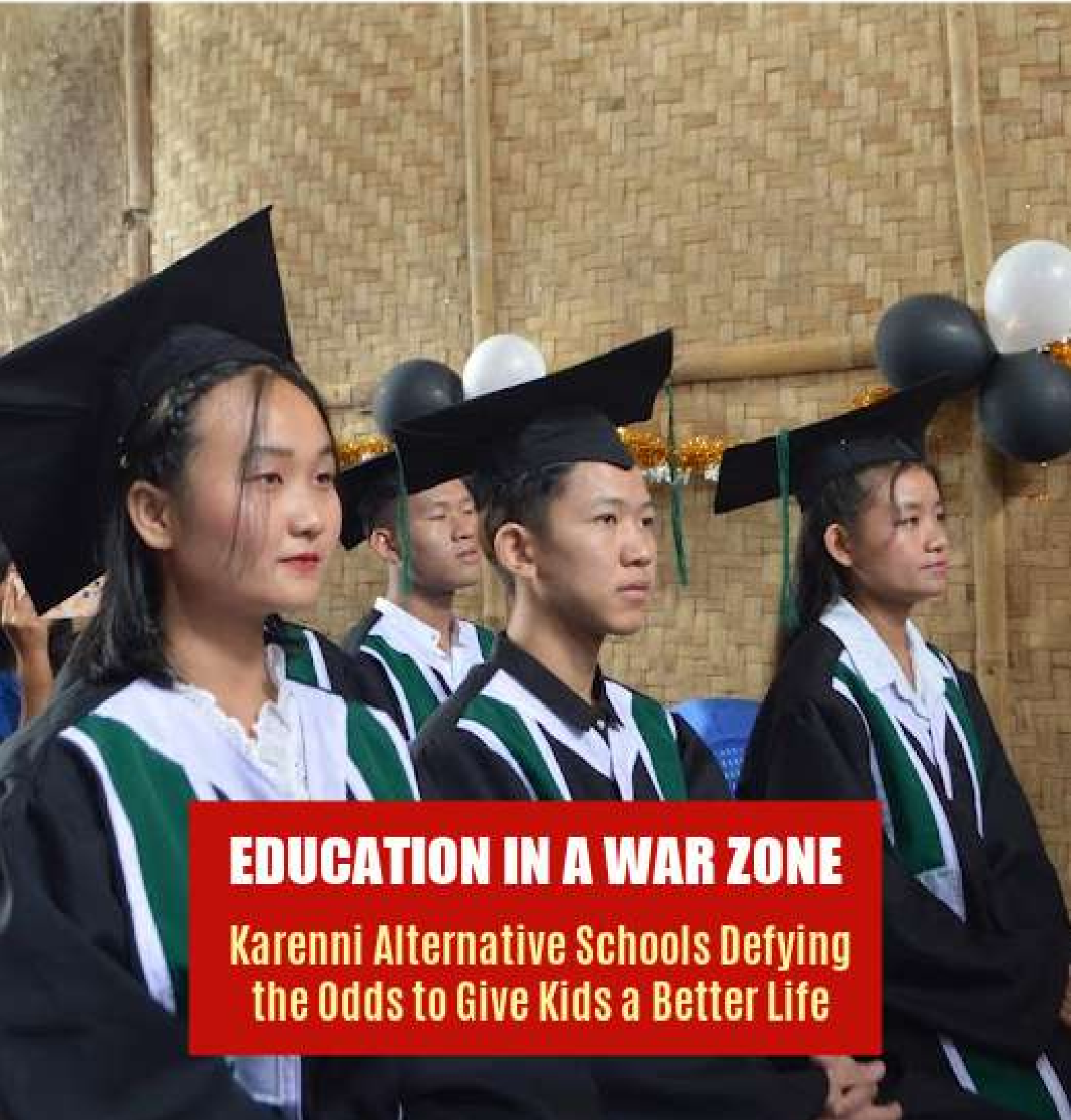


ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



EDUCATION IN A WAR ZONE

Karenni Alternative Schools Defying
the Odds to Give Kids a Better Life

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Analysis & Insight



DIGITAL MAGAZINE

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

REMINDER OF DECADES OF STRUGGLE

Last week, people took to the streets in Burma and abroad to remember the decades of struggle.

On August 8, 1988, a date forever etched into the national consciousness of Burma, hundreds of thousands of people - students, monks, workers, and ordinary citizens - poured into the streets in a historic protest demanding democracy and an end to decades of grim military rule. Known as the "8888 Uprising," this watershed moment marked the beginning of a long and painful struggle for freedom in a country plagued by authoritarianism, ethnic conflict, and repression.

The origins of Burma's military rule trace back to 1962, when General Ne Win seized power in a coup. Under his leadership, the country adopted a disastrous "Burmese Way to Socialism," resulting in economic collapse, isolation from the world, and widespread poverty. Political dissent was crushed, and civil liberties were abolished. Over time, frustration mounted among a population yearning for change, especially among students who became central to organizing and leading the 1988 demonstrations.

The 8888 Uprising was met with brutal force. Soldiers opened fire on unarmed protesters, killing thousands. Despite the bloodshed, the uprising ignited a powerful pro-democracy movement and led to the emergence of Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of independence hero General Aung San, as a national figure. Her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), won a landslide victory in the 1990 elections, but the military refused to relinquish power, placing her under house arrest for much of the next two decades.

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, military rule persisted with widespread human rights abuses, media censorship, and the imprisonment of political activists. Yet, the resistance never died. Despite enormous personal risks, dissidents

continued to push for democratic reforms. The international community imposed sanctions, and global awareness of Burma's plight grew, fueled by the efforts of the Burmese diaspora and exiled activists.

In 2011, the military initiated a carefully controlled transition to a quasi-civilian government. Political prisoners were released, censorship laws were relaxed, and in 2015, the NLD won a general election. For a brief period, hope flickered. But the military retained significant constitutional power, and in 2021, it staged another coup, overthrowing the elected government and detaining Suu Kyi once more - only this time she was put in prison, not house arrest.

This most recent coup reignited the resistance, with a new generation of activists taking up the fight, remembering the 8888 Uprising. Civil disobedience campaigns, massive street protests, and armed resistance groups have emerged to challenge the junta's grip. The military has responded with even greater brutality, including airstrikes on civilians, internet blackouts, and mass arrests.

Last week, on August 8, pro-democracy protestors rallied once again in Myanmar and in exile, reminding us the spirit of 1988 lives on. The battle for freedom in Burma is not merely a political struggle - it is a human one, rooted in the fundamental desire for dignity, self-determination, and justice. The resilience of the Burmese people in the face of repression offers a powerful testament to their unwavering commitment to democracy.

While the path to freedom remains fraught with obstacles, the legacy of the 8888 Uprising continues to inspire a nation and a movement determined not to be silenced.

EDITORIAL

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CONTENTS **mizzima** WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight

3 EDITORIAL

**6 Education in a War Zone -
Karenni Alternative Schools
Defying the Odds to Give Kids a
Better Life - Antonio Graceffo**

12 ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR
Analysis & Insight

16 CORE DEVELOPMENTS

Rising Displacement in Karenni
State Amid Shifting Territorial
Control, Ahead of Elections -
Antonio Graceffo

**19 India's Detainment of Myanmar
Citizens Raises Alarm Over Human
Rights Violations**

**22 Myanmar refugees in India call for
refugee rights as UNHCR meeting
gets cancelled**

**23 Malaysia to lead ASEAN
delegation to war-torn Myanmar**

**24 ISP study finds urgent help needed
to save children's education in
Myanmar**

**25 Human Rights Groups urge
SEANF to expel Myanmar junta's
commission**

**27 Over 750 civilians killed in junta
attacks during three months
following Myanmar earthquake:
report**

**28 Prisoners across Myanmar face
severe malnutrition as meat and
egg rations slashed**

**29 Concerns emerge over custodial
deaths in Myanmar since military
coup**



- 31** Heightened security and arrests in Yangon during Myanmar junta chairman's visit
- 32** Myanmar junta tightens grip ahead of planned December elections
- 33** NGOs urgently call for release of STUM leader and members
- 35** 8888 Uprising umbrella strike staged by revolutionary youth in Yangon
- 37** SHRF says 35 civilians killed by Myanmar junta air and artillery strikes across four Shan townships, Chinese pipeline threatened
- 38** Myanmar junta column burns village and abducts villagers in Wetlet, Sagaing Region
- 39** Myanmar junta arrests 40 civilians in Hakha after resistance ambush
- 40** TNLA warns talks with junta unlikely to succeed if demand to return towns persists
- 41** Myanmar military airstrike on Karenni school leaves children injured and missing
- 42** Civilian casualties mount in Hpakant and Kutkai as Myanmar junta targets non-combat zones
- 43** Myanmar junta targets DKBA adjutant general's residence in suicide drone strike
- 44** Myanmar military launches fresh airstrikes on Mindat after martial law declaration
- 45** 15,000 flee Pale Township as Myanmar junta launches offensive to retake police station
- 46** Flash floods kill 6 in Myanmar-China border town of Laiza

- 48** Floods submerge nearly 140 villages in Nyaunglebin District
- 49** Heavy rains trigger deadly landslides and floods in Thandaunggyi, Karen State
- 50** Applications for the UK Government's Chevening Scholarships now open to Myanmar students
- 51** **ASIAN & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**
India's Maritime Vision: From SAGAR to Indo-Pacific to MAHASAGAR
- 53** Higher US tariffs kick in for dozens of trading partners including Myanmar
- 55** Thousands protest in Tel Aviv against Israeli government move to expand Gaza war
- 57** **COLUMNS**
INSIGHT MYANMAR – More Than Words
- 58** **JUNTA WATCH**
- 59** **SOCIAL WATCH**

Cover photo of Karenni student graduates in Karenni State by Antonio Graceffo





EDUCATION IN A WAR ZONE - KARENNI ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS DEFYING THE ODDS TO GIVE KIDS A BETTER LIFE

ANTONIO GRACEFFO

About two hours outside the city, high atop a mountain, sits the Yaung Ni Oo Education Center, where 44 students, most from resistance-held areas of Karenni and neighbouring Shan State, are studying for the GED. The principal, 33-year-old James from Loikaw, explained that he chose the remote location for safety. With the Myanmar junta deliberately targeting schools, he felt the mountain offered some protection.

"I cannot guarantee safety," James admitted. "But it's better than other places. The mountains have tree cover."

The cool, rainy weather also helps, providing natural cloud cover that complicates detection by Myanmar junta drones and aircraft. "Here, artillery and mortars are less common," he said. "Very rare. But airstrikes, those can still happen."

It's telling that a conversation about education begins with a discussion on how to avoid airstrikes. But

that's the reality of life in Karenni State. The state is so small, and fighting so widespread across major towns, that explosions can be heard daily, almost no matter where you are.

Despite being remote and built out of necessity because of the war, the campus was quite beautiful. It consisted of several buildings, boys' and girls' dormitories, a kitchen and cafeteria, a classroom building, and a yard for sports. The school also had Starlink Wi-Fi, available for a few hours each day during class time so that teachers and students could access online learning materials.

The program length varies depending on the student's English level when they arrive. James explained, "Some students, their English level is, let's say, they are not ready to take the GED yet. So, we train English first. About six months they train in English and other introductory subjects like social studies and science." Most students complete the full GED program in about two years.



Students singing at the graduation ceremony.
Photo: Antonio Graceffo

"After that, we help the students get scholarships and apply to university, especially abroad, in Thailand," he said. Chiang Mai University and other Thai universities accept the GED for admission.

Students were kept busy with classes five days a week until 4 p.m., followed by a bit of free time and then chore time, during which they gathered firewood, helped in the kitchen preparing their own meals, or worked in the garden where they grew vegetables. After that, they had mandatory night study for two hours.

"For the students, we mainly target the families of revolutionaries, the sons and daughters of revolutionary people," James said. "And also, young people who really, really need, and who really want to go on to higher education."

Term breaks were short, with only five days between sessions, so only students from nearby areas could return home. For some students, if their families lived in government-controlled areas, or if returning home required crossing junta territory or active battle-

fronts, it was simply too unsafe. As a result, they would remain at the school for the entire length of their studies without going home.

James explained why so many students can't finish their high school education in their home communities: "Because here in our state, most of the areas are not safe because of the war. The military generally targets schools. So most young people cannot finish high school in a state school."

And so, across Karenni and all over Burma, similar alternative education schools are popping up.

Another such alternative school is New Horizon International, which offers students a full-time diploma program with classes in English, Chinese, basic computer skills, community development, social studies, research, and Karenni history. The school is located about two or three hours outside of town, up in the hills, but not on a mountaintop like Yaung Ni Oo Education Center.



Students await graduation.
Photo: Antonio Graceffo

Stella, a former tour guide with extremely fluent English who now serves as the school director, was distressed by how meager the school's facilities were. "We have one small solar panel for lights, but it keeps falling down in the wind," she said. "We don't have windows, so it's dark inside."

Most of the buildings were bamboo-framed structures covered with plastic tarps, all with earthen floors. Touring the girls' dormitory, Stella explained, "It gets cold with just a thin piece of plastic. And the roof leaks." Between the dormitory and the classroom building was the school's reservoir, made of a bamboo frame and lined with a plastic tarp, which frequently sprang holes. "Then we have to change it," said Stella.

