

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



SYSTEMATIC TORTURE

Myanmar junta beating,
shocking and raping prisoners,
according to UN report

WFP urges critical aid for starving civilians in Rakhine State

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DIGITAL MAGAZINE

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

SHAM DEMOCRACY IN MYANMAR

Myanmar junta chief Min Aung Hlaing's pledge to hold an election "by any means necessary" in Myanmar is a calculated attempt to secure political legitimacy for a military regime that has faced widespread domestic and international condemnation since seizing power in a coup in February 2021. By orchestrating an election amidst violent conflict, political repression, and ongoing civil unrest, the military is attempting to manufacture a veneer of democratic process to legitimize its continued rule. As part of this process, the State Administration Council (SAC) has been dissolved and replaced by the State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC).

The goal of the elections – set to run at the end of December and into January – is not to restore democratic governance, but to reinforce the junta's authority while appearing to fulfill the promise of constitutional rule. The general's insistence that at least half of the country's parliamentary seats be filled reflects a symbolic target, aimed at creating the illusion of participation and progress, even in the absence of genuine democratic conditions.

Since the military takeover, Min Aung Hlaing and his junta have systematically dismantled the country's democratic institutions. The National League for Democracy (NLD), which won a landslide victory in the 2020 election, was declared invalid by the military, its leaders imprisoned or forced into hiding. Aung San Suu Kyi, the country's most prominent civilian leader, has been sentenced to decades in prison on what many view as politically motivated charges. Any future election conducted under these circumstances would likely exclude legitimate opposition, be overseen by a regime with a clear interest in the outcome, and take place in an environment of fear

and coercion. Far from signaling a return to democracy, it would serve to formalize and extend authoritarian rule.

Min Aung Hlaing's election push can also be seen as an attempt to gain international recognition or at least weaken the diplomatic isolation that has followed the coup. By holding elections, even flawed ones, the military may hope to convince neighbouring countries, regional blocs like ASEAN, or other international actors that Myanmar is moving toward stability.

In reality, however, conditions on the ground suggest otherwise. Armed resistance against the military has intensified, with ethnic armed groups and People's Defence Forces engaging in widespread conflict. The economy is in decline, basic services have collapsed in many areas, and millions have been displaced. Holding an election under such conditions cannot produce a legitimate or representative outcome.

Critics argue that the general's emphasis on holding a vote "by any means necessary" is deeply revealing. It signals not a commitment to democratic values, but a willingness to use any available method – coercion, propaganda, or outright manipulation – to secure a result favourable to the regime.

Rather than resolving Myanmar's political crisis, such an election risks further entrenching military power and deepening public mistrust. In essence, Min Aung Hlaing is trying to rebrand an illegal and violent seizure of power as a lawful transfer of authority through a manipulated electoral process. The move is not about giving power back to the people – it is about preserving the military's grip on the state while wearing the mask of democracy.

EDITORIAL

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**Managing Director and
Editor In-Chief**
Soe Myint

Managing Editor
Thaw Zin Tun

Network Engineer
Wai Min Han

Video and Graphics Editor
Wai Yan Shein Zaw

General Manager
No No Lin

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published by
Mizzima s.r.o**

Address:
Salvatorska 931/8,
Stare Mesto, 11000,
Praha 1, Czech Republic

Contact email:
sm@mizzima.com

Phone/Signal/WhatsApp
+420 608 616688

CONTENTS **mizzima** WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight

3 EDITORIAL

6 SYSTEMATIC TORTURE - Myanmar junta beating, shocking and raping prisoners, according to UN report

10 ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR Analysis & Insight

14 CORE DEVELOPMENTS

Burma Resistance Forces Receive
Training in Combat Forensics:
Documenting Junta Atrocities –
Antonio Graceffo

17 Min Aung Hlaing vows to hold Myanmar election 'by any means' to secure 50 percent of parliamentary seats

18 International IDEA calls for global rejection of Myanmar junta's elections

20 IIMM investigates Myanmar Air Force chain of command over deadly airstrikes

21 Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun pressed for urgent UNSC action on Myanmar's ongoing crisis

23 Myanmar junta launches simultaneous offensives in Bhamo and Hpakant, heavy fighting with KIA intensifies

24 General Gum Maw says Myanmar junta twice proposed online talks with KIO, both rejected

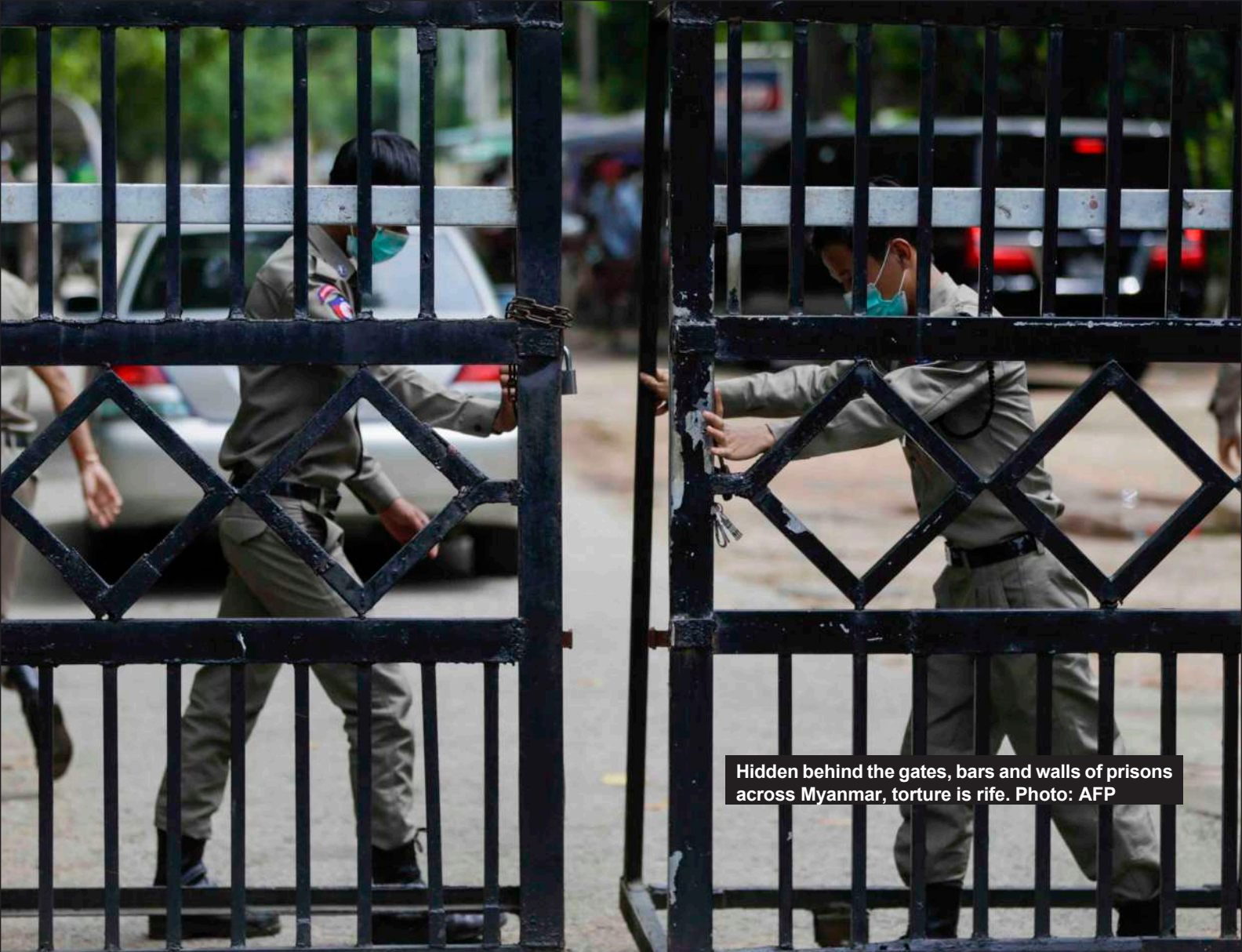
25 Human rights groups warn Trump aid cuts embolden Myanmar military



- 27** 14 Myanmar junta soldiers killed in clash with resistance forces in Yebyu Township
- 28** Over 10,000 flee Paungbyin Township as Myanmar junta naval convoy arrives from Hkamti
- 29** Sittwe man dies following detention and torture by Myanmar junta over alleged AA ties
- 30** 5,000 flee Monywa Township as Myanmar junta troops advance and fortify positions
- 31** Chin groups reject Arakan Army administration of Paletwa Township after district upgrade
- 33** NUG allocates over 567 million Kyats in humanitarian aid in July
- 34** Six civilians killed as Myanmar junta fighter jets strike trapped vehicles in Sagaing Township
- 35** Arakan Army says Rakhine towns unlikely to be returned to Myanmar junta
- 36** Myanmar junta uses paramotors to bomb Mandalay Region village
- 37** TNLA says civilians killed in Myanmar junta airstrike on Mogok monastery
- 38** Aid cuts put Myanmar refugees at grave risk, says HRW
- 40** WFP urges critical aid for starving civilians in Rakhine State
- 41** Myanmar photo exhibition being held in Bangkok
- 42** Waiting for Battles to Kick Off – Civilians and Soldiers in a Holding Pattern – Antonio Graceffo
- 45** **ASIAN & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**
Putin and Zelensky set for peace summit after Trump talks
- 47** UN warns Russia, Israel of conflict sex crimes listing risk
- 49** **COLUMNS**
INSIGHT MYANMAR – Echoes in the Absence
- 50** **JUNTA WATCH**
- 51** **SOCIAL WATCH**

Cover photo of inside of a prison
by Vincent Chan





Hidden behind the gates, bars and walls of prisons across Myanmar, torture is rife. Photo: AFP

SYSTEMATIC TORTURE MYANMAR JUNTA BEATING, SHOCKING AND RAPING PRISONERS, ACCORDING TO UN REPORT

UN-mandated independent investigators have uncovered “systematic torture” in Myanmar’s military-run detention facilities – including beatings, electric shocks, strangulations and gang rape – a pattern of atrocities which is intensifying across the country.

In its annual report released on 12 August, the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM) said it had made “important progress” documenting crimes and identifying those responsible, including commanders of security forces overseeing detention facilities.

Myanmar descended into civil war following the military coup of February 2021 and the detention of civilian leaders, including President Win Myint and State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi. The takeover sparked mass protests, a violent crackdown on dissent and a nationwide armed resistance movement.

‘Significant evidence’

The crimes detailed in the 12 August report include burning of sexual body parts, other forms of sexual violence, the pulling out of fingernails with pliers, and summary executions of captured combatants or civilians accused of being informers.

“We have uncovered significant evidence, including eyewitness testimony, showing systematic torture in Myanmar detention facilities,” said Nicholas Koumjian, Head of the Mechanism.

“We have made headway in identifying the perpetrators, including the commanders who oversee these facilities and we stand ready to support any jurisdictions willing and able to prosecute these crimes.”



A relative of a prisoner waits outside the prison for their release. Photo: AFP

Command responsibility

The report covers the period from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025 and draws on more than 1,300 sources, including nearly 600 eyewitness testimonies, photographs, videos, documents, maps and forensic evidence.

