

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

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Analysis & Insight

**Trump Administration Considers
Rare Earth Deal That Could
Reshape the Burma Conflict**

● **Myanmar junta changes its skin**

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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.

HONOURING THE MYANMAR PEOPLE'S MANDATE AGAINST TYRANNY

In November 2020, the people of Myanmar delivered a decisive message to the world. Through a democratic election, they overwhelmingly voted in favour of civilian rule, reaffirming their desire for a future rooted in freedom, representation, and peace. The National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Aung San Suu Kyi, won a landslide victory, securing a clear mandate from the public. That election was Myanmar's real and legitimate expression of popular will - a rare moment of clarity and unity in the country's long and tumultuous political history in which military regimes have trampled on democratic aspirations.

What followed was a brutal betrayal. On 1 February 2021, before the newly-elected parliament could convene, the Myanmar military staged a coup, imprisoning elected leaders including Aung San Suu Kyi and Win Myint and seizing control of the government. This act was not only illegal and unconstitutional - it was a direct assault on the people's choice. The junta's justification for the coup, based on vague and unsubstantiated claims of voter fraud, was quickly debunked by both local and international observers. It became clear that the military's true motive was to maintain its grip on power at any cost.

Since then, Myanmar has spiraled into violence and repression. The military has responded to peaceful protests with bullets, killing thousands of civilians, including children. Arbitrary arrests, torture, village burnings, and mass displacement have become daily realities. Far from governing, the junta has waged a war against its own people, aiming to silence dissent and erase the memory of the 2020 election.

Now, in a cynical effort to gain international legitimacy, the military seeks to hold its own "election". But this is no democratic process, as explained in a commentary we are running in this week's Mizzima Weekly. It is a facade,

carefully orchestrated to lend a veneer of credibility to a regime that rules by force. Opposition parties have been outlawed or dismantled, independent media silenced, and much of the country placed under martial law, now with stiff jail sentences for people caught complaining. In these conditions, no genuine election can take place. What is being offered is not a choice - it is a "performance" designed to mask tyranny, with the junta removing the state of emergency and renaming itself - adding "Peace" to their name.

The international community must not fall for this charade. Recognizing or engaging with the junta's electoral efforts - as seen with the junta's allies including China and Russia - risks legitimizing an illegitimate regime. It undermines the sacrifice of the thousands who have died, been imprisoned, or gone into hiding in defense of democracy - a pushback referred to as the "Spring Revolution". Silence or neutrality in the face of such injustice is itself a form of complicity.

On the contrary, the global response must be clear and firm: the only legitimate government of Myanmar is the one elected by its people in November 2020. That election must remain the reference point for all diplomatic and humanitarian engagement. The military junta must be held accountable for its crimes, and international pressure must be applied to support a transition back to democratic rule under civilian leadership.

The Myanmar people have already made their choice - and we will be reminded of that in the 8888 anniversary demonstrations this week, harking back to the 1988 democracy uprising.

It is not up to generals or foreign governments to rewrite the people's decision. Upholding the results of the 2020 election is not just a matter of politics - it is a matter of principle, justice, and the preservation of human dignity.

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Cover photo of Washington DC Capitol building by Kyle Mills





US President Donald Trump.
Photo: AFP

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION CONSIDERS RARE EARTH DEAL THAT COULD RESHAPE THE BURMA CONFLICT

ANTONIO GRACEFFO

In a groundbreaking shift, the Trump administration is reportedly considering two proposals for securing rare earth minerals from Myanmar, resources critical to advanced weaponry and battery production. The first option would involve engaging directly with the military junta, which would carry the side effect of granting it de facto recognition. The second, far more transformative option, would be to bypass the junta entirely and negotiate directly with the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the ethnic armed organization that controls most of Myanmar's rare earth mining territory.

If the U.S. chooses the latter, it would mark a historic break from the longstanding convention of democratic governments only engaging with officially recognized state authorities. Such a move would not only grant legitimacy to the KIA but also offer hope to all of Burma's ethnic armed organizations, many of which have long sought international recognition and support.

The KIA has captured and operates key mining zones, including Chipwi and Pangwa, disrupting traditional trade routes and positioning itself as the gatekeeper of a critical rare earth supply corridor. In 2024, the KIA reached a direct pricing agreement with Chinese buyers at 35,000 yuan per ton and has maintained export volumes close to 2023 levels, potentially generating over \$200 million in annual revenue. Burma now accounts for roughly 57% of China's rare earth imports.

For Washington, the stakes go beyond access to valuable resources. Partnering with the KIA could help cut China out of the U.S. supply chain and weaken Beijing's global dominance in the rare earth market. This makes the decision not just a diplomatic dilemma, but a strategic one, with far-reaching consequences for U.S. foreign policy, supply chain security, and Burma's future.

The KIA has emerged as the dominant military force in Kachin State. After a sweeping two-month offensive in early 2024, it seized over 200 junta positions and now controls the majority of the region. While the junta retains nominal control over parts of Myitkyina, the state capital, and Bhamo one of the largest cities, as well as scattered outposts near Hpakant, its hold on the region is tenuous. Even in urban areas still under junta occupation, KIA offensives continue. Myitkyina is surrounded, and the junta's control over Bhamo is becoming tenuous. Most military bases are isolated and under siege. Strategically, the KIA controls a major road leading south to the Chinese border, further undermining the junta's logistical capabilities while strengthening the KIA's ability to negotiate trade deals directly with Beijing.

In the territory it controls, the KIA, through its political wing the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), functions as a governing body. It administers civil services, including healthcare, and has implemented a local taxation system. The KIO deploys bureaucrats to manage governance, and its health department provides maternal care, immunizations, and emergency treatment in the liberated areas. The KIA also controls key resource zones and oversees export taxation, most notably in the rare earth sector.

The KIA's status as a quasi-state actor is most evident in its trade relations with China. After capturing Chipwi and Pangwa, China temporarily closed the border and halted rare earth shipments. However, following quiet negotiations - culminating in a December 2024 meeting in Kunming between KIA representatives and members of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference - trade resumed under new terms. The KIA introduced a 20% export tax on rare earth concentrates and agreed with Chinese buyers on a fixed

rate of 35,000 yuan (approximately \$4,830) per metric ton. By April 2025, rare earth exports to China were flowing again, regulated entirely by the KIA.

The Kachin Independence Army isn't the only ethnic armed organization in Burma functioning as a quasi-state actor. The United Wa State Army (UWSA), based in eastern Shan State, also operates independently of the junta and maintains its own government, armed forces, and economic policies. Backed by China, the UWSA oversees mining operations, including rare earth extraction, and conducts direct trade with Beijing, bypassing Myanmar's central authorities entirely. This establishes a precedent of states being able to engage with EAOs directly, particularly in a country where the junta has been expressly rejected by the EU and diplomatically downgraded by most other governments, many of whom have largely ceased engagement with the military regime while holding talks with the shadow National Unity Government (NUG).

Contrary to popular assumption, the United States does not maintain a rigid policy of only engaging with internationally recognized governments. While sovereignty and diplomatic recognition remain important, Washington has a long and well-documented history of working directly with non-state actors when doing so aligns with strategic interests.

U.S. policy on this front is pragmatic. Officials assess potential partners based on legitimacy, governance capacity, alignment with U.S. values, and the ability to maintain stability. This approach, often termed "strategic empowerment," focuses on supporting actors who can govern effectively and contribute to U.S. objectives, regardless of their formal statehood status.

One of the most significant examples of U.S. engagement with a non-state actor is its long-standing relationship with Kurdish authorities in Iraq. After the 1991

Gulf War, the U.S. helped establish a no-fly zone over northern Iraq, effectively shielding Kurdish areas from Saddam Hussein and allowing a de facto autonomous region to emerge. This later became the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), formally recognized in Iraq's 2005 constitution. The U.S. has coordinated militarily with the Kurdish Peshmerga, notably during the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the fight against ISIS. Today, the KRG functions as an autonomous region with its own government, armed forces, and foreign economic ties, offering a clear precedent for U.S. engagement with effective non-state entities that control territory and provide governance.

Since the late 19th Century, the United States has also provided direct military aid, training, equipment, intelligence, and logistical support to non-state actors across various theaters. In many cases, this assistance continued while the U.S. maintained formal diplomatic relations with the governments those groups were fighting. In this context, potential U.S. engagement with the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) would not be unprecedented.

Alongside the proposal to engage directly with the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), experts have urged Washington to deepen cooperation with U.S. partners in the Quad, specifically India, for rare earth processing and future supply to the United States. The Quad, which includes the U.S., India, Australia, and Japan, offers a strategic framework for securing critical minerals. Such cooperation would benefit both Washington and New Delhi by generating revenue for India, strengthening bilateral ties, and positioning both countries in opposition to China. However, the relationship is complicated by India's simultaneous membership in BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), where its interests sometimes conflict with China's. Collaborating on this rare earths deal would bring India closer to the U.S. strategic orbit.

Some of these ideas were raised in a July 17 meeting in Vice President J.D. Vance's office, which included Adam Castillo, former head of the American Chamber of Commerce in Myanmar. U.S. officials have also held indirect discussions with the KIA in recent months regarding rare earth trade. These talks represent a potential shift in U.S. policy toward Myanmar, driven by strategic competition with China over critical mineral access essential to defense and high-tech manufacturing.

One logistical concern is the proximity of the KIA-controlled mines to the Chinese border, allowing Beijing to potentially block shipments to India. Still, if the U.S. proceeds with a deal directly with the KIA, it would set an important precedent for other ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), such as the Karenni Nationalities Defense Force (KNDF), which is building a civilian go-

vernment in much of Karenni State, and the Karen National Union (KNU), which controls significant areas in Karen State. Recognition and support from Washington could not only weaken China's influence in Burma but also encourage other Western nations to follow suit, potentially pressuring the junta to allow elections and move toward a federal democracy.

Unfortunately, the U.S. remains deeply engaged elsewhere, with ongoing crises involving China, the trade war, Ukraine, and the Israel-Hamas conflict. However, the goal of cutting China out of U.S. supply chains may be enough to bring the Burma decision to President Trump's desk.

Antonio Graceffo is an economist and China expert with extensive experience of reporting on Burma.

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ANALYSIS & INSIGHT



Photo: AFP

JUNTA LEVERAGES TRUMP LETTER

In July 2025, US President Donald Trump wrote a formal letter to Myanmar military chief Min Aung Hlaing claiming Myanmar exports to the U.S. would become subject to a tariff of 40 percent by August 1. It was a coded reference to the junta itself, as few Junta leaders were acknowledged by name since the 2021 coup, and was immediately circulated by the regime. To this, Min Aung Hlaing responded with his “heartfelt gratitude” while offering to cut the tariff down to 10-20 percent and further proposed to also slash import tariffs on American products. He has proposed to send a top-level delegation to Washington to discuss trade; it is not confirmed yet that such a visit has actually happened.

The exchange came soon after the US lifted sanctions on some junta-related people and businesses and almost immediately international human rights organizations criticized the moves harshly. According to an analysts’ report, the Trump administration might have an interest in the rare earth mineral reserves of Myanmar, where potential access to it might be viewed as a form of minimizing the US reliance on China. The report went on to indicate that some former advisers have recommended strategic interaction with the junta or ethnic armed groups guarding mineral-rich areas and this could lead to the change in US policy.

Nevertheless, the move has generated fears amongst professionals and campaigners who feel that it will undermine international campaigns to bring the regime to justice.

The letter and sanction relief were shown in state-controlled media within Myanmar as successful diplomacy and a mark of warming relations between the US and Myanmar. In the meantime, pro-democracy campaigners and international commentators criticized the decision because it might lead to a dangerous legitimization of a military government that continues to commit heinous crimes. Such a change of heart, which saw the US about-turn, were criticized by the UN Special Rapporteur and organizations such as Human Rights Watch, who believed that such gestures only encourage the junta, and destabilize the international community's efforts to assist the Burmese people.

Junta heavily dependent on foreign weapons supplies

The Myanmar military regime which had been in power since a military coup in 2021 relies heavily to on foreign weapons suppliers. UN numbers show that close to one billion dollars' worth of weapons have been imported into the country by the junta with Russia and China being the main suppliers. Russia has supplied high-grade military weapons like fighter jets (MiG-29, Su-30), attack helicopters (Mi-35), drones and missiles. China has provided trainer jets, upgrades of the armoured vehicles and communications systems.

Belarus has been involved too and has been supplying air defense systems and technical assistance. In the interim, India and Thailand have sold small



Photo: AFP

quantities of artillery components, spy equipment and raw materials that are typically via Singapore-based firms, and have served as intermediaries even though Singapore has an official policy of not exporting weapons to Myanmar.

Along with foreign imports, Myanmar also has an extensive domestic weapons production effort that takes place in a network of state-run factories that are colloquially called Ka Pa Sa. Such camps manufacture ammunition, bombs, and even home-made drones. A lot of these abilities are being assisted by innovation and equipment that have been brought in under the foreign imports policies especially from China and North Korea. The use of drones by the military has grown significantly. The junta has imported drones,

many of them from Russian and Chinese drone makers, but others have been locally adapted. Formal imports of paramotor or ultralight aircraft have not been found to be verified and may be in improvised use.

Myanmar is a country with a state and nonstate contributed chain of arms supplemented by obscure supply routes and the participation of state and nonstate members. Russian and Chinese defense enterprises are the major exporters, whereas middle man enterprises operating in Thailand and Singapore assist in circumventing the sanctions by transporting materials and equipment to the weapons factories of Myanmar. Human rights organizations and the UN experts have continually urged all nations to impose a world arms embargo citing the military reinforcements



as a booster to brutality. Even under certain international sanctions, the procurement network of authoritarian regimes is still active and flexible.

Forced military conscription reaches 15th round

The Myanmar military junta has officially launched its 15th round of basic military training under the nationwide conscription programme, with ceremonies held at various regional military commands across the country on July 14. High-ranking officials, including military commanders and state and regional chief ministers, were present at the opening events, where they offered meals and cash incentives to conscripts.

Since the enforcement of the conscription law in early 2024, the regime has conducted 14 previous training batches between April 2024 and July 2025. While the junta has not publicly disclosed the number of conscripts trained so far, military analysts estimate that each batch has included at least 5,000 individuals—bringing the likely total to over 70,000 personnel now serving under the programme.