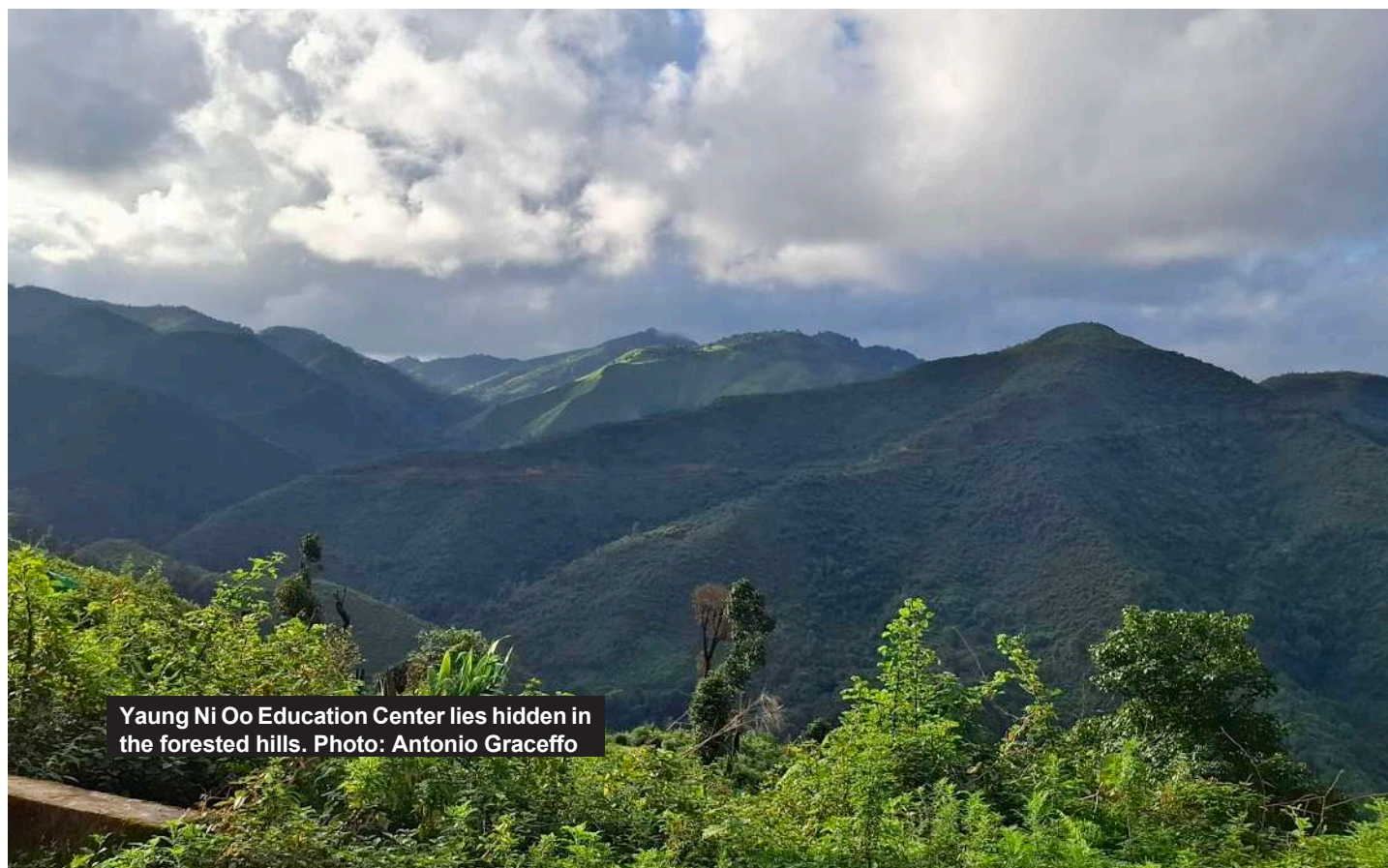
Water had to be pumped from far away, but the school only had a very small pump and one small generator—with no budget for fuel. Stella had recently called a carpenter to estimate the cost of finishing three of the buildings, but the price was astronomical. She simply doesn't have the budget, so the work will go undone.

Another major issue was the Starlink system. The school had only one small battery, about the size of a car battery, and had to run the generator to power it. "If we try to charge phones at the same time, it stops working," said Stella.

The library was a small room filled with books, many of them molding due to leaks in the plastic tarp roof. Beside the library was a bunker, an essential feature at every school in Karenni.

The students from New Horizon were away on a three-month internship, so the campus was currently being used by 21 students from the Karenni Public Education Department, a public school under the Karenni civilian government, the Interim Executive Council. Their teacher, Gabriel, explained that even with Karenni government support, providing education during wartime was a struggle.

"We were looking for a location. Actually, we were looking on the other side, two, three mountains that



Yaung Ni Oo Education Center lies hidden in the forested hills. Photo: Antonio Graceffo

way, but the road was too muddy, going uphill." Travel to and from the school was nearly impossible. Yet even at that altitude, the war found them, and students were often distracted by the sounds of artillery and drones. "Then we moved somewhere nearer the city, but the fighting was too close." So, they moved again and are temporarily using the New Horizon school until they can find a permanent location, away from the front lines.

But nowhere in Karenni State is safe from airstrikes. When asked how the war affected her students' psychology and learning, Stella said, "We are all in the same boat. Not only the students, but also the teachers. We all have our own trauma, because of the war, because of the bombs, the drones, the killings, a plane or something."

Because of the war, Stella lost her career, her home, and her livelihood. The school's founders gave her a very small house on campus for herself and her two children, along with a salary of about 800 baht (just under \$25 USD). She said it wasn't really enough to feed her family, but working as a teacher was still better than languishing in an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp.

This raises another point about the tragedy of the war in Burma: wasted human potential. Millions of people are jobless, countless children are out of school, and many adults and young people sit in IDP camps with absolutely nothing productive to occupy their time. Many do so with a prosthetic leg or other permanent physical injuries.

Even for those who have survived the war so far, the junta has squandered their lives, talents, and futures.

"It's okay, it's okay," said Stella, returning to how the students deal with the war. "They understand the situ-

ation. Sometimes, especially at night when the planes are flying around, we turn off the solar lights and stay quiet."

When asked if the school or surrounding villages had been hit, she replied with an ominous, "Not yet." She followed that with, "This place, not yet. But other places so many times already."

Both schools faced a common problem: difficulty buying supplies due to their remote locations. James explained, "For food, stationery, petrol, whatever we need, it's hard to buy here." The team had to drive about three hours each way. "So, it takes one day to buy those things and come back," he said.

Stella's situation was even more challenging. Her school didn't have a car, only a small, worn-out motorcycle that had belonged to her before the coup. "It breaks very often," she said.

Describing a typical supply run, Stella explained that she and another teacher had to ride the motorcycle to a distant market. "We just carry things with the motorbike. We cannot carry very much. I ride, she sits behind me, and we load vegetables in baskets, one in front, one in the middle, and one in the back," she said. "At least twice a week, we have to go."

During the rainy season, the task becomes even harder. "Very often, we fall off the bike. Get dirty, get injured. Of course, break the eggs. Especially the eggs, yes. But eggs are very expensive now. Everything is expensive."

Because nearly all supplies must be transported from Thailand across washed-out roads and through a war zone, the price of every commodity, especially food and fuel, is extremely high. Combined with the incredibly low salaries, this makes everyday life a constant struggle.

New Horizon is in a holding pattern, waiting for students to return from internship, at which point they will graduate. After that, the school will not be taking in a new intake because they don't have the funds. Stella said they hope they can find donors to continue the program.

Yaung Ni Oo Education Center is going strong. They held their first graduation on August 5, when six students completed their GED. But even taking the exam was another one of those hurdles that people outside of Burma can hardly imagine. Because the students come from revolution-controlled areas, they don't have passports, only national ID cards. In Thailand, the only city they can enter without a passport is Mae Sot, which, fortunately, hosts the only GED testing center that accepts a national ID card instead of a passport.

A school in Mae Sot provides accommodation for the students while they take the exam, but funds still had to be raised to pay the testing fees. Now that they've graduated, the students will face new challenges, applying for scholarships and trying to gain acceptance to study abroad. At that point, James will need to find a way to help them obtain passports.

Until then, the graduates will remain on campus and help tutor the next group of students. The school will continue to accept new students, but slowly, as resources are always fewer than the needs. Yet despite the lack of resources, profound loss and trauma, and the constant threat of airstrikes, the Karenni people remain determined to continue their education.

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

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Internally displaced people hiding out in the forest, driven away by the Myanmar junta. Photo: AFP

MYANMAR'S IDP CRISIS WORSENS

According to the latest report from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), ongoing armed conflict in Myanmar has forced more than 3.5 million civilians from their homes. Since late May 2025 alone, over 110,000 people have fled from Bago, Magway, Sagaing, and Tanintharyi regions, as well as southern Shan State.

In Moby Township, southern Shan State, internally displaced persons (IDPs) are facing severe food shortages. Tens of thousands fled to the eastern bank of Pekon Inn after junta forces recaptured Moby town on July 7. The displacement coincided with the rainy season, worsening living conditions.

In Magway Region's Pale Township, more than 30,000 people from around 30 villages have been left without adequate food or shelter. They fled after junta troops launched an operation to retake Kantdaunk village post, seized by resistance forces in June. The battle saw resistance fighters shoot down a junta jet fighter. "Due to the airstrikes, some civilians suffer. We urge people to stay away from war zones. We have many challenges in helping

IDPs," a revolutionary group member told Mizzima.

A displaced resident told the outlet: "We need to keep far from artillery and airstrike attacks. There are no IDP camps. We are sheltering under tarpaulin huts while rain falls continuously, and some people are suffering from the flu."

In Mandalay Region's Myingyan Township, about 5,000 residents from 10 villages have fled amid intensified clashes between local People's Defense Forces (PDF) and junta troops, backed by pro-military militias.

UNOCHA warns that the humanitarian crisis is worsening as the rainy season compounds the impact of displacement, with urgent needs for food, shelter, and medical care in multiple conflict-affected areas.

One of Myanmar's most conflict-ravaged regions has witnessed a "dramatic rise in hunger" after US aid cuts pushed by US President Donald Trump during a punishing civil war, the World Food Programme (WFP) said Tuesday. Western Rakhine state has seen some of the most intense fighting in Myanmar's many-sided civil conflict, which was sparked by a 2021 military takeover that deposed the democratic government.

Junta forces have blockaded the state as they battle local ethnic fighters, throttling vital trade routes and squeezing agriculture in the coastal territory bordering Bangladesh.

The situation was exacerbated in April when the WFP was forced to cut aid to one million people nationwide, after a global downturn in aid funding led by its largest donor Washington.



Earthquake destruction in a Sagaing town.
Photo: AFP

In central Rakhine, 57 percent of families are now unable to meet their basic food needs, a WFP statement said - a rise of 24 percent since December.

Junta renews offensive in Sagaing

After months of relative calm following the second wave of the “1027 Operation,” Myanmar’s military has renewed its offensives in Sagaing Region. Since late July, junta columns have advanced into nine townships — Sagaing, Wetlet, Ye-U, Kantbalu, Taze, Kale, Tamu, Chaung-U, and Pale — in what local resistance forces believe is an attempt to reclaim territory ahead of a planned “sham election.”

A member of a local revolutionary group told Mandalay Free Press, “I think they are trying to retake

some of our controlled areas to hold the sham election.”

The renewed military push has left civilians dead. On July 28 and 29, junta troops killed one child, two women, and four men. Two of the victims — a woman in her 20s and her young son — were internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Madaya Township, Mandalay Region, who had sought shelter in Ngayel village, Wetlet Township. According to local reports, troops raided the village on the morning of July 28, forcing residents and IDPs to flee. The woman and her child, along with another woman in her 40s, were shot dead on the spot.

When the troops later withdrew, three local men attempted to call monks to conduct Buddhist funeral rites for the victims. They were captured and killed



KIA fighters in the hills.
Photo: Mizzima

by the soldiers. Another member of the People's Administration Force (PAF) was also caught and executed. More than ten villagers are currently being held hostage by the junta unit.

In a separate development, a military convoy of over 20 vessels has been moving up the Chindwin River since July 4, departing from Mandalay and reaching Khamti after about a month. The convoy transported troops and supplies, making stops in Monywa, Kani, Mingin, Kalewa, Mawlaik, Paungbyin, and Homalin.

Local People's Defense Forces (PDFs) launched attacks during the journey, damaging one warship and four other vessels, and killing at least five junta personnel. The convoys are believed to be part of operations to transport natural resources — with the Khamti-bound fleet reportedly tasked with collecting jade from the Nansepon area, and another convoy aiming to carry copper from Monywa.

Sagaing Region remains one of the country's most active conflict zones, with both ground and riverine military operations intensifying in recent weeks.

Junta reinforces positions in Kachin State

Myanmar's military has successfully delivered reinforcements and supplies to Bhamo city, southern Kachin State, after days of resistance attacks along the Irrawaddy River. The river convoy, carrying troops, ammunition, and food, arrived in Shwegu on July 28 — the last junta-controlled town in southern Kachin. The 38-mile river route between Shwegu and Bhamo includes a 14-mile narrow stretch favourable for ambushes, and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and its allies also control the strategic Hsinhkan Bridge, about 15 miles from Bhamo.


The junta deployed a 150-strong security column along both riverbanks. After being forced to retreat to Shwegu at least three times due to KIA-led attacks, the convoy finally reached Bhamo on August 2.

Following the arrival of reinforcements, junta forces launched counteroffensives, including recapturing the No. 366 Artillery Battalion, which the KIA and allied forces had seized in February. A KIA spokesperson confirmed the withdrawal, citing intensified junta assaults.

In the jade-rich Hpakant area, clashes have persisted since April as the military attempts to retake key outposts, including Mawnmaw Bum and Lamaung Kaung. The KIA and its allies have repeatedly repelled or retaken newly-seized positions, such as Lagat Kawng post, located within M79 grenade range of the Hpakant military headquarters.

The junta has launched three major offensives toward Hpakant since April. The latest column, numbering between 300 and 500 troops, advanced along the Mogaung–Hpakant route and reached Nantyar village, 15 miles from Hpakant. Locals told the Kachin News Group the force appears focused on securing the road but could also be preparing for a further push into Hpakant.

Kachin State remains a focal point of the conflict, with both sides seeking to control strategic transport routes and resource-rich territories.



Makeshift housing erected by IDPs. Photo: Antonio Graceffo

RISING DISPLACEMENT IN KARENNI STATE AMID SHIFTING TERRITORIAL CONTROL, AHEAD OF ELECTIONS

ANTONIO GRACEFFO

Over the past several months, the fighting for cities in southern Shan and Karenni States, including Moby, Pasao, Demoso, and Loikaw, has intensified. The Burma Army seems more determined than before to take territory, which Khun Bedu, the chairperson of the Karenni Nationalities Defense Force (KNDF), speculates is due to the upcoming elections. The more territory the Burma Army takes, the more registered voters they can claim to legitimize the election results, which neither international observers nor people on the ground in Burma believe will be fair.

More than 10,000 people have been newly displaced, with the KNDF, People's Defense Forces (PDF), Free Burma Rangers (FBR), and civil organizations assisting in relocating them to safer areas.

At a Ranger camp in Karenni State, Aung Zay Ya, head of the Free Burma Rangers (FBR) Karenni team, shared that the rangers walked alongside the displaced for forty hours to help them escape Pekon and reach relative safety. "Around 500 Burma Army soldiers and the Pa-O National Army (PNA) arrived in East Pekon and surrounded the village. The villagers were terrified and tried to flee. So, we sent a team to East Pekon and evacuated about 4,000 IDP villagers," he said. The evacuation had to take place at night and on foot, through the jungle, as the Burma Army controls the

main roads. Along the way, the elderly, sick, wounded, and even children had to walk or, in extreme cases, be carried in a "bambulance," a hammock hung from a bamboo pole and carried by two volunteers.