It also details intensified investigations into Myanmar junta aerial attacks on schools, homes and hospitals – including incidents in the days following the March 2025 earthquake, when rescue operations were still underway.

The fighting has been accompanied by a crack-down which has seen nearly 30,000 people arrested, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners monitor group.

The UN Human Rights Council-mandated investigators are analysing the composition of the Myanmar Air Force and its chain of command to identify those responsible for such strikes.

New investigations have also been opened into atrocities in Rakhine state, where the military and the ethnic armed group Arakan Army are battling for control, alongside ongoing probes into crimes committed against the Rohingya in 2016 and 2017.

International accountability

Evidence collected by investigators has already supported proceedings before the International Criminal Court (ICC), the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and in Argentina.

It contributed to the ICC Prosecutor's November 2024 request for an arrest warrant for Min Aung Hlaing, Myanmar's military chief and to the Argentine Federal Court's February 2025 warrants against him and 24 others.

"Our report highlights a continued increase in the frequency and brutality of atrocities committed in Myanmar," Mr. Koumjian said.

"We are working towards the day when the perpetrators will have to answer for their actions in a court of law."

Spiralling crisis

Fighting between the military, pro-democracy forces and ethnic armed groups has displaced millions and pushed the country into deep political, economic and humanitarian turmoil.

The country also faces the long-running consequences of the 2017 military operations against the Rohingya Muslim minority in Rakhine state.

Those campaigns – described by the then UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein as "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing" – forced hundreds of thousands of Rohingya to flee across the border into Bangladesh, where most remain in crowded refugee camps.

Multiple pressures

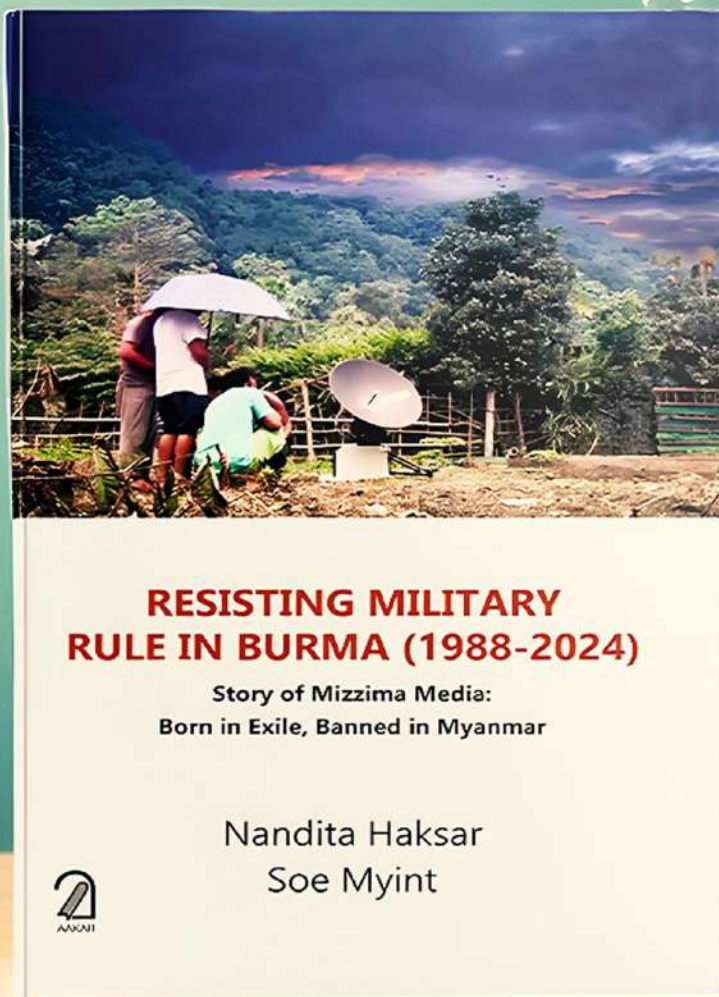
Investigators warn their work is being undermined by the UN's liquidity crisis, which have cut the mechanism's 2025 budget to just 73 per cent of the approved amount and will require a 20 per cent reduction in regular budget-funded staff in 2026.

To address resource constraints and operational challenges – including lack of direct access to witnesses in Myanmar, security risks and cybersecurity threats – the investigation team has adopted a three-year Strategic Plan, focusing on strengthening operational resilience and enhancing capacity.

RESISTING MILITARY RULE IN BURMA (1988-2024)

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

by Nandita Haksar and Soe Myint



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ANALYSIS & INSIGHT



CLASHES WITH THE MYANMAR JUNTA IN KACHIN STATE INTENSIFY

The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and allied forces have recaptured Mamonkine village in the Indawgyi region after days of clashes with junta and Shanni Nationalities Army (SNA) troops, according to Kachin News Group (KNG).

Fighting erupted on the morning of August 16, with resistance forces regaining control of Mamonkine and pressing their offensive toward junta positions in nearby Maingnau village, just one mile away. A KIA spokesperson confirmed that their forces now hold Mamonkine but noted that SNA troops remain in Maingnau.

“There is still fighting in Maingnau. When jet fighters come, people have to go to monasteries for shelter. Now, KIA has managed to enter the village — before that, the skirmishes were only outside,” a local resident told KNG.

The junta and SNA seized villages along the banks of Indawgyi Lake in mid-July. Since then, widespread reports have emerged of discrimination against Kachin civilians, property seizures, and violence. At least 14 civilians were killed under junta-SNA control, while more than 2,000 Kachin villagers fled their homes, according to local sources.

In an effort to ease tensions and prevent ethnic conflict, Kachin and Shan community representatives held a seminar in Myitkyina on August 14.

Meanwhile, heavy clashes continue in Bhamo, where the junta has intensified operations since sending reinforcements via a river convoy in early August. Fighting has been reported near at least four resistance bases, with battles spilling into urban areas around Myitsone Hotel, Winlight Hotel, the collective government office, and Bhamo University.

The KIA spokesperson denied claims that resistance forces had recaptured the junta's No. 366 Artillery Battalion but acknowledged that battles in Bhamo remain fierce. Control of the town's airport is still contested, with each side holding separate positions around the facility.

Junta forces reportedly launched a major offensive against Myitsone Hotel but suffered more than 60 casualties and lost a significant cache of weapons and ammunition to the KIA and its allies.

Worker influx into Yangon creates challenges

As fighting intensifies across Myanmar, many workers from conflict-affected regions are flocking to Yangon in search of employment. While garment factories continue to absorb most newcomers, employers say the influx of unskilled labour is creating new challenges.

"Due to the current conflict situation, many workers from those areas come to Yangon with hope to get jobs.



Garment workers in Yangon. Photo: Mizzima

However, garment factories are only able to provide enough jobs for new workers. Employers need to train them, but training cannot guarantee they will become skilled labour. Everyone cannot become skilled labour," said labour rights activist Myo Myo Aye in an earlier interview.

Most newcomers head directly to the garment sector, which provides relatively easy access to jobs compared to other industries. But employers are struggling to balance training needs with productivity demands, industry observers say.

Meanwhile, in the first week of August, more than 30 youths traveling from Rakhine State to central Myanmar were arrested at a junta checkpoint in Magway Region. "The youth came along the Ann-Ma I

road to reach central Myanmar. They got arrested at a small checkpoint," a local told Narinjara.

The crackdown on workers has also extended to labour activists. On July 25, authorities arrested Myo Myo Aye, the leader of the Solidarity of Trade Union of Myanmar (STUM). Three days later, nine more members — including her daughter — were also detained. STUM, formed after the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2021 coup, has been active in advocating for workers' rights.

On August 11, following pressure from military intelligence in Yangon's Shwepyithar Township, a manager from Wanxinda Travel Goods Company Limited filed a lawsuit against the arrested union leaders. A police source told Mizzima that the case was facilitated by bribes to military security officers. "They



Chin people displaced by fighting.
Photo: AFP

were supposed to be checked by the military court, but since August 1 the junta changed the system, and there is no more military court. These people were transferred to us (police)," the source said.

Even junta leader Min Aung Hlaing acknowledged Myanmar's labour crisis during his Labour Day address earlier this year, admitting that the country faces a workforce shortage. He urged citizens to remain and work inside the country rather than leaving for jobs abroad.

But workers continue to migrate. One worker who left for Malaysia told RFA, "Due to the Conscription Law and lack of job opportunities, everything is chaos in Myanmar. That's why we are going out, even if we want to stay in the country. Now we need to stay in another country, happy or not."

Chin forces clash over dispute

A dispute over control of Rihkhawdar, a key border trade town in Chin State, has escalated into clashes among Chin revolutionary forces, forcing thousands of civilians to flee across the border to India.

The Chin National Organization/Chin National Defence Force (CNO/CNDF) seized Rihkhawdar on July 5, triggering tensions with rival Chin National Front/Chin National Army (CNF/CNA) and Chin Defence Force (CDF-Hualngoram). The rivalry over territorial control began on July 2, according to local sources.

In response to CNDF's capture of Rihkhawdar, CNA fighters launched an attack on the group's headquarters in Falam Township. Meanwhile, more than 3,000 Chin civilians were displaced, seeking refuge in Mizoram State, India.

The contested town, located at the No. 2 India-Myanmar border trade gate, had previously been under the control of CNA and CDF-Hualngoram since November 2023.

Fighting persisted in township areas until July 10, when CNDF forces withdrew from Rihkhawdar under the cover of night. Rival forces claimed the retreat was due to military pressure. To ease tensions, the Mizoram Chief Minister has formed an Advocacy Group for Peace, which is facilitating reconciliation talks among the factions.

Speaking to Mizzima, a CNDF spokesperson said, "We retreated from the town and keep negotiations. Our side wants to stay peacefully."

A CNA spokesperson downplayed the clashes, noting, "It's not about agreement, about the military affairs. There are some small skirmishes in some places. I have not got the details on the ground."

Meanwhile, a spokesperson from CDF-Hualngoram told Mizzima, "We put military pressure to them to take back control of the town. That's why they left the town last night."



Trainees going through their paces.
Photo: Antonio Graceffo

BURMA RESISTANCE FORCES RECEIVE TRAINING IN COMBAT FORENSICS: DOCUMENTING JUNTA ATROCITIES

ANTONIO GRACEFFO

In a training exercise, a Karenni Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF) soldier poses as a dead Myanmar junta soldier, lying on the floor with his weapon in hand. Another soldier enters the room and photographs the scene from the doorway, ensuring the image captures the body, the weapon, and the computers on a nearby desk. Under the guidance of an instructor, he takes a detailed shot of the weapon. He then searches the body for identification, before moving on to the desk to photograph the computer and papers.

This meticulous process is part of specialized training in combat photography and documentation, aimed at two objectives: gathering military intelligence and documenting Myanmar military junta war crimes.

"Soldiers fear bullets, leaders fear the truth," explained Milkman, one of the trainers. "We're trying to give them that extra weapon so they can fight on more than one front." When news gets out that the junta is torturing civilians alive or mutilating resistance fighters, it can erode international support for them. And hopefully, this documentation will one day serve as evidence in an international war crimes tribunal.

Another trainer, Goose, described the program as teaching the "importance and process of sensitive site exploitation, or SSE, the step-by-step method of

documenting imagery for court cases. That includes photographing evidence, anything that could be used in a court of law. We emphasize precision so the evidence is indisputable. We have the trainees repeat the process in various scenarios until they can do it on their own."

