widespread destruction across multiple townships.

On 29 June, an airstrike on Kyaukme town injured two women and a man. Fourteen houses, a school, and two monasteries were damaged.

A separate strike on 26 June killed 49-year-old Moe Su Naung and injured two others, 17-year-old Zaw Htoo Lin and 19-year-old Phyo Than Kyaw. Two homes were damaged in that incident.

Just days earlier, on 24 June, two airstrikes on Kyaukme killed five civilians, three women and two men, and injured 14 others, including two children. The TNLA reported damage to 49 houses and two schools.

Meanwhile, on 25 June, the junta launched an aerial attack on Ohn Kine village in Mogok Township, Mandalay Region, injuring two civilians, one of whom was a child. Five homes and a monastery were also hit.

The TNLA stated that at least eight civilians have been killed and over 22 others injured in junta airstrikes over the past week across Nawnghkio, Kyaukme, and Mogok townships.

As the aerial bombardments continue, the TNLA has urged civilians in affected regions to stay vigilant and follow air-raid safety procedures to minimise casualties.

Following Operation 1027, the TNLA currently controls and administers vast parts of northern Shan State including Namhsan, Mantong, Namkham, Kutkai, Namtu, Mongngawt, Monglon, Kyaukme, Nawnghkio, Mong Mit, and Hsipaw townships as well as Mogok Township in Mandalay Region.



Photo: Supplied

8 CIVILIANS KILLED AND 29 INJURED IN MYANMAR JUNTA AIR AND ARTILLERY STRIKES IN NORTHERN SHAN STATE

An update by the Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) released on 2 July described the effects of airstrikes on Kyaukme, Mogok, and Nawgkhio between 24 June and 1 July. Additionally, over 50 buildings were damaged, including seven Buddhist monasteries, a Buddhist school, and a mosque. All the air and artillery attacks occurred in areas under the control of the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) since mid-2024.

The text of the update continues below.

On June 24, at about 5 pm, a SAC jet fighter dropped two 500-pound bombs on Quarter 3 and Quarter 7 of Kyaukme town, killing four civilians, injuring fourteen others and damaging 10 buildings, including a restaurant, a mosque and a temple. The four killed – three elderly women and one young man -- were all in the Sanpya Restaurant when it was bombed, and died instantly. They were: Daw Hla Yee (aged 60), Daw Hla Hla Htaw (aged 53), Daw Hla Tin (aged 55) and Thiha Naing (aged 22). On June 25, their bodies were buried at the Kyaukme cemetery.

Out of the fourteen injured in Kyaukme on June 24, seven were women: Daw Khin Yee (aged 60), Daw Hla Hla Thein (aged 55), Daw Hla Hla Yee (aged 52), Phyto Way Way Kyaw (aged 33), Aye San Moe (aged 25), Pauk Be (aged 22) and Ma Shun Lai Yi (aged 17). Three of the injured were men: U Hla Htay (aged 63), U Aung Tun (aged 55), and Mg Kyaw Zaw Hein (aged 19); and one was a five-year-old boy named Saw Saw. Details of the other three casualties are unknown. The injured were sent to hospitals in Kyaukme for treatment.

Previous to this, the most recent SAC airstrike on Kyaukme town was on May 5, 2025, when two bombs were dropped, causing no civilian casualties.

On June 25, at 11 pm, a SAC jet fighter dropped a 300-pound bomb on Ooh Kai monastery in Mogok town, injuring four civilians and damaging the Ooh Kai temple and five houses.

On June 25, at 10 pm, SAC troops fired eight artillery shells from Kan Kyi village into Say quarter of Nawngkhio town. The shells damaged two houses in Say Quarter.

On June 26, at 8 am, SAC troops again fired four (howitzer) artillery shells into Say Quarter, injuring a man and damaging a house.

In the early hours of June 27, 10-20 minutes before 1 am, a SAC jet fighter dropped two 500-pound bombs on Quarter 7 of Kyaukme town near the Electric Power Corporation EPC, killing one woman named Ma Moe Noun (aged 50) and injuring two young men named Phyto Than Kyaw (aged 19) and Saw Htoo Lyn (aged 17). A District Construction Guest House and two houses were damaged.

In the afternoon of June 29, at 2:30 pm, a SAC jet fighter dropped two 500-pound bombs on Quarter 1 of Kyaukme town, injuring two men and three women,

and damaging a Buddhist temple, a Buddhist school and fifteen houses. Between 8:30-9:00 pm, a SAC jet fighter dropped two 500-pound bombs and one cluster bomb on Quarter 7 of Kyaukme town, damaging four houses and a Buddhist temple.

On June 29, at 10 pm, SAC jet fighter dropped two 500-pound bombs on Say Quarter of Nawngkhio town, damaging several houses. After the airstrike, at 11 pm, SAC troops in Nawngkhio fired several shells into the town.

On July 1, at 3 pm, a SAC jet fighter came four times and dropped 11 bombs on Thonze village, 18 kms west of Nawngkhio town, killing three men, injuring another man and damaging two houses and two temples.

During June, there was fighting almost every day between SAC troops and the resistance forces of the Mandalay People's Defense Force (MDY-PDF) and TNLA along the Pyin Oo Lwin-Mogok road in Nawngkhio township.



Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKE KILLS WOMAN, DESTROYS HOMES IN SINGU TOWNSHIP, MANDALAY

A woman was killed and three houses destroyed when a military junta fighter jet from the carried out an airstrike on Pyi Soe Aung Ward in Letpanhla village, Singu Township, Mandalay Region, according to the Pyin Oo Lwin Township People's Defence Force (PDF).

The airstrike occurred at around 11:50 am on 29 June. A 300-pound bomb dropped from a jet based in Tada-U caused one fatality and extensive damage, according to the information officer of Pyin Oo Lwin Township PDF.

"The bomb was so powerful that the woman's body was completely torn apart," he said.

Singu Township, now fully controlled by resistance forces, has been subjected to repeated aerial bombardments by the junta.

Resistance fighters accuse the junta of deliberately targeting civilian areas, including homes, schools, hospitals, and religious buildings.

"Having lost control of the ground, the Military Council is now attacking non-military targets from the air to instil fear among civilians," one of the members of Pyin Oo Lwin Township PDF said.

The latest airstrike follows a similar incident on the evening of 23 June, when the junta conducted an airstrike near a field north of Htongyi village in Singu Township, injuring a local woman, according to the Pyin Oo Lwin District PDF.

Resistance forces have urged residents in the region to remain alert and take precautions, as aerial attacks by the junta become increasingly frequent.

Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA BURNS VILLAGES, ABDUCTS CIVILIANS IN MINHILA AFTER DEADLY CHECKPOINT AMBUSH

Following a deadly ambush on a military checkpoint that killed a lieutenant colonel and several soldiers, Myanmar junta troops have launched a sweeping retaliatory campaign across eastern Minhla Township, Bago Region, setting fire to more than 10 villages and displacing thousands of civilians, according to local resistance forces.

The crackdown began after a 16 June attack by local resistance fighters on the Sitkwintarzon checkpoint near Oakdwin village, which resulted in the death of Lt. Col. Yan Naing Aung, a senior military officer, and other junta personnel.

In the aftermath, around 500 junta troops began advancing into the area, carrying out raids on villages and targeting civilians with arrests and artillery fire, the Minhla Township People's Defence Force (PDF) said.

As of 2 July, more than 200 homes in at least 14 villages had been burned down.