Some became ill from drinking water collected in muddy holes. Aung Zay Ya said that during the evacuation, the Burma Army continued launching 120mm mortar attacks, injuring ten evacuees.

During the two days leading up to this meeting at the ranger camp, mortar and artillery shells had been falling within about one kilometer of our position with increasing frequency. While we were talking, planes flew overhead, and for a moment, it seemed like they might drop ordnance. Instead, they flew off, but shortly afterward, there was a loud thud as a mortar round hit something not far away.

The KNDF and I got into our vehicle and headed to the impact zone. What we found was all too typical of the SAC's war crimes. The mortar shell had hit a tree right next to a school. The roof was slightly damaged, but thankfully, it was late afternoon, and the children weren't in class, so no one was harmed. Yet, every time I'm in Karenni, we end up responding to clinics and schools being targeted.

The next morning, we were set to visit Youth Academy College (YAC), one of the many alternative education centers that has been opened in Karenni State to help fill the gap in education since the coup. It should have been a twenty-minute drive, but since the Myanmar junta controlled the main road, so, we had to take a two-hour, rough ride through the jungle roads. We also had to wear protective vests, and the soldiers carried weapons, just in case.

It is ludicrous that a two-hour drive through the jungle, wearing a bulletproof vest and accompanied by heavily armed guards, is what it takes to visit a school in Karenni State. It also makes me wonder why the UN doesn't ask Min Aung Hlaing to stop killing his people.

At the school, the director, Paul Du, explained that he had canceled classes because of fighting nearby. One student said that they had tried to have lectures that morning, but the teacher was concerned that they needed to listen for airstrikes. If they were focused on the lecture, they might not be able to hear the planes and react in time.

The two-year diploma program in social science and sustainable development had graduated its first batch but had to delay the second intake and relocate the school because of fighting. Now, the second batch is aiming to complete their studies, but the war keeps interrupting. Paul Du pointed to the surrounding mountains and said they were fairly safe from artillery and drones, but still vulnerable to airstrikes.

Several nearby villages had been displaced in the previous days of intensified fighting. The students were loading a truck with the possessions of the displaced, which had been sent ahead, and were now delivering them to a school where about 20 IDP families were taking refuge.

At the school, which had become an IDP camp, one student told me he had no contact with his parents, who are also displaced, so he wasn't sure if they had been affected by the most recent fighting or if they were safe. Another student said he couldn't return to his parents' location because it would require passing through territory now held by the junta. "Right now, we can't go back to our home because of the military." He explained that when his village was displaced, they lost their paddies. "Also, the field, we plant rice. At the time the military arrive there, we can't harvest." He laughed darkly and joked, "We grow rice for the military."

This underscores one of the many problems with displacement. The majority of people in Karenni State are farmers, and when they are displaced, they lose their fields.

In a separate meeting, Khun Bedu described how much territory had been lost recently. "And now the junta and Pa-O National Army (PNA) are taking all the property of the village already."

Aung Zay Ya explained that despite the danger of remaining in areas being overrun by the junta and PNO, some villagers refused to flee for fear of starving. "Some



Internally displaced children in Karenni State.
Photo: Antonio Graceffo

are hiding in the jungle. Even when we say, 'you have to move—if you're under the Burma Army, you're not safe.' Because the PNO said if the villager is Kayan or Karenni, they will kill them and burn down their house. So, we say, 'you have to run away.' But some villagers still don't want to leave because they have planted rice."

The junta and their PNO allies have intensified their attacks, clearly trying to advance and take the remaining urban areas in southern Shan and Karenni States. The KNDF is fighting fiercely to hold them back, but whichever way the battle goes, there are sure to be more IDPs.

Commenting on the outlook for the civilian population, Aung Zay Ya said, "So I think for the food, it's going to be a bit trouble. Because the junta shut down every transportation route." It is now nearly impossible to import food and medicine from inside Burma. "You can import from inside Burma, but not easy. If you bring medicine or rice, something for the emergency issue, they will be destroyed."

As a result, the entire state is dependent on imports from Thailand, which is also difficult because of the rainy season, the war, and the recent intensity of fighting. Inflation is skyrocketing, with some basic food and products doubling in price. For example, Paul Du said that drinking water is in short supply and the price has doubled. If the resistance forces can open up Pasao, that would help greatly with bringing in supplies from Thailand, but the fighting there is difficult.

Khun Bedu explained, "The junta now has its own factories. They're manufacturing drones, with support from Russian and Chinese technology, the most advanced drones, in very large numbers." The junta also manufactures its own guns and ammunition, while for the resistance, everything is a struggle. They cannot manufacture weapons and bullets. Drone jammers are very expensive and cannot be legally transported through Thailand.

In practice, international law and the international community are favoring the junta at this point. The junta is able to import weapons and fuel in unlimited quantities from China and Russia, while the resistance, relying on donations, struggles to bring in small quantities of bullets and the occasional jammer or high-quality drone. At the same time, ASEAN and India both seem to be moving diplomatically closer to the junta, leaving the resistance and Burma's civilian population to fend for themselves.

As for the displaced, a local priest said they were short of everything, particularly tarps and food. Aung

Zay Ya explained, "There's just no resources to feed them or medicine or anything. Even from our FBR side, you know, we provide medicine and food. But in Karenni, I want to say like 70% of people are IDP." Although FBR wants to help everyone, it is a small organization, and they simply don't have enough for 12,000 people.

The local priest echoed the same reality. He receives some donations and aid, then drives around in his car, distributing it to those in need, but sometimes he is working with as little as one hundred dollars in donations, barely enough to feed a few families for one month. Everyone trying to help the IDPs mentioned the shortage of plastic tarps used to build shelters. David Eubank, head of the Free Burma Rangers, said they recently gave away several hundred tarps, but there are thousands of displaced people.

In addition to the lack of shelter and food, Aung Zay Ya said "Some of the villagers, they're having malaria. And some of the children are having hygiene problems, like skin infections and things like that."

Civil society organizations and other local groups are helping IDPs get settled, but it is a constant challenge with so few resources. Meanwhile, the same problem persists that has made this conflict such a tragedy for so many decades. International NGOs still prefer to give aid to the junta rather than to the IDPs or to the ethnic civilian governments.

Tonight, while bombs continue to fall, 70% of the population of an entire state huddles under shared plastic tarps in the rainy season, with empty bellies, the UN does nothing to end the junta's tyranny or alleviate the suffering of the people of Burma.

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



IDPs take shelter. Photo: Antonio Graceffo



Myanmar refugee camp in India.
Photo: Supplied

INDIA'S DETAINMENT OF MYANMAR CITIZENS RAISES ALARM OVER HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Despite growing international concern, Indian authorities continue to detain Myanmar nationals fleeing the military junta — a move that rights groups warn could breach India's human rights obligations and result in irreparable harm to vulnerable individuals.

Human rights groups, including local Burmese communities, legal advocates, and civil society organizations (CSOs), are sounding the alarm over the prolonged detention and potential deportation of dozens of Myanmar nationals, particularly in the northeastern state of Manipur. The situation has been described as urgent and deeply troubling.

According to rights monitors, 82 individuals from Myanmar — including those affiliated with resistance movements and family members of political dissidents — were arrested by Indian police in Moreh, Manipur, on 27 January 2023. They were later transferred from Imphal Jail to a Detention Centre. While technically less restrictive than prisons, these facilities remain highly challenging in terms of conditions and oversight.

On 18 February 2023, nine minors were released, while several adults required hospitalization. Legal advocates, local CSOs, and community members

subsequently made efforts to facilitate prison visits and the delivery of essential supplies, but access remains inconsistent.

Humanitarian Toll Inside Detention

Many detainees are now entering their third year in confinement, without clear legal recourse or protection. Some have been separated from their children; others suffer from untreated illnesses and trauma. Detainees have reported overcrowded cells, inadequate sanitation, limited medical attention, and emotional distress stemming from prolonged uncertainty and fear of forced return.

Several detainees reportedly sleep on cold floors with minimal bedding. A few have attempted hunger strikes, while others have relapsed into severe depression due to the indefinite nature of their detention. Some have lost communication with their families entirely.

A 2023 report categorized detainees into three main groups:

- Individuals fleeing post-coup violence, many related to resistance members;

- Weavers who had migrated before the coup and worked in Churachandpur;
- Detainees held on drug- or weapon-related charges.

The first group was moved to a Detention Centre adjacent to the prison. Some elderly and child detainees have since been released. However, the death of a 32-year-old detainee from cardiac arrest while in custody has drawn widespread condemnation.

"These are people who escaped war and persecution — not criminals," said a legal worker involved in the case. "They should not be subjected to further suffering under detention."

Legal and Bureaucratic Gridlock

Legal teams, along with local CSOs and Burmese community organizations, continue to advocate for the release of the remaining detainees. International bodies have been informed of the situation, and recent human rights reports include these cases. Despite this, formal release orders have not been issued.

Local authorities reportedly face challenges such as determining post-release accommodation, avoiding re-arrest, and managing political sensitivities around refugee recognition. Temporary identification cards for refugees have been discussed but not implemented at scale. Government statements have emphasized that no refugee camps will be established in Manipur.

Local authorities had earlier initiated plans to build refugee camps to accommodate the rising number of arrivals from Myanmar. However, these efforts were abruptly halted following the eruption of ethnic violence in Manipur in 2023. The deteriorating security situation has made it nearly impossible to pursue large-scale humanitarian coordination or infrastructure projects.

Many of the detained weavers originate from conflict-affected areas and have no homes to return to. While safe housing options are under consideration, legal recognition remains limited. Detainees on drug-related charges are not the focus of current advocacy efforts.

Coercion and Deportation Risks

Human rights groups, local Burmese community members, and lawyers report that some detainees have been pressured to sign documents issued by Myanmar's diplomatic missions of the military junta. In certain cases, individuals were warned that refusal could result in indefinite detention. Families of detainees have reportedly spent considerable resources seeking their release, with little progress.

Observers warn that undocumented handovers may be taking place. Though some detainees were reportedly moved to border areas, no large-scale deportation has been officially confirmed in those cases.

Some officials from the former Chief Minister's government of Manipur State of India have alleged that detainees are connected to violence during the ethnic unrest in Manipur, raising concerns that these individuals risk becoming political pawns in ongoing regional conflicts. Others have already been transferred to Myanmar junta, while proposed relocations to safer areas within India have not materialized.

Systemic Breakdown and Vulnerable Lives

Regional political instability has made legal advocacy more difficult. Local courts have occasionally granted bail in individual cases, especially involving minors or vulnerable individuals. While some Indian states have expressed readiness to accept refugees, bureaucratic delays have impeded relocation.

Before the outbreak of ethnic violence in Manipur in 2023, legal organizations, together with local CSOs and Burmese community representatives, had coordinated with international agencies to seek refugee status for detainees. However, following the violence, legal efforts were disrupted, leaving detainees in a precarious limbo.

Among the detainees are people at heightened risk: political activists, journalists, and youth believed to have resisted military rule. Advocates stress that deporting such individuals could result in torture, imprisonment, or forced conscription under the Myanmar junta.

Documented Deportations Fuel Fears

In January 2025, a group of 26 Myanmar nationals detained in Imphal were deported. The group included weaving-industry workers, street vendors, and Rohingya refugees. Though originally sentenced to six months for immigration violations, they were detained for over two years before being handed to Myanmar authorities.

The deportation, reportedly coordinated with Myanmar's embassy in New Delhi and confirmed by Indian state officials, has left rights groups alarmed. Concerns remain over the fate of those returned, many of whom had fled conflict zones.

Observers note that this deportation reflects a broader trend. Over 250 Myanmar refugees have reportedly been detained in India, with more than 100 returned to Myanmar, often without adequate legal process.

India is devoting more attention to the Indo-Myanmar border area. According to the Indian Council on World Affairs (ICWA), the 2021 military coup in Myanmar has destabilized the country and escalated illegal activities along India's 1,643 KM Indo-Myanmar border. Armed resistance by the NUG and People's Defence Forces (PDF) have increased drug and arms

trafficking along with illegal immigration, impacting Indian states like Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. In response, India is revising its border management strategy with measures like "Smart Fencing System" and enhanced surveillance, balancing national security with maintaining cultural ties between cross-border communities.

A Call for Urgent Action

These developments raise critical legal concerns, particularly regarding India's obligations under international human rights law. While not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, India is bound by other treaties — including the Convention Against Torture — that prohibit the return of individuals to countries where they face serious harm.

Human rights groups — including local Burmese communities, groups of lawyers, and CSOs — are calling on Indian authorities to:

- Halt all deportations of Myanmar nationals;
- Immediately release detainees who pose no security threat;
- Grant temporary protection and work with international agencies to assess asylum claims;
- Improve conditions in detention centres and ensure medical and legal access.

The treatment of Myanmar refugees has become a critical test of India's commitment to humanitarian principles and international legal standards. For the hundreds still behind bars, each day in detention represents not just a legal failure — but a humanitarian crisis unfolding in silence.



Myanmar refugees in India.
Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR REFUGEES IN INDIA CALL FOR REFUGEE RIGHTS AS UNHCR MEETING GETS CANCELLED

A scheduled meeting between Myanmar refugees in India and officials from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in New Delhi, aimed at discussing refugee rights, has been cancelled, according to the Chin Refugee Committee (CRC), which led the protest.

The refugees had fled to India to escape persecution following the military coup on 1 February 2021, amid violent crackdowns on anti-coup protesters, ongoing clashes, and arbitrary arrests under conscription laws in Myanmar.

Myanmar refugees have been staging protests in front of the UNHCR office in New Delhi since 7 July, demanding recognition as refugees, more resettlement opportunities, and access to essential rights including healthcare, education, and security. The protests are held Monday to Friday, and 7 August marks the 24th day of demonstrations.

According to sources, a meeting between the UNHCR Chief of Mission for India and CRC leaders was agreed to take place on 7 August. However, the meeting was abruptly cancelled shortly after it began.

"We introduced ourselves to each other, and then the Chief of Mission cancelled the meeting citing security concerns. He left immediately, and so did we. It was very disappointing. I would call it a rude act," one CRC leader who attended the meeting told Mizzima.

Despite the UNHCR citing security concerns as the reason for the cancellation, protesters continued to wait peacefully behind the barricades outside the office for news of the meeting's outcome, the CRC

representative said.