When approaching a massacre site, reporters are trained to begin with wide-angle, long shots that capture the entire crime scene. If entering a house, they photograph the house number and any writing on the exterior before going inside. Outdoors, they are trained to include one or two fixed reference points, such as a building, large rock, or unusual tree, so that if they need to return and explain the layout to a court or investigators, the scene can be more easily identified.

Weapons are photographed front and back, to record model, type, make, and serial number. This is critical for proving whether Russia, China, North Korea, or Iran supplied arms to the junta. The same method applies to unexploded ordnance, shell casings, and drones, to prove origin and document violations of sanctions.

Whether indoors or outdoors, evidence such as computers and documents must first be photographed from a distance to prove they were already present,

preventing accusations that items were planted. Only then should close-up photographs and detailed examination take place.

The final step is to make a simple sketch of the crime scene, noting the date and location, then record the name of the soldier present upon arrival. That soldier holds the sketch next to his face for a photo. "This way if you need a witness in court, you know which soldier to call," said Goose.

Another instructor, who went by the name Instructor 3, cautioned, "You may not have time for all of this, but... the more thorough you do this, the better. If you have time." He explained that this work can be especially difficult when documenting atrocities against civilians, as family members may be present and distressed by the photographers' actions. Still, he emphasized that such photos "could be like the final nail in the coffin for the enemy."

Goose agreed, adding that he believed the camera could, in many ways, be a more powerful weapon than a gun because propaganda could turn public opinion. "When people are shown this evidence, it's indisputable and it can win hearts and minds and hopefully hold people accountable, that's the idea. And also, for people who don't see war and don't see atrocities, you know, if they're exposed to any of this kind of stuff, it needs to shock them."

One of the students, a KNDF soldier, already working as a combat photographer, raised his hand

and said, "I do these types of photos when people are killed, but if they are my friend, I don't photograph their face." After a pause, he added, "I guess I have to." The instructors agreed.

The question itself was telling. Most of these soldiers, all 25 or younger, had already seen so much death. Whether fighting or photographing victims, death had become a constant presence, and the loss of friends and comrades was an experience they all shared. Everyone in the room understood why he hesitated to photograph the face of a dead friend.

A twenty-five-year-old KNDF soldier, called AK, with significant experience as a combat photographer, told of about 35 civilians, internally displaced people, who were burned alive by the junta. The KNDF photographed the bodies but had no way of identifying them, so they were buried in an unmarked grave alongside soldiers and civilians killed by the junta. "It's really sad because everyone has a grave, with their names. These 35 people, no names, nothing."

The students and instructors discussed being in close proximity to death and how this makes the job of a combat photographer that much more emotionally challenging. AK explained that he was already learning about death before he joined the revolution. Immediately after the coup, he joined the protest movement. "But during the protest, we didn't have bombs or guns, we were just kids out on the streets."

According to AK, there was a legend that "the head



A camera could be more powerful than a weapon when it comes to swaying public opinion. Photo: Antonio Graceffo

of the military asked the monks how he could win this. And the monk said, shoot the head if you want to win. So, there were thousands and thousands of people out on the streets, and the military snipers would shoot the head." He mimicked being shot in the head. "What happens is when a bullet enters here, it blows out the other side... you don't have a f--ing face."

That's when the other soldiers chimed in, discussing the difficulty they had experienced photographing dead bodies without faces. This degenerated into recounting incidents of having to photograph disembodied corpses. One soldier asked what to do when they found the head far away or on a pole. The instructors said, "Photograph the head."

"But to desecrate bodies like that, to skin people and kill people with bombs like that, that's a certain level of evil," said AK. "The state allows them to do that. The state wants them to do that. The state wants to impose fear on those who are against the military, on those who could be involved in the resistance. I call it institutionalized evil."

The instructor reminded him, "And you've got to think, those are atrocities being committed by a government that wants to be recognized by the world. So, if they're doing stuff like that, that's really good evidence to say, 'hey, that's the enemy.' That could end up before the United Nations."

After the meeting, one of the instructors commented on the Karenni soldiers, saying, "What these guys have done at such a young age is shocking to hear. They can so casually talk about their friends that got killed and the things they've seen, and it's something even war veterans, a lot of war veterans, haven't seen to the

extent that these guys have." He went on to note that, despite the horrors, the soldiers seemed like happy young people.

When you are traveling around the country with soldiers in the back of a pickup truck, you can always hear them laughing, joking, and singing, even if they are on their way to or returning from a battle, despite having seen so many of their friends killed.

"Very humbling," he said, reflecting on the fact that people in the West have no clue about this level of suffering.

All three instructors were veterans of multiple conflicts. Yet Instructor 3 said, "I think that this is a different war than the West is used to. You have the jungle warfare, I guess you could call it similar to Vietnam, but then you throw in the drone warfare, and that adds a whole new... I mean, that's like two nightmares coming together."

Goose was quick to point out that this was the reason the instructors were in Burma and why the job of the combat reporter is so crucial. "Media plays a huge role when it comes to asymmetric warfare. I personally think media is more important than bullets, especially in today's age where everything is communicated. Being able to pull the hearts and minds of society into a belief, that's incredibly powerful."

All three instructors believed that by teaching the soldiers how to document atrocities and share their stories with the world, they were helping to defeat the Myanmar junta in the court of global public opinion.

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



Trainees pose and take a photo as part of the training. Photo: Antonio Graceffo

MIN AUNG HLAING VOWS TO HOLD MYANMAR ELECTION 'BY ANY MEANS' TO SECURE 50 PERCENT OF PARLIAMENTARY SEATS



Photo: AFP

Myanmar's military leader Senior General Min Aung Hlaing has pledged to hold an election "by any means necessary" to ensure that at least half of the country's parliamentary seats are filled. He made the remarks during a meeting on 12 August, according to junta-controlled newspapers published the following day.

The junta chief stressed that Myanmar's election law does not require a minimum voter turnout for the poll to be valid. He cited examples of countries where voter turnout falls below 50 percent, though most see participation above that level.

Under current parliamentary procedures, a session is valid if more than half of eligible representatives attend the first sitting, while the second sitting requires at least one-third attendance. Min Aung Hlaing said the regime intends to hold elections in as many townships as possible to meet the 50 percent benchmark.

The 2008 Constitution, which the junta continues to uphold, provides for a maximum of 440 seats in the Pyithu Hluttaw and 224 in the Amyotha Hluttaw, with 25 percent of seats in each chamber reserved as unelected seats for the military.

The junta, which seized power citing alleged voter list irregularities, plans to conduct the vote in stages starting in the third and fourth weeks of December 2025, and continuing in the first and second weeks of January 2026.

The National Unity Government (NUG) and other resistance forces have vowed not to recognize the polls, while observers warn the process will lack legitimacy and could escalate the ongoing conflict.



Myanmar soldiers. Photo: AFP

INTERNATIONAL IDEA CALLS FOR GLOBAL REJECTION OF MYANMAR JUNTA'S ELECTIONS

On 12 August, International IDEA issued a statement calling on the global community to reject support for Myanmar's planned elections, emphasizing aid for its democracy movement and urging diplomatic efforts to avoid normalizing relations with the military junta.

The statement continues as follows.

International IDEA expresses grave concern over recent decisions taken by the military junta to dissolve the State Administration Council (SAC) and appoint a State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC) as an interim government in Myanmar, paving the way for the junta's illegitimate election plan.

On 31 July 2025, the junta declared an end to its unconstitutional state of emergency, which had been extended seven times since the February 2021 coup. Power was handed over to the SSPC as a new "interim government" that is almost identical to the SAC.

These developments are not genuine reforms but a strategic repackaging of military rule to give a semblance of democratic legitimacy ahead of the junta's planned elections in December 2025 and January 2026. The elections will not be a genuine democratic exercise but are a calculated attempt to undermine Myanmar's legitimate interim government institutions, including the interim parliament, the Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw composed of MPs elected in 2020, and the broader democracy movement, which

continue their efforts to design a future democratic union under the Federal Democracy Charter.

To further deter resistance to the planned elections, the junta has declared a new “Law on the Prevention of Disruption and Interference with Elections”, which imposes harsh penalties—including the death penalty—for any acts of “sabotage or disruption” of the electoral process. The junta also issued a new cybersecurity law to criminalize the use of VPNs and penalize users who access banned social media sites or share information from them, granting the regime uncontrolled power to conduct online surveillance and arrest critics. These draconian laws contradict international human rights standards.

On 1 August, the junta declared a new state of emergency and imposed martial law on 63 townships across Myanmar, including areas in Kachin, Karenni (Kayah), Karen, Rakhine, Shan, and Chin States, as well as Sagaing, Mandalay, and Magwe regions—territories largely controlled by anti-junta forces.

Together, these measures are designed to suppress dissent, prevent meaningful political participation, and continue the junta’s campaign of human rights violations against Myanmar’s people—reinforcing the illegitimacy of the upcoming elections and the high risk of violence.

International IDEA calls on the international community to:

Reject and withhold any technical, material or political support for the junta’s planned elections.

Reaffirm and provide technical and financial support to Myanmar’s democracy movement, including

elected MPs, Ethnic Resistance Organizations, ethnic political parties, and civil society organizations, in their efforts to design a future federal democratic union.

Support inclusive dialogue and the ongoing transitional constitution-making process that reflects the will of the people to uphold human rights and democratic norms.

Increase diplomatic and advocacy efforts to prevent normalisation and legitimisation of diplomatic relations with the military junta, both bilaterally and in international and regional forums.

Adopt a ‘do no harm’ approach to all engagements on Myanmar, especially interactions with the military junta, guided by the pressing need to end violence and restore democracy, while rejecting the entrenchment or legitimization of military rule.

We commend the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for its recent efforts to foster dialogue among anti-junta groups and for considering establishing a permanent mandate for the ASEAN Special Envoy on Myanmar. We further welcome Japan’s statement of 1 August expressing support for genuine democracy in Myanmar, including the implementation of ASEAN’s Five-Point Consensus. These are positive steps toward strengthening regional cohesion and addressing the crisis through principled engagement.

International IDEA remains committed to working with all stakeholders who support a democratic future for Myanmar and will continue to advocate for the protection of democratic institutions, inclusive governance, and the rule of law.



Myanmar junta leader sitting in the cockpit of a jet. Photo: AFP

IIMM INVESTIGATES MYANMAR AIR FORCE CHAIN OF COMMAND OVER DEADLY AIRSTRIKES

The Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM) is examining the structure and chain of command of the Myanmar Air Force to identify those responsible for junta airstrikes that have killed and injured civilians, according to a report released on 12 August.

The report says the IIMM has intensified its investigation into aerial bombings that have struck schools, homes, hospitals, and other civilian areas. It is gathering evidence to determine whether these attacks targeted legitimate military objectives or were deliberately directed at civilians.

Among the incidents under review are airstrikes on internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, schools, religious buildings, and health facilities in Karenni State — attacks that reportedly occurred in areas with no identifiable military targets, causing high civilian casualties.

The IIMM is also investigating the junta's supply chains for weapons and equipment used in the bombings, in addition to the air force's command

structure, in order to pinpoint those responsible. Evidence collected indicates that fighter jets, helicopters, drones, and paramotors have been used in strikes resulting in significant civilian deaths.