"We haven't been able to fully assess the damage yet because junta soldiers are still present in some of the villages," a PDF official said.

On 2 July, junta troops reportedly abducted five women in Zayithmyaung village, Ma Thin Thin Oo, Ma

Par Par, Ma Ah Thay, Ma Mi Cho, and another unnamed resident, after they briefly returned to their homes to retrieve belongings. The women were taken to the local monastery, but their subsequent whereabouts remain unknown.

"They were fleeing the war and were arrested while trying to get home and get their things. We haven't heard anything about their release," said a local resident.

The military's scorched-earth response has forced residents from more than 40 villages to flee, including Kywemakaing, Ywaykone, Sanboke Kyunkone, Sarchaung (East), Khwetma, Ngahlasan, Ngamoeyeik, Zayithmyaung, Shwepaukpin, Taunglain, Kanthonesint, Htaukkyant, Thayawkon, Bantbwaypin, and Sinaichaungpauk.

Junta forces have been widely accused of committing atrocities in civilian areas in response to attacks by resistance groups, including arson, looting, and indiscriminate shelling, as part of their broader campaign to suppress opposition in contested regions.



Photo: AFP

MYANMAR JUNTA DRONE STRIKE ON FUNERAL INJURES THREE WOMEN IN MINHILA, BAGO REGION

A drone strike launched by the Myanmar military junta on a funeral gathering in Tha Yaw Kone village, Minhla Township, Tharwaddy District of Bago Region, left three women injured, one of them critically, according to an official from the Minhla Township People's Defence Force (PDF).

The aerial attack occurred at around 3:55 pm on 3 July, targeting the village as residents gathered for the funeral of a man named Ko Win Zaw Moe. The explosion reportedly damaged at least three houses, including that of local teacher Daw Yi Htay.

"The bomb struck near Daw Yi Htay's house and blew open the roof. She was hit by shrapnel and suffered a severe head injury. Her mother was also wounded, and her daughter who is hearing impaired sustained critical injuries from the blast," a PDF official told Myanmar Now.

The three victims - Daw Yi Htay, in her 40s; her mother Daw Sein Mya Kyi, in her 60s; and her daughter - are currently receiving treatment at Minhla Hospital.

According to residents, the funeral was being held shortly after the junta forces had threatened villagers with arson if they did not return to their homes following an earlier evacuation due to military raids. Many had reluctantly returned, only to face the drone strike.

"People are fleeing again now. I believe the junta wanted to force people out so they could burn the village. That may have been the purpose behind the drone attack," said one local resident.

Shortly after the funeral bombing, at around 4 pm, the junta conducted a second drone attack near the Kantiinbeelin (Kyawe Ma Kaing) Dam. The extent of damage from that strike remains unknown, according to the Minhla PDF.

The attacks came amid an ongoing military offensive in the eastern part of Minhla Township. On 16 June, resistance forces attacked the junta's Sit Kwin Tar Sone checkpoint near Oakdwin village, killing several junta soldiers, including Minhla Township administrative official Lt. Col. Yan Naing Aung.

In response, a junta column of around 500 troops has been conducting sweeping raids through villages at the base of the Bago Yoma mountain range. Since then, junta forces have burned or destroyed at least 200 homes in 14 villages and carried out widespread artillery and drone attacks, the PDF said.

As a result of the escalation, thousands of residents from over 40 villages in eastern Minhla Township have been forcibly displaced.



MYANMAR JUNTA FIGHTER JET CRASHES IN KARENNI STATE, BODIES OF TWO PILOTS FOUND

A Myanmar military fighter jet that went missing on 1 July during a training flight has crashed near Khemaphyu village in Hpa-saung Township, Karenni State, according to confirmation from the Karenni Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF).

The junta initially reported that the aircraft had vanished from radar and lost communication at a point 130 kilometres southeast of Naypyidaw, possibly due to mechanical failure or bad weather, according to a military-run newspaper published on 2 July. The aircraft type was not disclosed by the junta, though search operations were said to be underway in the area.

However, resistance forces later confirmed that the aircraft had crashed during combat operations amid intense fighting in the region. The wreckage and the bodies of two pilots were found on 3 July near Khemaphyu.

"The aircraft was bombing in the Battle of Hpa-saung. It crashed due to engine failure. The identities of

the pilots are still being verified," a KNDF spokesperson said.

A weapons analyst told Mizzima that the downed aircraft was a Chinese-made FTC-2000G, a light multi-role fighter jet with an estimated price of US\$8.5 million per unit.

This incident adds to the growing number of military aircraft lost by the junta since the 2021 coup, including Mi-35P and Mi-17 helicopters, Eurocopter 365s, K-8s, and other FTC-2000G jets.

Most recently, on 10 June, an F-7 fighter jet crashed and caught fire in Pale Township, Sagaing Region. While the junta blamed the crash on mechanical failure during a training flight, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) claimed to have shot the aircraft down.

The latest crash comes amid heightened military operations in Karenni State, where junta forces are facing fierce resistance from local armed groups like the KNDF.



IDP camp in Rakhine State.
Photo: Supplied

RAKHINE IDPS FACE HEALTH AND SHELTER CRISIS AMID MONSOON SEASON AND PROLONGED CONFLICT

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Rakhine State are facing worsening health and livelihood conditions as ongoing conflict and the monsoon season converge, leaving thousands without adequate shelter or medical support.

At the Mahayan IDP camp in Pauktaw Township, one of the first areas seized by the Arakan Army (AA), more than 300 displaced households, or around 1,000 people, have been struggling without any humanitarian assistance for nearly five months.

Camp officials say that over 100 families have been unable to build proper shelters and are instead packed into overcrowded monasteries and community halls.

"Community halls are unable to protect us from rain or wind. During the dry season, we can manage, but in the monsoon season, the conditions are extremely cramped and inconvenient. We're worried that if a storm hits, we won't even have a place to stay," a camp official said.

As rain lashes the region, environmental hygiene in the camps has deteriorated, contributing to a surge in illness, particularly among children.

"Mosquitoes are rampant because of the monsoon season. The foul smells from garbage piles are causing children to fall ill. The lack of proper latrines is also creating difficulties for the elderly and everyone else," said one displaced woman at the camp.

Hundreds of thousands of civilians across Rakhine State have been displaced by intense clashes between the AA and the military junta since 2023. The AA, which has declared its aim to take full control of Rakhine State, now holds 14 of the state's 17 townships and is actively attempting to seize the remaining three: Sittwe, Maungdaw, and Kyaukphyu.

As humanitarian access remains limited and displacement continues, IDPs are left to fend for themselves in increasingly hazardous conditions, with no immediate relief in sight.



Photo: Supplied

RIGHTS GROUP WARNS DRAFT SAGAING CONSTITUTION STILL FALLS SHORT ON FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

Human Rights Myanmar (HRM) has raised serious concerns about the fourth draft of the Sagaing Constitution, warning that it still lacks key protections for civil and political rights despite improvements in transparency and public participation.

In an analysis released this week, HRM acknowledged positive developments in the latest draft, such as the removal of a controversial requirement that judges must have “served the revolution,” which it called a necessary step to uphold judicial independence. However, the group stressed that crucial rights remain absent. Among these are the right to vote, a ban on the death penalty, robust fair trial protections, a right to internet access, and meaningful definitions of emergency powers and judicial review.