Once the CRC leaders exited the meeting and informed the crowd, more than 1,000 protesters dismantled the barricades and moved toward the UNHCR office, shouting slogans and continuing to demand their rights. As of 1:00 PM local time, they remained gathered in front of the office.

New Delhi police arrived and asked the protesters to disperse, but the demonstrators remained and negotiated with the police while continuing to demand refugee rights.

A CRC leader confirmed that although the meeting with UNHCR was cancelled, they plan to continue engaging in dialogue and will not end the protests until their demands are met.

In anticipation of the important meeting with UNHCR, CRC released a statement on 6 August, calling for a strong and unified turnout. The announcement invited Myanmar nationals in New Delhi to join the protest, including Christian church ministers and leaders, community leaders, translators from UNHCR-related departments, refugee shop owners, and students from government, private, and community schools.

India is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol.

Due to Myanmar's political instability since 1988, many Burmese have sought refuge in India. Aid groups estimate that over 10,000 Myanmar refugees currently reside in New Delhi.



FLASHBACK: Aung San Suu Kyi and Win Myint in court. The two leaders remain imprisoned. Photo: AFP

MALAYSIA TO LEAD ASEAN DELEGATION TO WAR-TORN MYANMAR

Malaysia will lead a regional delegation to Myanmar next month after the junta scrapped its state of emergency, Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan announced on Friday.

Mohamad told reporters the trip will "most likely" take place on September 19 and include the foreign ministers of Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines.

"I want to get a clear picture for me to bring to the attention of the ASEAN leadership in October," he said, referring to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' year-end summit.

Malaysia currently chairs the bloc, which has tried to increase pressure on member state Myanmar's junta, including by barring its leaders from summits, over the ongoing bloodshed.

But the ASEAN has so far been fruitless in its diplomatic efforts to end Myanmar's conflict, triggered by the junta's ousting of elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021, sparking a many-sided civil war.

Last week, military chief Min Aung Hlaing ended the nationwide state of emergency declared during the coup and touted plans for an election in December.

Opposition groups said they will boycott the vote, while a UN expert has branded the exercise a "fraud" designed to legitimise the junta's continued rule.

Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad said the ASEAN delegation will look into the coming polls.

"I want to discuss with them whether their elections will be comprehensive," he said.

Mohamad pointed out that "there are still 63 cities or areas currently still under a state of emergency".

Most of them are conflict zones or areas under the control of anti-junta groups.

No exact date has yet been set for the election.

AFP



Young students leave school.
Photo: AFP

ISP STUDY FINDS URGENT HELP NEEDED TO SAVE CHILDREN'S EDUCATION IN MYANMAR

A new report by the Institute for Strategy and Policy (ISP-Myanmar) highlights a troubling rise in school dropout rates in Myanmar following the military coup in 2021. According to the ISP's latest Situation Brief, the number of school-aged children who are no longer in school has surged significantly, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas.

The study shows that the percentage of out-of-school children increased from 5.3% in the 2021-2022 academic year to 8% in 2023-2024. Although there was a slight drop to 7.3% in the 2024-2025 period, the overall rate remains far above pre-coup levels, which hovered around 2% in the 2019-2020 academic year.

This shift represents more than just a statistical change, it reflects the growing impact of political instability, armed conflict, and the collapse of public services on the country's education system. ISP notes that areas under junta control – particularly 47 villages in the conflict-heavy “special districts” – have seen an especially sharp decline in student attendance.

In some locations, the report says, access to basic education has nearly vanished due to the destruction of infrastructure, ongoing military operations, and the displacement of communities. Parents and guardians are increasingly unwilling or unable to send their children to school due to safety concerns and economic hardship.

The ISP warns that the long-term consequences of this educational disruption could be severe, limiting opportunities for millions of children and weakening the country's human capital for years to come.

The brief calls for immediate and targeted interventions to restore access to education, especially in conflict zones and rural communities. Without swift action, the ISP cautions, Myanmar risks creating a “lost generation” of children deprived of both safety and schooling.



Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing.
Photo: AFP

HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS URGE SEANF TO EXPEL MYANMAR JUNTA'S COMMISSION

On 7 August, the CSO Working Group on Independent National Human Rights Institution (Burma/Myanmar) (Working Group) and the Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI) issued a press release urging the Southeast Asia National Human Rights Institution Forum (SEANF) to immediately remove the junta-controlled Myanmar National Human Rights Commission from its network.

The press release is as follows.

In May 2025, the APF officially removed the MNHRC from its regional human rights network, following the removal of its accreditation by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) in December 2024 and subsequently, its GANHRI membership in March 2025.

According to the APF's Constitution, full members hold an "A" status accreditation from GANHRI, indicating full compliance with the Paris Principles—the international standards for effective, credible,

and independent NHRIs. Members with a "B" status accreditation—signifying only partial compliance—are only granted associate membership.

As the APF uses GANHRI's accreditation decisions to determine membership status in its network, the expulsion of the MNHRC following GANHRI's removal of the MNHRC's accreditation status was imminent and necessary.

Five long months after GANHRI revoked the MNHRC's accreditation, the APF has finally taken the critical decision required under its own constitution. This long-overdue, principled decision is the result of more than four years of consistent advocacy efforts and repeated calls by the Working Group and ANNI alongside their local, regional, and international partners.

How the MNHRC supports the junta

Since the attempted coup in 2021, the Myanmar military junta has continued to commit atrocity crimes

against the people of Myanmar—killing more than 7,000 people, torching more than 110,000 homes, and conducting more than 5,000 airstrikes, most of which have targeted civilians.

The MNHRC has been an accessory to these crimes, serving as a smokescreen for the junta by echoing false narratives, thus lending false legitimacy to the perpetrators of these human rights abuses.

For more than four years, the MNHRC has clearly violated the Paris Principles through persistent silence and inaction towards the junta's grave human rights violations. It has also expressed vocal support for the junta.

Khin Ohmar, Chairperson of Progressive Voice, member of the Working Group, said: "The APF's long-awaited decision to remove the junta-appointed MNHRC demonstrates that the network is, at last, willing to take a principled stance. This decision sends a clear message to the people of Myanmar that the APF is finally upholding its integrity by refusing to tolerate the MNHRC's blatant disregard for the Paris Principles and cover-up of human rights violations.

"This is an overdue but necessary commitment to accountability and human rights by the APF. This proxy institution of the Myanmar military—the MNHRC—is irreparable. All regional NHRIs and networks must cease any support for and engagement with the MNHRC. Continuing to do so risks complicity in the crimes of the Myanmar military and undermines the credibility and integrity of their own human rights institutions."

Mary Aileen Diez-Bacalso, Executive Director of FORUM-ASIA, which serves as the Secretariat of ANNI, said: "The recognition by global and regional

NHRI networks of the junta-controlled MNHRC as unacceptable and in violation of international standards is critical in promoting justice and accountability. We call on other international and regional bodies, particularly the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the SEANF to take immediate steps towards disengaging with the discredited MNHRC in order to preserve its credibility and public trust."

Bo Bo, Executive Director of Generation Wave, member of the Working Group, said: "The APF's long-overdue decision must serve as a critical push for SEANF to uphold the same principles and remove the MNHRC from its human rights network without further delay. For SEANF's credibility and integrity as a human rights network, this step must be taken. The removal of the MNHRC from the APF echoes the voices of Myanmar's civil society that have tirelessly called out the MNHRC's non-compliance with the Paris Principles and dangerous alignment with the murderous junta.

"SEANF and regional NHRIs must honor these voices. At a time when the Myanmar people continue to suffer under the illegal junta's campaign of terror, it is all the more urgent and imperative that regional NHRI networks stand with civil society in Myanmar as we work to build a genuinely independent and credible national human rights institution rooted in the Paris Principles."

OVER 750 CIVILIANS KILLED IN JUNTA ATTACKS DURING THREE MONTHS FOLLOWING MYANMAR EARTHQUAKE: REPORT

More than 750 civilians were killed and over 1,400 injured in military attacks between 28 March, the day a powerful 7.7-magnitude earthquake struck and the end of June, according to a 5 August report by Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica titled "Amidst Aerial and Ground Attacks, the Lives of Innocent Victims."

During this three-month period, the junta carried out more than 1,000 targeted assaults on civilians, including airstrikes, artillery shelling, and ground incursions.

The quake-hit regions of Mandalay, Sagaing, and Bago (East) were among the worst affected. Mandalay recorded 98 civilian deaths and over 200 injuries, Sagaing saw 218 killed and more than 400 injured, while in Bago (East) 38 people were killed and over 70 injured.

"Despite the urgent need for reconstruction, the military council has continued and even intensified its airstrikes and military operations targeting civilians," the report stated.

Data from Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica shows a sharp escalation in aerial assaults after the earthquake. From 1 January to 27 March, the junta carried out 346 airstrikes in 101 townships. In the three months following the quake, that number surged to 536 airstrikes across 98 townships.

In this post-earthquake period alone, airstrikes killed 437 civilians and injured 1,072, with the highest casualties reported in Sagaing, Mandalay, Rakhine, Karen, Magway, Bago (East), and Karenni.

The report accuses the junta of exploiting the disaster to bolster political legitimacy, strengthen ties with foreign governments, and intensify its crackdown on resistance forces. It also alleges that humanitarian aid from international donors was diverted to support the junta's operations instead of reaching earthquake-affected communities.



Photo: AFP

PRISONERS ACROSS MYANMAR FACE SEVERE MALNUTRITION AS MEAT AND EGG RATIONS SLASHED

Families of inmates across Myanmar say prisoners are facing worsening malnutrition due to drastic cuts in daily meat portions and weekly egg rations, leaving many physically weakened and at risk of serious illness.

Under Myanmar's Prison Law, each prisoner is entitled to at least seven ticals (around 114 grams) of meat per day. But former inmates recently released from various prisons report that the amount has dropped to just three ticals (about 49 grams) a day.

In 2021, shortly after the military coup, prisoners reportedly received five to seven eggs per week. That number has now fallen to just one and a half to two eggs weekly.

"Since the coup, meals have become noticeably less nutritious. The portions of meat are smaller than they used to be, especially after prices rose. The lack of proper nutrition is weakening prisoners' immune systems, and we are seeing an increasing number of deaths in custody," said Ko Thaik Htun Oo, head of the Political Prisoners' Network - Myanmar (PPNM), speaking to Mizzima.

Prisoners who are denied family visits are among the most vulnerable, relying solely on prison food. Many are falling ill due to a lack of essential nutrients.

"Since May, we've only received one and a half eggs and just a handful of rice. The bean soup is so watery it's like rice-rinsing water. The food is often

contaminated with flies and worms. Some families can no longer afford to send food to their relatives in prison," said a woman recently released from Insein Prison.

According to former inmates, prison authorities have been treating malnourished prisoners and those with low blood pressure using expired stimulants and oral rehydration salts. Meals often consist of tough rice and watery lentils, with meat served sparingly as little as three pieces under two inches in size per week.

U Htun Kyi of the Former Political Prisoners' Society (FPPS) believes the shortages are intentional and aimed at breaking political prisoners' morale, with officials citing budget constraints as an excuse.

"They claim it's due to the budget. But when I was in Myingyan Prison from 1992 to 2002, they fed us rice mixed with rice hull or iron filings. The soup was thin and sometimes had cockroaches. Hundreds of political prisoners died of malnutrition back then. They're pushing political prisoners to the edge, breaking them mentally and physically. Many former prisoners are still suffering from secondary illnesses caused by years of inadequate nutrition," he told Mizzima.

The prolonged lack of nutritious food has left many prisoners so weak that a growing number have lost function in their lower limbs. According to a 19 May PPNM report, up to 15 percent of inmates in Myingyan Prison are now suffering from such debilitating conditions.

CONCERNS EMERGE OVER CUSTODIAL DEATHS IN MYANMAR SINCE MILITARY COUP

On 6 August, a coalition of civil society organizations issued a Joint Public Statement expressing deep concern over the rising number of deaths in custody in Myanmar since the 2021 military coup.

The statement is as follows.

The undersigned organizations are gravely concerned over reports of an increasing number of deaths in custody in Myanmar, especially in the last four and a half years that has seen an unprecedented erosion of respect for and the protection of human rights. Since the 2021 military coup, over 1,800 people have reportedly died while being detained by the military junta, many owing to a systematic denial of healthcare in prisons and/or as a result of untreated injuries they sustained during abusive interrogations following their arrest. We demand that the Myanmar military urgently provide people deprived of their liberty access to adequate healthcare, of the same standard and with the same options as are available in the community and accessible to all detainees without discrimination, and put an immediate end to the torture and other ill-treatment of detainees.

Independent media and prison monitoring groups reported the death of several people in separate detention places in July 2025. Ma Wutt Yee Aung, 26 years old and a student activist arrested by junta forces in September 2021 over alleged terrorism and incitement charges, died in Insein Prison in Yangon on or around 19 July 2025. The Dagon University Students Union has expressed concern that her death may be the result of head injuries she sustained during interrogations while in detention and prison authorities' denial of adequate

treatment for her despite her family's requests for her to be treated in a hospital outside the prison. On the same day, 44-year-old Ko Pyae Sone Aung, a representative of the National League for Democracy party chapter in Mon State's Belin Township, reportedly died in the State's Thaton Prison after being violently beaten. According to the Human Rights Foundation of Monland, Ko Pyae and four others were beaten with batons and kicked in the stomach. Sources were also concerned that his death was also the result of prison officials' denial of proper medical treatment for his hypertension, diabetes and clogged arteries. Arrested in January 2022, Ko Pyae was sentenced to six years in prison for alleged sedition and terrorism. Earlier in July, two other political prisoners died in separate prisons in the same month also due to medical complications.

In a September 2024 report, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights stated that at least 1,853 people have died in custody since the 2021 coup. Based on data from monitors, over 70 people have died in custody between January and July 2025 alone. At least 59 of them reportedly died when weakened structures collapsed in Obo Prison in Mandalay Region, after a 7.7-magnitude earthquake hit the country in March 2025. The number includes people arbitrarily detained based solely on their known or perceived support for opposition groups, including the National League for Democracy that was deposed by the military in the 2021 coup. Numbers could be higher given barriers to obtaining and verifying information, especially in light of restricted access to prisons and the banning of many media outlets in the country.