The mechanism is further looking into allegations that the junta has employed chemical weapons.

Beyond air operations, the IIMM's latest findings highlight progress in documenting torture in interrogation facilities, arbitrary detention of civilians accused of being informants, sexual violence, and crimes related to the Rohingya.

According to the report, the conclusions are based on information from more than 1,300 sources — including testimony from over 600 eyewitnesses — as well as photographs, videos, audio recordings, documents, maps, satellite imagery, social media content, and forensic evidence.

Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun

AMBASSADOR KYAW MOE TUN PRESSED FOR URGENT UNSC ACTION ON MYANMAR'S ONGOING CRISIS

On 12 August, Myanmar's Permanent Representative to the UN, Kyaw Moe Tun to the UN issued a statement urging the UN Security Council to take urgent and decisive action against the military junta, citing the escalating humanitarian crisis, widespread displacement, and increased deaths at sea that are negatively impacting regional and international peace and security.

The transcript of Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun's speech is reproduced below.

At the outset, I wish to congratulate Panama for assuming the UNSC Presidency of this month and thank the presidency of Panama for organizing this important debate.

I also thank the briefers for their remarks.

Mr. President,

Maritime transport is the primary mode for global trade with having over 80% of the international trade by volume. In this regard, we are of the view that the strengthening maritime security is vital for development of all countries especially developing countries which are depending on maritime trade.

Yet, the global uncertainty, escalating geopolitical tensions, transnational criminal activities, armed conflict and their consequences affect maritime security as much as any other domain.

Disruptions to the freedom of navigations and proliferation of criminal networks operating on the high seas pose a growing threat to international trade and

global economic stability. Traditional and emerging challenges in the maritime domain, including piracy, drug and human trafficking and depletion of marine resources, have become increasingly complex and interconnected.

Against this backdrop, Myanmar reaffirms our call in the Pact for the Future to address the impact of threats to maritime security in accordance with international law, the UN Charter and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Mr. President,

In my country, Myanmar, the collapse of rule of law and political institutions, the rise of corruption and the prevalence of insecurity, after the 2021 attempted military coup, have created conditions conducive for the expansion of transnational criminal activities through overland corridors and maritime channels.

In addition, the military junta and its affiliated Border Guard Forces, are breeding safe havens for criminal syndicates by providing security for them and facilitating their illicit economies, including online scams, human and drug trafficking.

According to the recent UNODC report, flows of drugs from Myanmar have surged across not only East and Southeast Asia, but also into South Asia since the coup.

An escalating supply of methamphetamine from Myanmar has been subsequently trafficked through the Andaman Sea and South China Sea to countries in the

region. Methamphetamine and ketamine manufactured in Myanmar are also trafficked through the Straits of Malacca as a major transit route.

The drugs are loaded at predetermined locations in international waters for onwards delivery to third countries, ultimately posing threats to the wider region and beyond.

Mr. President,

Since the illegal coup, over 7,000 people have been killed by the military junta. Over 20 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. Half of the population is now living under the national poverty line.

At the same time, indiscriminate and systematic violence against civilians by the military junta has also pushed them to seek safety across the country and elsewhere outside. More than 3.5 million people including Rohingya, has been displaced.

Vulnerable populations in IDP camps also become highly exposed to being trafficked by human smugglers.

According to the UNHCR, the number of person fleeing by boat in 2025 has increased with an average of 174 percent. From January to May 2025, 3,100 Rohingya refugees embarked on dangerous sea and river journeys, and 457 persons were reported as dead or missing by the end of May.

The deteriorating situation in Myanmar and insecurity in the refugee camps will continue to keep the alarming trend of increased movements and deaths at sea for the 2025-2026 sailing season.

Mr. President,

These spillover effects of the junta's atrocities, the lack of rule of law, the economic collapse, poverty, displacement, the rise of transnational organized crimes including online scam, drug and human trafficking in Myanmar are negatively impacting on the regional and international peace and security as well as the maritime security.

Such threats to regional and international peace and security require enhanced coordination among the UN member states; not silos.

Those escaping from the military's atrocities and stranded in the sea deserve international protection by the wider region; not forced refoulement.

Most importantly, the people of Myanmar deserve urgent, decisive and effective actions by the UN Security Council; not mere expressions of concern.

It is unfortunate that in almost three years since its adoption, there is still no follow-up to the UNSC resolution 2669.

The lack of timely action by the Council and the international community is also contributing to prolonging the conflict.

With every passing day of no action, more civilians are being killed; more young people are losing their future. In fact, according to UNDP, nearly 300,000 to 500,000 young people have been fleeing Myanmar since the illegal coup to escape the deteriorating socioeconomic condition and forced conscription. This ongoing phenomenon poses risks of exploitation, irregular migration and the erosion of national human capital.

Therefore, in light of the inaction of the Council, I urge the international community to explore all available tools at their disposal to save the lives of the people of Myanmar by cutting the flow of weapons, jet fuel and dual-use items to the military junta.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, the restoration of rule of law, our democratic institutions, viable economy along with people-centered regional cooperation are central to achieving maritime security, peace and stability as well as safeguarding the potential of youth in Myanmar.

The National Unity Government, our allied ethnic resistance organizations and relevant stakeholders have been in talks for future Myanmar that ensures prosperity, peace and stability and justice for all.

We cannot build trust without listening to the aspirations of the people and the youth.

We cannot reconcile without addressing transitional justice.

We cannot hold an inclusive election without releasing our arbitrarily-detained political leaders and prisoners.

It is crystal clear that the planned sham election of the military junta will further exacerbate the already-volatile situation in the country.

Finally, I once again appeal to the international community to support the people of Myanmar and their resolution to end the military dictatorship, build a federal democratic union and secure their future.



Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA LAUNCHES SIMULTANEOUS OFFENSIVES IN BHAMO AND HPAKANT, HEAVY FIGHTING WITH KIA INTENSIFIES

The Myanmar junta has launched simultaneous offensives against Bhamo, second-largest city in Kachin State and Hpakant, spokesperson for the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Colonel Naw Bu, told Mizzima.

In Bhamo, junta warships that arrived on August 1 have remained in place until August 13, without withdrawing. Fighting inside the city has intensified following the arrival of reinforcements brought in by the military.

"They are carrying out more intense operations than before. They use small drones first, followed by heavy weapons and airstrikes. After that, ground troops advance to attack. They have now captured the Field Artillery Battalion 366 camp. The airfield can't be confirmed yet, it's a battlefield, so they could have reached it, but we can't verify if it has actually fallen into their hands," said Colonel Naw Bu.

Pro-junta Telegram channels have claimed that the Bhamo airfield and Field Artillery Battalion 366 were retaken from the KIA.

According to the KIA, heavy fighting is ongoing in Bhamo at the airfield, the Field Artillery Battalion 366 camp, Military Operation Command 21 headquarters, the Supply and Transport Battalion 933 camp, and camp of Light Infantry Division 88 near Bhamo University.

Similarly, clashes are taking place in Hpakant Township, where junta troops are advancing along the Maupin-Kamaing-Namya-Hpakant road.

"There is also fighting in Hpakant. A new column is advancing from the Kamaing road, and our KIA troops

together with allied forces are attacking it. That column hasn't reached Hpakant yet. Earlier-arrived groups are re-stationed in some areas of the town. I'm not sure if they've increased troop numbers, but the new columns haven't entered yet," Colonel Naw Bu said.

Namya village, located between Hpakant and Kamaing, is held by KIA and KPDF forces. Another source said about 150 junta and Min Zay Thant militia troops have been advancing toward Namya since August 10.

"There's a KIA and KPDF checkpoint in Namya, and that's what they're attacking. Fighting broke out there on August 10 and 11, closing the road. They're not aiming to move on to Hpakant. They'll remain in Namya. They targeted it because of the checkpoint. After the clashes, both sides reopened the road," the source said.

The Hpakant-Kamaing road is over 36 miles long, with KIA Brigade 9 and Battalion 44 active along it.

The junta briefly took control of the route in late May, but due to its length and dense forest, they could not maintain full control. The source said the military is now pushing another column to fully secure the road.

In Hpakant, junta troops are also stationed at strategic points including Hmaw Si Sa Pagoda Hill, Ahhmitepon, and Ever Myaw Garden in Yuma village. Tensions remain high in Maw Maung Lian, Maw Wan Lay, Maw Wan Gyi, Ahhmitepon, Sharawkha Village, Nyaungpin Gone, and Yuma.



General Gum Maw

GENERAL GUM MAW SAYS MYANMAR JUNTA TWICE PROPOSED ONLINE TALKS WITH KIO, BOTH REJECTED

Kachin Independence Army (KIA) Lieutenant General Gum Maw revealed on 11 August that the military junta had twice approached the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) through the Peace-talk Creation Group (PCG) to propose online peace discussions, offers the KIO declined.

The announcement came after Gum Maw claimed an interview with BBC Burmese presented his remarks incompletely, prompting him to clarify the sequence of events.

"KIO didn't offer the invitation first. After the peace talks held in Naypyidaw last year, the junta sent a message through the PCG about an online discussion with the KIO. The KIO's position was that we would send a delegation to meet in Myitkyina if they were serious about talking, instead of having an online discussion," Gum Maw wrote on social media.

He said the junta did not respond to this counterproposal, but several months later the PCG made the same inquiry again and the KIO gave the same reply.

Although the KIO's stance was not publicly announced, Gum Maw said it was shared with the Chinese Special Envoy, international diplomats, and the Japanese Special Envoy.

The disclosure comes a week after Gum Maw met with leaders of the National Unity Government (NUG), including its acting president and ministers, as well as leaders from the Chin National Organization/Chin National Defence Force (CNO/CNDF) and the Yaw Army (YA). All parties later issued statements about the meeting.



US President Donald Trump. Photo: AFP

HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS WARN TRUMP AID CUTS EMBOLDEN MYANMAR MILITARY

On 14 August, several human rights organizations and activists issued a collective warning expressing deep concern that President Trump's extensive cuts to foreign aid have empowered military generals in Myanmar to commit mass killings with impunity, severely undermining human rights and democratic efforts.

The statements continue below.

The Trump Administration's decision to close USAID was announced earlier this year under the so-called Department of Government Efficiency (Doge), with Myanmar set to lose over \$1 billion of development assistance by 2029.

Organisations on the ground – including pro-democracy groups, civil society networks, independent media outlets and humanitarian aid providers – have been forced to cease operations, lay off staff and reduce essential services.

Sam Mason, CEO of Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART):

"Some of our worst fears are now being realised. We warned at the time [when aid cuts were announced] that such a rushed and ill-conceived policy would weaken local mechanisms for oversight and justice, that civilians would become even more exposed to threats and persecution. Now, in some of the country's

most volatile regions, the military have carte blanche to violate human rights."

Benedict Rogers, Senior Director at Fortify Rights:

"The ripple effects of these cuts are far-reaching, putting thousands of lives in grave danger and severely impeding the ability for pro- democracy and human rights groups to make their voices heard. The cuts undermine years of international efforts to support a democratic future for Myanmar and strike a devastating blow to the country's courageous but embattled democracy movement. They undermine efforts to seek accountability for mass atrocity crimes, undercut the efforts of brave local journalists to report the truth about the situation in the country, and represent a gift to the junta's authoritarian allies China and Russia."