As its battlefield losses mount, the junta has intensified its recruitment methods, employing a mix of lottery-based selection, forced arrests at bus stations and crowded areas, and raids on communities. According to data from the Spring Revolution Database (SRD), approximately 3,000 individuals were arrested to be conscripted in the first half of 2025. Of those, 1,306 came from rural areas, 1,298 from urban zones, 260 were apprehended while commuting, and 12 were seized while traveling. By comparison, an estimated 12,000 people were forcibly recruited in 2024 alone.

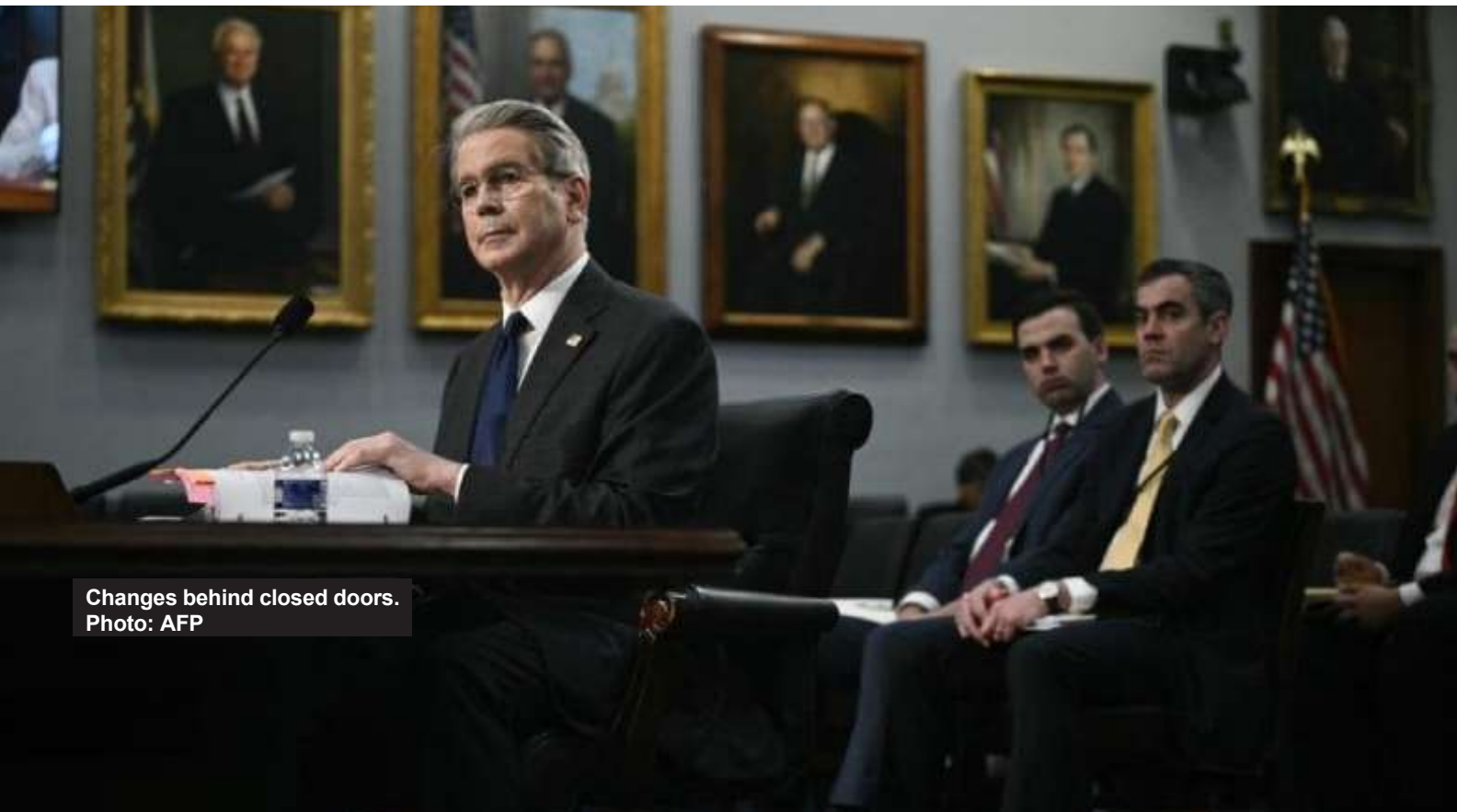
"Youths' freedom is lost under conscription. Parents worry constantly about when their children

will be taken. People are fearful wherever they go," a resident from Yangon told DMG.

An Arakan Army (AA) soldier also stated that many prisoners of war captured on the battlefield are revealed to be junta conscripts - some selected through the lottery system, others forcibly enlisted.

Though military training for female conscripts has yet to begin, the junta has started compiling lists of eligible women in Mon and Karen States since mid-2024. Similar efforts are reportedly underway in industrial zones and factories in Yangon and Mandalay where large numbers of women work.

The growing reach of the junta's conscription campaign has raised widespread fear and resentment among the public, as the military continues to replenish its ranks through coercive measures amid escalating conflict across the country.



Changes behind closed doors.
Photo: AFP

THE MYANMAR JUNTA'S LOBBYING AND LEGAL REPRESENTATIVES IN NORTH AMERICA

ANTONIO GRACEFFO

On July 24, 2025, the U.S. Treasury Department lifted sanctions on several Myanmar entities and individuals closely tied to the country's military junta. Among those removed from the sanctions list were KT Services & Logistics and its founder Jonathan Myo Kyaw Thaung, MCM Group and its owner Aung Hlaing Oo, Suntac Technologies' Sit Taing Aung, and businesswoman Tin Latt Min. These individuals had previously been sanctioned for arms production and business dealings with military-owned enterprises following the junta's 2021 coup.

The delisting followed an exchange of letters between U.S. President Donald Trump and junta leader Min Aung Hlaing, though the White House maintains the decision was part of a routine review process initiated under the previous administration. Still, the move drew strong criticism from human rights groups, given the Myanmar military's continued repression,

alleged war crimes, and a civil war that has devastated the economy.

Two North American firms have played key roles in helping Burma's most notorious military-linked tycoons get sanctions lifted and re-enter the global economy: Dickens & Madson, a Canadian lobbying firm known for representing controversial regimes such as Sudan and Zimbabwe, and (possibly, but unconfirmed) Ferrari & Associates, a Washington-based U.S. law firm specializing in economic and trade sanctions under the jurisdiction of the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). Ferrari & Associates handles matters such as removal from the Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) list, responding to OFAC investigations, and securing OFAC licenses. Their office is located directly across the street from the U.S. Treasury.

The Montreal-based firm, Dickens & Madson, signed a \$2 million contract with Myanmar's military regime on March 4, 2021, just over a month after the coup. The firm agreed to lobby the United States, Russia, Israel, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, the United Nations, the African Union, and other governments and international bodies on behalf of the junta. The stated goal was to "assist in explaining the real situation in the country" and to push for the removal of international sanctions.

Dickens & Madson filed the agreement under the U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), as required for any firm engaging in political work on behalf of a foreign principal. Their most recent FARA disclosure, dated June 30, 2025, remains a matter of public record, providing transparency into their foreign influence activities.

Ben-Menashe, an Israeli-Canadian businessman and former Israeli military intelligence officer, is the principal and contract signatory for Dickens & Madson. He has a long history of representing controversial clients through high-priced lobbying deals. Among them: Sudanese General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemeti), head of the heavily sanctioned Rapid Support Forces (RSF), signed a \$6 million agreement with the firm to secure international legitimacy and support. That deal also proposed Sudanese troop deployments to assist Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army in exchange for funding from Libya's eastern command. In Burkina Faso, military coup leader Paul Henri Damiba paid Dickens & Madson \$500,000 to lobby the Biden administration for the release of frozen funds and a new U.S. grant.


In the Central African Republic, Ben-Menashe's associate signed a contract promising to procure a dozen Russian attack helicopters. In Tunisia, the firm took a \$1 million lobbying contract to advocate for a jailed presidential candidate. Ben-Menashe also represented Zimbabwe's longtime autocrat Robert Mugabe.

The March 2021 agreement with Myanmar's then-Defense Minister Mya Tun Oo was ultimately canceled by Dickens & Madson before becoming effective, as the firm was unable to obtain authorization from U.S. and Canadian authorities to receive payment due to existing sanctions. Despite efforts to maintain the contract, compliance issues with sanctions laws forced them to abandon the representation.

Ferrari & Associates is widely believed to be the primary U.S. law firm assisting Myanmar junta-linked individuals in securing sanctions relief. While no public records or FARA filings confirm the firm's representation, a LinkedIn post by a firm associate celebrating the July 2025 OFAC delistings of junta-affiliated entities strongly implies involvement. Known for handling high-profile sanctions cases, Ferrari has represented controversial clients including Iranian businessmen, Russian oligarch Oleg Deripaska, and officials from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The firm's track record, combined with the timing of the delistings and the polished tone of junta communications, suggests Ferrari & Associates played a key, if unofficial, role in facilitating the junta's reentry into the global financial system.

As a democracy, the United States often faces ethical dilemmas when it comes to the legal rights of authoritarian regimes. Under U.S. law, the Burmese junta—like any other entity—has the right to hire legal counsel, retain lobbyists, and petition the government. Lobbying on behalf of the junta is not illegal, though those involved are generally required to register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA). U.S. sanctions primarily restrict financial transactions, not legal or political representation. As a result, the junta has secured legal allies in North America and will likely continue pursuing international legitimacy by exploiting U.S. legal protections and democratic freedoms.

Antonio Graceffo is an economist and China expert with extensive reporting experience on Burma.



Tom Andrews.
Photo: AFP

US LIFTING SANCTIONS ON MYANMAR JUNTA ALLIES 'UNCONSCIONABLE' UN EXPERT

The UN's Myanmar expert on Wednesday criticised the US decision to lift sanctions imposed on the ruling general's allies and their military-linked firms, branding it "unconscionable".

Washington lifted the sanctions after the junta chief sent a glowing letter of praise to President Donald Trump earlier this month.

Tom Andrews, the special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, said removing sanctions from individuals and companies that have provided weapons, supplies and other material support was a "shocking" turn in US policy that risked emboldening the junta and its enablers.

"This is a major step backward for international efforts to save lives by restricting the murderous junta's access to weapons," he said in a statement.

"It is unconscionable to undermine these efforts by rolling back sanctions on Myanmar arms dealers and junta cronies."

Myanmar has been engulfed in a brutal conflict since February 2021, when Min Aung Hlaing's military wrested power from the civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

The coup sparked a civil war that has killed thousands, leaving 3.5 million displaced and half the nation in poverty.

Earlier this month, the junta chief sent a letter to Trump, responding to his threat of tariffs by lauding his

presidency with praise, including for shutting down US-funded media outlets covering the conflict.

Andrews said the companies removed from US sanctions lists had all been implicated in the arms trade, including brokering the junta's acquisition of weapons, raw materials, supplies.

"The junta's use of weapons of war to attack civilians has been devastating -- and this is a fact that the Trump administration has recognised by calling out the military junta for these attacks and other grave human rights violations," said Andrews.

"What makes this action even more appalling is that sanctions against the junta are proving to be effective.

"The volume of military equipment that the junta was able to import declined by over 30 percent from 2023 to 2024, in part because of sanctions imposed by the United States and other nations."

Andrews, a Democrat former US congressman, urged Republican Trump's administration to reconsider.

"It is literally a matter of life and death," he said.

Special rapporteurs are independent experts mandated by the UN Human Rights Council. They do not, therefore, speak for the United Nations itself.

AFP



Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing.
Photo: AFP

MIN AUNG HLAING FORMS 'STATE SECURITY AND PEACE COMMISSION' AS EMERGENCY RULE ENDS IN MYANMAR

Myanmar's junta leader Senior General Min Aung Hlaing has formed a new governing body called the 'State Security and Peace Commission,' naming himself chairman, according to an official announcement made on 31 July. The move comes as the six-month extension of the seventh state of emergency expired and power was transferred to the National Defence and Security Council (NDSC).

The SSPC includes top military leaders, many of whom were members of the now-dissolved State Administration Council (SAC). Deputy Commander-in-Chief Soe Win was appointed vice chairman. U Nyo Saw, U Aung Lin Dwe, General Maung Maung Aye, Lieutenant General Tun Tun Naung, U Than Swe, Lieutenant General Yar Pyae, and General Kyaw Swar Lin are also members of the newly formed commission. General Ye Win Oo is serving as secretary.

Former generals Nyo Saw and Aung Lin Dwe are listed with civilian honorifics ("U") in the official statement. U Nyo Saw, a graduate of the 23rd intake of the Defence Services Academy and chairman of the Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC), has been appointed Prime Minister. He will concurrently serve as Minister at the Office of the Prime Minister and Minister for National Planning.

The announcement also marked the exclusion of some key military figures from the commission.

General Mya Tun Oo and Admiral Tin Aung San, both prominent in the former council, were not reappointed to the new body. Instead, Mya Tun Oo has been made Minister for Transport and Communications, and Tin Aung San is now Minister at the President's Office (1). Both are referred to using civilian honorifics indicating their likely retirement.

The current Union Government under the SSPC consists of 30 ministers. Unlike the previous cabinet structure, no deputy prime ministers have been appointed. Lieutenant General Yar Pyae oversees the now merged Ministry of Border Affairs and Ethnic Affairs. He is the highest-ranking graduate from the Defence Services Academy in the current cabinet (22nd intake).

The new SSPC also includes Aung Lin Dwe as Chief Executive of the NSDC, with General Ye Win Oo serving as Joint Chief Executive.

The formation of the SSPC a new Union Government by the NDSC signals a shift in the military's approach to governance following nearly four and a half years of direct rule under emergency provisions. Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, who had served as acting president during the emergency period, is expected to maintain his dominant influence as head of the newly formed commission.

MYANMAR'S END OF THE STATE OF EMERGENCY, AN 'UNACCEPTABLE FRAUD'

The Burmese junta's decision to end the state of emergency ahead of the illegal elections announced for next December only serves to pull the wool over the eyes of those countries preparing to accept this farce: China, Russia, India, Belarus, Thailand, and Cambodia, first and foremost, and of those who seek a return to the unacceptable pre-coup situation in which the military dominated the quasi-civilian government, according to a press release by ITALIA-BIRMANIA.INSIEME issued 1 August.

Pursuant to the Constitution imposed by the previous dictatorship in 2008, Burmese junta leader Min Aung Hlaing resigned as Prime Minister and formed an interim government of 30 ministers, the same as before, to prepare the ground for the illegal elections next December.