The 2024 OHCHR report also describes torture and other ill-treatment in military custody as "pervasive",

particularly in interrogation centres and compounds, as well as in prisons including the notorious Tharyarwaddy Prison in Bago Region. Practices in these settings include physical and psychological abuse, including sexual abuse, carried out by officials seeking to obtain confessions or information on other people allegedly affiliated with or supporting anti-military groups. Political prisoners, especially those participating in peaceful protests inside prisons against abuse, endure punishments including severe beatings, solitary confinement, new charges, and, in some cases, being transferred to more remote detention places or worse, killed during these transfers. The Political Prisoners Network-Myanmar, a monitoring organization, noted that at least 190 political prisoners have died due to abusive interrogation, other ill-treatment or denial of access to adequate healthcare since 2021 and until July 2025. Despite extensive documentation of these practices by various domestic and international groups, not one official from the military junta has been known to have been made accountable for these deaths and abuses inside prisons.

It must be noted that the widely reported torture and ill-treatment of detainees is just one facet of the dire human rights situation in the country that remains in need of sustained international attention and action. Since the 2021 coup, Myanmar's military junta has

killed more than 7,000 people, mostly civilians, and arbitrarily detained nearly 30,000. More than 3.5 million people have been internally displaced in the ongoing armed conflict. Human rights groups have documented indiscriminate military air strikes, killing civilians in classrooms, at weddings, in shelters and even during the aftermath of the earthquake in March 2025, as well as the denial of humanitarian aid, all of which may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes.

We reiterate our long-standing calls for Myanmar's military junta to put an end to the torture and other ill-treatment of detainees, and to urgently work towards improving conditions inside detention places to bring these into line with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) and other international standards on detention. Detainees should be allowed timely and adequate access to healthcare and medical treatment, including being allowed to visit hospitals outside prisons to seek treatment that is not available in prison. The provision of medicines and other supplies inside detention places should be bolstered, including by allowing international aid as well as access to prisons by humanitarian and medical organizations, and family members who can deliver food, medicine and other essentials. The Myanmar military should also immediately release all people arbitrarily detained.



Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing on a visit to Yangon. Photo: AFP

HEIGHTENED SECURITY AND ARRESTS IN YANGON DURING MYANMAR JUNTA CHAIRMAN'S VISIT

Security in Yangon was tightened during a visit by State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC) Chairman Min Aung Hlaing, with at least ten people arrested, according to the Rangoon Scout Network.

Min Aung Hlaing, who assumed the role of chairman of the rebranded junta on 31 July, made his first domestic trip in the position on 2 August, traveling by train from Taungoo to Bago before arriving in Yangon.

Junta troops began heightened security measures the day before his arrival, conducting VPN and ID checks on young people at the Yangon expressway's zero-mile marker and deploying forces along the routes he was expected to travel. Armed personnel were stationed at key points, including in high-rise buildings, a Rangoon Scout Network official said.

On 4 August, state media reported that Min Aung Hlaing visited the General Aung San Museum, the Secretariat, and the Supreme Court in Yangon. Local

residents said troops also carried out nighttime guest list checks in surrounding areas and townships.

At least ten people were arrested at Tada Lay, Thingangyun, and Pazundaung railway stations on 2 August, ahead of his arrival. "They were reportedly arrested on suspicion. The youths detained at Thingangyun Station are believed to be young people, but the ages of those taken at the other stations are unknown," the Rangoon Scout Network official said, adding that their whereabouts remain under investigation.

Yangon residents report that security operations intensify with each visit by Min Aung Hlaing, often involving arrests and searches without clear cause.

After completing visits to several sites in Yangon on 4 August, Min Aung Hlaing returned to Naypyidaw via the expressway that evening.



Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing.
Photo: AFP

MYANMAR JUNTA TIGHTENS GRIP AHEAD OF PLANNED DECEMBER ELECTIONS

During the past week, Myanmar's military junta intensified its hold on power through a series of internal changes and legal measures, underscoring its determination to maintain control ahead of elections slated for December.

On August 5, the newly formed State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC) reinstated sweeping powers for security forces to conduct warrantless home raids, make arrests without witnesses, and intercept private communications. The measures – rescinded briefly earlier this year – also permit the seizure or destruction of personal correspondence. Rights advocates say the move further erodes civil liberties in a country already under severe political repression since the February 2021 coup.

In a separate consolidation of authority, the National Defence and Security Council appointed Union Minister 1 for the President's Office Tin Aung San as National Security Advisor and Union Minister at the President's Office 1. The role gives him direct oversight of security policy and coordination with the NSPC, placing one of the junta's most trusted figures at the centre of the military's governing structure. Analysts say the dual post enhances his influence over both administrative and security apparatuses.

Meanwhile, the absence of Admiral Moe Aung – former commander-in-chief of the Myanmar Navy –

from key government functions and appointment lists has fuelled speculation that he has been removed from his posts. No official announcement has been made, but observers believe the move could indicate internal reshuffling or a shift in business-aligned factions within the armed forces' upper ranks.

These developments come just days after the junta formally ended a three-year state of emergency, dissolved the State Administration Council, and announced the transition to the SSPC framework. While the military portrays these moves as steps toward a "multi-party democracy," critics inside and outside Myanmar argue they are designed to entrench military dominance under a veneer of electoral legitimacy.

Japan and other foreign governments have expressed concern over the credibility of the planned elections, calling for the release of political detainees – including ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi – before any vote takes place.

With political opposition suppressed, internet freedoms curtailed, and military reshuffles underway, the junta's actions this week suggest the December polls will occur under conditions heavily weighted in its favour.

Photo: Mizzima

NGOS URGENTLY CALL FOR RELEASE OF STUM LEADER AND MEMBERS

On 8 August, a coalition of human rights and labor organizations released a Joint Public Statement expressing serious concern about the ongoing pattern of arbitrary arrests and detentions in Myanmar. This issue has been highlighted by the recent arrests of STUM union leader Myo Myo Aye, her daughter, and other staff members.

The text of the statement continues below.

On July 25, 2025, Myo Myo Aye, aged 56, was arrested at her home in Shwe Pyi Thar Township, Yangon. The arrest was carried out under distressing circumstances, where the authorities forced Myo Myo Aye's son to kneel and pointed guns to his head in front of both her and her husband, to demand Myo Aye hand over her digital devices. After raiding her room, the authorities took her away in handcuffs, along with her belongings, money, and household registration document, which contains the list of residents in the household. At the same time, the authorities also raided STUM's office, where Chue Thwel, aged 27, was present. About a dozen people in plain clothes, including the Shwe Pyi Thar ward administrator, forcibly entered the office and confiscated laptops and mobile phones.

As the news about the arrest spread, on the night of July 27, Chue Thwel briefly mentioned Myo Myo Aye's arrest on social media and urged the media and the public to respect their privacy. The next evening (July 28th), the authorities also arrested Chue Thwel and three other STUM staff members. Another STUM staff member was arrested in the early morning of July 29. The authorities also locked up and sealed all of STUM's three offices, including an office of STUM's affiliate organisation, Solidarity of Township Garment Labour Organisation.

To date, we do not know where human rights defender Myo Myo Aye, her daughter, and the other detainees are being illegally held, or the reasons for their detention. We are, however, concerned that they may be held at the interrogation center at Shwe Pyi Thar, which is notorious for its use of torture and degrading treatment against detainees. Myo Myo Aye also urgently needs access to her regular medication for her pre-existing medical conditions. However, it has been impossible to deliver the medication to her, and we are thus concerned for her well-being and safety, as well as that of the other detainees.

Under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Article 9 states that “no one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.” Under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Article 9(2) states that, “anyone who is arrested shall be informed, at the time of arrest, of the reasons for his arrest and shall be promptly informed of any charges against him,” and Article 14(3)(b) states clearly that everyone should “have adequate time and facilities for the preparation of his defence and to communicate with counsel of his own choosing.” Additionally, the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders acknowledges the right of human rights defenders to freely and safely advocate for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms. However, all these basic human rights and guarantees have been denied to Myo Myo Aye, Chue Thwel and the other STUM staff members being held incommunicado. We also note that Articles 330 and 331 of the Burmese Penal Code of 1957 prohibit torture and ill-treatment during interrogation, but we are not able to ascertain if these laws are being upheld by the authorities.

Myanmar’s military leader Min Aung Hlaing said that the regime plans to hold “a free and fair election” by the end of this year, but unfair and arbitrary detentions against innocent civilians, human rights defenders and labor representatives like Myo Myo Aye and other STUM members continue to persist. A report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights published in May this year highlighted that, “According to credible sources, as at 31 March 2025, [...] some 28,961 [civilians] had been arrested, 22,165 remained in detention and 172 had been sentenced to death by military-controlled courts that do not ensure any respect for judicial guarantees and fair trial rights.” The Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders has repeatedly expressed concerns for the safety of defenders in the country.

In the United States Department of State’s 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices on Burma, it was reported that, “many political prisoners were held incommunicado, and there were numerous reports of political prisoners being denied medical services,” and even where “political prisoners were vulnerable to sexual violence and hard labor.”

In 2021, the Burmese authorities declared 16 labor unions and labor activist organizations illegal, including STUM. STUM and Myo Myo Aye have continued to exercise their right to freedom of association and collective bargaining, and have been advocating relentlessly for stronger worker protections in increasingly fraught Myanmar; however, Myo Myo Aye has constantly faced harassment from the authorities and businesses alike. In April 2021, Myo Myo Aye was detained for over six months before she was released in October 2021. Her current disappearance is a continuation of the political persecution she faces due to her labor organization and human rights work.

We call on the international community and governments to take action, and to advocate for the safe return and protection of Myo Myo Aye, Chue Thwel, and other detained STUM staff members. At the immediate, we also enjoin the international community and governments to support by:

Calling for the immediate and unconditional release of human rights defender Myo Myo Aye, her daughter Chue Thwel, and other detained STUM staff members;

Enquiring on the whereabouts of Myo Myo Aye and other STUM members, and the conditions of their detention;

Advocating for fair treatment, legal representation and humanitarian support for Myo Myo Aye and other STUM members;

Calling for respect of the rights for freedom of expression and freedom of association and assembly of labour rights defenders like Myo Myo Aye and other STUM members; and

Continuing to publicly call for the immediate release of all political prisoners and condemn further arbitrary arrests, intimidations and retaliations.

We call on international organizations to show solidarity and support for Myo Aye and fellow STUM members by posting on your social media or to your government representatives, to request that they take action as well.

8888 UPRISING UMBRELLA STRIKE STAGED BY REVOLUTIONARY YOUTH IN YANGON

8888 Uprising demonstration in London.
Photo: EPA



Despite heavy security and repression in Yangon, revolutionary youth staged an umbrella strike on 8 August to mark the 37th anniversary of the historic 8888 Uprising.

The demonstration was held in key locations across the city, including in front of Yangon City Hall, Yangon University, and Kandawgyi Lake. Youth participants carried umbrellas bearing the number "8" and the slogan "Rebellion and Resistance" as a symbol of defiance.

In a statement, the Yangon People's Strike group said the action commemorates the struggle for democracy from the 8888 Uprising to the present-day Spring Revolution. It condemned successive military regimes for brutally suppressing the people and causing countless deaths.

"The fascist military dictatorship, which is killing and annihilating the people as if they were enemies to maintain its grip on power, must be rooted out," the revolutionary youth declared.

The strike was organized by the Yangon People's Strike, Yangon Revolutionary Four Brothers, and local residents, who were undeterred by the junta's tightened security measures across the city.

Solidarity events under the global umbrella strike movement are also being held by Myanmar communities and supporters abroad on 8 August.

To mark the anniversary, the embassies of the United States, United Kingdom, Norway, and Sweden released statements expressing support for the people of Myanmar in their ongoing struggle for democracy and peace.

CORE DEVELOPMENTS

"The Spring Revolution is a time when all allied ethnic revolutionary forces must unite and fight the final battle, focusing only on the will of the people, to completely eliminate the military dictatorship and all forms of authoritarianism," the National Unity Government (NUG) stated.

On 8 August 1988, a nationwide pro-democracy uprising erupted in Myanmar as millions rose against military rule. The movement became a defining moment

in the country's political history, remembered as a powerful symbol of the people's aspiration for justice and dignity.

Though brutally suppressed by the military, the spirit of the 8888 Uprising lives on. When the military again seized power in February 2021, the echoes of 1988 returned louder, more unified, and more determined than ever as people from cities to rural areas rose once again to demand freedom.



Photo: EPA



Photo: EPA



The Chinese pipeline. Photo: Supplied

SHRF SAYS 35 CIVILIANS KILLED BY MYANMAR JUNTA AIR AND ARTILLERY STRIKES ACROSS FOUR SHAN TOWNSHIPS, CHINESE PIPELINE THREATENED

In an update released on 7 August, the Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) described killing and wounding of civilians by junta air and artillery strikes in Hsipaw, Mogok, Kyaukme, and Naawgkhio townships of northern Shan State and the potential for damage to the Chinese pipeline which runs through the area.

The text is as follows.

Between July 15 and August 4, 2025, SAC airstrikes and shelling killed thirty-five civilians and injured fifty-five others, damaging over 60 buildings -- including three hotels, two Buddhist temples, two schools and a clinic -- in areas of Hsipaw, Mogok, Kyaukme, Nawngkhio and Kutkhai townships under control of the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) since 2024.

SAC air and artillery attacks in Kyaukme and Hsipaw townships were carried out dangerously close to China's oil and gas pipelines, renewing fears of

possible pipeline explosion. In both townships, bombs exploded near pipeline control stations, where the pipeline infrastructure comes above ground, making it more vulnerable to rupture and ignition of fuel.

In Kyaukme the attacks near the pipelines were carried out by SAC troops based at Goke Hteik Bridge, who fired shells and launched drones eastward directly along the pipelines, and over a pipeline control station. Between July 25 and 31, more than 17 artillery shells and 3 drone bombs landed in Pang Pao, Pang Tueng and Nawng Ping Long villages, killing five civilians, including a Buddhist novice, injuring five other young novices, and damaging two temples, including one where IDPs were sheltering.

In Hsipaw, SAC airstrikes, dropping powerful 500-pound and 250-pound bombs, took place near the pipelines on the northern edge of the town between July 19 and August 3. One of the bombs dropped on Wan Mai village, whose eastern edge lies only 100 meters from the pipelines.



Damaged Wetlet village.
Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA COLUMN BURNS VILLAGE AND ABDUCTS VILLAGERS IN WETLET, SAGAING REGION

A military junta column burned six houses and abducted several villagers during a raid on Htone Bo village, Wetlet Township, Sagaing Region, according to local residents.

A 70-strong junta column raided Htone Bo village on the morning of 6 August after departing Makauk village in Shwe Bo Township.

"A father, his two sons, and a vehicle were reportedly taken from Htone Bo village, though the details remain unclear," said a member of the People's Defence Force based in Wetlet Townsh.