Lord Alton of Liverpool, who chairs the Joint Committee on Human Rights and speaks here in a personal capacity:

"The more we remove deterrents to violence, the more we embolden the perpetrators. We give them a green light to carry on their killings with impunity. It strengthens tyranny and intensifies suffering."

Frontline human rights group, who remain anonymous for security reasons:

"Trump's policy is killing people. Aid cuts will have an even deadlier impact than the earthquake."

A local human rights group:

"We are worried for our future. We are among many NGOs [non- governmental organisations] in Myanmar

destabilised by these cuts."

Sisters-2-Sisters:

"Aid cuts badly impact ordinary citizens. Patients who depend on treatment cannot access the medicines they need."

Similar concerns are highlighted in a report by HART, published today, from Shan State and the Thai-Myanmar border.

The report warns that aid cuts have "de-funded health clinics, women's shelters, child protection services, essential medicines, vaccinations, access to legal aid, emergency food distribution [and] independent monitoring of human rights violations."

Benedict Rogers adds:

"I just returned from a month in the region, where I heard first-hand how refugees' rations have been stopped, leaving them in a precarious struggle for survival. Food, schooling for children, and basic medical care provision has almost ceased. Unless the international community steps up, and works in partnership with the Thai authorities to find a long-term sustainable solution for the livelihoods of refugees, these cuts could result in destitution, disease and death. At a time when Myanmar's military regime is committing egregious atrocity crimes, now is not the moment to cut the lifelines of support to the people."



Myanmar soldiers. Photo: AFP

14 MYANMAR JUNTA SOLDIERS KILLED IN CLASH WITH RESISTANCE FORCES IN YEBYU TOWNSHIP

The Mon State Revolutionary Force (MSRF) announced on 14 August that joint resistance forces attacked a military column advancing near Kawt Hlaing village in Yebyu Township, Dawei District, Tanintharyi Region, killing 14 junta soldiers.

According to MSRF spokesperson Mi Ta La Nyan, the battle took place on 13 August between around 11 am and 3 pm, involving MSRF fighters and a 150-strong junta column.

"It was a fierce battle. The junta troops were in disarray, scattered, and we had the upper hand," Mi Ta La Nyan said.

MSRF confirmed that one of the 14 dead was a junta officer.

Eight resistance fighters and one local civilian were injured by heavy artillery fire from junta forces following the clash, the spokesperson added.

The MSRF said it is unclear where the junta column retreated after the fighting, but the situation in the area remains tense.

Junta troops have been continuously advancing in Yebyu Township, with heavy artillery fire reported from Minthar village, the Infantry Battalion 282 camp, and the Kanbauk area naval base.

Revolutionary forces have urged local residents to remain vigilant due to ongoing shelling.

The attack was carried out jointly by the MSRF, Battalion 27 of Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) Brigade 6, the Ramanya Mon Army (RMA), Dawna Column 2 (Ye Guerrilla Force – YGF), the Kanbauk Defence Force (KBDF), Strategy 33 Dawna Column Special Operations Group, and the Hserkapaw Battalion of the Kawthoolei Army (KTLA).



A Myanmar naval vessel. Photo: AFP

OVER 10,000 FLEE PAUNGBYIN TOWNSHIP AS MYANMAR JUNTA NAVAL CONVOY ARRIVES FROM HKAMTI

More than 10,000 residents from 15 villages in Paungbyin Township have fled their homes following the arrival of a junta naval convoy from Hkamti Township on 14 August.

According to resistance forces, the convoy consisted of 33 vessels, most transporting jade from Hkamti, located in the upper reaches of the Chindwin River. The jade was reportedly sourced from the Nansipon mines, an area controlled by junta troops and the Shan Ni Army (SNA).

"The rain hasn't stopped and keeps pouring down. Those who brought their pets are facing many difficulties. The lack of clean drinking water is a serious problem, and some children have fallen ill," said a local man from Paungbyin.

A member of the Paungbyin Township Defence Force said the convoy was split into three groups of 11 ships each. While the defence forces did not open fire, the junta fired heavy weapons during its passage.

The arrival of the convoy forced residents from villages including Settaw, Sandar, Thayaung, Sutnanminya, Kawtkan, Nyaung Pin Tha, and Naung Rin Kye to flee. Many are now sheltering in makeshift conditions under heavy rains, facing shortages of food, water, and medical supplies.



Sittwe sea front. Photo: AFP

SITTWE MAN DIES FOLLOWING DETENTION AND TORTURE BY MYANMAR JUNTA OVER ALLEGED AA TIES

A 45-year-old casual labourer from Lanmadaw (South) Ward in Sittwe township has died after being beaten and tortured in military custody, following his arrest on allegations of membership in the Arakan Army (AA).

The victim, identified as U Su Laing, earned his living through odd jobs such as driving slow-moving vehicles and fishing. A person close to him told Mizzima that he was detained on 9 August and that the junta informed his family of his death on 12 August.

"He died of internal injuries. The junta accused him of traveling to AA-controlled areas and detained him. Think about it, he was 45; could he really have joined the AA? It might have been a setup. He had no ties to the AA. On Saturday, junta troops and police came calling his name and took him away in a vehicle. Yesterday, they told his family he had died. They did not return the body but told the family they could come and bury him

if they wished. He was buried at a cemetery in Sittwe. Before his arrest, he was healthy and had no illnesses," the source said.

Local residents said several others in Sittwe have recently been arrested on similar accusations of AA links, with their whereabouts still unknown.

Since 2024, the junta has regularly conducted nighttime raids and arbitrary arrests across the town's wards, sometimes led personally by the commander of the Sittwe Regional Military Operations Command.

Door-to-door guest list inspections including at monasteries and relief camps, have been reported, with those deemed suspicious taken into custody. Meanwhile, the junta's artillery regiment in Sittwe township is said to be firing almost daily at AA-controlled areas along the township's borders.



Photo: Supplied

5,000 FLEE MONYWA TOWNSHIP AS MYANMAR JUNTA TROOPS ADVANCE AND FORTIFY POSITIONS

Around 5,000 residents from five villages in Monywa Township have fled their homes following the advance of junta forces along the Monywa-Aryataw road and the establishment of fortified military positions, according to local sources.

Beginning on 8 August, approximately 800 troops from the Northwestern Regional Military Command moved into the area, setting up fortified outposts. Locals say soldiers have been forcing residents to work as porters, prompting widespread fear, particularly among families with adult children.

"People are terrified because the troops are building positions and forcing locals to work as porters. Many of us have grown-up children, and we fear for their safety if they encounter soldiers. The weather has been bad, making living conditions even harder," a woman from Kyaukka told Mizzima.

Revolutionary forces in the township report that the junta is using mechanized paragliders to guard its new positions while deploying heavy troop strength along the road.

"The junta is deliberately trying to block revolutionary forces from controlling the outskirts of towns so that they can stage elections in areas they claim to control," said a military officer from the Burma Liberation Democratic Front (BLDF).

The Monywa Township People's Administration said it is providing food and medical assistance to displaced families.

The military's advance has forced residents from Kyaukka, Wartan, Sitharlay, Nyaungpin, and Hta Naung Win villages to seek safety elsewhere, with many now sheltering in temporary camps under difficult weather conditions.



Photo: Supplied

CHIN GROUPS REJECT ARAKAN ARMY ADMINISTRATION OF PALETWA TOWNSHIP AFTER DISTRICT UPGRADE

Multiple Chin organizations have strongly opposed the Arakan Army's (AA) move to upgrade Paletwa Township in southern Chin State to district status under its administration.

The rejection follows a statement by AA spokesperson Khaing Thukha during the 10th press conference of the Arakan People's Revolutionary Government on 11 August. He said the AA planned the upgrade after capturing Paletwa from the junta during Operation 1027, describing it as the first liberated area on the western front. He added that the administration was handling stability, rule of law, development, healthcare, education, and public services.

"During this revolutionary period, just because they (AA) captured it and defeated the junta, claiming 'this is our territory' is absolutely unacceptable. There is no unity in the current union yet, and we are in a situation where further diplomatic discussions are needed when

the military dictatorship collapses," the spokesperson of the Interim Khumi Affairs Coordination Council (IKACC).

Junta forces in Chin State have not been completely cleared, and there are differences of opinion among Chin revolutionary groups, namely the Chinland Council (CC) and Chin Brotherhood (CB).

Although the CC has formed a Chin government, it has not yet designated towns, townships, or districts. How Chin State will be built after defeating the military is a matter solely concerning the Chin people, according to the spokesperson.

Although Paletwa is part of Chin State, both Rakhine and Chin people live together there, and coexistence is accepted. With around 100,000 Chin people living in Rakhine State, the issue will need to be discussed

at the negotiation table in the future, according to the IKACC spokesperson.

Regarding the ULA/AA's administration in Paletwa Township, the Chin Civic Movement (CCM), composed of local and international youth, women, and intellectuals working to resolve differences among Chin nationals, also rejected in a statement on 12 August.

While the CCM views military activities and fighting in Chin State positively in the context of overthrowing dictators and liberating oppressed ethnic groups together, it considers the ULA/AA's actions, which lack the consent of local Chin people, as a colonial act against the Chin people, expressing great disappointment.

Unity and cooperation among Chin revolutionary groups are the only sustainable solution for Chin national affairs and the building of Chin State. The CCM believes that the Paletwa issue can be renegotiated among stakeholders in a federal democratic manner after the people's revolution, as stated in their announcement.

Regarding this issue, when Mizzima asked a responsible person from the Chin National Front (CNF), he expressed their stance, "Just as Rakhine State should be governed by Rakhine people, Chin State should be governed by Chin people."

As the people of Paletwa do not accept the political stance and administrative mechanisms implemented by the Arakan People's Government, the Global Khumi Organization (GKO) and the Global Khumi Youth Association (GKYA) jointly issued the rejection in a statement on 12 August.

AA's action violates the Panglong Agreement and the territorial boundaries of Chin State as established by Myanmar's constitutions, as well as the will of the entire Chin population. It is seen as a power-centric colonial system that contradicts democratic principles, according to the statement.

Since the Arakan Army took control of Paletwa Township starting 14 January 2024, six murders and five rape cases have occurred over one year, according to the statement cited in local human rights records.

Although severe punishments, including the death penalty, have been imposed for murder and rape cases, a Paletwa local expressed a desire to know how the Arakan People's Revolutionary Government has addressed these incidents and called for transparent judicial processes.

Mizzima has been attempting to contact ULA/AA spokesperson Khaing Thukha regarding the opposition from Chin organizations to the Arakan Army (AA) designating Paletwa Township as a district and administering it, but has not yet received a response.

In Paletwa Township, In addition to the AA, which is allied with the Chin Brotherhood, members of the Chinland Defence Force-Paletwa (CDF-Paletwa) and Chin Defence Force-Daai (CDF-Daai) – both part of the Chinland Council (CC) – are also based and operating in the township.



Internally displaced people.
Photo: Supplied

NUG ALLOCATES OVER 567 MILLION KYATS IN HUMANITARIAN AID IN JULY

The Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management under the National Unity Government (NUG) announced on 11 August that it had provided 567.64 million Kyat in humanitarian assistance during July 2025.