HRM also criticized the continued use of vague language in Article 16 of the draft, cautioning that ill-defined terms could open the door to future rights abuses. “Rights are never truly protected unless a constitution sets enforceable standards,” HRM stated, drawing comparisons to Myanmar’s 2008 Constitution, which included broad guarantees but enabled censorship and arbitrary detention due to vague wording.

The watchdog singled out a new provision in Article 16 that restricts fundamental rights if they threaten “public safety” or “dignity,” warning that these subjective concepts have often been misused in Myanmar to crack down on peaceful dissent and activism.

HRM further noted that the new language could place Myanmar at risk of violating international human rights standards, particularly where absolute rights – such as the prohibition of torture or freedom of opinion – must never be restricted under any circumstances.

While praising the Sagaing Parliament’s willingness to consult the public and move toward more democratic governance, HRM urged drafters to go further by adopting precise, enforceable human rights guarantees in line with international law.

HRM urges that an opportunity to build a model for a future federal Myanmar must not be squandered, offering continued legal support to strengthen the constitutional process.

PRELIMINARY SURVEY COMPLETED FOR PROPOSED RAILWAY FROM MIZORAM TO INDIA-MYANMAR BORDER

Photo: Supplied

The initial survey for a proposed railway line connecting Sairang/Sihhmui in Mizoram to Zorinpui near the India-Myanmar border has been completed, according to a report by All India Radio.

Vanlalvena, a Member of India's Rajya Sabha (Upper House) representing Mizoram, said he formally submitted a proposal to the Indian central government for the construction of the railway, which would begin near Mizoram's capital Aizawl and extend to the Lawngtlai District border with Myanmar. He also met with India's Railway Minister to press for swift implementation of the project.

The proposed railway would span approximately 223 kilometres, starting from Sairang/Sihhmui and reaching Zorinpui village, located just one kilometre from the Myanmar border town of Paletwa in Chin State, and home to an Assam Rifles base.

Although the preliminary survey has been completed, the final approval of the alignment map is still pending, Vanlalvena told media.

"If this railway project is completed, both sides will benefit. Right now, due to poor road conditions, water transport is the main route. But better infrastructure could make trade much more efficient," said a local resident from the India-Myanmar border.

He noted that key goods such as fuel, food supplies, and medicines are currently transported from India through Mizoram to Paletwa Township in Chin State, and onward into Rakhine State.

The planned railway is expected to support the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (KMMTTP), a 500 million USD trade and infrastructure initiative jointly launched by India and Myanmar in 2008. The project aims to enhance connectivity between India's northeastern states and Myanmar's western region through a combination of sea, river, and land transport.

However, the ongoing conflict in Myanmar poses a serious obstacle. Fighting between the Myanmar junta and the Arakan Army (AA) has intensified along parts of the project route. The AA has seized control of strategic townships including Kyauktaw, Ponnagyun, and Paletwa, key areas linked to the Kaladan project corridor.

Alongside the railway, India is also constructing a 106-kilometre highway from the border to Paletwa as part of its broader infrastructure plan to improve regional connectivity and trade links with Southeast Asia.



Photo: Zuyet Awarmatek

MYANMAR JUNTA FORECASTS WIDENING BUDGET DEFICIT FOR 2025-2026 FISCAL YEAR

Myanmar's Military Council is projecting a significant increase in national expenditure for the 2025-2026 fiscal year, with the budget deficit expected to exceed 8,300 billion kyats, according to figures from the Union Budget released on 2 July.

Initial estimates show that revenues are expected to surpass 38,000 billion kyats, while total expenditures are forecast to exceed 46,000 billion kyats. The estimated deficit-to-GDP ratio stands at 4.87 percent.

In comparison, provisional data from the 2024-2025 fiscal year recorded revenues of over 34,000 billion kyats and expenditures of more than 38,800 billion kyats, resulting in a budget deficit of around 4,300 billion kyats. The newly-projected shortfall therefore represents a more than 50 percent increase year-on-year.

Bo Bo Oo, a former MP and deputy chairman of Yangon's Sanchaung Township from the National League for Democracy (NLD), attributed the widening deficit to the Military Council's increased defense spending following the 2021 coup.

"In the past, budgets were designed with a focus on minimizing deficits. In the 2020 budget, defense spending was significantly reduced. Now, it seems

they're allocating to defense as they please," he said.

Since the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the Military Council has stopped releasing detailed breakdowns of budget allocations, keeping spending across ministries opaque. As a result, it remains unclear how resources are being distributed among sectors.

The last publicly available expenditure data from the 2023-2024 fiscal year, showed that defense spending surged to over 5,600 billion kyats, the highest allocation among all ministries. This increase came at the expense of education and healthcare budgets, both of which saw cuts.

During a Financial Commission meeting held on 24 March, Military Council leader Senior General Min Aung Hlaing stated that this year's budget allocations had been increased for the defense, internal affairs, health, and education sectors. However, without transparent disclosures, the actual distribution of funds remains uncertain.

Since the military takeover, Myanmar has experienced rising inflation alongside expanding fiscal deficits, further compounding the country's economic and social challenges.



SIGNING CEREMONY KUALA LUMPUR DECLARATION on ASEAN 2045: OUR SHARED FUTURE

26 MAY 2025

SOUTHEAST ASIAN MPS CALL ON ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS TO IMMEDIATELY ACT TO FREE MYANMAR'S POLITICAL PRISONERS

On 3 July, ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR), a network of MPS from countries across Southeast Asia, released a statement urging ASEAN Foreign Ministers to prioritise the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners in Myanmar at the upcoming 58th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Kuala Lumpur.

The statement is as below.

APHR, a network of more than 175 current and former elected policymakers in Southeast Asia, warns that continued silence only deepens the suffering of thousands unjustly imprisoned under Myanmar's brutal military regime.

"ASEAN can no longer postpone justice," said Mercy Chriesty Barends, Chairperson of APHR and Member of the Indonesian House of Representatives. "The continued detention of political prisoners is a

stain on our regional conscience. Their release must be a top priority at the AMM and an integral part of ASEAN's engagement with Myanmar moving forward."

Among those 29,338 unjustly detained are more than 5,000 women and at least 610 children and youth under the age of 18. Torture, denial of medical treatment, psychological abuse, and imprisonment under inhumane, degrading conditions are widespread. These are not isolated abuses—they are systematic, deliberate, and emblematic of the junta's contempt for life and law.

The ASEAN Leaders' Meeting (ALM) held on 24 April 2021 acknowledged calls for the release of political prisoners, but four years later, these calls remain unheeded. The Five-Point Consensus (5PC) has failed to address the issue, allowing the junta to continue its violent campaign against its own people

with impunity.

“Recognition without enforcement is meaningless,” Barends added. “We need a principled ASEAN, one that not only listens, but acts.”

Conditions in Myanmar prisons reveal a system designed not merely to detain but to destroy. According to the Political Prisoners Network–Myanmar (PPNM), at least 130 political prisoners have died in custody. Of these, 50 perished during the 7.7 magnitude earthquake at Obo Prison on 28 March 2025—including a pregnant woman who was denied critical medical care. Another 60 died from untreated illness or a complete lack of access to health services. Nineteen others were tortured to death or subjected to conditions amounting to slow execution.

These deaths are the tragic consequence of detention conditions that defy all standards of humanity and legality. Torture, beatings, solitary confinement, and denial of legal counsel are routine. Spoiled food, overcrowded cells, and unhygienic facilities are the norm. Pregnant women and LGBTQ+ detainees endure degrading abuse, including strip searches and sexual violence. Children are surveilled by male guards through CCTV in so-called ‘education centers,’ while survivors of the March earthquake were left to suffocate under collapsed rubble, without evacuation or emergency care.