Most residents managed to flee to safety as the junta column entered the village. However, some villagers were trapped inside the village and detained, with several reportedly abducted by the junta troops.

Later that evening, the junta column returned to Makauk village in Shwebo Township. The whereabouts

and condition of those taken by the junta troops are still unknown, according to the local People's Defence Force member.

Htone Bo village, which is near Shwebo and Madaya townships, is situated on the bank of the Ayeyarwady River in the northeastern section of Wetlet town.

Since the junta troops stationed in Madaya Township have frequently fired heavy artillery howitzers from the western side of the town, the Wetlet Information Network has advised the residents of the villages along the riverbanks in the eastern part of Wetlet Township and along the Minwun Mountain Range to remain vigilant and cautious.

According to revolutionary forces, a military junta column that departed from Shame Ma Kar Police Station in Wetlet town raided Ngar Yae village, and killed at least four local residents on 28 July.



Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA ARRESTS 40 CIVILIANS IN HAKHA AFTER RESISTANCE AMBUSH

The junta army has arrested at least 40 civilians in Hakha, Chin State, following an ambush by local resistance forces, according to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) and the Chin Defence Force-Hakha (CDF-Hakha).

The arrests took place on the afternoon of 3 August, targeting people returning from church and others at a tea shop in town. Those detained remained in custody as of 5 August without being released.

CHRO said most of those arrested were young men, although the exact number, gender, and ages have not been confirmed. CDF-Hakha Secretary General Zar Kyone Lian also verified the detentions.

The crackdown came after a 2 August ambush, when CDF-Hakha attacked two military vehicles carrying junta soldiers and policemen around 9 pm near the CB Bank in Pyidawthar Ward. The next day, junta troops carried out retaliatory arrests across Hakha.

"We received reports of thieves and robbers operating at night, so our forces were on patrol when we encountered the junta's convoy. Whenever these incidents occur, the regime's strategy is to punish civilians, especially the youth," said Zar Kyone Lian.

One vehicle reportedly halted during the ambush while the other returned fire, possibly resulting in junta casualties. Later that night, junta forces stationed at Yone Taung strategic hill fired heavy artillery into Hakha, injuring a Christian priest and two children in the old town.

On 4 August, CHRO condemned the junta's actions, accusing the junta of violating religious freedom and deliberately targeting civilians by attacking public spaces and religious gatherings.

Analysts suggest the arrests could also be linked to recent Chin resistance operations, including the detention of junta-linked personnel.

Zar Kyone Lian confirmed that among those captured by the resistance is the provincial head of the Construction Department in Hakha, who is allegedly involved in the junta's election preparations.

CDF-Hakha has vowed to take firm action against those participating in organizing junta-led elections. Of Chin State's nine townships, only junta-controlled Hakha and Tedim are slated to hold polls. The CDF has pledged to resist, warning that the elections could further harm civilians.



TNLA WARNS TALKS WITH JUNTA UNLIKELY TO SUCCEED IF DEMAND TO RETURN TOWNS PERSISTS

The Palaung State Liberation Front/Ta'ang National Liberation Army (PSLF/TNLA) has warned that upcoming peace talks with the junta are unlikely to yield results if the regime insists on reclaiming towns currently under TNLA control.

"The junta's present position is still that townships such as Kyaukme, Nawngkhio, Mogok and Moemeik should be handed back. If they maintain that stance during the negotiations, then these talks are unlikely to produce any result. Only if the nature of the discussion changes, will they be different," PSLF/TNLA spokesperson Lway Yay Oo said at a 5 August press conference on the group's military and political situation.

The next round of talks is set for the end of August, though the exact date has not been confirmed. The negotiations will be held under Chinese mediation. They follow a previous meeting in Kunming from 28–29 April that ended without agreement.

At the Kunming talks, the junta delegation led by Lieutenant General Ko Ko Oo, head of Bureau of Special Operations 1, demanded that the TNLA

withdraw from several townships and return to the Palaung Self-Administered Zone centred on Namhsan and Mantong. The TNLA, led by Lieutenant General Tar Gu Jar, rejected the proposal.

If the junta maintains its earlier position in the upcoming talks, the TNLA says it will push for key demands, including a ceasefire with no further military advances, a complete halt to all military operations such as airstrikes, artillery shelling, drone attacks, and ground offensives, and unrestricted delivery of essential supplies and medical aid to civilians in conflict zones.

The TNLA captured multiple towns during Operation 1027, including Mogok in Mandalay Region, and Naung Cho, Namtu, Kutkai, Namkham, Namhsan, Mantong, Monglon, Mongngawt, Moemeik, Kyaukme and Hsipaw in northern Shan State.

The junta later retook Nawngkhio, forcing the TNLA to relocate its administrative operations from the town to a safer area on 15 May before withdrawing completely. Following the takeover, junta troops advanced along the Nawngkhio–Mogok road, sparking ongoing clashes in recent days, according to the TNLA.

Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR MILITARY AIRSTRIKE ON KARENNI SCHOOL LEAVES CHILDREN INJURED AND MISSING

A military airstrike on a school in Hpasawng Township, Karen State, on 8 August injured several children and left others missing, according to the Karenni State Interim Executive Council (IEC).

The attack occurred around 9 am, when a Y-12 aircraft dropped bombs on a middle school where students were taking exams, IEC Secretary U Banyar Khun Aung told Mizzima.

"It's understood that a Y-12 aircraft was flying overhead while children were taking exams. Some are still missing - it was chaos, with students running in all directions," he said.

Initial reports confirm that at least three students were injured. The number of those missing remains unknown as many children fled in panic following the explosion. With internet access cut in Hpasawng, confirmation of casualties and missing persons remains difficult.

The targeted school has around 50 students enrolled. No active clashes were reported in the area

at the time of the strike, and the Karenni Nationalities Defense Force (KNDF) condemned the bombing as a deliberate attack on civilians.

"The Military Commission has been patrolling the Hpasawng area with a Y-12 aircraft since this morning. There is no major fighting in the area at present," a KNDF press officer said.

The last reported clashes in Hpasawng Township occurred in late June, when the Karenni Revolutionary Joint Forces launched assaults on Infantry Battalions 134 and 135. The Karenni Army announced on 3 July that it had captured Battalion 134. Battalion 135 remains under the control of the Military Commission.

Fighting continued into the first week of July but has since subsided, with no major engagements reported.

On 3 July, a Chinese-made FTC2000G fighter jet used by the Military Commission in bombing operations over Hpasawng crashed near Khe Ma Phyu village. The bodies of two pilots and wreckage were recovered at the site.

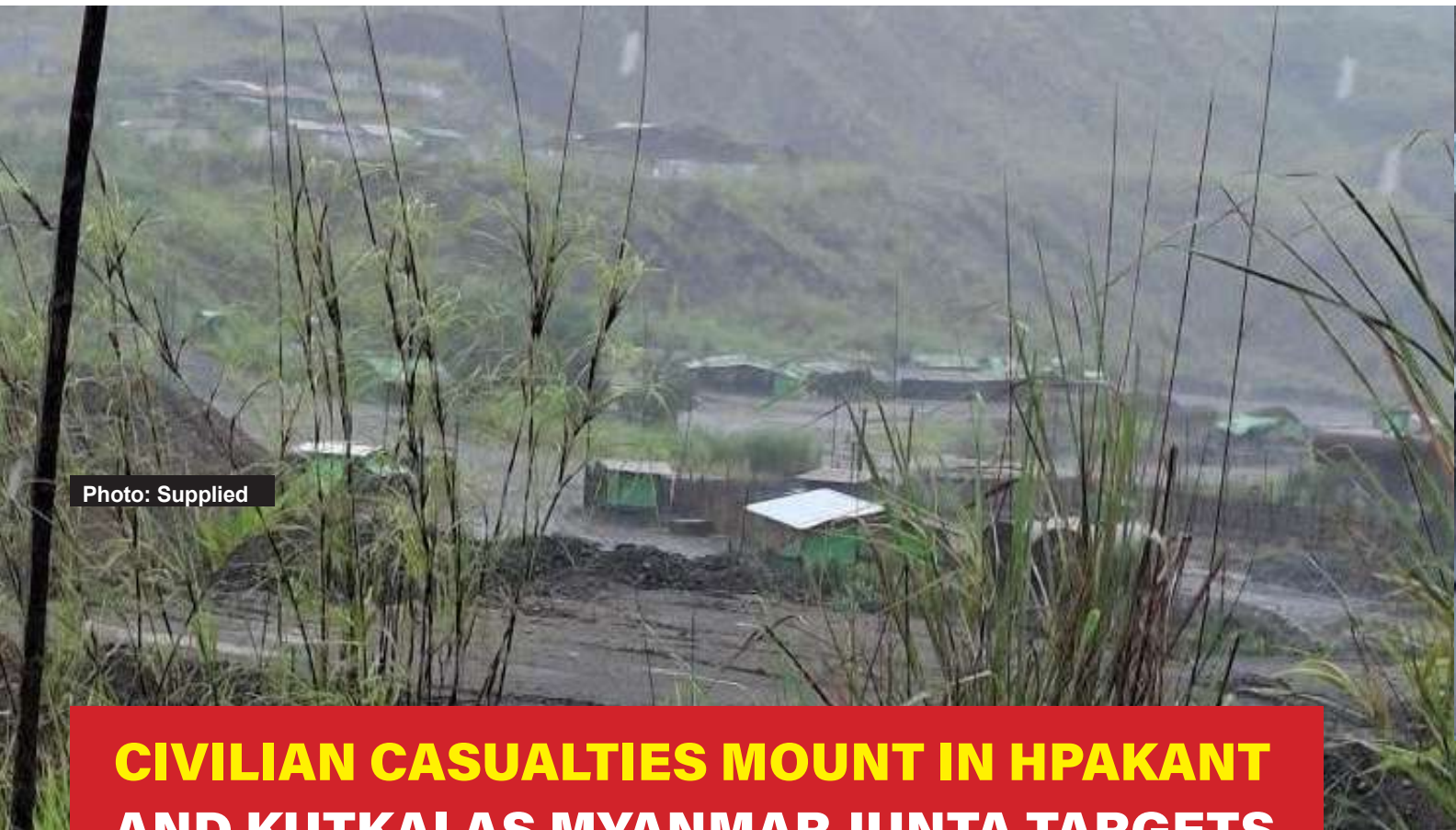


Photo: Supplied

CIVILIAN CASUALTIES MOUNT IN HPAKANT AND KUTKAI AS MYANMAR JUNTA TARGETS NON-COMBAT ZONES

Ongoing fighting in Hpakant Township, Kachin State, has led to a series of deadly attacks on civilian areas unrelated to the conflict, with at least three people killed in Myauk Phyu village between 3 and 4 August, according to local residents.

“One person died yesterday, and two men died this morning due to heavy weapon attacks by the military,” a local from Myauk Phyu told Mizzima on 4 August.

Clashes near Nyaung Pin Kone continue to intensify, prompting the junta to indiscriminately fire heavy artillery into nearby villages.

“The fighting is happening close by. Last night and even now, they have fired into unrelated villages with heavy weapons, and many civilians have been affected,” said a resident of Hpakant.

According to a 4 August statement by the Kachin Human Rights Watch (KHRW), at least 12 civilians were killed recently in Hpakant and Kutkai Township,

northern Shan State, due to attacks by the junta and unidentified armed groups.

Earlier, on 3 July, a drone strike hit a monastery in Ah Hmat Pone village, Hpakant Township, killing a woman and a man and injuring 12 others. On 31 July, an artillery shell exploded in Hmaw Si Sa village, killing two children and their mother.

In Kutkai Township, a junta airstrike on 30 July targeted the New Century Hotel, killing six people, including a child, and injuring eight others.

KHRW also reported that a man was shot dead on 10 July in front of the Sky Hotel in Maw Si Sa village by an unidentified armed group.

The rights group has called on the United Nations and international human rights organizations to urgently investigate the ongoing violence, halt attacks on civilians, and prioritize protection for communities under threat.



Damaged residence of Democratic Karen Benevolent Army Adjutant General Colonel Saw Sein Win. Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA TARGETS DKBA ADJUTANT GENERAL'S RESIDENCE IN SUICIDE DRONE STRIKE

The residence of Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) Adjutant General Colonel Saw Sein Win came under a suicide drone attack by junta forces at around 5 pm on 3 August in Wawlay Myaing Township, Myawaddy District, Karen State, according to sources close to the armed group.

No casualties were reported, but the strike caused significant damage to the house. A DKBA member said the junta used both heavy artillery and drones in the attack, describing it as a deliberate strike.

That same day, two junta fighter jets bombed the residence twice, while six kamikaze drones were reportedly launched at the site.

The incident occurred as Karen National Union (KNU)-affiliated forces continued a month-long offensive to seize a key junta-held strategic outpost near Wawlay Township.

Colonel Saw Sein Win has been known for maintaining ties with the junta, attending military-organized events in Naypyidaw, and representing the DKBA at the junta's peace forum from 25 to 27 June.

A Karen political analyst suggested the attack may be retaliation for the DKBA's recent shift in stance.

"General Saw San Aung recently said elections would not be allowed in DKBA-controlled areas. The DKBA has also stopped providing logistics, food supplies, and transport support to the junta – cooperation that ended earlier this year," the analyst said.

The junta has previously targeted DKBA positions and personnel. On 16 July, junta forces bombed the DKBA Central Security Battalion 3 headquarters near Wawlay Myaing and launched suicide drone attacks on an online scam compound allegedly under DKBA protection. On 21 January 2023, an airstrike hit the home of Major A Wan, a tactical officer from the DKBA's No. 2 Division, in Kyein Chaung village, Kyainseikgyi Township.

The DKBA was among the ethnic armed groups that signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) on 3 November 2011 with the civilian-led government under President U Thein Sein.



Damaged houses in Mindat. Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR MILITARY LAUNCHES FRESH AIRSTRIKES ON MINDAT AFTER MARTIAL LAW DECLARATION

The military junta carried out two airstrikes on Mindat town in Myanmar's Chin State around 8:50 am on 3 August, just days after Senior General Min Aung Hlaing declared martial law across dozens of townships reclaimed by resistance forces.

The bombings damaged two buildings and eight houses but caused no casualties, according to the Mindat Township Interim People's Administration Team.

Mindat is one of seven Chin State townships placed under martial law on 31 July, alongside Paletwa, Matupi, Kanpetlet, Tonzang, Falam, and Thantlang. Only Hakha and Tedim were excluded.

"By declaring martial law in an area they haven't yet controlled, it signals their intention to launch an offensive to retake it," said Salai Htet Ni, spokesperson for the Chin National Army (CNA).