Of the total, 199.31 million Kyat was spent on emergency food relief for 149,613 displaced people, while 35.23 million Kyat was used to support the families of 167 people killed and 317 others injured in the ongoing conflict.

The ministry also allocated 450,000 Kyat to assist political prisoners and their families, and 5.25 million Kyat for members of the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) and their families. An additional 11.63 million Kyat was designated for general humanitarian aid, and

12 million Kyat went toward supporting vulnerable populations and their families.

In its statement, the NUG ministry expressed “deep respect for those who have fought for the revolution over the past four years, enduring numerous hardships in their pursuit of victory.”

The humanitarian needs remain immense.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), as of July 2025, Myanmar’s internally displaced population exceeded 3.5 million. When including former refugees from areas such as Rakhine State, the total number of displaced people has risen above 4.3 million.



Vehicles on fire following junta attack.
Photo: Supplied

SIX CIVILIANS KILLED AS MYANMAR JUNTA FIGHTER JETS STRIKE TRAPPED VEHICLES IN SAGAING TOWNSHIP

At least six civilians were killed and more than 20 injured when junta fighter jets repeatedly bombed passenger vehicles trapped by military columns in Sagaing Township on 11 August, according to local sources.

The attack occurred at around 2 pm near the 14-mile junction between Taung Yin and Padu villages along the Sagaing–Shwe Bo inter-district road.

Witnesses said the road had been blocked, leaving multiple vehicles from Mandalay stranded before they came under assault from five junta aircraft.

“The road was blocked, trapping many vehicles. Then the junta’s fighter jets bombed them. Many people were killed or injured. Some victims were decapitated inside their vehicles, while others were found underneath them,” a local familiar with the incident told Mizzima.

The airstrikes also destroyed four vehicles and set fire to a roadside restaurant and a betel nut shop near the intersection. Members of local resistance forces

confirmed that six people were killed and more than 20 others injured.

Relief efforts for the victims have been completed, but residents remain concerned about the presence of junta troops in the area.

On 12 August, a junta column from the Sagaing-based Light Infantry Division 33 was reported advancing toward Sakyin town, while another column near Wetlet and Sagaing townships reached Ywar Sint Kai (North) village and remained active, according to a commander from a Wetlet-based resistance group.

“There is still a risk that the vehicles in that area could be burned again because they are currently trapped between two junta columns,” the commander said.

Since July, the junta has been carrying out operations to advance toward villages along the Ayeyarwady River near Sagaing and Wetlet, triggering frequent clashes with local resistance forces.



AA spokesman.

ARAKAN ARMY SAYS RAKHINE TOWNS UNLIKELY TO BE RETURNED TO MYANMAR JUNTA

Towns under the control of the Arakan Army (AA) in Rakhine State are unlikely to be handed back to the military junta, the group's spokesperson U Khaing Thu Kha said at a press conference on 11 August.

"It is unlikely that the towns will be handed over to the military junta," he told reporters, stressing that the AA's position differs from arrangements made in northern Shan State.

In Operation 1027, launched by the Three Brotherhood Alliance in northern Shan State, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) seized Lashio town but later returned it to the junta following Chinese-brokered talks.

"Regarding the return of towns in Rakhine to the junta, our stance will differ from what was done in northern Shan State. For example, members of our Brotherhood Alliance have different historical backgrounds," U Khaing Thu Kha said.

Since the start of Operation 1027, the AA has captured 14 towns in Rakhine and is continuing its push to seize the remaining areas, including the state capital Sittwe, as well as the towns of Kyaukphyu and Munaung.



A Myanmar military paramotor.
Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA USES PARAMOTORS TO BOMB MANDALAY REGION VILLAGE

Paramotors from the Myanmar junta dropped bombs on Taungyoete village in Mahlaing Township, Mandalay Region, in a pre-dawn raid on 11 August, destroying three houses and killing three cows, according to the Mahlaing Township People's News Network.

The attack, carried out around 2 am, saw three paramotors drop nine bombs on the village and surrounding farmland. Two of the explosives struck inside the village, damaging homes and killing livestock.

"In the early morning, when people are still sleeping, paramotors often attack around Mahlaing and Taungtha townships," a local network member said.

The aircraft, reportedly approaching from Sedo village in southern Mahlaing, also strafed houses with machine-gun fire during their approach and retreat.

Taungyoete had been hit in previous raids prompting many residents to flee. There were no human casualties this time. Villagers from Taungyoete, Lalbyar, Phoekywe, Khaungtaugone, and Wayonegone have since sought refuge in safer areas.

Mahlaing Township has seen no major ground clashes in recent weeks, but the military has repeatedly used paramotors for aerial strikes, prompting local organizations to warn residents to stay on high alert.



Searching for the injured.
Photo: Supplied

TNLA SAYS CIVILIANS KILLED IN MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKE ON MOGOK MONASTERY

The Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) said civilians were killed and injured when junta jet fighters carried out a bombing raid on Mogok, a town in Mandalay Region under TNLA control.

At 6:51 pm on 9 August, a junta jet dropped two 500-pound bombs on Kyauk Naga Monastery in eastern Mogok, killing a novice, two children, one woman, and one man.

A monk and another man were injured, and five homes were destroyed, according to the TNLA.

Later that evening, three 250-pound bombs were dropped on Pan Tein Taung ward in Hsipaw town, injuring one man and destroying seven homes.

The TNLA has urged residents to remain on high alert for possible air attacks and to follow air raid defence measures.

From July to 8 August, the junta carried out six airstrikes that killed 21 people including monks and children and injured 57 others, the TNLA said.

AID CUTS PUT MYANMAR REFUGEES AT GRAVE RISK, SAYS HRW

More than 100,000 Myanmar refugees in Thailand have lost access to essential food and medical aid due to US funding cuts, putting them at serious risk, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said 12 August.

The Thai government should immediately permit refugees to lawfully work and travel outside its refugee camps, the NGO says.

The Trump administration's dismantling of foreign assistance, along with other donor shortfalls, led to the termination of most food assistance provided by The Border Consortium (TBC) and primary healthcare services from the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in the nine camps along the Thai-Myanmar border on July 31, 2025. Cuts since January have already led to the deaths of refugees, who are barred from working legally, moving freely, or accessing services in Thailand, leaving them largely dependent on foreign assistance.

Thailand's National Security Council has proposed measures to address the drop-off in assistance in the camps, but the Ministry of Interior has yet to make any policy announcement, according to HRW.

"The cutting of US funding for humanitarian aid should spur the Thai government to change its policy toward the 100,000 Myanmar refugees in the border camps," said Shayna Bauchner, Asia researcher at Human Rights Watch. "These refugees are desperate to provide for their families and, if the government lets them, can contribute to Thailand's economy."

The refugee camps were established along the Thai-Myanmar border beginning in the mid-1980s for people fleeing Myanmar military offensives against ethnic armed groups. Currently, they shelter over 107,000 refugees, including about 91,000 verified by the Thai government and the United Nations refugee agency, UNHCR.

Human Rights Watch interviewed eight refugees from Mae La, the largest camp, in late July. Six had lived in the camps for decades after fleeing fighting in Myanmar's eastern Karen State; two were born in the camps.

When US funding cuts were first announced in early 2025, the standard monthly allowance was reduced to just 77 baht per adult, about US\$2.30. The Border Consortium warned in March that without immediate funding, refugees would "face a precarious and life-threatening situation." On July 31, all food aid for standard households was cut, affecting over 80 percent of families, with "vulnerable" and "most vulnerable" households receiving limited rations.

"In the past, we had enough rations," a 34-year-old refugee said. "But the funding's been cut bit by bit. The cash decreased and prices went up. I get 77 baht a month, but you can't buy anything with that."

Between 2022 and 2024, chronic malnutrition among children under age 5 in the camps increased for the first time in at least a decade.

All the refugees who spoke to Human Rights Watch said they would work outside the camps if allowed. Barring them from legal work denies them not only income but a key source of dignity and self-reliance.

"I feel like I'm under house arrest," the 34-year-old said. "If the Thai government allowed us to work, it would benefit everyone. We could support ourselves and our families."

Some refugees support themselves through small businesses or stipends from jobs with nongovernmental organizations, which have also been cut. Others find ways out of the camps to work as informal day laborers, harvesting corn or rice, at risk of being caught: One refugee said Thai authorities fined him 500 to 1,000 baht (\$15-30) for being outside the camp. Now, with the massive influx of Myanmar nationals into Thailand, refugees are more likely to be detained, extorted, or deported if found traveling without authorization.

Since the 2021 military coup in Myanmar, the camp population has grown by 35 percent, as military atrocities have forced more than a million people to flee to neighboring countries. The Myanmar military's airstrikes and landmine use continue to threaten lives in border areas, which remain unsafe for returns.

"Since I was born here [in Thailand], I used to think this was my country, the place I belong," said a 37-year-old refugee. "Then I got older and learned: Thailand is not my country. But in Myanmar, we don't have a place either."

Aid cuts have led to an increase in coping strategies, including high-risk migration. Two women in their early 20s paid a broker 15,000 baht (\$450) to smuggle them to Bangkok, with money borrowed at 10 percent interest. They had no jobs or housing lined up, leaving them vulnerable to trafficking and abuse. "It's scary and risky," one said. "We may be sent back to Myanmar. We may be detained and extorted." But she said it was her only option: She had lost her job due to aid cuts and needed to pay for her mother's medical treatment. "In the camps," she said, "it's a dead end."

Out of desperation, some have resorted to stealing, refugees reported. A camp committee member said that in July, a single mother with five children was caught stealing a bag of rice from her neighbor. "She doesn't want to steal but she doesn't have any income or way to feed her children," he said. "So she felt this was her only choice."

A camp education coordinator said that more children are being sent to work outside the camps to support their families, leading to a significant drop in school attendance. Parents are struggling to afford school fees and feel discouraged about its value. "They see the older generation who graduated but have no jobs," the education coordinator said. "They think, what's the point of sending their kids to school if there's no work."

Funding cuts have also impacted refugees' access to health care, forcing the IRC to shut down its health operations by the end of July. Healthcare staff have been reduced by half, patient referrals and hospital transportation have been suspended, and medications are running low, refugees said. The Thai Ministry of Public Health will reportedly provide refugees with access to provincial hospitals.

"Recently there are more depression cases because the situation in Myanmar isn't getting better, the situation in the camps isn't getting better," said a refugee who performs community mental health visits.

Aid workers indicate that drug and alcohol use has increased. "Since they don't have any work or activities,

young people are using drugs and becoming addicted, even students," a community health worker said. "The problem has always been around, but it's gotten worse."

Hope for resettlement abroad has largely vanished. The Trump administration halted a new resettlement program in early 2025, forcing 26 refugees to return to Umpiem Mai camp when their resettlement flight was canceled in February. Others described stalled applications to Australia and Canada.

Many refugees hold UN registration cards but said that the cards only highlight the denial of their rights in Thailand. "Having the card means we can't go anywhere, we can't apply for jobs, we can't study," said a teacher who has spent 17 years in the camps. Both he and his brother had tried applying for jobs outside the camps, but, "When I showed my card as ID, they said, 'You're a refugee!' We have no future, no opportunities. Our lives are in limbo."

The Thai government should grant refugees the right to work legally outside the camps through a free, expedited process, a policy that would also support Thailand's economy, which is facing labor shortages and an aging population. Thai language programs, which are being piloted for a small number of students over 18, should be introduced across all camps, for both adults and children.