ITALIA-BIRMANIA.INSIEME denounces the plans of the junta, which has neither the legal nor political

legitimacy to hold completely illegal elections. These elections were called by a military junta installed through a coup d'état, establishing a violent, oppressive, and anti-democratic regime that has decimated the democratic opposition parties, forcing many leaders into exile or underground, excluding them from or withdrawing from the race to avoid legitimizing the regime.

Moreover, precisely because of popular resistance, it controls less than 30% of the country and could only hold its farcical "elections" in this remaining area.

ITALIA-BIRMANIA.INSIEME, to better clarify the instrumental and cosmetic nature of these elections, which must be rejected, recalls that the military junta has changed the law on the political parties registration, providing for the dissolution of any party accused of electoral fraud or "illegal conduct during elections." This move is designed to minimize the risk posed by potential challengers, while the regime has taken all necessary measures to ensure its victory.

Furthermore, a new law imposes prison sentences of up to 10 years for anyone who makes speeches or organizes protests aimed at "destroying part of the electoral process."

Even ASEAN, which continues to invite junta representatives to its Summits, stated that it will not accept elections in Myanmar that do not include all parties, declaring: "There is no point in holding partial elections. It will not solve any problem; on the contrary, it will make the situation worse."


ITALIA-BIRMANIA.INSIEME also condemns the radical change in the US position toward the military junta, with the recognition of the junta as a trading partner and the subsequent decision to remove certain Burmese arms suppliers from the sanctions list.

It is crucial to recognize that the people of Myanmar are fighting for fundamental systemic change, not a return to the pre-coup status quo, and that the transition to democracy is taking place now, thanks to popular resistance and grassroots governance in much of the country no longer under military control.

ITALIA.BIRMANIA.INSIEME therefore calls on the Italian government to commit to condemning these

attempts at false normalization in Myanmar, at the EU level and at the next UN General Assembly, recognizing the failure of the "5-Point Agreement," and working to block the illegal elections and the recognition of their results.

As requested by the recent ILO resolution, it also calls for a halt to any relationship that could contribute to or enable the perpetuation of harm, violence, or acts of repression, including through the supply of military equipment or resources, including jet fuel, or the free flow of funds to military authorities



Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing.
Photo: AFP

MIN AUNG HLAING WARNS OF HARSH PENALTIES FOR DISRUPTING UPCOMING ELECTION

Military junta leader Senior General Min Aung Hlaing warned on 29 July that individuals attempting to interfere with the upcoming election process could face imprisonment and heavy fines, citing a new law aimed at safeguarding the military-organized vote.

The law formally titled the Prevention of Disruption and Sabotage of Multi-Party Democratic General Elections includes severe penalties for a range of activities, including the death penalty in cases where violations result in fatalities.

Section 16 of the law prohibits speeches, organizing, incitement, protests, or distribution of materials that may disrupt or sabotage the electoral process. Violators face three to seven years in prison and fines. If carried out collectively, the penalty increases to five to ten years' imprisonment.

Section 17 criminalizes direct or indirect threats, obstruction, or abuse intended to prevent individuals from voting. Offenders will face both prison sentences and financial penalties.

Sections 18 through 20 outline punishments for those who threaten, obstruct, or harm election officials, including polling station managers and members of the Election Commission. Sentences for such offenses range from three to 20 years. In group cases, penalties range from a minimum of five years to life imprisonment.

Anyone who destroys or damages election-related materials such as ballot papers, ballot boxes, machines, or property belonging to the Election Commission can be sentenced to five to 10 years in prison along with a fine.

The junta will also form a Central Committee for Supervision of Election Period Security, tasked with monitoring both domestic and international organizations it deems a threat to the electoral process.

The Union Election Commission (UEC), operating under the junta, has announced that the general election will be held in December. However, the National Unity Government (NUG) and other opposition forces have denounced the vote as a "fake election," asserting that it lacks legitimacy under military rule.



Photo: AFP

MYANMAR JUNTA ENACTS LAW IMPOSING DEATH PENALTY FOR LEAKING MILITARY SECRETS

Myanmar's military junta enacted the Military Secrets Protection Law on 28 July, introducing harsh penalties including the death sentence and life imprisonment for the unauthorized disclosure of military secrets.

Signed into law by junta chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, the new legislation applies not only to active-duty personnel in the armed forces and police but also to pro-military militias such as the Pyu Saw Htee and even former military members under the junta's control.

The law comprises 23 sections across six chapters and defines "military secrets" in broad terms.

These include strategies, tactics, military training procedures, technologies, machinery, weapons, ammunition, and production techniques, as well as any procedures or systems designated as sensitive by the military at any time.

According to the regime, the stated objectives of the law are to strengthen national security, prevent foreign entities from accessing military intelligence, and block the transfer of such information to unauthorized armed groups or individuals.

The law prohibits both current and former defence personnel from engaging with foreign governments, military organizations, or private security firms without

official permission. Those found guilty of breaching the provisions will face either life imprisonment or the death penalty.

A military officer participating in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), who spoke to Mizzima on condition of anonymity, said the law is primarily aimed at military deserters who have joined anti-junta resistance forces.

"The strictest controls under this law are aimed at deserters. These deserters are not just evading service—they're actively participating in illegal armed groups. If caught, they'll be prosecuted under this new law instead of the ordinary desertion law, and they'll face far more severe punishment," the officer said.

The law also imposes new restrictions on former military personnel, requiring them to obtain approval from the relevant ministry before taking up roles in private security or defence-related companies. However, the CDM officer noted that those still serving face even tighter constraints.

Analysts view the law as a response to rising defections, desertions, and battlefield losses among junta forces. With increasing numbers of military personnel reportedly joining opposition groups, observers believe the regime is using this law to deter further defections and tighten control over its remaining forces.



MYANMAR JUNTA MANDATES PRISON SENTENCES FOR ELECTION CRITICS

Myanmar's junta said Wednesday it has enacted a new law dictating prison sentences for critics or protesters of their planned election, which is being boycotted by opposition groups.

The junta seized power in a 2021 coup, sparking a many-sided civil war, and has touted elections at the end of this year as a path to peace.

Opposition groups -- including democratic lawmakers ousted by the military takeover -- and international monitors have called the poll a ploy to legitimise the junta's rule.

State newspaper The Global New Light of Myanmar said the "Law on the Protection of Multiparty Democratic Elections from Obstruction, Disruption and Destruction" was enacted on Tuesday.

Its 14-page text forbids "any speech, organising, inciting, protesting or distributing leaflets in order to destroy a part of the electoral process".

Individuals convicted face between three and seven years behind bars, while offences committed in groups can result in sentences between five and 10 years.

The legislation also outlaws damaging ballot papers and polling stations, as well as the intimidation or harm of voters, candidates and election workers, with a maximum punishment of 20 years in prison.

If anyone is killed during an attempt to disrupt the election "everyone involved in the crime faces the death penalty", the law says.

Swathes of Myanmar are beyond the control of the junta and some government census workers deployed last year to gather data ahead of the poll faced resistance and security threats.

Data could not be collected from an estimated 19 million of the country's 51 million people, provisional results said, in part because of "significant security constraints".

Analysts have predicted the myriad of anti-coup guerrillas and ethnic armed groups the junta is battling may stage offensives in the run-up to the vote as a sign of their opposition.

A UN expert called on the international community last month to reject the election plan as "a fraud".

Tom Andrews, the UN special rapporteur on the rights situation in Myanmar, said the junta is "trying to create this mirage of an election exercise that will create a legitimate civilian government".

AFP



MYANMAR JUNTA RESHUFFLES CABINET UNDER REBRANDED LEADERSHIP, EXCLUDES KEY FIGURES FROM PREVIOUS COUNCIL

According to a statement issued on July 31 by the junta-controlled Ministry of Information, a number of ministerial changes have occurred within the newly formed cabinet under the newly formed State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC), which is currently led by junta chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing in his role as acting president. Notably, the Ministry of Education was initially omitted from the new cabinet lineup.

As part of the restructuring, the constitutionally mandated and military-dominated National Defence and Security Council (NDSC) appointed General Nyo Saw as Prime Minister in the new cabinet. He was also assigned the additional roles of Minister at the Office of the Prime Minister and Minister for National Planning. Nyo Saw retired as the armed forces Quartermaster General in 2020 but retained control of the military's business holdings. In total, the NDSC established 29 ministries, including those under U Nyo Saw's leadership.

The initial announcement notably excluded the Ministry of Education, sparking widespread criticism on social media. In response, a follow-up statement confirmed that the Ministry of Education had been added to the new cabinet, with Dr. Chaw Chaw Sein appointed as the Minister of Education.

The now-dissolved State Administration Council (SAC) cabinet comprised 34 ministries, including

four under the Office of the Chairman of the SAC. In contrast, the new cabinet formed by the NDSC features several structural changes, some ministries have been renamed or merged, while certain ministers from the previous cabinet were not reappointed.

Several ministers from the previous junta cabinet were completely removed from their positions, including Minister of Planning and Finance Win Shein, Minister of Education Dr. Nyunt Pe, Minister at the SAC Chairman's Office Ministry (1) Admiral Moe Aung, Minister of Hotels and Tourism U Kyaw Soe Win, and Minister of Ethnic Affairs U Khun Thant Zaw Htoo.

In the newly formed cabinet, Tun Ohn, who previously served as Minister of Commerce, was reassigned as Minister of the President's Office (4). Chit Swe, the former Minister of Labor, was appointed as Minister of Economy and Trade, while Aung Kyaw Hoe, formerly Minister at the SAC Chairman's Office Ministry (3), was named the new Minister of Labor.

In the current cabinet formation, the Ministry of Planning and Finance has been dissolved and replaced by the Ministry of Finance and Revenue. Dr. Kan Zaw, who previously served as Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations, has been appointed to lead the new ministry. Meanwhile, Daw Wah Wah Maung, formerly a Deputy Minister, has been promoted to Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations.

Most of the remaining ministers have retained their previous positions. As part of further restructuring, the Ministries of Border Affairs and Ethnic Affairs have been merged, with Lieutenant General Yar Pyae appointed as the new minister. Additionally, Jeng Phang Naw Htaung has been assigned to lead both the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs and the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.

Notably, junta leader Min Aung Hlaing and his deputy Soe Win – who previously held the positions of Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, respectively – are absent from the new cabinet formed by the NDSC. No deputy prime minister roles were appointed in the current structure.

Dr. Chaw Chaw Sein, the newly appointed Minister for Education, formerly served as Deputy Rector at Yangon University of Foreign Languages and as Director General of the Monitoring and Evaluation Department.

She is also known to be an academic peer of U Kyaw Moe Tun, Myanmar's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, who was appointed by the National Unity Government (NUG).

Photo: AFP

MYANMAR'S MILITARY LEADER CALLS FOR CONTINUED COOPERATION FROM COUNCIL MEMBERS AHEAD OF PLANNED ELECTION

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing has called on members of the State Administration Council (SAC) and their subordinates to continue cooperating in the future, as he prepares to hold a general election. His remarks came during a commendation ceremony held at Zeyathiri Beikman in Naypyidaw on the morning of 30 July.

The ceremony took place one day before the expiration of the sixth-month extension of the seventh emergency period. During his speech, the military leader thanked those who worked with him over the past four and a half years, describing the current moment as "the beginning of the second page."

"I urge continued cooperation in the upcoming journeys so that we can successfully move forward. There is still a long way to go for the nation's future. This is the beginning of our second page. The first page has already been turned," he said.

Min Aung Hlaing reiterated that an election would be held in December and emphasized that the support and cooperation of the public would be crucial to its success. He also instructed authorities at every level to encourage eligible citizens to vote.

To prepare for the election, the military has enacted the conscription law, assigned duties to security forces, formed defence and anti-terrorism units, and established people's militias. However, Min Aung Hlaing admitted these measures alone are not sufficient.

Under the 2008 Constitution which the junta continues to uphold the National Defence and Security Council (NDSC) is constitutionally required to hold elections within six months of the termination of emergency rule.

With the emergency period set to expire, speculation is growing over whether Min Aung Hlaing will formally transfer authority to the NDSC, a body dominated by military appointees, during the council meeting scheduled for 31 July.

In recent days, the junta enacted the Election Protection Law, which includes provisions for life imprisonment and the death penalty. It also approved the seventh amendment to the election laws governing the Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw, and regional or state parliaments on 28 July as part of its election preparations.



GENERAL YE WIN OO'S SON COMPLETES CONSCRIPTION TRAINING, RAISING QUESTIONS OVER SYMBOLIC PARTICIPATION

Htet Ye Naung, the son of General Ye Win Oo, who serves as Secretary of the newly restructured State Security and Peace Commission, has completed the military conscription training course, according to the Myanmar Defense and Security Institute (MDSI).

He attended the 13th People's Military Service Training Course held at Ba Htoo Military Training School in Ba Htoo Township, Shan State. The graduation ceremony took place on 31 July.

General Ye Win Oo and his wife were present at the graduation ceremony.

According to MDSI, Htet Ye Naung was accompanied by the son of a Rakhine State minister, although this has not been independently verified.

"Both of them only submitted their names and stayed at the training centre. They had senior sergeants assisting them. They were quite relaxed and simply acted like they were in training," Ko Naung Yoe, a military research officer at MDSI told Mizzima.

Typically, individuals with strong academic qualifications are sent to Ba Htoo Military Academy

and those who graduate are often promoted to the rank of second lieutenant and assigned to units such as weapons, on job training, or communications. However, Ko Naung Yoe said that although Htet Ye Naung's name appeared on the roster, he is not expected to serve in any actual military role.

At a time when the public criticizes the absence of junta leaders' children from conscript programmes, the attendance of a top general's son appears to be symbolic. While ordinary trainees and porters are deployed to the frontlines after completing training, sources say that individuals like Htet Ye Naung are assigned to non-combat areas only.

Earlier this year, on 1 March, Htet Ye Naung participated in organizing the 25th anniversary of the Noid Music Festival, a two-day hip-hop event held at Hexagon Complex in Shwe Htut Tin Win, Tamwe Township, Yangon.

He is also known to be close to Yone Lay, a singer supportive of the military regime.

During the early stages of the military coup, Htet Ye Naung was subject to a boycott campaign, which caused a temporary pause in his event organizing. However, since around 2023, he has resumed organizing music and entertainment events.

He is now formally listed as having completed military conscript training.