As one former political prisoner told the APHR delegation during the fact-finding mission in Mae Sot, Thailand in May 2025, “For two years and 2 months, I survived by drawing birds on the wall and counting the days by using pieces of bricks. Some of my cellmates never made it out.”

These atrocities amount to flagrant violations of international law. They breach the Convention Against Torture, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Conventions, and the ASEAN Charter itself, which commits member states to the rule of law, good governance, fundamental freedoms and human rights.

“The junta’s utter disregard for legal norms and human dignity has made Myanmar a failed state in every moral and legal sense,” said Wong Chen,

APHR Board Member and Member of the Malaysian Parliament. “No ASEAN dialogue is credible if it refuses to confront these atrocities. What we are witnessing is not ambiguity—it’s abandonment.”

The junta’s continued manipulation of amnesty announcements further underscores the farce. In April 2025, the regime claimed to release 4,000 prisoners—yet only 348 political detainees were freed. Many of those released were re-arrested, forced into hiding or exile, or left without access to reintegration support. The regime persists in treating political prisoners not as citizens but as threats to be erased.

“Acknowledging political prisoners without securing their release is not diplomacy—it’s deflection,” said Charles Santiago, APHR Co-Chair and former Malaysian Member of Parliament. “We need action, not ambiguity. We need courage, not consensus without consequence.”

As the AMM approaches, APHR reiterates the call for the Ministers to make the release of all political prisoners, including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and President U Win Myint, a central issue on the formal agenda. ASEAN must also set time-bound benchmarks for progress, support independent prison monitoring mechanisms, and take concrete steps to dismantle the culture of impunity that emboldens the junta.

“Every day ASEAN hesitates, more lives are lost,” said Rangsiman Rome, APHR Board Member and Member of the Thai Parliament. “The moral weight of inaction is too great. ASEAN must choose now: complicity or conscience.”

APHR calls on civil society, media, and governments across the region to amplify this urgent demand. ASEAN cannot continue to assert its relevance while ignoring the horror unfolding in its own neighborhood. The region must remember: there can be no peace without justice, and no future without freedom.



TWO POLITICAL PRISONERS RE-ARRESTED OUTSIDE THAYET PRISON AFTER COMPLETING SENTENCES

Two political prisoners were re-arrested immediately upon their release from Thayet Prison in Magway Region on 1 July, according to the Political Prisoners Network-Myanmar (PPNM).

Among the four individuals released after completing their prison terms, advocate Tun Tun Aung and Ko Naing Lin Tun were detained again at the prison entrance, the group said in a statement.

"They were re-arrested under Section 52(a) of the Counter-Terrorism Law. They were taken back into custody right outside the prison," a PPNM information officer said.

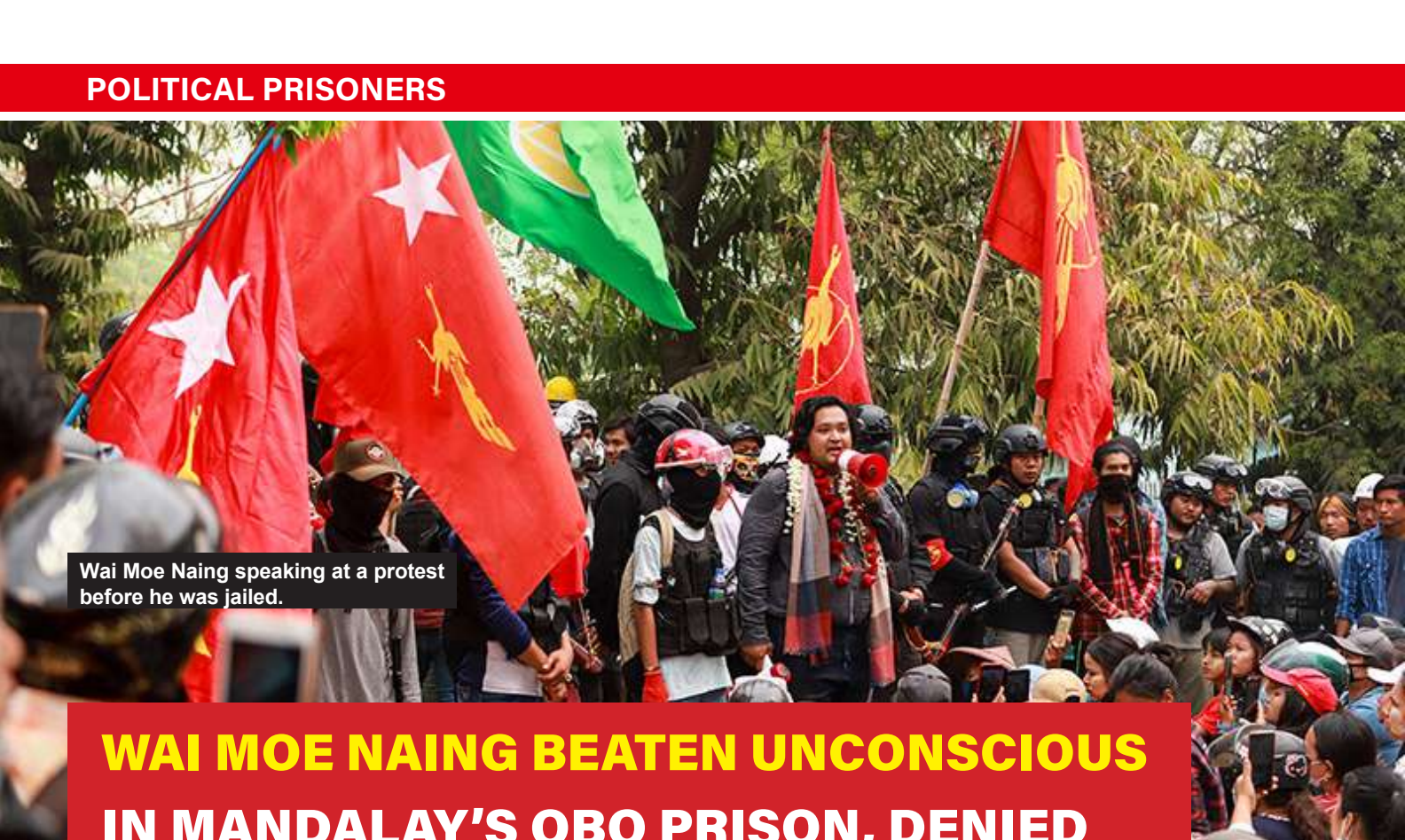
The two men are currently being held at Thayet Myoma Police Station, according to the network.

Tun Tun Aung and Ko Naing Lin Tun were initially arrested in June 2021. Tun Tun Aung had been sentenced under Section 505(c) of the Penal Code,

which targets speech that could incite public unrest, while Ko Naing Lin Tun was convicted under Section 17(1) of the Unlawful Associations Act for alleged ties to anti-junta organizations. Both were serving seven-year sentences.

Their re-arrest highlights the junta's continuing crackdown on political dissidents, with authorities frequently invoking vague provisions of the Counter-Terrorism Law to justify further detention of individuals who have already served their time.

Rights groups have repeatedly condemned the use of re-arrests as a tactic to instil fear and silence dissent, especially among former political prisoners who are viewed as influential figures in local communities.