The right to work is guaranteed under international human rights law, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which applies to all individuals regardless of legal status or documentation, including refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless people.

Thailand should engage refugee-led groups, humanitarian agencies, and UNHCR to transition from a closed-camp aid model to an approach that empowers refugees, grants legal status and documentation, and benefits host communities, Human Rights Watch said.

"Donor countries should cover the urgent gaps in camp funding while encouraging Thailand to allow refugees to be self-reliant," Bauchner said. "Granting refugees permission to work and travel would give them tools for the future while supporting Thailand's economic growth."



A family at meal time in Rakhine State.
Photo: Supplied

WFP URGES CRITICAL AID FOR STARVING CIVILIANS IN RAKHINE STATE

On 12 August, the World Food Programme (WFP) issued a statement calling for urgent humanitarian support in Myanmar's Rakhine State, where a critical combination of conflict, blockades, and funding cuts has led to a dramatic surge in hunger and malnutrition.

The WFP statement continues below.

In central Rakhine, the number of families not able to afford to meet basic food needs has reached 57 percent, up from 33 percent in December 2024. While these findings suggest alarming levels of food insecurity, indicating a worsening of the acute malnutrition situation in central Rakhine, it is expected that the situation in northern Rakhine is much worse due to active conflict and access issues.

Reports from WFP's Community Feedback Mechanism reveal an alarming rise in distress signals. Families are being forced to take desperate measures to survive: rising debt, begging, domestic violence, school drop-outs, social tensions, and even human trafficking.

"People are trapped in a vicious cycle; cut off by conflict, stripped of livelihoods, and left with no humanitarian safety net," said Michael Dunford, WFP

Representative and Country Director in Myanmar. "We are hearing heartbreaking stories of children crying from hunger and mothers skipping meals. Families are doing everything they can, but they cannot survive this alone."

The hunger crisis is being driven by prolonged conflict, severe movement restrictions, soaring food prices and the reduction of support due to a significant decrease in humanitarian funding. In April 2025, WFP was forced to cut lifesaving support to over one million people across Myanmar, due to funding shortfalls.

Despite dwindling resources, WFP is working to resume limited lifesaving support in the worst-hit areas. WFP is urgently calling on the international community to step up with increased humanitarian funding, and for authorities on the ground to allow unimpeded humanitarian access. WFP requires USD 30 million to assist 270,000 people in Rakhine for the next six months.

"Without urgent action, this crisis will spiral into a full-blown disaster," said Dunford. "The world must not look away."

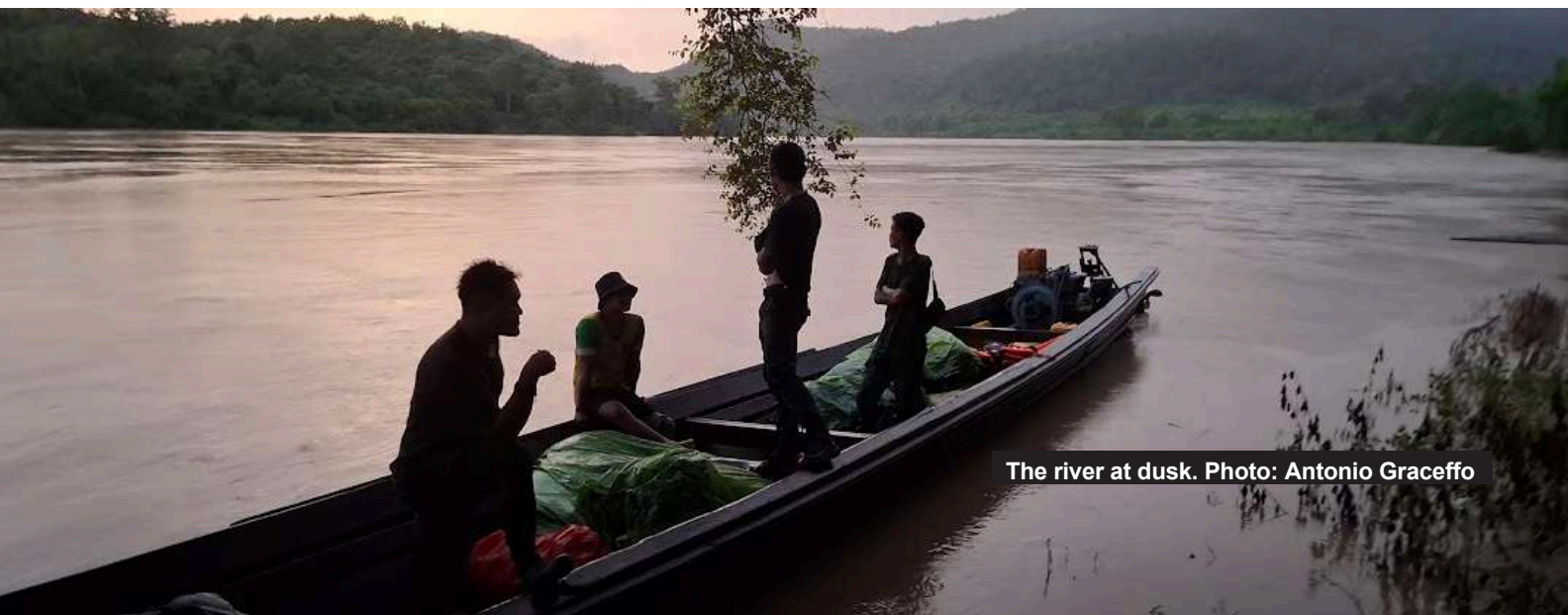


MYANMAR PHOTO EXHIBITION BEING HELD IN BANGKOK

The Foreign Correspondents of Thailand Club launched a photo exhibition entitled "Still Here" on 11 August that will run for two weeks. Photos displayed included those of independent media organizations including Mizzima.

A panel discussion entitled "Myanmar's Conflict, Political and Information Landscape" was held at the photo exhibition launch. Speakers included Richard Horsey, Senior Adviser, International Crisis Group and Mon Mon Myat, an independent journalist.





The river at dusk. Photo: Antonio Graceffo

WAITING FOR BATTLES TO KICK OFF – CIVILIANS AND SOLDIERS IN A HOLDING PATTERN

ANTONIO GRACEFFO

In West Demoso, the sound of artillery and mortar fire echoes throughout the day, with the front line in some places less than a kilometer from civilian villages. Everyone has an opinion about what the Myanmar junta is doing, and when the fighting will begin in earnest.

“Right now, we think the military is probing, attack here, attack there, just to see where the weakness is,” said one civilian. Soldiers shared similar views, believing the Burma Army’s shelling and mortar strikes followed no fixed pattern but were meant to test defenses and find the best point for an assault.

One headquarters soldier told me, “I want to go to the front, to defend the place where my grandmother lives. But the leader asked me to stay.” Many others expressed the same impatience, eager to make a final push to drive the Myanmar junta out of the area. In Pasaung (Pasao), fighting was intense in June, and both civilians and soldiers now wait for the expected “big battle,” a moment that could come any day yet has stretched into weeks of uncertainty.

In every battle, the military junta holds air superiority and enjoys greater access to ammunition and aerial resupply. Yet much of its force consists of conscripts, men who often have no desire to fight. Most are outsiders to this region, with no personal stake in capturing or defending it. What actually drives them to keep fighting, or to support the junta at all, remains a mystery.

“But in this area, maybe we have an advantage because we know the way in the jungle,” one civilian speculated, confident the resistance would prevail.

Fighting around Moby and Pekon in Karenni State has also been fierce since late February, displacing tens of thousands. Many have fled to Mese. A group of about forty who arrived recently said that 700 more were on the way from their area alone. Unlike earlier displacements, many of these new IDPs had given up trying to survive near junta-controlled territory. They now plan to relocate permanently closer to the Thai border. However, some people, unwilling to surrender

their homes to the junta, remain hidden in the jungle nearby, waiting to see which way the fighting will go.

Capturing Pasaung would be a major gain for the resistance, as it would open a supply route to Thailand, enabling the direct transport of goods, food, and medicine along a paved road.

When we traveled from Demoso to the Pasaung area, the sound of artillery and mortars continued late into the night. Two days later, when we reached the front, it was quiet, no shelling, no major activity, just a sense of restrained expectation as soldiers held their positions, waiting almost impatiently for the order to attack.

The former junta base resembled a small town, complete with buildings, houses, and paved roads. One soldier who had fought in the battle to retake it pointed to a bombed-out house and said, "That is where the junta kept their families. When we got close, we thought we were safe from airstrikes because they wouldn't want to endanger their women and children." But the junta called in airstrikes danger-close. "On their own families!" the soldier added in disbelief.

His wife had recently given birth to their child, and it was clear how abhorrent he found the idea that a father would risk the life of his own child. "Their own children!" he repeated. Another soldier remarked that if the junta could do this to their own families, imagine what they are willing to do to Karenni families.

We passed a bomb crater, and one of the Karenni Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF) soldiers told me, "This is where Oo Reh died." Oo Reh was a Free Burma Rangers (FBR) medic who David Eubank, the group's leader, called "one of our best Rangers." He was killed on June 30, 2025, when a Burma Army jet airstrike struck during an evacuation.

Oo Reh had been rescuing a man whose foot was blown off by a Burma Army landmine. For days before, Oo Reh had driven the evacuation vehicle under constant fire, including rifles, machine guns, RPGs, mortars, and airstrikes. Eubank described his conduct as calm and steady under pressure. He worked tirelessly to bring wounded to safety. On his final mission, landmines lined both sides of the road, making it impossible to reverse. The team loaded the victim into the truck, but as they prepared to leave, a jet dove in for an attack.



Fighters on the trail. Photo: Antonio Graceffo

The first bomb narrowly missed, but during the second run, a fragment struck Oo Reh in the face, killing him instantly.

This happened amid a brutal battle in which the Karenni fought to push the Burma Army from Pasaung. In three days, over 250 were wounded and 26 killed, with more than 150 airstrikes and hundreds of mortar bombs. Eight Rangers were wounded evacuating casualties, but Oo Reh was the only fatality. His death came just before the Karenni secured half the town, a victory that felt hollow to those who loved him.

Now, the soldiers are gathered and ready to take the other half of the town. A common problem for the resistance is a shortage of ammunition. Earlier this year, the KNDF won a decisive victory against the junta in Moby, reclaiming a large amount of lost ground. But within days they were forced to retreat, effectively handing the territory back because they lacked the bullets and artillery shells to hold it. Some soldiers told me they have gone into battle with as few as 30 rounds of ammunition. For many, it was disheartening to watch friends die to take that ground, only to see their sacrifice vanish like smoke.

In the case of the Pasaung battle, however, an officer told me they had enough ammunition and manpower. "We have enough of everything," he said. They are simply waiting for the order to move.