His father, General Ye Win Oo, who serves as Chief of Military Security Affairs and Secretary of the Military Commission, is known in military circles as a trusted confidant of Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

In 2024, Ye Win Oo, along with Lieutenant General Nyo Saw (appointed as Prime Minister after switching to civilian role) and Lieutenant General Aung Lin Dwe (Secretary of the then State Administration Council (SAC)), were all promoted to the rank of General.

Previously, General Ye Win Oo also served as Joint Secretary of the SAC. After the formal transfer of power to the military-formed government, he was appointed Joint Chief Executive of the National Defense and Security Council Office, in addition to serving as Secretary of the State Security and Peace Commission.



EUROPEAN ANTI-JAMMING TECH FOUND IN MYANMAR MILITARY DRONES, CAR REPORT REVEALS

A new investigation by Conflict Armament Research (CAR) has uncovered how the Myanmar military is circumventing international sanctions by using advanced European technology to fortify its armed drones.

Despite longstanding European Union (EU) arms embargoes and export restrictions targeting Myanmar's junta, CAR field investigators have documented the use of European-made global navigation satellite system (GNSS) receivers in Myanmar military drones.

These high-precision modules are equipped with anti-jamming capabilities, which protect the drones from electronic interference and allow for more effective attacks using aerial munitions.

The GNSS modules were discovered integrated into rotary UAVs – modified hexacopters and quadcopters – recovered in conflict zones such as Karenni and Chin States. These drones had been adapted for offensive use, with release mechanisms installed to deploy mortar rounds and domestically manufactured aerial bombs.

CAR traced the modules back to a European manufacturer, which shipped the components in mid-2023 to a vetted distributor in China. The trail then led through two Chinese companies, with the final recipient located in Ruili, a major border town adjacent to conflict areas in Myanmar.

One of the drones was recovered within weeks of the modules being sold to the Ruili-based firm, highlighting a rapid diversion from commercial to military use.

Although the GNSS units were not listed under the EU's Dual-Use Regulation Annex I at the time of export, the manufacturer had secured end-user declarations stating the components would not be used for military purposes or transferred to sanctioned destinations.

However, Myanmar was not explicitly listed in those agreements. Upon being alerted by CAR, the manufacturer halted sales through the identified supply chain and issued instructions to block further exports to the implicated entities.

The discovery underscores a pattern CAR has observed globally: the exploitation of commercial supply chains by sanctioned regimes to acquire technology for weapon development. It also raises concerns about the effectiveness of current export control frameworks in detecting and preventing such diversions, especially for dual-use goods.

CAR's report highlights the importance of ground-level documentation and continuous monitoring in enforcing arms embargoes. Without such efforts, manufacturers and regulators may remain unaware of how commercial technologies are repurposed to fuel ongoing conflicts.



MYANMAR JUNTA ENACTS CONTROVERSIAL CYBERSECURITY LAW AMID ELECTION PREPARATIONS

The Myanmar junta has enacted the long-criticized Cybersecurity Law starting 30 July, according to junta-controlled newspapers published on 31 July. The law, which was officially promulgated on 1 January, comes into effect roughly seven months later amid preparations for holding elections later this year.

Digital rights groups, including the Myanmar Internet Project, have raised alarm over the law, warning that it enables increased surveillance and suppression of internet use by the regime.

Under the law, providing or operating Virtual Private Network (VPN) services without prior approval from the military-controlled Ministry of Transport and Communications is a criminal offense. Violators face prison terms of one to six months, fines ranging from 1 million to 10 million kyats, or both. The law also allows for the seizure of related equipment.

While VPN service providers may emerge under government approval, the Myanmar Internet Project has warned that such services will not be able to guarantee

the protection of users' personal data, undermining online privacy and security.

The law further criminalizes the dissemination, distribution, copying, or sale of what it deems "inappropriate information" through electronic means. Offenders face the same penalties as those violating VPN restrictions.

Additionally, the law grants the regime sweeping powers to block or restrict access to digital platforms, seize materials related to digital services, and shut down or label platforms as unsuitable for public use—either temporarily or permanently.

Human rights and digital security advocates have condemned the law as a tool for tightening control over information ahead of the upcoming election, which has already been criticized by the National Unity Government (NUG) and other opposition groups as illegitimate.



NUG Acting President Duwa Lashi La in the field. Photo: Supplied

NUG INTERIM PRESIDENT SAYS A NEW MYANMAR DEPENDS ON REMOVAL OF MILITARY COUNCIL

Interim President of the National Unity Government (NUG), Duwa Lashi La, declared that a just and prosperous new Myanmar can only be built by removing the Military Council whether through political strategy or armed resistance.

He made the remarks during a cabinet meeting of the NUG held on 31 July.

"The ministers' performance so far has been quite good, but there is room for improvement. Nothing remains static—we must always strive to move from good to better," he said.

He urged NUG members to remain truthful, committed, and mindful of their role in shaping the country's future.

"As revolutionaries leading reform, we must be willing to make personal sacrifices and remember that we are building a new nation," he added.

NUG Union Chief Minister Mahn Win Khaing Than also noted that some ministers have recently visited resistance-held areas in Sagaing and Magway, giving them clearer insight into conditions on the ground and strengthening their capacity to support the revolution effectively.

In a statement issued on the evening of 30 July, the NUG confirmed that the acting president, ministers, and officials have been meeting with local communities and revolutionary allies in liberated zones to push forward the goals of the revolution.

According to Mizzima's reporting, 18 ministers and deputy ministers are currently active in revolutionary areas across northern and southern Myanmar.

Ten are operating in Kachin State and Sagaing Region in the north, while eight are based in Kayin State, Mon State, and Tanintharyi Region in the south. An additional six NUG officials are stationed along various border areas, according to information from the NUG.

Photo: Supplied

NUG VOWS LEGAL ACTION AGAINST PRISON STAFF INVOLVED IN TORTURE AND DEATHS OF POLITICAL PRISONERS

The National Unity Government (NUG) has pledged to pursue legal action against Prisons Department personnel who are complicit in the torture and deaths of political prisoners held in military junta-run prisons across Myanmar.

Speaking during a public and international broadcast on 29 July, U Nay Phone Latt, spokesperson for the NUG Union Prime Minister's Office, said that the NUG has collected personal information on thousands of prison employees who assisted the junta in carrying out abuses against detainees.

Legal action will be taken against them in accordance with the law, depending on the extent of their involvement.

"We have gathered information on thousands of staff involved in torture and killings inside the prisons. Legal accountability will follow, based on their individual levels of participation," he stated.

U Nay Phone Latt also confirmed that four political prisoners died in July alone due to torture or denial of medical care while in custody. He expressed deep sorrow over their deaths, describing them as heroes and martyrs of the revolution.

Among those who died was Ko Pyae Song Aung, an executive officer of the National League for Democracy (NLD) in Bilin Township, who passed away

in Thaton Prison on 19 July. The following day, Ma Wut Yee Aung, a former central executive member of the Dagon University Students' Union, died from injuries sustained during interrogation in Insein Prison.

Sayadaw U Pya San Thiya, a respected monk and political detainee, died in Mandalay's Obo Prison on 25 July after being denied timely medical treatment. Another political prisoner, Daw Aye Myat Zaw, also died in custody during the same period.

U Nay Phone Latt further stated that the NUG is reviewing leaked data from the junta, emphasizing that the information will be crucial for future justice processes, accountability, and transitional justice mechanisms.

"These documents will serve not only to prosecute those involved in war crimes and human rights violations but also to establish a clear path toward justice during the transition," he said.

According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), at least 2,150 individuals have died in junta custody since the 2021 coup. This figure includes 138 deaths in interrogation centers, 188 in prisons, 8 during prison transfers, and 43 in police detention facilities.



Rohingya refugees. Photo: AFP

ICJ UPDATE ON GAMBIA'S CASE AGAINST MYANMAR FOR GENOCIDE VIOLATIONS

On 29 July, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) provided an update on The Gambia's case against Myanmar for alleged violations of the Genocide Convention.

The text of the update is as follows.

On 11 November 2019, The Gambia filed in the Registry of the Court an Application instituting proceedings against Myanmar concerning alleged violations of the Genocide Convention. In its Application, The Gambia requests, among other things, that the Court adjudge and declare that Myanmar has breached its obligations under the Convention, that it must cease forthwith any internationally wrongful act, that it must perform the obligations of reparation in the interest of the victims of genocidal acts who are members of the Rohingya group, and that it must offer assurances and guarantees of non-repetition. As a basis for the Court's jurisdiction, the Applicant invokes Article IX of the Genocide Convention. The Application was accompanied by a request for the indication of provisional measures.

On 23 January 2020, the Court made an Order indicating a number of provisional measures, requiring among other things that Myanmar, in relation to the members of the Rohingya group in its territory, take all measures within its power to prevent the commission of all acts within the scope of Article II of the Genocide Convention; take effective measures to prevent the destruction and ensure the preservation of evidence related to allegations of such acts; and submit a report to the Court on all measures taken to give effect to the Order within four months, as from the date of the Order, and thereafter every six months, pending a final decision in the case by the Court.

By a further Order dated 23 January 2020, the Court fixed 23 July 2020 and 25 January 2021 as the respective time-limits for the filing of a Memorial by The Gambia and a Counter-Memorial by Myanmar. By an Order dated 18 May 2020, these time-limits were extended to 23 October 2020 and 23 July 2021, respectively. The Memorial of The Gambia was filed within the time-limit thus Extended. On 20 January 2021, Myanmar raised preliminary objections to the jurisdiction of the Court

and the admissibility of the Application.- 3 -

On 22 July 2022, following public hearings, the Court delivered its Judgment, in which it rejected the preliminary objections raised by Myanmar and found that it had jurisdiction to entertain the Application filed by The Gambia on the basis of Article IX of the Genocide Convention, and that the Application was admissible.

By an Order dated 22 July 2022, the Court fixed 24 April 2023 as the new time-limit for the filing of the Counter-Memorial of Myanmar. By Orders dated 6 April 2023 and 12 May 2023 respectively, the Court extended that time-limit, first to 24 May 2023 and then to 24 August 2023. The Counter-Memorial was filed within the time-limit thus extended.

By an Order dated 16 October 2023, the Court authorized the submission of a Reply by The Gambia and a Rejoinder by Myanmar, and fixed 16 May 2024 and 16 December 2024 as the respective time-limits for the filing of those written pleadings. The Gambia duly filed its Reply.

On 15 November 2023, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (jointly) and the Maldives filed Declarations of intervention under Article 63 of the Statute of the Court. By an Order dated 3 July 2024, the Court decided that the Declarations of intervention submitted by the Maldives and the Joint Declarants under Article 63 of the Statute of the Court were admissible in so far as they concerned the construction of provisions of the Genocide Convention.

Four more Declarations of intervention under Article 63 of the Statute were filed, respectively, by Slovenia on 29 November 2024, by the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 10 December 2024, by Belgium on 12 December 2024 and by Ireland on 20 December 2024.

In accordance with Article 83, paragraph 1, of the Rules of Court, the Registrar immediately transmitted certified copies of each Declaration of intervention to The Gambia and Myanmar, which were informed that 29 January 2025, 10 February 2025, 12 February 2025 and 20 February 2025, respectively, had been fixed as the time-limits for the submission of written observations on those Declarations. In accordance with paragraph 2 of the same Article, the Registrar also transmitted copies of the Declarations to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and to the States entitled to appear before the Court. Within the time-limits fixed by the Court, The Gambia and Myanmar each filed written observations on the Declarations of intervention submitted by Slovenia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Belgium and Ireland. While Myanmar objected to the admissibility of all Declarations,

The Gambia contended that they were admissible. By letters dated 4 March 2025, the Registrar informed the Parties, Slovenia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Belgium and Ireland that, in light of the fact that Myanmar had objected to the admissibility of the Declarations of intervention, the Court was required, pursuant to Article 84, paragraph 2, of its Rules, to hear the States seeking to intervene and the Parties on the admissibility of the Declarations of intervention, and had decided to do so by means of a written procedure. The Registrar further stated that the Court had fixed 19 March 2025 as the time-limit within which the States seeking to intervene could furnish their written observations on the admissibility of their Declarations, and 3 April 2025 as the time-limit within which the Parties could furnish their written observations in response. The States seeking to intervene, as well as The Gambia and Myanmar, filed their written observations within the time-limits thus fixed.



JOINT STATEMENT BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS ON ASEAN'S STAND AGAINST MYANMAR JUNTA AND SUPPORT FOR TIMOR-LESTE

On 31 July, 237 civil society organizations, including 11 organizations which chose not to disclose their name, issued a joint press statement, welcoming ASEAN's condemnation of the Myanmar junta's planned sham election and supporting Timor-Leste's admission to ASEAN.

The statement is as follows.

On 11 July 2025, ASEAN announced its position that the Myanmar military junta's so-called election "is not a priority" and "will not solve any problems, but instead will worsen conditions." We—the undersigned 237 Myanmar, regional, and international civil society organizations—acknowledge this clear condemnation by ASEAN of the junta's plan to hold a sham election as a step in the right direction. We also welcome ASEAN's firm stance in supporting Timor-Leste's official admission to the bloc at the ASEAN Summit this October, which is a defiant rejection of the junta's bullying tactics and its false claims to state authority.

As this year's ASEAN Chair, Malaysia took a principled and critical step by taking this long-overdue position—an unequivocal denouncement of the junta's sham election—on behalf of ASEAN. This marks a significant shift in the bloc's stance towards a more assertive and responsible approach to the Myanmar crisis, a step we hope will be followed by further decisive actions ahead of the ASEAN Summit in October.

It is undeniable that the junta has neither the legal nor political legitimacy to hold an election. The junta also lacks the effective territorial and administrative control necessary to do so, as Myanmar's democratic resistance forces, including the National Unity Government (NUG) and ethnic federal units, advance their effective control across the country. The junta's sham election is a deliberate attempt to fabricate a façade of legitimacy and reinforce military tyranny, undermining the democratic aspirations of the Myanmar people and perpetuating cycles of violence.

As we have repeatedly called on ASEAN to publicly denounce and end all support for the junta's planned sham election, we take serious note of ASEAN's decisive condemnation of this so-called vote. Moving forward, we call on ASEAN to reinforce this position during its Summit in October with a concrete, time-bound action plan in support of the Myanmar people's efforts to achieve a peaceful and sustainable future.

Furthermore, ASEAN demonstrated sound political judgment in highlighting the junta's violent attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure. We welcome this principled position, which is a fundamental step towards addressing the root cause of Myanmar's worsening polycrisis: the Myanmar military.