Wai Moe Naing speaking at a protest before he was jailed.

WAI MOE NAING BEATEN UNCONSCIOUS IN MANDALAY'S OBO PRISON, DENIED MEDICAL CARE

Wai Moe Naing, a leading figure in the anti-coup movement and chairman of the Monywa University Students' Union, was brutally beaten by prison staff upon arrival at Obo Prison in Mandalay, according to a statement released on 1 July by the Political Prisoners Network – Myanmar (PPNM).

PPNM reported that Wai Moe Naing was struck on the head with a metal rod, causing heavy bleeding and loss of consciousness. Despite the seriousness of his injuries, prison authorities failed to provide emergency medical care or transfer him to the prison hospital.

"As in previous incidents, he received no medical attention, not even basic first aid. The beating happened right at the prison gate," said PPNM spokesperson Thaik Htun Oo.

Wai Moe Naing is now being held in solitary confinement with his legs shackled, the group said. They also reported that prison officials have restricted family visits and banned the delivery of care packages.

He was among nearly 200 political prisoners who were transferred from Monywa Prison to Obo Prison around 5 am on 12 June. Upon arrival, many were reportedly subjected to unprovoked beatings by prison staff.

Concerns over the deteriorating treatment of political detainees have intensified in recent days. On

29 June, parliamentary representatives and committees from the state and federal levels released a joint statement condemning the inhumane conditions and lack of medical care for prominent detainees, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

Obo Prison has come under growing scrutiny after several prominent political prisoners died in custody this year, reportedly due to medical neglect. These include National League for Democracy (NLD) Vice Chairman and former Mandalay Region Chief Minister Dr. Zaw Myint Maung, former Minister of Electricity and Energy U Win Khaing, and most recently, Mandalay Region Parliament Speaker U Aung Kyaw Oo, who died on 27 June.

On the same day, Myanmar Prison Witness reported that 56 political prisoners have died at Obo Prison over the past six months due to the denial of medical treatment and access to external healthcare facilities.

According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), as of 30 June, a total of 29,342 people have been arrested since the junta seized power in 2021. Among them, 22,184 remain in detention, and 10,882 have been sentenced to prison terms.



POLITICAL PRISONERS IN MYANMAR'S MYINGYAN PRISON BEATEN AND ISOLATED FOR HONOURING SUU KYI'S BIRTHDAY

Political prisoners held in Myingyan Prison, Mandalay Region, were brutally beaten, shackled, and thrown into solitary confinement by prison authorities after they recited poetry to mark the 80th birthday of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, according to the Political Prisoners Network – Myanmar (PPNM).

At least five political detainees who participated in the 19 June celebration are still being held in isolation and are reportedly denied medical attention, barred from family visits, and prohibited from receiving parcels, PPNM said.

"Currently, we learned that at least five men are being held in detention," said Ko Thaik Htun Oo, a spokesperson for the network.

The military junta has sentenced Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to 27 years in prison on multiple charges, including fraud, and continues to hold her at an undisclosed location. Since the 2021 coup, it has routinely cracked down on symbolic acts of resistance linked to the ousted leader, including birthday observances and the nationwide "flower strike" movement.

Among those targeted was Ma Hnin Yin Phyu, a staff member at Myanmar Radio and Television

(MRTV), who was arrested for offering prayers on 19 June in commemoration of Suu Kyi's birthday.

Earlier that month, on 12 June, prominent protest leader Ko Wai Moe Naing, president of the Monywa University Students' Union, was severely beaten with an iron rod by prison staff while being transferred from Monywa Prison to Obo Prison in Mandalay. He reportedly lost consciousness due to the assault which left him with a fractured forehead.

He was subsequently shackled and locked up without receiving medical care.

Rights groups have raised alarm over the worsening treatment of detainees under the junta, particularly political prisoners targeted for acts of symbolic resistance.

According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), as of 1 July, a total of 29,347 people have been arrested since the 2021 military coup. Of those, 22,188 remain in detention, and 10,886 have received prison sentences.

Photo: AFP

INDONESIAN 'INFLUENCER' GIVEN 7-YEAR MYANMAR PRISON SENTENCE

An Indonesian "influencer" has been sentenced to seven years in prison for meeting with rebels in junta-ruled Myanmar, a foreign ministry official in Jakarta said 2 July.

Myanmar has been consumed by a many-sided civil war since the military snatched power in a 2021 coup, with millions of people displaced, according to United Nations figures.

The Indonesian social media influencer, identified by officials as a 33-year-old with the initials A.P., was arrested by Myanmar authorities in December.

"After going through the court process, A.P. was sentenced to seven years in prison," said Judha Nugraha, director for citizen protection at the Indonesian foreign ministry.

The Indonesian national was accused of "entering Myanmar illegally and then meeting with an armed group categorised as a banned organisation", said Judha.

A Myanmar court charged him with violating laws on terrorism, immigration and unlawful association, as the junta battles rebels in a grinding war.

The Indonesian man is currently being held at Insein Prison in Yangon, Myanmar's economic capital.

The ministry official said Jakarta was "facilitating a request for clemency from the family".

On a social media account reported by local media to belong to the jailed influencer, posts show a man jaunting through conflict zones -- including war-torn Ukraine and Afghanistan -- as well as enjoying glitzy stays in Bali and Paris.

In Instagram posts dated November 2024, he shared images captioned from various locations in Myanmar and with various groups belonging to the anti-coup resistance.

He posted several pictures of himself with alleged rebels in uniform, including some armed with weapons.

Myanmar's military has suffered stinging territorial losses to the myriad anti-coup fighters and ethnic armed organisations opposing its rule.

The junta has been forced to turn to conscription to bolster the ranks after four years of war.

AFP



Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing with Belarus President Lukashenko on his recent visit. Photo: AFP

THE BURMESE JUNTA'S DANGEROUS GAMES WITH PUTIN AND LUKASHENKO TO GAIN AN IMPOSSIBLE INTERNATIONAL CREDIBILITY

Like children's games, if one were to connect the dots of the numerous political initiatives the Burmese junta has launched in recent months, it would become clear—much like the Burmese military, which continues to lose ground—that they are trying to build an improbable international legitimacy. They are preparing the ground for upcoming illegal elections, relying on the hidden interests of many governments in the region and those of major global autocracies, which seek to have an ally in a strategic area like the Indo-Pacific.

The junta's strategy is quite clear. It involves promoting initiatives of false openness and dialogue to legitimize the upcoming illegal elections, strengthening ties with Russia and Belarus, suppliers of weapons, drones and military training.

It makes little difference that, since 2023 the International Labour Organization (ILO) condemned Belarus for persistent violations of fundamental labour rights, in particular freedom of association and the right to organize, urging its constituents (governments, employers and trade unions) "to review the relations they may have with the Government of Belarus and take appropriate measures to ensure that the Government of Belarus cannot use such relations to perpetuate or extend violations of workers' rights in the area of freedom of association, and to contribute as much as possible to the implementation of its recommendations".

Ignoring these condemnations, the junta organized

the Myanmar-Belarus Business Forum in Yangon in January, which was reconvened again in Minsk, in March attended not only by the junta's leader Min Aung Hlaing, but also by the top representatives of the Myanmar Federation of Chamber of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) along with entrepreneurs representing the main productive sectors, including the textile and apparel, notorious for the rampant exploitation of workers, forced to work up to 15 hours a day, under martial law, for starvation wages, and amid threats of arrest and violence.