He also called on the public to oppose the junta's proposed election plans, warning that the regime intends to hold a vote only after reestablishing full territorial control.

Following the military's declaration, roads in Kanpetlet Township were closed for security reasons, according to an announcement from the CDF-Kanpetlet Khonu Battalion on 3 August. The group also banned travel, cross-border trade, and transport of goods by motorbike through Gate No. 1 and Gate No. 2 from 4 to 10 August, except in emergencies.

The Mindat Township Interim People's Administration Team reported that the junta conducted 18 airstrikes in the township from January to 11 June 2025. These attacks killed 10 civilians, injured 20, and damaged over 100 religious, government, and private buildings.



Photo: Supplied

15,000 FLEE PALE TOWNSHIP AS MYANMAR JUNTA LAUNCHES OFFENSIVE TO RETAKE POLICE STATION

Fierce clashes between the junta's forces and resistance groups have forced around 15,000 civilians from Pale Township to flee their homes, according to resistance sources.

The mass displacement began after junta troops launched an operation to recapture the Kandaunt police station, seized by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and allied resistance forces on 19 June.

"We have to keep our distance from the airstrikes and shelling. There are no official displacement camps, so we've built makeshift tents in the forest to protect ourselves from the constant rain. Many people are now sick with the flu," said an internally displaced person from Pale Township.

A PLA fighter reported that junta forces are pushing toward Kandaunt village and are actively engaged in fighting with resistance troops, suffering heavy casualties on their side. To retake the outpost, the junta is employing both ground assaults and airstrikes,

displacing thousands of civilians in surrounding areas.

"The airstrikes are making life extremely difficult for the local people. We urge civilians to stay away from conflict zones. There are now large numbers of displaced villagers scattered across the area, and it's becoming increasingly challenging to deliver aid to them," said Ko Nay Min, a revolutionary fighter, speaking to Mizzima.

Villages affected by the fighting include Kandaunt, Maesi, Thayatkan, Thahlaingkan, Nyaungyingon, Tharsi, Taungywarthit, Thayethla, Aungchanthar, Kyaungwundu, Ohnhnauk, and Koepin. Residents have been on the move for several days, seeking refuge in forests, makeshift shelters, and other areas far from the conflict.

Local sources say the humanitarian situation is worsening rapidly as displaced families struggle to find food, clean water, and medicine while heavy rains continue to pound the region.

FLASH FLOODS KILL 6 IN MYANMAR-CHINA BORDER TOWN OF LAIZA

Monsoon floods in a rebel-held Myanmar town on the country's mountainous border with China have killed six people, a spokesman for the armed group controlling the area said 6 August.

The northern town of Laiza bordering China's Yunnan province has reported flash flooding since early Monday, when muddy waist-high waters began to stream through the streets.

Laiza is a stronghold of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), which has for decades commanded control of its own ethnic enclave and emerged as one of the most powerful factions in Myanmar's civil war.

"A lot of water flowed down the mountain to the river," said KIA spokesman Naw Bu.

"The flow of water was too strong and destroyed areas surrounding the river," he added. "Six people were killed in the flood and 100 houses were destroyed."

Rescue operation had begun on Wednesday, he said, but were being hampered by road blockages.

"All of the roads have been damaged and the roads disappeared in some areas," said one resident, who declined to be named for security reasons. "The water rose suddenly."

More than 3.5 million people are currently displaced in Myanmar amid the civil war sparked by a 2021 coup, many sheltering in temporary camps, leaving them exposed to the elements.

The resident said flooding was "terrible" around local camps for the displaced where some shelters had been swept away and people had been wounded.

Myanmar is in the midst of its monsoon season when daily deluges are common.

But scientists say hazardous weather events are becoming more frequent and severe around the world as a result of human-driven climate change.

AFP



Flooded home in Nyaunglebin.
Photo: Supplied

FLOODS SUBMERGE NEARLY 140 VILLAGES IN NYAUNGLEBIN DISTRICT

The Central Committee of the Karen National Union (KNU) reported on 5 August that nearly 140 villages in Nyaunglebin District, Bago Region, have been submerged due to severe flooding.

Continuous heavy rain since 24 July and the overflowing Sittaung River have inundated villages, damaged more than 30,000 acres of paddy fields, and forced the temporary closure of 37 schools, the KNU said.

In Kyaukkyi Township, flooding has affected 5,495 houses and 28,162 people across 80 villages in 24 village tracts, with many areas still underwater, according to the KNU Central Committee.

In Mu Township, 57 villages have been submerged since 23 July. Fourteen houses were swept away, 4,250 acres of paddy fields inundated, and 18 schools closed, the group added.

In the last week of July, incessant rainfall triggered flooding across multiple areas in Myanmar, including Madauk, Taungoo, Shwegyin, Nyaunglebin and Oktwin in Bago Region; Tachilek, Kalaw and Pindaya in Shan State; and Hpa-an and Myawaddy in Karen State.



Photo: Supplied

HEAVY RAINS TRIGGER DEADLY LANDSLIDES AND FLOODS IN THANDAUNGGYI, KAREN STATE

Heavy rainfall and mountain runoff have caused severe flooding and landslides in Thandaunggyi Township, Kayin State, killing at least eight people, including a two-year-old child, and leaving others missing, according to local residents.

Since 4 August, torrential rains have swollen streams in Poekhaylaw, Thauk Yay Khap, and Pathi, while triggering landslides in Wards 1, 3, and 4, as well as in the Thandaung 13- and 14-mile areas near Naw Bu Baw Su Taung Mountain.

Over three consecutive days – on 4, 5, and 6 August – landslides claimed eight lives, with some entire families among the victims.

“Around Thandaunggyi town and the roads linking nearby villages, there have been landslides, collapsed bridges, and extensive farmland destruction. Yesterday, four people died; this morning, another four, including children. We still don’t know how many are missing. No aid has arrived yet, so people are surviving with whatever they can manage themselves,” a local resident told Mizzima.

Floodwaters have damaged key infrastructure, including the Sike Pyo Yay bridge near Thandaung

Myothit High School and the Thauk Ye Khet bridge connecting Thandaunggyi to Htee Pu Che and Kaya Che villages. Several roads have been left impassable.

More than 20 houses have been destroyed – some swept away by floodwaters, others buried in landslides. While some residents have evacuated to safer areas, others remain trapped, urgently in need of food, drinking water, and emergency assistance.

“This year’s flooding is worse than anything we’ve seen before. The damage from the earlier earthquake has made it worse this time. Even this morning, it’s still pouring, and the runoff from the mountains is relentless,” a local woman said.

Thandaunggyi Township borders Taungoo Township in Bago Region, Hpruso and Hpasawng in Kayah State, and Pekhon in Shan State. It is an active conflict zone, with ongoing clashes between the junta and resistance forces. Locals say the junta has blocked supplies and medicines from reaching Thandaunggyi and the Karenni region via the Taungoo–Yado road, further complicating relief efforts.



The late Myint Swe

MYANMAR'S ACTING PRESIDENT MYINT SWE DIES FOLLOWING CRITICAL ILLNESS

The Myanmar military commission's acting president, Myint Swe, who had been in intensive care due to a severe neurological condition, died at 8:28 am on 7 August, according to an official announcement by the military-run MRTV.

His death came two days after the junta revealed on 5 August that Myint Swe had been receiving intensive care since 24 July at the military's 1,000-bed Hospital No. 2. Although reports of his death surfaced on 6 August, the junta initially dismissed them as false.

Myint Swe had been suffering from Parkinson's disease and related neurological complications since early 2023.

He reportedly received treatment in both Singapore and Yangon throughout 2024, including care from a special team led by junta Health Minister Dr. Thet Khaing Win. After being discharged from hospital, his condition failed to improve and he had been under home care since July 2024, according to the military commission.

In July 2025, he was readmitted to hospital following a significant decline in his condition, which included weight loss, fever, poor appetite, and reduced mental alertness.

Following his medical leave, junta leader Senior General Min Aung Hlaing assumed the role of acting president. Earlier, in April 2024, the junta had also removed Vice President Henry Van Thio from office, consolidating Min Aung Hlaing's control over the government.

Myint Swe, a graduate of the 15th intake of the Defence Services Academy, rose through the ranks to become a Lieutenant General.

He served as the Chief Minister of Yangon Region under the Thein Sein administration and played a central role in the violent crackdown on the 2007 Saffron Revolution.

Appointed vice president by the military delegation in parliament during the National League for Democracy (NLD) government, Myint Swe assumed the position of acting president during the 1 February 2021 coup.

Since then, he largely remained out of public view, appearing mainly during the military commission's periodic extensions of the state of emergency.



APPLICATIONS FOR THE UK GOVERNMENT'S CHEVENING SCHOLARSHIPS NOW OPEN TO MYANMAR STUDENTS

Applications for the UK Government's prestigious Chevening Scholarship to study in the UK are open as of 5 August until 7 October at 6:30pm (MMT), according to the UK Embassy.

The programme offers talented young people from across Myanmar the opportunity of a fully funded Master's degree at a UK university.

Every year, 13, on average, of the brightest and most talented Myanmar students are awarded a Chevening Scholarship. Recent Chevening scholars have ranged from studying health and education to development and cultural heritage management. There are over 200 Myanmar alumni who have made a positive change applying the skills and experiences acquired from their studies and time in the UK to their communities.

For more than 40 years, Chevening has attracted hundreds of thousands of applications globally. Successful applicants are individuals who can clearly demonstrate outstanding leadership, influence, and networking skills through compelling, evidence-based examples.

Andrew Jackson, Head of Mission, British Embassy Yangon, said: "I have recently arrived in Myanmar and am delighted one of my first tasks is to welcome

applications to Chevening. I am already impressed with the tenacity and talent of Myanmar's young people.

"If you are reading this and are curious about studying in the UK, please do apply. There is no such thing as a 'typical' scholar or 'typical' course. I'm continually inspired by the dedication and drive of the Chevening community, and I look forward to seeing what the next generation of Myanmar scholars will bring to their communities and to their chosen place to study in the UK."

Prospective candidates can submit their applications via chevening.org/apply. For more information on the Myanmar Chevening community, including upcoming information sessions, please follow our UK in Myanmar Facebook page: www.facebook.com/ukinmyanmar

Before applying, candidates are strongly encouraged to review the resources available at chevening.org/guidance and assess whether they are ready to present a competitive application.

Since the programme started in 1983, over 60,000 professionals have advanced their careers through Chevening, demonstrating the UK's commitment to developing the leaders of tomorrow.



Indian Naval personnel.
Photo: AFP

INDIA'S MARITIME VISION: FROM SAGAR TO INDO-PACIFIC TO MAHASAGAR

SUCHITRA DURAI

FORMER AMBASSADOR OF INDIA TO THAILAND

A decade ago, on 12 March 2015, while commissioning in Mauritius the gleaming Offshore Patrol Vessel Barracuda, built in Garden Reach, Kolkata to Mauritian specifications, Prime Minister Narendra Modi outlined India's policy towards the Indian Ocean Region (IOR): SAGAR – Security and Growth for All in the Region. The Indian Ocean, he pointed out, was critical to the future of the world bearing two-thirds of the world's oil shipments, one third of its bulk cargo and half of its container traffic. The forty states that are on its littoral host nearly 40% of the world's population.

SAGAR policy emphasized five aspects: safety and security of the Indian mainland and island territories and ensuring a safe, secure and stable IOR; deepen economic and security cooperation with friends in the IOR particularly maritime neighbours and island states through capacity building; collective action and cooperation; seek a more integrated and cooperative future towards sustainable development for all; and increased maritime engagement in the IOR as the primary responsibility for the stability and prosperity of IOR lay with those living in the region. If SAGAR was the external outreach of India, in the national context it was complemented by the Sagarmala port-led development initiative.

For long, India has been criticized for its continental bias, that it was focused on its northern and north west frontiers to the neglect of its vast maritime interests. However, this has been changing. Since the launch of its Look East policy in 1992 which evolved into the proactive Act East policy in 2015, India has reclaimed its maritime legacy. PM Modi recently released a special coin commemorating 1,000 years of Emperor Rajendra Chola's naval achievements.

The Indian navy has been in the forefront of maritime diplomacy through capacity building initiatives, joint exercises, plurilateral conferences, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) and Search and Rescue (SAR) activities. The 2004 Tsunami established India's credentials in disaster relief operations. India came to be recognized as the first responder and net security provider in the IOR, particularly to states in its neighbourhood. India's prompt assistance to Myanmar in the aftermath of the devastating Cyclone Nargis in 2008 and being the first country to deliver drinking water to the Maldives after a freshwater crisis in that country in end 2014 consolidated that image. In March, 2025 India mounted a huge relief and rescue Operation Brahma to earthquake hit Myanmar.

India has now graduated to becoming a “preferred security partner” in the Indo-Pacific region forming defence partnerships that not only include joint exercises and capacity building but also exports of defence equipment either as a grant or under a defence Line of Credit at the request of the partner state.

Trilateral maritime security cooperation with Sri Lanka and Maldives which began in 2011, has extended to other Indian Ocean states including Mauritius and Bangladesh with Seychelles as observer under the Colombo Security Conclave that now has a charter and a secretariat in Colombo. The Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) which began as an initiative of the Indian navy in 2008 is an inclusive platform to discuss maritime issues and to work out effective response mechanisms. IONS has 25 participating countries from South Asia, West Asia, Africa, Southeast Asia and European countries with Indian Ocean territories as well as nine observers and a rotating chair (India will take over as chair, at the end of 2025). MILAN is a biennial multinational exercise hosted by Indian navy in harmony with India’s vision of SAGAR and the Act East policy.

A crucial facet of maritime security is enhanced maritime domain awareness. Towards this, India has also been pursuing white shipping agreements with several countries (22 have been concluded till now) and established a state-of-the-art Information Fusion Centre (IFC – IOR) in Gurugram that facilitates sharing of maritime information among member states.

India has a long history of development partnership going back to the period prior to its Independence. Its approach to development partnership has been shaped by its independence struggle, solidarity with other colonized and developing countries and the inspiring leadership of Mahatma Gandhi who declared that “my patriotism includes the good of mankind in general”. It is thus that India has been sharing its developmental experiences and technical expertise in a spirit of “Vasudhaivakutumbakam” (the ancient belief that the World is One Family). As PM Modi stated in his address to the Ugandan Parliament in 2018, “Our developmental partnership will be guided by your priorities, it will be on terms that will be comfortable for you, that will liberate your potential and not constrain your future..”. The Indian model of developmental

cooperation is comprehensive and involves multiple instruments including grant-in-aid, concessional lines of credit, capacity building and technical assistance. Above all, it is unconditional, transparent, sustainable and financially viable.