We further welcome ASEAN's support of Timor-Leste's accession to the bloc, in defiance of the illegal junta's bullying tactics against Timor-Leste's full ASEAN membership. The decision by ASEAN to move forward with Timor-Leste's accession this October is a clear rejection of the Myanmar military's illegitimate claims to state authority. The junta has repeatedly attempted to obstruct Timor-Leste's entry—most recently by submitting a letter to Malaysia urging the ASEAN Secretariat to suspend all admissions procedures. This follows Timor-Leste's unwavering stance against the junta's atrocities, including Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão's powerful speech denouncing the junta in 2023, President Ramos-Horta's engagements with the NUG, and the junta's retaliatory expulsion of Timorese diplomats from Myanmar. ASEAN's rejection of the junta's bullying tactics is not only a welcome gesture of solidarity with Timor-Leste, but also an affirmation that the illegal junta is not recognized as the legitimate state representative of Myanmar. We stand in steadfast solidarity with Timor-Leste—an active and principled supporter of the Myanmar people's democracy-building efforts—as the country becomes ASEAN's 11th Member State.

However, we continue to be deeply disappointed by ASEAN's ongoing reliance on its failed Five-Point

Consensus (5PC)—which “remains [ASEAN's] main reference to address the political crisis in Myanmar,” according to the Joint Communiqué of the 58th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting, dated 9 July 2025. ASEAN must be reminded that the military junta has actively disregarded the dead-on-arrival 5PC since its creation through the repeated commission of atrocity crimes. No true progress on the 5PC—much less the full implementation thereof—will ever be possible, as the military has no genuine will for peace.

We, once again, urge ASEAN to move beyond the failed 5PC and unequivocally support the Myanmar people's goals to fully dismantle military tyranny and establish an inclusive federal democracy. To do so, ASEAN and its Member States must cease all engagements with and support to the military junta. Any engagement with or support to the junta only emboldens its violence and deepens ASEAN's complicity in its atrocity crimes against the people of Myanmar. Instead, ASEAN must engage formally and meaningfully with Myanmar's democracy stakeholders and legitimate representatives to support the Myanmar people's immense, ongoing efforts to build democracy from the ground up for a peaceful and sustainable future.

We consider ASEAN's denouncement of the junta's sham election at the 58th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting and ASEAN's upcoming admission of Timor-Leste to the bloc, in defiance of the junta's bullying tactics, as clear signals of the bloc's commitment to taking a firmer and more principled stance against the murderous junta. ASEAN must be held to this commitment. Now is the time for ASEAN to stand firmly with the people of Myanmar and take decisive, meaningful action to support their collective aspirations and determination for federal democracy and sustainable peace.

JAPAN'S STATEMENT ON MYANMAR'S STATE OF EMERGENCY: UNDERSTANDING THE TRUE STAKES BEHIND DIPLOMATIC WORDS

JAMES SHWE

As Myanmar's military junta lifted its state of emergency on July 31, 2025, and announced elections for December, Japan's Foreign Minister IWAYA Takeshi issued a statement expressing concerns about Myanmar's trajectory. While such diplomatic responses may appear supportive at first glance, understanding their true significance requires examining the dangerous context in which these elections are being orchestrated—and why international recognition could prove catastrophic for Myanmar's democratic future.

Background: The Junta's Desperate Gambit for Legitimacy

The military regime's planned December 2025 election is not a step toward democracy—it is a calculated attempt to manufacture legitimacy for continued authoritarian rule. Since seizing power in February 2021, the junta has systematically dismantled Myanmar's democratic institutions, banned major opposition parties including the National League for Democracy (NLD), and imprisoned leaders like Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The military controls less than half the country, with resistance forces holding vast territories, making any nationwide election logistically impossible.

The junta has enacted brutal new electoral laws imposing prison sentences up to ten years—or even the death penalty—for anyone deemed to be obstructing the electoral process. This includes basic activities

like criticizing the election, organizing resistance, or even sharing information online. More than 29,000 people have been arrested since the coup, with over 6,900 confirmed killed by regime forces. Under these conditions, participation in elections cannot be considered voluntary—it is coerced compliance under threat of violence.

Junta's True Intent: Engineering Legitimacy

The military's election strategy reveals its real objectives. By switching from first past-the-post to proportional representation in the upper house, combined with the military's guaranteed 25% of parliamentary seats, the junta can maintain control even with a minority of votes. New electoral laws ban anyone with criminal convictions—including virtually all opposition leaders—from participating.

The regime has dissolved 40 opposition parties, ensuring that only military-friendly candidates can compete.

International election monitoring organizations have unanimously condemned these elections as a "sham" designed to "legitimize and entrench an illegal regime. The UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar has explicitly warned that the junta is seeking to "turn back the clock" and destroy the advancements in human rights and economic opportunities that Myanmar's

people began to enjoy.

The Dangers of International Recognition

The most significant threat lies not in the election itself, but in the possibility of international recognition of its results. China has already begun positioning itself to legitimize the outcome, hosting junta-aligned political parties and providing technical assistance for the electoral process. Beijing sees Myanmar's election as a "political transition" that could restore some semblance of regional stability while protecting Chinese economic interests, particularly the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor.

This creates a dangerous precedent where authoritarian regimes can manufacture democratic legitimacy through controlled elections. As UN experts have warned, any international recognition of these results would effectively reward the military for its coup, human rights abuses, and systematic destruction of Myanmar's democratic institutions. Even worse, it could encourage other military regimes to follow similar playbooks.

The risk extends beyond Myanmar's borders. If the international community accepts these elections as legitimate, it signals that military coups can be retroactively validated through staged democratic processes. This undermines the global commitment to democratic governance and the rule of law that has been painstakingly built over decades.

Analyzing Japan's Diplomatic Statement

Japan's Foreign Minister IWAYA Takeshi's statement calling for the release of political prisoners, an end to violence, and restoration of democracy represents a principled position that refuses to legitimize the junta's actions. By explicitly questioning the credibility of elections held under current repressive conditions, Japan maintains pressure on the regime while supporting ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus.

However, the statement's limitations are evident in what it does not say. There are no new sanctions, no concrete consequences for continued repression, and no explicit rejection of the electoral process. The diplomatic language, while carefully crafted to avoid legitimizing the junta, may not be forceful enough to deter other nations from recognizing the results.

For Myanmar's people and international observers, understanding the difference between diplomatic pressure and substantive action is crucial. Japan's words are welcome, but words alone have not stopped the junta's systematic destruction of Myanmar's democratic institutions.

What Must Be Done

The international community faces a critical test. Recognizing the junta's election results—even with reservations—would validate the military's strategy and encourage similar coups elsewhere. Instead, nations must:

Explicitly reject the election as illegitimate before it takes place, not after the results are announced. Waiting sends the wrong signal to both the junta and other potential coup plotters.

Strengthen coordination with ASEAN and other regional partners to ensure unified rejection of the electoral process. China's efforts to secure regional acceptance make this coordination essential.

Support Myanmar's legitimate representatives, including the National Unity Government and ethnic armed organizations that represent the true will of the Myanmar people as expressed in the 2020 elections.

Impose meaningful consequences on any nation that provides legitimacy to the junta's electoral exercise, including diplomatic and economic measures.

The people of Myanmar cannot safely speak out against this electoral charade—that burden falls on the international community. The world's response to Myanmar's fake election will determine not only Myanmar's future, but whether military coups can be legitimized through staged democratic processes globally.

Myanmar's real election already took place in November 2020, when the people overwhelmingly chose democracy. Everything happening now is an attempt to overturn that choice through violence and deception. The international community must not be complicit in this historic injustice.



On the road. Photo: Antonio Graceffo

THE RAINY SEASON'S IMPACT ON FIGHTING IN BURMA

ANTONIO GRACEFFO

Truckloads of resistance soldiers wind their way through jungle roads that are difficult even in the dry season but turn into seas of mud during the rains. Abandoned and disabled vehicles line the route, an ominous sight in a country where vehicles are precious lifelines. With severe shortages, trucks are the only way to move fuel, food, medicine, and finished goods from Thailand to the people.

Each time the lead truck reaches a dip in the road, a young soldier is sent ahead to test the depth. Barefoot, he steps into the mud, sinking up to his knees. He doesn't wear shoes because they'd be sucked off by the mud. Prodding the ground with a stick and his feet, he finds a passable route and signals the driver to follow. The trucks behind carefully trace the same path, one by one.

Farther up the trail is a river crossing that, in the dry season, would be little more than a stream. After days of heavy rain, though, even the shallowest sections are now about a meter deep. A group of six men wades through, carrying a motorcycle suspended on bamboo poles, like pallbearers at a funeral. In some cases, motorcycles can go where trucks can't. If there's a narrow high spot on or beside the road, a motorcycle might squeeze through, while a truck wouldn't. Of course, motorcycles can't carry as much cargo or as many passengers, but they remain vital to transport in

this terrain. For one thing, when it comes to crossing larger rivers, multiple motorcycles can be loaded into a single boat, something that isn't possible with trucks.

Two resistance soldiers stand waist-deep in the river, positioned between stakes driven into the riverbed on either side. They guide drivers to stay within the narrow path, the only safe way to cross. The crossing has created a massive traffic jam, with four or five pickup trucks backed up on each side, all overloaded with resistance fighters riding in the open beds. When the trucks move, they're splattered with mud; when they wait, they're soaked by rain.

One of the soldiers in the water grabs the winch line from a truck's front bumper and secures it to a tree stump on the far bank. After a flurry of shouting, hand signals, and repositioning, the truck lurches through the current and climbs the opposite side. Once the winch line is released, it continues on its way.

The rainy season slows the pace of action. This single river crossing took about fifteen minutes per truck, and with at least five vehicles waiting on each side, some may have to wait for hours. And this is just one of many rivers that vehicles must cross on the long journeys between cities in the Burmese hinterland.

CORE DEVELOPMENTS

Next in line is a mess truck or chow truck (in military parlance) loaded with rice and cooking equipment. The mess crew will go ahead first to establish a field kitchen behind the front lines, close enough to deliver hot meals to soldiers in combat.

Cooking requires building a fire, which means gathering wood, finding a way to ignite it in the rain, and concealing the flames and smoke when junta aircraft are overhead. A frontline medic noted that waterborne illnesses and malaria spike during the rainy season. Mosquitoes breed in greater numbers, and runoff from swollen rivers contaminates drinking water supplies. While mess crews boil water for the soldiers, under combat conditions they can only purify a limited amount.

If the mess truck breaks down, the soldiers go hungry. But any truck can fail, whether it's carrying food, troops, or ammunition, and any of those failures could shift the outcome of a battle. Saw Gyi, a frontline medic with the Free Burma Rangers (FBR), explained that drivers carry tools and spare parts and will try to fix their vehicles on the spot. "If they can't," he said, "they contact the nearest camp and request another truck."

But in many areas of Burma, there's no phone service and no internet. "So, they need to get to a place

where they can get internet first," he added. That often means abandoning the truck and walking until they can find a Starlink connection. "Then they can call someone to help them."

Saw Gyi also explained how the rainy season affects the wounded. In one battle, there was no way to get a patient to a hospital inside Burma. "Normally, we can get them to the hospital in one day," he said. "But in the rainy season, it can take three days or more, and so the people could die." In such cases, it's easier to send patients directly to Thailand. But the problem isn't just the risk of death during the journey; a three-day trip ties up a vehicle for six days round-trip, which means others may die for lack of transport.

Driving during the rainy season consumes significantly more fuel due to constant stopping, false starts, back-and-forth maneuvering, and frequent detours. This increases costs and puts additional strain on a revolution that depends entirely on donations to function. Passing other vehicles in the jungle is also more dangerous and difficult. One resistance driver explained. "It's very dangerous. You can slide and hit the other vehicle. If you try to back up, you might get stuck." He added that in the dry season, vehicles can usually pull off the road to pass, but in the rainy season, deep ruts and narrow trails trap vehicles in a fixed path.



Monsoon rains provide challenging road conditions.
Photo: Antonio Graceffo

"If you get into the trail, you can't get out," he said. "The high part of the road is very narrow, and if you slip into the ditch, it's hard to recover. It's much harder than in the dry season."

Saw Gyi said, "The most difficult thing is transportation in the rainy season. But also sleeping." When you build a shelter, you have to be more careful. Not only do you need cover overhead for rain, but to be mindful of the fact that if you are at the bottom of a hill, you could get flooded out. "So normally they bring a hammock." And if they have a poncho or tarp they cover the hammock when they sleep.

Resistance soldiers from the Karenni Nationalities Defense Forces (KNDF) said that fighting usually slows during the rainy season.

David Eubank, head of Free Burma Rangers (FBR), explained, "Usually you witness a decrease of fighting by the Burma Army because of the road systems." Heavy rains confine junta forces to paved roads, while resistance fighters continue moving through jungle paths. Although the Burma Army has air and drone superiority, Eubank noted that poor weather limits both. "The weather makes all flights difficult, and cloud cover limits airstrikes. Heavy rain also hampers drone operations. So generally, there's a decrease in fighting during the rainy season." Still, he added, "with fighting now moving into cities and along paved roads, and with more advanced aircraft and better drones, it's still going on across all areas of Burma."

For civilians, the rainy season brings added suffering. "When you flee in the rainy season," Eubank said, "everything gets wet. It's miserable. There's higher

incidence of malaria."

While drones can't fly during heavy rain, they still operate daily between showers. Saw Gyi explained, "Normally, we used to spend the rainy season training or preparing. But this year, because of Burmese airstrikes and drone tactics, and because the Burma Army is pushing large numbers of troops into resistance-held areas, we have to keep fighting." Still, he noted a small upside to the season: "In the rainy season, we have some advantage in avoiding airstrikes and drones. When it's hot, rainy, and misty, drones can't fly easily. If it's raining, they can't fly over the resistance."

At this point in the conflict, nearly every story circles back to drones. Twenty-five-year-old Yea Kyaw, a soldier in the Karenni Nationalities Defense Forces, only mentioned the rain briefly before shifting focus. Reflecting on his years of fighting, he said, "It's more difficult in the rainy season, because when you go to the frontline, there's a lot of mud and mosquitoes."

But his expression changed when he spoke about drones. "Now, the military is more powerful with drones, so when it's not raining, we're really scared. It's worse than before because of better technology. They can target exactly. When the drone is coming, you stay in the bunker, but sometimes the bunker fills with water. It's uncomfortable."

Antonio Graceffo is an economist and China expert with years of experience reporting the conflict in Burma.