All this while the Burmese trade union confederation CTUM, the Myanmar Employers Organization, organization of democratic entrepreneurs and the National Unity Government, were working toward the adoption of a historic resolution, based on Article 33 of the Constitution of this UN agency. This resolution aimed to address the repeated, deep, violation of fundamental ILO Conventions on freedom of association and forced labour.

In an effort to bolster its image ahead of the illegitimate sham elections, the Information Ministry of the junta launched the "Myanmar Narrative Think Tank," claiming it aims to "help shape a bright future for Myanmar while engaging the global community."

Following the adoption of the ILO Resolution on freedom of association and forced labour, it was the turn of the organization in mid-June of a phantom "Peace Forum". It featured local actors, diplomats, and

international experts, including online participation by Alexander Dugin—Putin's ideologue—and an Italian scholar, Lorenzo Maria Pacini, a contract professor at UniDolomiti in Belluno and the so called "Bellinzona Libera Università degli Studi" apparently a unaccredited Swiss university, specialized in "the Fourth Political Theory and Geopolitics of the Multipolar World". Several other controversial figures also participated.

For those familiar with Myanmar, there were also figures like Hla Maung Shwe, Zaw Oo, Aung Naing Oo, and even ex-dissident Ko Ko Gyi, president of the People's Party, who registered for the upcoming illegitimate elections. All carefully selected to listen to stirring speeches about peace and dialogue, even as the junta continues its campaign of terror—bombing cities and villages, destroying schools, hospitals, and places of worship to terrorize the population and weaken resistance, thereby paving the way for the upcoming illegitimate elections.

The prospect of these elections has reopened the Pandora's box of so-called experts, diplomats, and academics—negotiators who see new opportunities for their failing strategies, which nevertheless bring renewed fame and research funding. This is a familiar pattern from the past, which has only resulted in reinforcing military interests and economic gains. And we all saw the results.

In June, the Oslo Forum was also held, inviting top officials from countries with questionable democratic credentials, including the Saudi Foreign Minister, Chinese International Department Minister Liu Janchao, Iran's Foreign Minister, Oman's Foreign Minister, Egypt's Foreign Minister, the Syrian Foreign Minister, the Ukrainian Parliament's Human Rights Commissioner, and the ASEAN Secretary-General.

However, the highlight was the invitation extended to Burmese General Min Aung, considered a hardliner within the junta and secretary of the National Solidarity and Peacemaking Negotiation Committee (NSPNC), established by the junta. The event was organized by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), a Swiss NGO dedicated to "building peace worldwide"—though with limited success. Meanwhile, in Yangon, the Indian Embassy hosted an event organized by the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue, featuring "peace mediators."

To strengthen its strategic partnerships, immediately after the Peace Forum, on June 26, General Min Aung Hlaing travelled to Russia and then to Belarus—invited by President Lukashenko, within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)—where he signed

a series of economic and military supply agreements, including for weapons and drones, to target villages that his troops cannot reach by land.

As one can see from these data, the circus of so-called mediators has returned, even though the reality and the expectations of the Burmese people and their democratic representatives are far removed from what is discussed in seminar rooms.

Certainly, one non-negotiable issue remains: the future role of the military, which must be held accountable and brought to justice—possibly through referring Myanmar's situation to the International Criminal Court by the UN Security Council.

There are two incompatible realities: the vain debates about prospects for peace, and the ongoing bombing campaigns—despite the ceasefire announced by the junta after the 28 March devastating earthquake that caused extensive damage in the affected states and regions, which account for about a third of Myanmar's GDP. As the recent World Bank report highlights, "The economic and social impact has been widespread, with disruptions to production and supply chains, factory and market closures, and labour shortages. Total damages to physical assets—including residential buildings, public infrastructure, and historic sites—are estimated at \$11 billion (14% of GDP or 5% of total capital)."

Meanwhile, the EU ambassador to the UN reported during a recent briefing by the UN Special Envoy on Myanmar: "The situation has worsened since last year. Myanmar's military continues to inflict unbearable suffering on the population through indiscriminate airstrikes, village burnings, killings, mutilations, forced conscription—and the list goes on. The bombing of a school in Depayin on May 12 is yet another grim example of this trend."

It will therefore be crucial to recognize that the people of Myanmar are fighting for profound systemic change, not for a return to the pre-coup status quo and that ASEAN's 5-Point Consensus is ultimately dead and beyond repair. The people's aspirations include a genuine, total, civilian control over the military, and their accountability for human rights violations.

Time is of the essence. European and international institutions must act swiftly to halt the rise of an authoritarian international order that daily challenges those democratic principles—however imperfect—that the EU has helped foster.

Democracy may not be exportable, but autocracies are actively working to increasingly expand in number and influence.



Chinese naval vessel.
Photo: AFP

CHINA'S CALCULATED ASCENT AND AGGRESSIVE POSTURING IN SOUTH AND EAST ASIA

SUN LEE

In the annals of global power shifts, few stories are as dramatic and consequential as China's meteoric rise. From the economic shadows of poverty to becoming the world's second-largest economy, China's transformation over the past few decades has redefined the strategic dynamics of Asia. Yet behind its breathtaking economic success lies an increasingly assertive geopolitical posture, one that has deepened anxieties among its neighbors and kindled fresh tensions across the Indo-Pacific.

At the heart of this transformation is a pivot in strategic vision. Under Deng Xiaoping, Beijing hewed to a philosophy of restraint "hide your strength and bide your time." But under Xi Jinping, ascendant since 2012, this caution has given way to the rallying cry of the "Chinese Dream" a sweeping vision that speaks not only to national rejuvenation and economic prosperity but also to military preeminence, regional dominance, and global influence.

Beijing's actions reveal a state shedding the veneer of benign ascendance. In the South China Sea, China has militarized disputed reefs, deployed coast guard and maritime militia fleets, and created de facto no-go zones through its anti-access strategies. This is not mere posturing but a conscious effort to create strategic depth, deny access to rival militaries, and consolidate

control over key trade routes and energy reserves. The endgame is clear: transform contested waters into a Chinese-controlled security buffer, denying even the world's most powerful navies unimpeded access.

Recent escalations sharply delineate the architecture of China's expanding strategic posture across Asia, highlighting Beijing's deliberate use of coercive tactics to enforce and entrench its maritime claims. These moves exemplify a now-familiar pattern: first, articulate sovereignty over contested regions; next, normalize a continuous and visible presence through maritime patrols and the construction of dual-use infrastructure; and ultimately, consolidate control via calibrated shows of military force and sustained diplomatic pressure. This progression—methodical, assertive, and often unilateral—reflects not isolated decisions but the systematic pursuit of regional preeminence under the banner of China's national rejuvenation.

Across the Taiwan Strait, the tempo of Chinese military provocations has reached alarming heights. Beijing's fixation with Taiwan reflects its broader goals of territorial integration and deterrence. Just days ago, China dispatched 74 aircraft in waves, with 61 crossing the median line, long considered an unofficial buffer. Paired with the presence of six warships, the operation

painted an unmistakable picture: the manifestation of the “encircle and suffocate” strategy: to unnerve the Taiwanese populace, stretch its defense resources thin, and internationalize the psychological burden of resistance. For Taiwan, Hsiao Bi-khim, Taiwan’s foreign policy advisor, emphasized the island’s pivot toward asymmetric defense that involves investing in technologies and strategies designed to outmaneuver a numerically superior PLA force. But China’s resolve is not merely military but a combination of economic, diplomatic, and discursive. The message to Taipei and the world is simple: Taiwan is a non-negotiable component of the Chinese homeland, and preserving the status quo is an increasingly narrow path.