In June, 2018 at the Shangri La conference, PM Modi outlined India’s Indo-Pacific vision. For India, the Indo-Pacific stands for a free, open, inclusive region that “embraces us all in a common pursuit of progress and prosperity”. He emphasized ASEAN centrality, a rules-based order, freedom of navigation, unimpeded commerce and peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with international law. There is great synergy between the Indian approach and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. In November 2019 at the East Asia Summit in Bangkok, India launched the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) a coherent initiative comprising seven pillars of practical cooperation built on the SAGAR vision. India’s active participation in the QUAD (Australia, India, Japan and US) is part of our Indo-Pacific vision. Earlier, in 2014, India established FIPIIC (Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation), a strategic initiative for strengthening diplomatic and economic engagement with islands in the Pacific Ocean.

It was in 2023, during India’s presidency of the G-20, whose leitmotif was inclusivity, that the African Union was invited to join the grouping. India’s presidency, inter alia, revived multilateralism, amplified the voice of the global south and championed development. India has hosted three editions of the Voice of the Global South summit since then.

Ten years after SAGAR, during an official visit to Mauritius in 2025, PM Modi announced MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions), an updated doctrine. If SAGAR is the sea, then MAHASAGAR denotes “ocean” in Hindi and several other Indian languages. MAHASAGAR marks a strategic evolution from a regional focus on the Indian Ocean to a global maritime vision, with particular emphasis on the global south. PM Modi’s recent engagements with Mauritius, Maldives, Trinidad and Tobago, Ghana and now the Philippines are aligned with the MAHASAGAR vision.



Photo: AFP

HIGHER US TARIFFS KICK IN FOR DOZENS OF TRADING PARTNERS INCLUDING MYANMAR

The United States began charging higher tariffs on goods from dozens of trading partners on 7 August, in a major escalation of President Donald Trump's drive to reshape global commerce in America's favor.

Shortly before the new levies kicked in, Washington separately announced it would double Indian tariffs to 50 percent and hit many semiconductor imports from around the world with a 100-percent levy.

As an executive order signed last week by Trump took effect, US import duties rose from 10 percent to levels between 15 percent and 41 percent for a list of trading partners.

Many imports from economies including the European Union, Japan and South Korea now face a 15-percent tariff, even with deals struck with Washington to avert steeper threatened levies.

But others like India face a 25-percent duty -- to be doubled in three weeks to 50 percent -- while Myanmar, Laos and Syria face staggering levels at either 40 percent or 41 percent.

Switzerland's government, which failed to convince Trump not to impose a stinging 39-percent tariff, was

set to hold an extraordinary meeting later Thursday.

Taking to his Truth Social platform just after midnight, Trump posted: "IT'S MIDNIGHT!!! BILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN TARIFFS ARE NOW FLOWING INTO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA!"

The latest wave of "reciprocal" duties, aimed at addressing trade practices Washington deems unfair, broadens the measures Trump has imposed since returning to the presidency.

'No charge'

On the eve of his latest salvo, he doubled planned duties on Indian goods to 50 percent, citing New Delhi's continued purchase of Russian oil.

The new levy -- up from 25 percent now -- would take effect in three weeks.

The Federation of Indian Export Organisations called the move a "severe setback for Indian exports, with nearly 55 percent of our shipments to the US market directly affected."

For New Delhi, one of the main sticking points

has been Washington's demand to access India's vast agricultural and dairy market.

"We will not compromise with the interests of our farmers, our dairy sector, our fishermen," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Thursday.

Trump's order also threatened penalties on other countries that "directly or indirectly" import Russian oil, a key revenue source for Moscow's war in Ukraine.

Washington has already separately stuck tariffs on sector-specific imports such as steel, autos and pharmaceuticals.

Trump said Wednesday he also planned an "approximately 100 percent tariff" on semiconductor imports, but with "no charge" for companies investing in the United States or committed to do so.

Shares in Taiwanese chip-making giant TSMC surged as Taipei said it would be exempt, but some other Asian manufacturers took a beating.

Companies and industry groups warn the new levies will severely hurt smaller American businesses, while economists caution that they could fuel inflation and hit growth.

With the dust settling on countries' tariff levels, at least for now, Georgetown University professor Marc Busch expects US businesses to pass along more of the bill to consumers.

'This will matter'

An earlier 90-day pause in these higher "reciprocal" tariffs gave importers time to stock up, he said.

But although the wait-and-see strategy led businesses to absorb more of the tariff burden initially, inventories are depleting and it is unlikely they will do this indefinitely, he told AFP.

"With back-to-school shopping just weeks away, this will matter politically," said Busch, an international trade policy expert.

The tariffs leave lingering questions for partners that have negotiated deals with Trump recently.

Tokyo and Washington, for example, appear at odds over key details of their pact, in particular on when lower levies on Japanese cars will take place.

Generally, US auto imports now face a 25-percent duty under a sector-specific order. Toyota has cut its full-year profit forecast by 14 percent because of the tariffs.

Japan and the United States also appear to differ on whether the "reciprocal" tolls of 15 percent on other Japanese goods would be on top of existing levies or -- like the EU -- be capped at that level.

China and the United States, meanwhile, currently have a shaky truce in their standoff but that is due to expire on August 12.

Chinese exports to the United States tumbled 21.7 percent last month, official data showed, while those to the European Union jumped 9.2 percent and to Southeast Asia by 16.6 percent.

The EU is seeking a carveout from tariffs for its key wine industry.

In a recent industry letter addressed to Trump, the US Wine Trade Alliance and others urged the sector's exclusion from tolls, saying: "Wine sales account for up to 60 percent of gross margins of full-service restaurants."

Trump has separately targeted Brazil over the trial of his right-wing ally, former president Jair Bolsonaro, who is accused of planning a coup.

US tariffs on various Brazilian goods surged from 10 percent to 50 percent Wednesday, but broad exemptions including for orange juice and civil aircraft are seen as softening the blow. Still, key products like Brazilian coffee, beef and sugar are hit.

AFP



Demonstrators in Tel Aviv, Israel.
Photo: AFP

THOUSANDS PROTEST IN TEL AVIV AGAINST ISRAELI GOVERNMENT MOVE TO EXPAND GAZA WAR

Thousands took to the streets in Tel Aviv last Saturday to call for an end to the war in Gaza, a day after the Israeli government vowed to expand the conflict and capture Gaza City.

Demonstrators waved signs and held up pictures of hostages still being held in the Palestinian territory as they called on the government to secure their release.

AFP journalists at the rally estimated the number of attendees to be in the tens of thousands, while a group representing the families of hostages said as many as 100,000 people participated.

Authorities did not provide an official estimate for the size of the crowd, though it dwarfed other recent anti-war rallies.

"We will end with a direct message to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu: if you invade parts of

Gaza and the hostages are murdered, we will pursue you in the town squares, in election campaigns and at every time and place," Shahar Mor Zahiro, the relative of a slain hostage, told AFP.

On Friday, Netanyahu's security cabinet greenlighted plans for a major operation to seize Gaza City, triggering a wave of domestic and international criticism.

Foreign powers, including some of Israel's allies, have been pushing for a negotiated ceasefire to secure the hostages' return and help alleviate a humanitarian crisis in the Strip.

Despite the backlash and rumours of dissent from Israeli military top brass, Netanyahu has remained defiant over the decision.

In a post on social media late Friday, Netanyahu said "we are not going to occupy Gaza -- we are going to free Gaza from Hamas".

The premier has faced regular protests over the course of 22 months of war, with many rallies calling for the government to strike a deal after past truces saw hostages exchanged for Palestinian prisoners in Israeli custody.

Out of 251 hostages captured during Hamas's 2023 attack, 49 are still being held in Gaza, including 27 the military says are dead.

'A new crime'

The Palestinian Authority (PA) on Saturday lambasted Israel's plan to expand its operations in Gaza.

According to a statement carried by the official Palestinian news agency Wafa, PA president Mahmud Abbas said the plan "constitutes a new crime", and stressed "the urgent need to take action to stop it immediately".

He also emphasised "the importance of enabling the State of Palestine to assume its full responsibilities in the Gaza Strip".

In the same meeting that approved the Gaza City plan, the security cabinet adopted a set of principles for ending the war in Gaza that included establishing a new "administration that is neither Hamas nor the Palestinian Authority".

The PA, conceived as a first step towards a Palestinian state, exercises limited administration over

parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank, but does not have a presence in Hamas-run Gaza.

A statement issued Saturday by the foreign ministers of Italy, Australia, Germany, New Zealand and the United Kingdom again criticised the decision to occupy Gaza City.

"This will exacerbate the catastrophic humanitarian situation, endanger the lives of hostages, and increase the risk of a mass exodus of civilians," they said.

Russia also condemned the Israeli plan to take control of Gaza City in a statement Saturday.

Implementing such plans "risks worsening the already dramatic situation in the Palestinian enclave, which shows all the signs of a humanitarian disaster", said a foreign ministry statement.

Gaza's civil defence agency said at least 37 people were killed by Israeli fire across the territory on Saturday, including 30 civilians who were waiting to collect aid.

Israel's offensive has killed more than 61,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's health ministry, figures the United Nations says are reliable.

Hamas's 2023 attack on Israel -- which triggered the war -- resulted in the deaths of 1,219 people, according to an AFP tally based on official figures.

AFP



THE RESISTANCE WILL NOT BE DAMMED

“I focus on research that's mostly relevant for climate resilience, and I look at Myanmar as the most interesting and important case.”

Kyungmee Kim, an associate researcher in the Climate Change and Risk Programme at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, brings a substantive level academic, political, and emotional engagement to her work on Myanmar. Speaking with the Insight Myanmar podcast from the International Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, she discusses the convergence of extractive industries, conflict, environmental injustice, and climate vulnerability in Myanmar.

Kim's initial research for her PhD focused on community resistance to hydropower dams in Myanmar's ethnic minority regions, primarily in Karen and Chin areas. While these regions are rich in hydropower potential due to their river systems, they have also been historically marginalized and subject to long-running armed conflict. That dual reality—resource abundance alongside political vulnerability—makes them prime targets for state-backed, extractive infrastructure projects that often proceed without local consultation or consent. While large-scale hydropower is frequently presented as a clean energy solution, Kim highlighted how, in these cases, it is fundamentally just an extractive industry that deepens environmental and social injustices; affected communities face displacement, cultural loss, and ecological degradation,

all under the banner of “renewable development.” Kim's research underscores the need to critically interrogate who benefits from such projects and who bears the cost.

One of the most illustrative cases Kim discusses is the Myitsone Dam project, initially negotiated in secret between China Power Investment and Myanmar's military government in the early 2000s. It was planned for the confluence of the Mali and N'Mai Rivers in Kachin State, an area that holds ecological, cultural and spiritual significance. Amazingly, the dam project only came to light by accident, when someone stumbled upon a Japanese engineer's project booklet that had accidentally been left in a tea shop! Once the impact of the dam became clear, activists translated the documents, raised awareness, and organized to stop the project from moving forward. Eventually, that localized resistance evolved into a broader, nationwide campaign to “Save the Irrawaddy,” as the confluence of the two rivers also happens to be the source of the Irrawaddy River, which runs through the country's heartland. This strongly resonated with the Bamar majority, due to the river's historical and symbolic role as “the mother of the country.”

The movement also tapped into latent, anti-Chinese sentiment stemming from its longtime backing of Myanmar's military regime. Kim notes how the twin narratives of environmental justice and national identity fused to create a powerful, collective message. The dam's suspension, surprisingly declared by Thein Sein, became a landmark case for Myanmar, and also caused Chinese investors to reconsider how they could better engage with local stakeholders in other countries in carrying out their many planned investment projects.

CATCH THE PODCAST

Read more and listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast here:

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2025/7/28/episode-372-the-resistance-will-not-be-dammed>



MYANMAR JUNTA TIGHTENS GRIP AHEAD OF PLANNED DECEMBER ELECTIONS

During the past week, Myanmar's military junta intensified its hold on power through a series of internal changes and legal measures, underscoring its determination to maintain control ahead of elections slated for December.

On August 5, the newly formed State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC) reinstated sweeping powers for security forces to conduct warrantless home raids, make arrests without witnesses, and intercept private communications. The measures – rescinded briefly earlier this year – also permit the seizure or destruction of personal correspondence. Rights advocates say the move further erodes civil liberties in a country already under severe political repression since the February 2021 coup.

In a separate consolidation of authority, the National Defence and Security Council appointed Union Minister 1 for the President's Office Tin Aung San as National Security Advisor and Union Minister at the President's Office 1. The role gives him direct oversight of security policy and coordination with the NSPC, placing one of the junta's most trusted figures at the centre of the military's governing structure. Analysts say the dual post enhances his influence over both administrative and security apparatuses.

Meanwhile, the absence of Admiral Moe Aung – former commander-in-chief of the Myanmar Navy –

from key government functions and appointment lists has fuelled speculation that he has been removed from his posts. No official announcement has been made, but observers believe the move could indicate internal reshuffling or a shift in business-aligned factions within the armed forces' upper ranks.

These developments come just days after the junta formally ended a three-year state of emergency, dissolved the State Administration Council, and announced the transition to the SSPC framework. While the military portrays these moves as steps toward a "multi-party democracy," critics inside and outside Myanmar argue they are designed to entrench military dominance under a veneer of electoral legitimacy.

Japan and other foreign governments have expressed concern over the credibility of the planned elections, calling for the release of political detainees – including ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi – before any vote takes place.

With political opposition suppressed, internet freedoms curtailed, and military reshuffles underway, the junta's actions this week suggest the December polls will occur under conditions heavily weighted in its favour.



MYANMAR REACTS TO ACTING PRESIDENT U MYINT SWE'S DEATH

This week, discussions on Facebook and news-sharing groups in Myanmar have been dominated by the death of Acting President U Myint Swe, who passed away on August 7 after a prolonged illness.

The announcement, made by the military junta, confirmed that a state funeral will take place and a period of national mourning will be observed.

Across social media, reactions are emerging quickly. Pro-democracy pages point out that Myint

Swe was primarily a figurehead under junta rule and was overshadowed by Min Aung Hlaing. Some users express concern about the further centralization of power, while others comment on the absence he maintained from public life since the coup.

In one comment thread, a user wrote: "His death will not change anything, power stays with the generals."

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Analysis & Insight



DIGITAL MAGAZINE

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