Flooding in Bago.
Photo: AFP

OVER 18,000 PEOPLE DISPLACED BY FLOODS ACROSS BAGO REGION, MON AND KAREN STATES

Widespread flooding triggered by days of heavy rainfall has displaced more than 18,000 people in Mon State, Karen State, and Bago Region, with rivers and creeks spilling over into homes and villages, according to local residents and social assistance groups.

Rising water levels from major waterways, including the Bilin River and Donthami Creek in Mon State, the Thanlwin and Thaungyin Rivers in Karen State, and the Sittaung River in Bago Region, have inundated large parts of Bilin, Thaton, Hpa-an, Hlaing Bwe, Kawkareik, Kya-In Seik Gyi, Taungoo, Oakdwin, Htantapin, Madauk, and Shwe Kyin townships.

In Bilin Township alone, nearly 6,000 people have been affected, with eight temporary relief camps currently operating.

"Water levels have dropped by about two inches compared to yesterday. It hasn't rained since morning, and there's been some sunshine," said an official from the Bilin Township Social Assistance Association.

Displacement due to flooding spans several regions: more than 5,000 in Hpa-an, over 4,000 in Hlaing Bwe, more than 2,000 in Taungoo, over 1,000 in villages near Myaing Kalay in Hpa-an Township, and over 200 in Thaton. In total, Mizzima estimates that at least 18,000 people have been impacted.

"If the water level in the Thaungyin River drops, it will flow into the Thanlwin River, causing levels to rise again on this side. Right now, the water is still rising. Over 700 people have already left this morning, and by evening, that number will exceed 1,000," said a source in Myaing Kalay.

Although rainfall has stopped in most affected areas including Taungoo, Bilin, Hpa-an, and Myawaddy, residents remain on high alert as floodwaters linger.

"There are 10 relief camps in Taungoo and three in eastern Oakdwin. Over 2,000 people are currently affected in Taungoo, with more than 100 in Oakdwin. We're uncertain about other towns. Although water levels remain above the danger mark, they are beginning to fall. What we urgently need now is food and water," said Ko Kyaw Thura from the Save The Tree Rescue Team.

The floods have already proven deadly. Between 27 and 30 July, flash floods and landslides in Taungoo District have claimed three lives. In Bilin, a person died after being struck by a falling tree. The Do Thaung Bridge on the Taungoo-Htantapin road was also destroyed, and several homes were damaged.

Motorists have been warned to exercise caution on flooded stretches of the Hpa-an-Thaton road, the Yangon-Mawlamyine highway between Thaton and Bilin, and the Taungoo-Htantapin road.

According to a 7:30 am update on 30 July from the junta' Meteorology and Hydrology Department, water levels in the Bilin River are expected to recede below the danger mark within 24 hours. However, flood alerts remain in place for the Thanlwin, Sittaung, and Thaungyin Rivers in Hpa-an, Taungoo, Madauk, and Myawaddy townships.

Mizzima continues to verify reports from other townships as the situation develops.



TENS OF THOUSANDS FACE DRINKING WATER CRISIS IN BAGO REGION FLOOD DISASTER

Severe flooding in Myanmar's Bago Region has left tens of thousands of people in urgent need of clean drinking water and humanitarian aid, as floodwaters continue to rise and contaminate water sources across multiple townships.

Triggered by heavy rainfall from a tropical cyclone, the Sittaung River has been steadily rising since 19 July, inundating more than 60 low-lying neighbourhoods and villages including Taungoo, Oktwin, Htantabin, Shwekyin, Nyaunglaypin, and Madauk Townships.

Locals report that most wells have been submerged or polluted by floodwater, leaving communities with little to no access to safe drinking water. Many are now relying on stored rainwater for survival.

"The wells are flooded. In the town, we can't even buy purified drinking water anymore, and prices have gone up. Roads are under water, cutting off the supply of goods. The situation is worse in the villages. Places like Oktwin, Htantabin, Madauk, and Shwekyin have completely run out of drinking water," said a local resident.

Communication lines have also been disrupted in many flood-hit areas, with phone and internet services down, hampering coordination efforts and delaying relief operations.

According to a local social welfare group in Taungoo, nearly 50,000 people have been affected

in that township alone, where nine relief camps have been set up.

"People are still arriving at the camps. The water hasn't risen today, but it hasn't receded either. We're helping families who are trying to relocate," an official said.

In Madauk Township, nearly 90 percent of the area remains submerged after more than a week of continuous flooding.

Local sources say that the junta has imposed restrictions on independent relief teams, further limiting access to emergency aid.

"Relief work is only visible in Taungoo. In other areas, no official teams are present. Local authorities and civilians aren't offering help either. There are military checkpoints between towns. People are desperate," said a resident of Oktwin.

With no official aid reaching many villages, flood victims have sought shelter with relatives on higher ground or are surviving in makeshift tents. In Madauk's Nyaunpinpauk village alone, over 10,000 people have reportedly been affected.

"Last year's flooding was severe, but there was aid. This year, it's worse, and no camps have been opened," said a local from Madauk.

The floods have also devastated livelihoods across the region, with many residents cut off from work, food supplies, and essential services. Aid workers warn that thousands now depend entirely on humanitarian assistance to survive.

According to the junta's Department of Meteorology and Hydrology, the Sittaung River remains above danger levels in Taungoo and Madauk and is likely to stay high for at least another day. The Shwekyin River is also expected to remain above its danger level, though it may drop slightly.

Residents anticipate continued flooding in the Sittaung River basin until early August. While seasonal flooding is common in the Bago Region, this marks the second consecutive year of extreme inundation, with increasing calls for long-term disaster preparedness and immediate emergency relief.



MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKES KILL 24 IN SINGU TOWNSHIP, INCLUDING PRISONERS AND CIVILIANS

Junta forces launched airstrikes on 29 July in areas controlled by revolutionary forces in Singu Township, Mandalay Region, targeting Letpanhla Police Station and Shwepantaw village.

The attacks killed 24 people and injured more than 30 others, according to the Mandalay People's Defence Force (MDY-PDF).

The MDY-PDF reported that the airstrike on Letpanhla Police Station occurred in the evening and killed 22 people – 21 men and one woman – who were either prisoners or detainees under investigation. Over 30 others were wounded in the attack.

On the same day, a separate airstrike hit Shwepantaw village, killing one local man and one woman, the group added.

Earlier on 29 June, a junta jet also bombed Pyi Soe Aung Ward in Letpanhla village, killing a 40-year-old woman, according to local sources.

Revolutionary groups have urged local communities to remain vigilant and to construct bomb shelters at homes, schools, and healthcare facilities in anticipation of further airstrikes.



CIVILIAN KILLED BY MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKES IN KUTKAI, MOGOK, AND MONGLON

Myanmar junta forces carried out airstrikes on Kutkai Township in northern Shan State on 30 July, killing at least six civilians including a child and injuring seven others, according to the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA).

At around 1 am, a junta aircraft dropped two 250-pound bombs on the Yar Zu Thit hotel in Kutkai's No. 2 Ward. The victims included one child, one woman, and four men, while the injured comprised three women and four men, the TNLA said.

On the previous day, 29 July, the junta also conducted airstrikes on TNLA-controlled areas in Mogok and Monglon townships.

In Mogok, 14 homes were damaged and three civilians, two men and one woman were killed. Another 18 people were injured, including 11 men and seven women, according to the TNLA.

In Monglon's Khan Ni ward, a 250-pound bomb dropped by junta forces killed a man and damaged seven civilian homes.

The TNLA reported that in July alone, the junta carried out 28 airstrikes across the townships of Kyaukme, Mongngawt, Naungcho (Nawngkhio), Hsipaw, and Mogok. These strikes killed at least 15 people – two children and 13 men – and injured 48 others, including four children, 35 men, and nine women. A total of 76 homes, two schools, and two monasteries were damaged.

The TNLA has urged residents in affected areas to remain on high alert and to follow air defense precautions to reduce harm and protect lives.



MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKES HIT TNLA-CONTROLLED MOGOK TOWN, CAUSING CIVILIAN CASUALTIES

Myanmar's military junta launched airstrikes on Mogok town in Mandalay Region on 29 July, resulting in civilian casualties and property damage, according to local sources. The town is under the control of the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA).

The airstrikes occurred around 10:30 am, targeting residential areas near Min Bridge in the eastern part of Mogok and in the vicinity of Sakhanta Market.

Houses were damaged, and several people were injured, though the exact number of casualties remains unconfirmed.

"They keep bombing continuously, so we have to stay alert. It's raining heavily and the sky is dark, so we couldn't even hear the planes. There are casualties, but we don't know the exact numbers yet. It seems like a lot of people were injured," a Mogok resident told Mizzima.

This follows an earlier airstrike on 26 July, when junta forces bombed the Shwe Lipyar Hotel in Mogok, killing one civilian and injuring three others, according to a statement by the TNLA.

On 9 July, two children were killed and eight others

injured when a military aircraft dropped bombs on Pan Ma Hteik village in the same township.

Tensions escalated after negotiations between the TNLA and the junta collapsed during peace talks held on 28 and 29 April in Kunming, China. The talks, facilitated by China's Special Representative for Asian Affairs, Mr. Deng Xijun, reportedly ended without agreement after the junta demanded TNLA forces withdraw from key towns – including Naungcho, Kyaukme, Thibaw, Moemate, and Mogok – and relocate to Namsan and Mantong. The TNLA rejected the demand, leading to a breakdown in negotiations.

Following the failed talks, the junta intensified military pressure on TNLA-held areas through airstrikes and ground operations, despite the ongoing rainy season.

Residents of Mogok now live in constant fear, as the threat of further air raids looms. The TNLA has urged the public to remain alert and follow air defence protocols.

TNLA spokesperson Lway Yay Oo told Mizzima that further negotiations between the TNLA and the junta are expected to take place in August.



THREE-DAY OPERATION SHARK STRIKES JUNTA CONVOY ALONG CHINDWIN RIVER

A coordinated three-day offensive codenamed "Shark," targeting a military convoy navigating the Chindwin River, has left one warship and a motorboat ablaze and caused casualties among junta troops, according to a 31 July statement from Mawlaik District Battalion 3.

The operation, conducted on 25, 26, and 28 July, struck junta vessels as they passed through Mawlaik and Paungbyin townships in Sagaing Region. The attacks were part of a joint effort by local resistance forces to halt the convoy's advance toward Khanti Township in northern Sagaing Region.

"We are satisfied with the success of the attack, but stronger weapons are needed to achieve a decisive victory," said an official involved in Operation Shark.

At least five junta soldiers were reported killed and eight others wounded, though resistance forces warned that the actual number of casualties could be higher.

According to the statement, junta troops responded with 122mm artillery, 5.8mm machine guns, other heavy weapons, and air support, including jet fighters.

The military convoy, originally made up of 28 vessels departed from Monywa, entered Mawlaik District with 23 ships after sustaining damage. Despite their damage, the vessels were reportedly repaired mid-journey and continued northward.

"We fired on them, burned and damaged several vessels, but they managed to repair the damage. We haven't been able to fully destroy or sink any, and now they continue advancing with the same 23 ships," said the official.

The convoy was last reported arriving in Homalin Township on the evening of 31 July. It remains uncertain whether the military fleet will proceed further toward Khanti.

Operation Shark was jointly launched by the No. 1 Military Region Mawlaik District Command Office, Battalions 1, 2, 3, and 4, the Pa Ka Pha units of Mawlaik and Paungbyin townships, Khanti District Artillery Group, Tamu District Artillery Group, and Katha District Battalion 2 Artillery Group.



NAGA STUDENTS CALL FOR ACTION TO PROTECT INDIGENOUS RIGHTS AND HALT THE INDO-MYANMAR BORDER FENCE

On 29 July, the All Naga Students' Association, Manipur (ANSAM) urged the international community to stop the Indo-Myanmar border fence construction. ANSAM appealed to the UN to reinstate the Freedom of Movement Regime, crucial for the Naga people's cross-border ties.

The statement is as follows.

UNPO stands firmly alongside ANSAM's appeal, continuing its close collaboration with Naga grassroots and civil society organizations and continues to work closely with Naga civil society organizations to defend the Naga people's rights and promote peaceful and inclusive dialogue.

The All Naga Students' Association, Manipur (ANSAM) has issued an urgent appeal to the United Nations and UNPO to intervene in halting the ongoing

construction of the border fence along the Indo-Myanmar border. The construction, initiated by the Government of India, has led to the unilateral scrapping of the Freedom of Movement Regime (FMR), which was a critical mechanism that had enabled the cross-border Naga population to maintain generational social, cultural, and economic ties.

The dismantling of the FMR and the erection of the border fence are having devastating effects on the Naga communities straddling both sides of the international boundary. Once able to move freely to attend school, seek medical treatment, trade goods, and visit relatives, Nagas are now confronted with barbed wire and restricted mobility, an outcome that ANSAM and other Naga organizations strongly condemn. The fence not only undermines Indigenous rights but also violates international human rights norms, including Article 36 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which guarantees the

right of Indigenous peoples divided by international borders to maintain and develop cross-border relations for cultural, social, economic, and spiritual purposes.

In its statement, ANSAM reminds the international community that the Indo-Myanmar border was arbitrarily drawn during the colonial era, splitting the Naga homeland without the free, prior, and informed consent of the affected communities. For generations, Naga peoples on both sides of the border have maintained peaceful relations rooted in shared history, culture, and identity. The current fencing project threatens to erase these ties and further entrench the historical injustice faced by the Naga people.

According to recent reporting by the Associated Press, the Government of India has intensified its border fencing project in response to concerns over national security, drug trafficking, and instability in Myanmar. However, for Indigenous communities like the Nagas, this securitization approach comes at a severe cost. The scrapping of the FMR, which had existed for over five decades, not only disrupts traditional cross-border trade but also jeopardizes access to essential services such as education and healthcare for borderland communities.

In its Memorandum, ANSAM calls for the reinstatement of the Freedom of Movement Regime and urges the Government of India to initiate peaceful and inclusive dialogue with Naga representatives. Such dialogue must be built upon the 2015 Framework Agreement, which aimed to address the Indo-Naga conflict and to recognize the unique history and aspirations of the Naga people. Moreover, ANSAM urges the Government of India to consult meaningfully with Indigenous communities living along the border to explore alternative, rights-respecting approaches to border management that address security concerns without violating Indigenous rights or severing community ties.