China’s maritime drills near Japan in June 2025 marked an unprecedented shift. For the first time, both PLA aircraft carriers, the Shandong and Liaoning conducted joint maneuvers in the Pacific, launching over 500 fighter sorties and skimming Japan’s exclusive economic zone. The Liaoning breached the “second island chain,” a symbolic red line in U.S. and Japanese defense doctrine connecting Japan to Guam. China’s naval expansion near Japan has triggered rare public disclosures from Tokyo about Chinese carrier deployments and fighter jet maneuvers perilously close to Japanese aircraft and territorial waters, crossing lines both literal and diplomatic.

By stretching the perimeter, China gradually pushes the bounds of what’s considered acceptable military activity, from territorial waters to deep into international sea lanes. Japan’s concern is not simply about proximity, but about the deliberate unravelling of maritime norms. Beijing insists its actions comply with international law, yet its operational tempo, scale, and disregard for proximity protocols suggest otherwise. It is strategic theatre with geopolitical intent.

The South China Sea has emerged as the crucible of China’s expansionist designs. On 20 June 2025, the China Coast Guard deployed water cannons against a Philippine government vessel near Scarborough Shoal, reviving memories of previous confrontations. China’s claim? Routine enforcement within “inherent territory.” The reality? A blatant assertion of control through intimidation, cloaked in selective interpretations of maritime law.

The Philippines, like other ASEAN states, finds itself trapped between asserting sovereignty and avoiding

escalation. China’s strategy is elegantly coercive, no open warfare, just enough pressure to alter status quo and erode competing claims. It’s legal warfare without bullets, but with real consequences for sovereignty and maritime freedom.

These incidents reflect a deeper contradiction between China’s official rhetoric and its actions. While Beijing repeatedly emphasizes its commitment to a “peaceful rise” and soft power diplomacy, couched in white papers that reject hegemony or expansion, it increasingly relies on hard power to shape its strategic environment. This dichotomy sows confusion and mistrust among regional actors and global observers, especially when paired with Beijing’s expansive claims that treat the South China Sea, Taiwan, and the East China Sea as “core interests” on par with national sovereignty.

At the core of China’s behavior lies the strategic application of hybrid pressure maritime expansion, economic entanglements, and diplomatic ambiguity. Beijing has constructed a defensive maritime arc around its coastline, leveraging artificial islands, fortified reefs, and long-range systems to create an Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD) belt. This not only deters rival navies but constricts US influence, converting contested seas into Chinese spheres of control.

China’s overarching goal appears to be the reconfiguration of regional power structures. By militarizing disputed waters, intimidating neighboring navies, and investing in naval modernization, Beijing seeks to deter foreign presence particularly that of the United States and create a regional order where smaller states rely on Chinese patronage. This, in turn, supports the realization of Xi Jinping’s Chinese Dream: a revivalist doctrine that envisions China not merely as a participant in global affairs, but as its central arbiter. As China’s economy fuels a growing defense budget and naval modernization, its regional coercion is no longer subtle. It is bold, calculated, and unapologetic.

Sun Lee is the pseudonym of a writer who covers Asia and geopolitical affairs.



Photo: AFP

US SUPREME COURT APPROVES DEPORTATION OF MIGRANTS INCLUDING MYANMAR NATIONALS TO SOUTH SUDAN

The US Supreme Court on 3 July gave the green light for the Trump administration to deport a group of migrants stranded at an American military base in Djibouti to war-torn South Sudan.

The decision by the conservative-dominated top court comes 10 days after it cleared the way for the Trump administration to deport migrants to countries that are not their own.

The eight migrants were being flown to South Sudan from the US in May but ended up in Djibouti when a district court imposed a stay on third-country deportations.

The court said migrants were not being given a "meaningful opportunity" to contest removal.

On June 23, the Supreme Court lifted the stay imposed by District Judge Brian Murphy, clearing the way for third-country deportations.

But Murphy, an appointee of former president Joe Biden, said the case of the eight migrants who ended up in Djibouti was subject to a separate stay order he issued that had not been addressed by the Supreme Court.

On Thursday, the Supreme Court said its June 23 decision applied to both of the judge's orders.

Liberal justices Sonia Sotomayor and Ketanji Brown Jackson dissented from the decision.

"What the Government wants to do, concretely, is send the eight noncitizens it illegally removed from the United States from Djibouti to South Sudan, where they will be turned over to the local authorities without regard for the likelihood that they will face torture or death," Sotomayor said.

"Today's order clarifies only one thing: Other litigants must follow the rules, but the administration has the Supreme Court on speed dial," she said.

The US authorities have said that the eight men -- two from Myanmar, two from Cuba, and one each from Vietnam, Laos, Mexico and South Sudan -- are convicted violent criminals.

The Trump administration has defended third-country deportations as necessary since the home nations of some of those who are targeted for removal sometimes refuse to accept them.

Donald Trump campaigned for president promising to expel millions of undocumented migrants from the United States, and he has taken a number of actions aimed at speeding up deportations since returning to the White House in January.

AFP



Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, helped by aides. Photo: AFP

DALAI LAMA, ON 90TH BIRTHDAY, AIMS TO LIVE FOR DECADES MORE

The Dalai Lama said he dreamed of living for decades more, as the Buddhist spiritual leader prayed with thousands of exiled Tibetans on the eve of his 90th birthday, which fell on 6 July.

Thumping drums and deep horns reverberated from the Indian hilltop temple, as a chanting chorus of red-robed monks and nuns offered long-life prayers for Tenzin Gyatso, who followers believe is the 14th reincarnation of the Dalai Lama.

Looking in good health, dressed in traditional maroon monk robes and a flowing yellow wrap, he led prayers -- days after confirming that the 600-year-old Tibetan Buddhist institution will continue after his death.

Many exiled Tibetans fear China will name its own successor to the Dalai Lama, to bolster control over a territory it poured troops into in 1950 and has ruled ever since.

"So far, I have done my best and with the continued blessings of Avalokiteshvara (a Buddhist spiritual protector), I hope to live another 30 or 40 years, continuing to serve sentient beings and the Buddha Dharma", he said, referring to the teachings of the Buddha.

Followers of the Dalai Lama laud his tireless campaign for greater autonomy for Tibet, a vast high-altitude plateau about the size of South Africa.

'Experience happiness'

But speaking at the main temple in the Indian Himalayan town where he has lived for decades -- after Chinese troops crushed an uprising in the Tibetan capital Lhasa in 1959 -- he offered teachings to a far wider audience.

"In my life, I have encountered people from all walks of life, those with faith in religion and others with no interest in it at all. This is only natural, as individuals have different mental dispositions", he said, speaking in Tibetan.

"Yet, the common desire shared by all, including the Tibetan people, is the wish to avoid suffering and to experience happiness."

The charismatic Buddhist had previously said the institution would continue only if there was popular demand -- and his confirmation on Wednesday it would has reassured followers around the globe.

He said he had received multiple appeals from Tibetans in Tibet and in exile, as well as from Buddhists from across the Himalayan region, Mongolia and parts of Russia and China.