UNPO, of which the Naga people have been members since 1993, has worked in close partnership with Naga civil society to raise international awareness of their rights and political aspirations. In April 2025,

UNPO delivered a statement at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), denouncing the construction of the Indo-Myanmar border fence and the revocation of the FMR as violations of Indigenous rights. More recently, and building on recent calls made by Naga organizations such as ANSAM, UNPO delivered a joint statement in collaboration with the Global Naga Forum during the 18th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) to raise concerns about the Naga people's right to traditional economies and the ongoing human rights violations faced by the community across Myanmar and the Indian occupied states of Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur.

UNPO supports the efforts of ANSAM as a key youth organization representing Naga voices, and echoes their call for the Government of India to engage in meaningful and peaceful dialogue with Indigenous communities and to comply with its obligations under international law.

UNPO stands alongside ANSAM and Naga organizations in calling on the international community to uphold the rights of the Indigenous Naga peoples, and encourages the United Nations, EMRIP, and UNPFII to join these collaborative efforts and stand with the Naga people.

The dismantling of the Freedom of Movement Regime and the construction of the border fence not only contravene international standards but threaten to irreparably damage the cultural, economic, and social fabric of Naga life. It is imperative that Indigenous voices are heard, respected, and meaningfully included in decisions that affect their future.

MYANMAR REFUGEES IN MIZORAM SUPPORT DEPORTATION OF CRIMINAL OFFENDERS

Myanmar refugees in Mizoram.
Photo: Supplied

Myanmar refugees sheltering in India's Mizoram State have expressed support for new regulations introduced by the influential Mizoram Youth Association, which include the deportation of any refugees found guilty of crimes such as drug trafficking.

According to a report aired by All India Radio (Aizawl) on 27 July, the association has issued a directive requiring Myanmar nationals in the state to abide by local laws. Among the key points is the provision that individuals involved in drug-related offenses will be arrested, imprisoned, and subsequently sent back to Myanmar.

"We are guests here, so we must respect their rules. If we can't, then we shouldn't be here," said a male refugee, who emphasized that those abiding by the law have nothing to fear. He added that the drug-related activities of a few individuals have damaged the reputation of the broader refugee community.

Another refugee said repeat drug offenders often return to trafficking shortly after being released.

"They just go back to it again and again. Deporting them might be the only way to stop this cycle," another refugee said.

The Mizoram Youth Association has also prohibited the establishment of new religious organizations and ethnic-based groups by refugees. It further requires them to register with local youth branches and submit their identification cards. Refugees must also seek permission before relocating to different areas.

Refugees are additionally banned from engaging in businesses that require government permits and are not allowed to own houses or land. A female refugee expressed understanding of these rules and said they are necessary to maintain harmony with the host communities.

There are growing concerns among refugees over negative perceptions caused by the rising flow of illicit drugs from Myanmar. Mizoram, where alcohol sales are officially prohibited, has ramped up its anti-drug efforts.

In the border district of Champhai, authorities seized nearly 17 kilograms of heroin and more than 90 kilograms of methamphetamine pills between 1 July and 25 July, according to official anti-narcotics data.

Since the 2021 military coup in Myanmar, more than 30,000 people from Myanmar have taken refuge in Mizoram, according to figures released by the state government.



Rescued scam centre workers waiting to be sent home. Photo: AFP

UN SOUNDS ALARM ON SOUTHEAST ASIA SCAM CENTRE SURGE

Human trafficking for forced criminal activity is growing at an alarming rate, with hundreds of thousands of people trapped in online scamming centres across Southeast Asia, the United Nations said Wednesday.

Too often, instead of getting help, victims are arrested for crimes they were forced to commit, the head of the UN's migration agency said on World Day Against Trafficking in Persons.

"Trafficking is a human rights crisis, but it's more than that. It's a massive global business that fuels corruption, spreads fear, and preys on the most vulnerable," Amy Pope said.

Her International Organization for Migration agency has witnessed trafficking for forced crime expand with "alarming" speed, she said.

"Right now, across Southeast Asia, hundreds of thousands of people are stuck in online scamming compounds," the IOM chief said.

"These operations bring in an estimated \$40 billion a year, and many of those trapped are migrants, young jobseekers, children, and people with disabilities."

She said the Geneva-based IOM had helped nearly 3,000 victims rebuild their lives since 2022.

The agency has helped bring people home from the Philippines and Vietnam and supported victims in Thailand, Myanmar, and beyond, Pope said.

But she warned that far more remained stranded.

"To make matters worse, instead of getting help, they're often arrested, prosecuted, and punished. Let me be clear: no-one should be jailed for something they were forced to do," she said.

She urged governments and civil society to step up and get national laws changed so that trafficking survivors could be protected rather than punished -- and urged authorities to go after the traffickers rather than those they exploit.

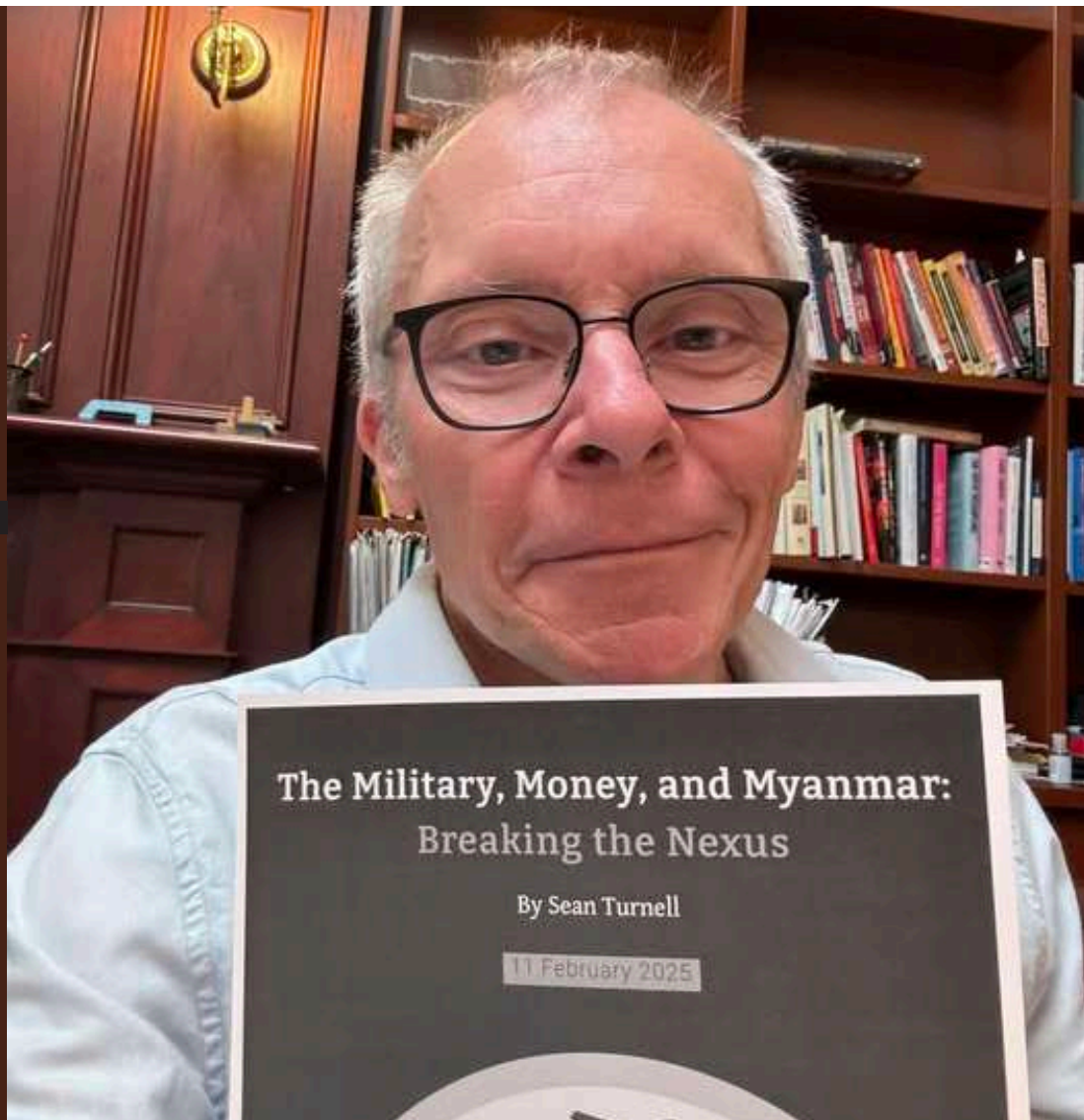
Myanmar's many-sided civil war -- sparked by a 2021 coup -- has enabled the rapid growth of lucrative internet fraud factories established in its loosely governed borderlands.

Cyberscam operations lure foreign workers with promises of high-paying jobs but hold them hostage and force them to commit online fraud. Many of the trafficking victims are Chinese men.

Many people have said they were trafficked into often heavily fortified scam compounds to target victims with romance or business scams on social media, luring them into making untraceable cryptocurrency payments.

AFP

Sean Turnell



FLATTERY WILL GET YOU EVERYWHERE

INSIGHT MYANMAR

“I remain confident in the longer term, completely, actually, that this regime is losing,” Sean Turnell, the Australian economist and former advisor to Myanmar’s civilian government, tells the Insight Myanmar Podcast.

This is Turnell’s fourth time on the podcast. In his first appearance, he unpacked the long shadow of cronyism, currency collapse, and rent-seeking that has stunted national growth and fueled the coup; the second time, he recounted the experiences behind his arrest, imprisonment, and release, interwoven with reflections on Aung San Suu Kyi, and economic reform; most recently, he explored post-coup economic

innovation, revolutionary funding mechanisms, and the tug-of-war over currency control between the military regime and the resistance.

Today, Turnell discusses the recent U.S. decision to lift sanctions on several suspected cronies connected to the Myanmar junta; this episode launches an emergency series from Insight Myanmar that will address this recent turn of events and their implications. Despite the widespread concern, controversy and confusion surrounding the move, Turnell offers a nuanced, cautiously optimistic perspective grounded in his deep understanding of Myanmar’s economy, U.S. sanctions policy, and the bureaucratic realities of

Washington.

Turnell begins by clarifying the scope of the recent announcement. Contrary to the more pessimistic interpretations, he believes that the move does not represent a broad policy shift. “This is very, very targeted to a few individuals and a few enterprises,” he says, emphasizing that it does not signal, at least for now, that the military itself or its main financial organs are being rehabilitated. Instead, he views it as a narrow administrative adjustment—albeit one that could become counterproductive if it emboldens the junta or encourages additional lobbying by its cronies.

He also strongly rejects a narrative around this move that has quickly gained traction: the claim that the sanctions were lifted because Min Aung Hlaing wrote a flattering letter to President Trump. The timing, in Turnell’s opinion, was coincidental; he explains that the real drivers of this move were expensive, highly specialized lobbying campaigns in Washington. Lobbying efforts, he says, are less about outright bribery than about hiring skilled advocates who argue one’s case within the U.S. Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). He explains that lobbying operates more like an administrative appeal than a political payoff, and notes that this recent lobbying success was in fact an anomaly, because most such efforts fail. Indeed, to Turnell, its unlikely success actually underscores just how unlikely any broader wave of sanctions relief truly is. “There’s usually a lot of evidence as to why somebody should be on the [sanctions] list,” he says, adding that such evidence is not easily overturned. That said, he does admit that this particular situation raises troubling questions about transparency and influence.

To sketch out the background context of U.S. sanctions, Turnell describes how they are created, managed, and lifted. OFAC handles the technical work of sanctioning individuals and entities. While executive orders and congressional legislation set the legal framework, the actual decisions are administrative, with

little public or judicial oversight. “You could lift an awful lot of sanctions just simply through executive orders,” he cautions. This procedural vulnerability means that, under a Trump presidency, political pressure could in theory be applied to soften sanctions—though Turnell believes that experienced career officials and congressional allies of Myanmar’s democracy movement would resist any sweeping changes.

Providing further background context, Turnell notes that historically, Myanmar’s elites have often tried to evade restrictions by shifting assets or renaming entities, in addition to the significant sums they spend on lobbying for their removal. These efforts in themselves suggest to Turnell that past sanctions must have certainly been painful. The effectiveness of sanctions has not only been financial but psychological as well, constraining the regime’s access to global financial systems and limiting its ability to fund arms purchases.

This relates to the shadowy world of Myanmar’s military-linked conglomerates, in particular MEC (Myanmar Economic Corporation Limited) and MEHL (Myanma Economic Holdings Public Company Limited). While these entities remain sanctioned for now, Turnell explains that their complex structures—riddled with subsidiaries and shell companies—require constant vigilance. That said, he believes that the most dangerous channels of military financing remain under tight U.S. restriction.

Throughout the conversation, Turnell reiterates that this new development should not be read as a wider rollback or even the complete end of sanctions on the Myanmar military. He describes the current sanctions landscape as powerful and largely effective, particularly the U.S. measures against state-owned banks like the Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank and the Myanmar Investment and Commercial Bank. These actions, he says, have choked off the junta’s capacity to conduct foreign exchange transactions, crippling its ability to pay for arms and sustain its war machine.

Moreover, Turnell points to pending congressional initiatives that would expand the scope of sanctions enforcement to target additional financial institutions, including the Myanmar Economic Bank and possibly even the central bank itself—and he hopes for stricter sanctions on jet fuel supplies as well. The key challenge, he warns, is not political will but administrative capacity. He points to big reductions in staff by the present administration, noting that the State Department, USAID, and other agencies have been hollowed out, which could slow the pace of future sanctions actions and increase the risk of political interference from above.

Regarding fears about U.S. tariffs on Myanmar, he views them as largely symbolic. “The trade between Myanmar and the US is infinitesimal,” he says. Far more damaging to Myanmar’s economy are the junta’s own self-destructive policies, especially its obsessive control over foreign exchange. “Min Aung Hlaing is already the biggest ‘sanctioner’ on Myanmar,” Turnell argues, noting how the junta chief has created an environment in which exporters face crippling restrictions that disincentivize trade altogether.

Throughout the interview, Turnell returns to a key distinction: the difference between the symbolic and practical effects of last week’s announcement. Symbolically, he concedes, it has been damaging; they have generated confusion, emboldened the regime’s cronies, and created an opening for narratives about U.S. retreat. But practically, it has not weakened the core of the sanctions regime or the financial choke points that matter most. His bottom line is clear: we should be alert, but not alarmed.

Taking a broader view, Turnell sees several dangers on the horizon, particularly the junta’s planned sham election. However meaningless the results would be, he fears it could give some governments and opportunistic investors a “fig leaf” to normalize relations with the regime. Preventing that, he insists, will require relentless advocacy from pro-democracy actors.

“We’ve just got to be constantly out there beating that drum,” he urges, warning that global attention spans are short and Myanmar risks being “forgotten” amid other crises in Ukraine, the Middle East, and U.S. domestic politics.

Looking forward, Turnell emphasizes that the pro-democracy movement must not only defend existing sanctions but also push for new ones—while simultaneously fighting attempts by other countries to normalize relations with the junta after its staged election. He believes that advocacy remains an exhausting but essential task, and given the plethora of issues that compete for attention, persistence is the only way to prevent the regime’s international backers from exploiting global indifference.

In sum, Turnell says that while he does not dismiss the dangers of sanctions erosion because of this recent development, or the challenge of present geopolitical environment, he views the fundamentals of U.S. policy as remaining intact. For him, the key challenge is not a dramatic pro-junta shift in Washington, but the slow grind of political fatigue and bureaucratic attrition. He urges listeners to see the recent sanctions relief not as a turning point, but as a reminder of the need for constant, informed pressure on policymakers—both in the U.S. and around the world. He says simply, “We’ve just got to keep going!”

CATCH THE PODCAST

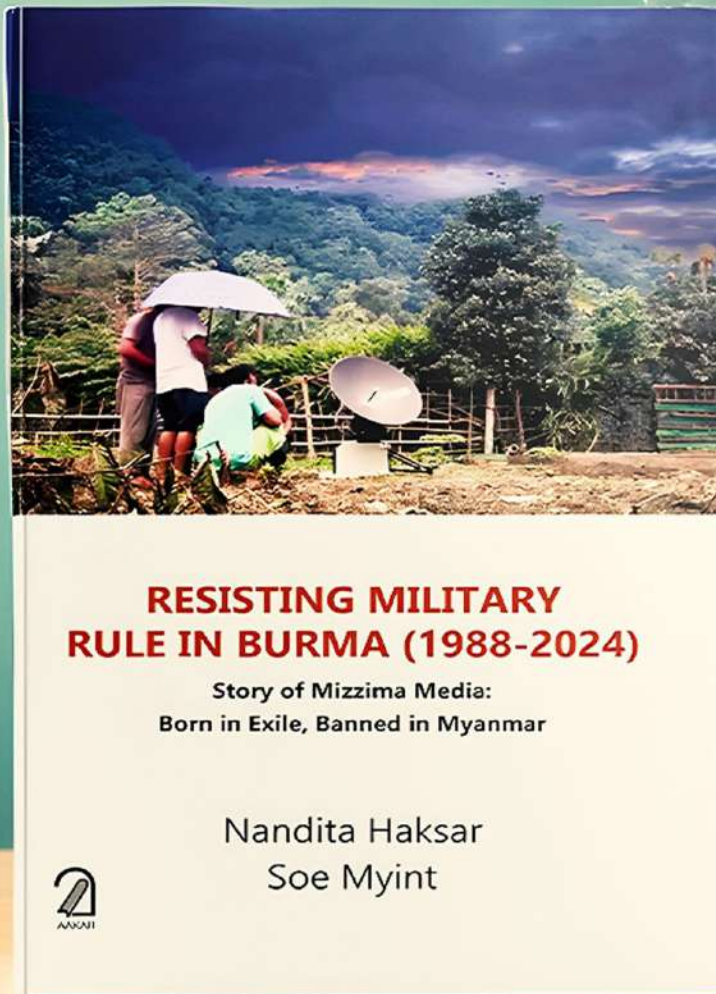
Listen to the full Insight Myanmar Podcast here:

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2025/7/31/episode-371-flattery-will-get-you-everywhere>

RESISTING MILITARY RULE IN BURMA (1988-2024)

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

by Nandita Haksar and Soe Myint



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Yarlung Zangpo Grand Canyon in Tibet. Photo: AFP

CHINA BEGINS BUILDING MEGA- DAM IN TIBET

The hydropower dam, which China says will be the world's largest, has raised concerns from neighboring countries and environmentalists.

China has started to build a massive dam on Tibet's longest river, a move approved by the central government in December despite concerns by India, Bangladesh and Tibetan rights groups about its impacts on residents and the environment.

The structure is expected to cost more than 1 trillion yuan (US\$137 billion). Once completed, it would be the world's largest hydropower dam, generating 300 billion kilowatt-hours of power annually, about three times the power of China's Three Gorges Dam, Xinhua, a state-run news agency, reported last year. Operations are expected to begin sometime in the 2030s.

Premier Li Qiang attended a commencement ceremony with other officials in Nyingchi in southeastern Tibet over the weekend.

Xinhua reported that the electricity generated "will be primarily transmitted to other regions for consumption, while also meeting local power needs in Tibet."

The river is known as Yarlung Tsangpo in Tibet, Brahmaputra in India, and Jamuna in Bangladesh. It flows through all three areas from its origin in the glaciers of western Tibet.

Climate activist and researcher Manshi Asher told RFA in December that there is "substantial evidence"

of negative impacts from hydropower projects in the Himalayas.

"This project will undoubtedly alter the environmental flows of the river," Asher said. "The larger the dam, the greater the impact on the river flows."

Neeraj Singh Manhas, a special adviser on South Asia at Parley Policy Initiative in South Korea, said in December that the dam could affect agriculture, hydropower generation and drinking water availability in India.

"Seasonal changes in water discharge could exacerbate floods or intensify droughts downstream, undermining livelihoods and ecosystems," Manhas said.

Over the weekend, the Chinese premier said that special emphasis "must be placed on ecological conservation to prevent environmental damage," according to Xinhua.

China has built an estimated 22,000 large dams to help fuel decades of rapid industrialization and economic growth — about 40% of the world's total.

Reporting: Radio Free Asia, AFP, Reuters



MORE THAN WORDS

"We need to make sure that we build not just a movement, but a resilient community that can stand against oppression for generations to come."

These are the words of Maw Nwei, who recently launched the Adhikara podcast. He joins the conversation today along with Morgen, who manages the podcast's technical and media aspects. Adhikara represents a significant new platform in Burmese media. It aims to fill a unique and necessary space within Myanmar's socio-political landscape by navigating complex conversations, particularly around human rights, uses of language, and societal values. The name "Adhikara" is derived from a Sanskrit word meaning "right" or "authority," reflecting the podcast's central mission to empower listeners with knowledge about their rights.

Adhikara's origins are rooted in the 2021 military coup, which drastically changed both the country's socio-political climate, and along with it, Maw Nwei's own approach to activism. Prior to the military takeover, he had led over 100 human rights training sessions across the country, but in the coup's aftermath, this kind of training became impossible. Therefore, he launched the podcast, recognizing its effectiveness in facilitating profound discussions on human rights with experts; free from the logistical constraints of in-person training, he was still able to reach and inform an interested audience.

Maw Nwei explains why he landed on podcasting as an ideal solution for navigating Myanmar's restrictive environment. First, traditional media and online spaces for sharing human rights content have been significantly restricted since the coup, and podcasts provide an alternative platform where discussions

on sensitive topics can still take place. For example, one of Morgen's upcoming projects, 'First February 2021,' aims to document personal stories from the day of the coup, adding both emotional depth and historical context to the podcast. Maw Nwei notes, as well, the limited number of online entertainment and information platforms that remain in the wake of the coup, which makes podcasts a more accessible form of media for the Burmese people. Podcasts are also relatively inexpensive to produce. Finally, they reach a broad audience, providing flexible listening options on their own time. This on-demand access is particularly valuable for those experiencing economic hardships and social restrictions under military rule; in other words, people with limited leisure time can listen even as they do other things.

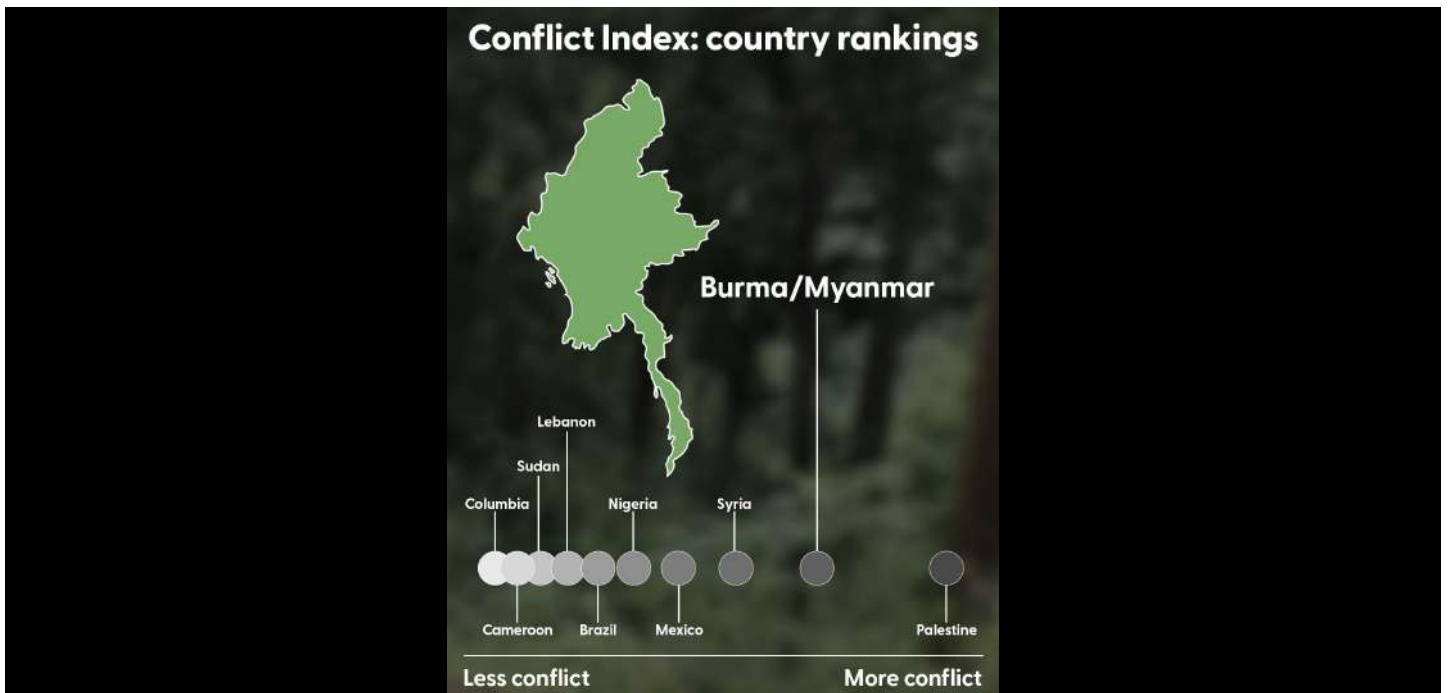
Morgen acknowledges the challenges of transitioning Burmese audiences from more familiar platforms like Facebook to podcast apps like Spotify and Apple, and while the task remains difficult, they are committed to making their podcast accessible and building a consistent presence across various digital platforms.

The Adhikara podcast presents its content primarily in the Burmese language to ensure accessibility to as wide an in-country audience as possible. However, because of Myanmar's linguistic diversity, the team is also working on translating content into ethnic minority languages, to promote inclusivity and expand their reach. This approach influences how they frame the conversations as well. Maw Nwei describes coming from dual Buddhist and Christian background, and has always been open to the teachings of other religions. This further enriches his perspective as a host, enabling him to integrate diverse spiritual teachings within his human rights discourse, based on what will likely resonate with a diverse audience.

CATCH THE PODCAST

Read more or listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast here:

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2025/7/22/episode-368-more-than-words>



MYANMAR JUNTA SIGNALS “SECOND CHAPTER” AMID SPECULATION OVER END OF EMERGENCY RULE AND ELECTION PLAN

A high-level congratulatory meeting of the State Administration Council (SAC) was held on the morning of 30 July at Naypyidaw’s Zeyarthiri Beikman Hall, attended by SAC Chairman Min Aung Hlaing, sparking speculation over a possible shift in the junta’s political roadmap.

The meeting, also attended by the vice chairman, secretary, and members from states and regions, was reported by junta-controlled state media as a key gathering before the current six-month state of emergency expires on 31 July.

In his address, Min Aung Hlaing said the military assumed responsibility for the country’s turmoil in accordance with the 2008 Constitution to maintain peace and stability. He again cited unproven claims of widespread fraud in the 2020 general election and alleged corruption in the electoral process. He claimed the SAC had reviewed voter lists in detail and that investigations had uncovered voting fraud, although no independent evidence has been provided.

Reaffirming the junta’s long-stated goal of holding a general election, the senior general said preparations are ongoing for a poll to be held in December, which he described as a “vision that never changes.” He emphasized the need for accurate voter lists to ensure

a free and fair multiparty democratic election, calling the 2020 vote a “dark spot” in the country’s history.

“This period, during this over four-year period, we overcame difficulties in the first chapter, and now we need to enter the second chapter to build a better future,” he said, suggesting the SAC sees itself moving into a new phase of governance.

The military imposed a one-year state of emergency after seizing power in February 2021, extending it every six months as it violently suppressed mass protests and fought against ethnic armed groups and anti-junta forces across the country.

The conflict has grown to place Myanmar as one of the most violent in the world, according to data by ACLED released in December 2024. The intentional targeting of civilians through airstrikes, shelling, and arson attacks has left many deeply sceptical of a free and fair election or junta promises of a new chapter.

While some political analysts have speculated that the SAC may end the state of emergency to pave the way for elections and potentially hand over authority to a caretaker government, the junta’s latest rhetoric indicates it intends to maintain control while pushing ahead with its election narrative.



FEAR OF JUNTA'S CONSCRIPTION SPREADS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

In recent weeks, many young people in Myanmar are scared of being forced into the military. This fear is causing panic, with some fleeing their homes and others expressing their worries online.

On social media platforms like Facebook and TikTok, people are posting about missing friends and family members who might be hiding to avoid conscription. There are emotional pleas from family members asking for help in finding their loved ones, and some are sharing goodbye messages.

One touching TikTok video shows a mother crying while holding a photo of her son, saying, "My son

didn't even say goodbye." This video has gained a lot of attention, with many people sharing their own stories of loss.

Advocacy groups are advising young people to use secure messaging apps, stay away from busy public places, and not reveal their locations. There are also online campaigns using hashtags like #SayNoToForcedRecruitment to raise awareness and show resistance to conscription in Myanmar.

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.