He said responsibility for identifying the 15th Dalai Lama "will rest exclusively" with his office, the India-based Gaden Phodrang Trust.

Self-declared atheist and Communist China, which condemns the Nobel Peace Prize winner as a rebel and separatist, issued a swift response.

China said on Wednesday that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama "must be approved by the central government" in Beijing, and that it would be carried out "by drawing lots from a golden urn", foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning told reporters.

That urn is held by Beijing, and the Dalai Lama has already warned that, when used dishonestly, it lacks "any spiritual quality".

India and China are intense rivals competing for influence across South Asia, but have sought to repair ties after a 2020 border clash.

New Delhi's foreign minister said it had "always upheld freedom of religion for all in India and will continue to do so".

'Struggle'

The birthday celebrations have also been a time for reflection on an inevitable future without the Dalai Lama.

"Seeing him turn 90 today fills me with happiness, but also a deep sadness," said Dorje Dolma, 27, who fled Tibet to India.

"His Holiness has always felt like a father figure to me," she added. "His good health brings me joy, but his age sometimes worries me."

Hollywood star Richard Gere, a longtime backer of the Tibetans in exile, has been among the tens of thousands taking part in days of celebrations.

"There's something about this Tibetan cause that touches people, and certainly, a central part of that is His Holiness the Dalai Lama," Gere said during celebrations on Thursday.

"Which begs the question: What do we do when we don't have His Holiness to open those doors? He's not there to carry us. And we struggle with that, all of us now."

AFP



CAN'T KNOCK THE HUSTLE

"You need to pay attention to what the kids care about," Naomi Gingold tells the Insight Myanmar Podcast. "It will inform so much about the place that you're trying to understand, be it politics, culture, all of it! And you do a disservice to the nature of what you're trying to understand when you don't."

Gingold, a journalist and academic researcher, has dedicated years to studying Myanmar's hip hop scene. Her research and book-in-progress is on the unexpected rise of hip hop in the country; it's a story that unfolds alongside the inseparable history and evolution of modern technology, the public sphere, as well as youth political sentiment and agency. She joins us here to discuss a genre that changed popular culture, the public sphere, and much more in Myanmar—a fact the whole world was shockingly made aware of when the military executed one of the country's first hip hop stars in July 2022, Zeya Thaw.

Gingold traces the rise of Burmese hip hop back to the mid-late 1990s, a period when the country was still under strict military rule. At that time, youth culture began carving out a new form of expression through hip-hop, blending beats, slang, and self-assertion in ways

that, while not necessarily overtly political, challenged cultural norms and expanded the boundaries of what was permissible in a tightly controlled society.

Gingold's research, in part, highlights how subtle articulations of agency and discontent held profound political significance in a society where free expression was suppressed and could even lead to transformative change. The regime, intent on controlling the narrative, enforced heavy censorship as hip hop developed—rejecting entire albums, altering lyrics, and scrutinizing the visual content of music videos. Despite these constraints, rappers adapted with remarkable ingenuity, using slang, metaphors, coded language and double meanings to express their frustrations and aspirations. While not always intended as direct political resistance, their very act of self-expression often challenged cultural norms and conveyed potent, underlying messages that were disruptive to a regime that sought total control.

Among others, Gingold highlights the group Acid—a pioneering hip hop group that Zeya Thaw was a member of, that used the medium to explore themes which were often overlooked or suppressed, setting the stage for later artists to continue challenging societal boundaries. Their lyrics—infused with the energy of a generation yearning for change spoke directly to the experiences of Burmese youth. Initially rejected in its entirety by censors, Acid's debut album, when finally released (after many revisions), marked a significant, cultural moment. It was the first successful Burmese hip hop record, and the album's synthesized beats and blunt lyrics, reflecting a range of emotions and situations not typically heard in local popular music, captivated the country's youth.

CATCH THE PODCAST

Read more and listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast here:

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2025/6/12/episode-355-cant-knock-the-hustle>

MYANMAR JUNTA TOUTS AGRICULTURAL AMBITIONS DESPITE ECONOMIC COLLAPSE

Photo: AFP

Myanmar junta chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing delivered optimistic projections at a recent National Economic Development meeting, claiming Myanmar's GDP would reach \$81.6 billion in 2025-26, up from \$76.4 billion in 2024-25, according to the junta-controlled newspaper The Global New Light of Myanmar. The junta leader touted Belarus as a model, highlighting its \$73.1 billion GDP and \$6.8 - 8.2 billion agricultural exports compared to Myanmar's modest \$4.8 billion.

However, these forecasts starkly contrast with international assessments. The World Bank now expects Myanmar's GDP to contract by 1 percent in the 2024-2025 fiscal year, a downward revision from previous projections of modest growth. The World Bank predicts the country will not return to pre-COVID-19 economic levels until at least 2027.

Min Aung Hlaing dismissed World Bank projections as "inaccurate," claiming Myanmar maintains 170 percent rice self-sufficiency. Yet reality paints a different

picture. Based on the latest estimates, 15.2 million people are food insecure, according to the World Food Programme, with rice prices rising substantially, making Myanmar's staple food unaffordable for some consumers, especially the most vulnerable.

Over half of Myanmar's townships are experiencing active conflict, which continues to disrupt supply chains and border trade.

Ethnic armed groups opposed to the military junta now control trade routes accounting for 91 percent of the country's overland trade with China, according to The Diplomat.

While the junta promotes agricultural modernization schemes, businesses continue to face a very difficult operating environment with shortages of raw materials, inadequate electricity supply, and weakness in domestic demand.



Photo: AFP

MYANMAR NETIZENS DIVIDED AS PROMINENT ACTIVIST DR TAYZAR SAN CRITICIZES SHADOW GOVERNMENT NUG

Social media erupted with heated debate after Dr Tayzar San, the physician and pro-democracy activist who organized the first protest against the junta following the 2021 Myanmar coup, criticized the anti-junta National Unity Government (NUG) on July 7 for needing urgent reforms to ensure revolutionary success. Online reactions ranged from staunch support for the activist's frank assessment to fierce defense of the shadow government, highlighting deep divisions in Myanmar's resistance movement.

Dr Tayzar San's critique focused on the NUG's weaknesses in establishing systematic military chain of command structures and growing concerns about code of conduct issues and corruption problems in the revolutionary forces as the resistance continues.

He argued that while the NUG enjoys popular support, it needs to strengthen People's Defense Forces (PDFs), convert some armed ethnic groups into NUG-affiliated PDF units, and improve capacity in financial management and public services to match the revolution's evolving needs.

Facebook users quickly took sides in the debate. A supporter of Tayzar San wrote, "The problem is that instead of fighting the war, NUG is trying to govern the

country. What you need to do is fight to win the war and then hand over power to the government that will emerge to rule the country."

Another supporter of Tayzar San remarked, "From early on, those who pointed out weaknesses of NUG were attacked and labeled as junta supporters. Anyone trying to hide the truth with personal or organizational attachments in revolutionary matters is betraying the revolution."

The criticism also sparked particularly strong reactions from NUG defenders. A Facebook user expressed surprise at Dr. Tayzar San's stance. "It's surprising that Dr Tayzar San is among those who want to criticize NUG at an inopportune time."

Some users warned against internal divisions, with one commenting, "NUG leaders who have been working since the beginning are now being easily criticized by some when we reach this situation. People should consider that without the NUG, resistance groups would just be seen as undisciplined rebels. As for me, I donate to the revolution because we have the 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.