For the soldiers, retaking Pasaung would be a major victory and a powerful motivator, helping to erase

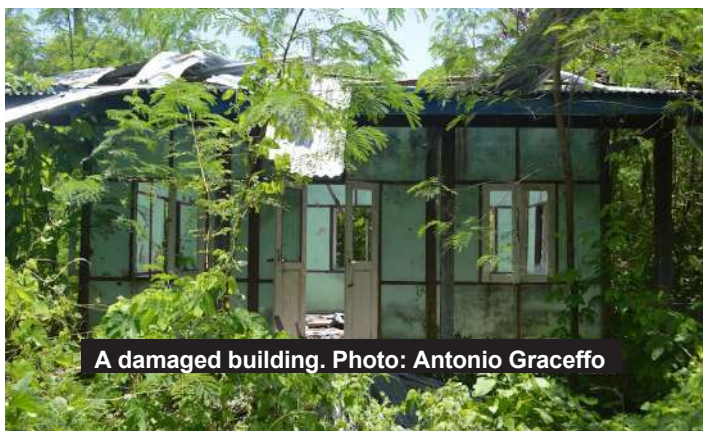
the sting of earlier disappointments like the territorial losses in Moby. For civilians, a win at Pasaung could mean the chance to finally return home. Others, weary of waiting, have resigned themselves to resettling deeper inside Karenni territory. In some cases, people have even chosen to return to junta-controlled areas.

One man explained, "They will have less freedom, but they believe they will be safer and have better access to services and economic opportunities." This may hold true in cities like Loikaw, but in other areas civilians report that the junta and allied Pa-O forces are killing Karenni people simply for being Karenni. In those places, survival depends on fleeing to Karenni-held territory.

Regardless of the path chosen, returning to junta areas, hiding in the jungle and hoping for the best, or resettling in Karenni strongholds, everyone wants the Karenni forces to prevail and to see the junta driven out. One civilian told me, "We don't have to have an independent country, but if we could drive out the junta and have an independent state, that would be fine." Most people simply long to live normal lives again: working their fields, raising their families, and educating their children in a world free from airstrikes.

But for the time being, everyone is waiting for the battles to start and to see how they will turn out.

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





US President Donald Trump meets with visiting European leaders at the White House to discuss a solution to the Ukraine crisis. Photo: AFP

PUTIN AND ZELENSKY SET FOR PEACE SUMMIT AFTER TRUMP TALKS

Russian and Ukrainian presidents Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelensky looked set for a peace summit after fast-moving talks Monday between Donald Trump and European leaders that focused on the key issue of long-term security guarantees for Kyiv.

Hopes of a breakthrough rose after Trump said he had spoken by phone with Russian counterpart Putin -- whom he met in Alaska last week -- following a "very good" meeting with the Europeans and the Ukrainian president at the White House.

It would be the first meeting between the Russian and Ukrainian leaders since Moscow's brutal invasion nearly three and a half years ago, and comes as Trump tries to live up to his promise to quickly end the war.

Trump, 79, wrote on his Truth Social network that "everyone is very happy about the possibility of PEACE for Russia/Ukraine."

"At the conclusion of the meetings, I called President Putin, and began the arrangements for a meeting, at a location to be determined, between President Putin and President Zelensky," Trump said.

Trump said he would then hold a three-way summit with the Ukrainian and Russian leaders.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said Putin had agreed to the bilateral meeting within the next two weeks, but there was no confirmation of a date or location.

Zelensky 'ready' to meet Putin

Zelensky confirmed to reporters outside the White House he was "ready" for a bilateral with bitter foe Putin, whose invasion of Ukraine has led to tens of thousands of deaths.

In Moscow, a Kremlin aide said that Putin was open to the "idea" of direct talks with Ukraine.

The Ukraine war has ground to a virtual stalemate despite a few recent Russian advances, but Trump's summit with Putin last Friday failed to produce any ceasefire.

Zelensky then rushed to the White House to meet with Trump after the US president increasingly pushed

the Ukrainian leader to make concessions to Russia.

The leaders of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Finland, the European Commission and NATO then announced that they would be coming too, in a pointed show of support.

Zelensky also met one-on-one in the Oval Office with Trump in their first encounter in the heart of the US presidency since their acrimonious blow-up there in February.

The Ukrainian president said the meeting was their "best" yet, with little of the tensions that erupted when Trump and Vice President JD Vance berated him in front of TV cameras for not being "grateful" for US support.

Trump even complimented Zelensky on his black jacket, after the Ukrainian was criticized by right-wing media because he failed to change his trademark war-leader's outfit for a suit during the February visit.

'Security guarantees'

The US president meanwhile said he had discussed security guarantees for Ukraine, adding that Putin had agreed to them despite ruling out Kyiv's long-held dream of joining the NATO alliance.

Trump said the guarantees "would be provided by the various European Countries, with a coordination with the United States of America."

NATO chief Mark Rutte told reporters at the White House it was a "very successful meeting" with "the president really breaking the deadlock."

"Today was really about security guarantees, the US getting more involved there, and all the details to be hammered out over the coming days," he said.

The Financial Times, citing a document seen by the newspaper, said Ukraine had undertaken to buy \$100 billion of US weapons financed by Europe in return for US guarantees for its security.

Zelensky later spoke to reporters about a \$90 billion package, and said Ukraine and its allies would formalize the terms of the security guarantees within 10 days.

The presence of the European leaders however also underscored continuing nervousness about whether Trump will pivot towards Putin as he has on a number of occasions.

Trump had pushed Ukraine ahead of the meeting to give up Crimea and abandon its goal of joining NATO -- both key demands made by Putin.

French President Emmanuel Macron called Monday for stepping up sanctions against Russia if Putin does not move forward on peace with Ukraine.

Finnish President Alex Stubb said Putin was not "to be trusted."

Germany's Merz meanwhile said Ukraine should not be forced to surrender its Donbas region to Russia in talks.

"The Russian demand that Kyiv give up the free parts of Donbas corresponds, to put it bluntly, to a proposal for the United States to have to give up Florida," Merz told reporters.

AFP



Photo: AFP

UN WARNS RUSSIA, ISRAEL OF CONFLICT SEX CRIMES LISTING RISK

The United Nations warned Israel and Russia on 14 August that their militaries faced being listed as parties suspected of committing sexual violence in conflict in light of credible evidence of violations.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres's report said the two countries risked being added to a list of parties thought to use sexual violence including rape in conflict that includes Myanmar's military, Sudan's army and the Palestinian militant group Hamas.

"Due to significant concerns regarding patterns of certain forms of sexual violence perpetrated by Israeli armed and security forces and Russian armed and security forces and affiliated armed groups, these parties have been put on notice for potential listing in the next reporting period," said the annual report.

"These concerns relate primarily to violations recorded in detention settings."

In the case of Israel, the report alleges "credible information" military and security forces perpetrated

patterns of sexual violence including "genital violence, prolonged forced nudity and repeated strip searches conducted in an abusive and degrading manner."

In February, the Israeli army said it had charged five soldiers for abusing a Palestinian detainee at a site used to hold Palestinians following the start of the war in Gaza in the wake of the October 7, 2023 attacks by Hamas.

Among the charges was an allegation that the accused had stabbed a man with a sharp object "which had penetrated near the detainee's rectum."

The report said there was "credible" evidence of violations "against Ukrainian prisoners of war, in 50 official and 22 unofficial detention facilities in Ukraine" and Russia.

"These cases comprised a significant number of documented incidents of genital violence, including electrocution, beatings and burns to the genitals, and forced stripping and prolonged nudity, used to humiliate and elicit confessions or information," it said.

In 2024, the human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine documented 209 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, including rape, the report added.

Israel has cooperated with a special representative on the issue of sexual violence in conflict, whereas Russia has not, the report said.

The report said however that Israel's refusal to grant access to inspectors had frustrated her ability to determine patterns and trends.

Israel rejected the report's findings and called a letter that accompanied it from Guterres "unusual."

"The UN must focus on the shocking war crimes and sexual violence of Hamas and the release of all hostages," Israel's ambassador to the UN Danny Danon said.

"Israel will not shy away from protecting its citizens and will continue to act in accordance with international law."

Russia's embassy to the United Nations did not respond to a request for comment.

AFP



ECHOES IN THE ABSENCE

"This story, Aung San Suu Kyi in prison is one of the most recognizable stories [about Myanmar], but she's disappeared since the coup."

Lorcan Lovett, an experienced journalist based in Southeast Asia, speaks to the Insight Myanmar Podcast about his reporting on Myanmar's post-coup crisis, focusing on Suu Kyi's detention, the fractured resistance, and the junta's plans for a 2025 election. A recent Guardian article, co-authored by Lovett and Tin Htet Paing, brought to light rare, authenticated daily logs detailing Suu Kyi's prison life, revealing her deteriorating health as well as the murky conditions of her present incarceration. This is Lovett's second appearance on the podcast; in his prior episode, he recounted his move from Yangon's bustling media scene to on-the-ground reporting in resistance-held zones, documenting Myanmar's descent into violent unrest and the fragile coalitions driving its fractured revolution.

Lovett explains how the documents were obtained by a source affiliated with People's Embrace, a group of military and police defectors who work with "watermelons"—that is, current members of the police and military who secretly oppose the regime. The logs are rich with credible details, including the names of staff members, Suu Kyi's food and medication intake, and her daily routines, all of which aligned with her known, past habits. Lovett then cross-verified the materials with an

independent, well-connected Myanmar-based source unaffiliated with the resistance, and also received confirmation from Suu Kyi's son, Kim Aris, who said the logs were consistent with what he had learned through private channels.

The logs, dated January and February 2024, presented Suu Kyi as frail but lucid. They show her waking up daily at 4:30am, meditating, reading military-run newspapers and consuming sparse meals, at times subsisting on just "a little bit of chicken, a little bit of rice, and two pieces of chocolate." Lovett consulted with physician Dr. Aung Kyaw, who warned that her ailments—particularly her gum and dental pain—were not being treated, that she was just getting medication for the pain. "For an 80 year old spending so much time in prison... it's a really worrying situation," Lovett said. The Guardian piece was timed for her 80th birthday and intended to "raise international awareness of the situation, not only of Suu Kyi, but of Myanmar as well."

Lovett speculates that although Suu Kyi is confined, she likely remains more aware of the country's collapse than one might expect. Despite receiving only junta-controlled newspapers, he believes she can read between the lines. Drawing on his own review of those same publications, Lovett notes that military denials of resistance attacks often repeat so many details that they effectively confirm the events. He also cites Australian economist Sean Turnell, who was imprisoned under similar conditions and said that newspapers weren't censored and that information "seeps through in other ways"—including via staff at the prison, whose motivations are not exactly entirely aligned with those of the regime.

CATCH THE PODCAST

Read more or listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast here:

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2025/8/3/episode-373-echoes-in-the-absence>



People crossing the bridge to Myawaddy on the Myanmar-Thailand border.
Photo: AFP

MYANMAR CLOSES THAI-MYANMAR FRIENDSHIP BRIDGE NO. 2, HALTING TRADE

The Myanmar side temporarily closed the Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge No. 2 on the morning of 18 August, halting cross-border trade, according to local sources.

The closure comes about a week after the junta announced a ban on 35 imported consumer goods, including toothpaste and soap. The bridge is the main trade route between Myawaddy and Mae Sot, and its shutdown has stopped all official trade.

"This bridge is the only official trade route, so now that it's closed, trade has stopped. If trade stops, the

price of goods could go up even more. I'm not sure why they closed the bridge," said a Myawaddy resident.

Thai media reported that more than 500 cargo trucks on the Mae Sot side have been stranded for over a week, unable to enter Myanmar.

With the import ban and trucks stuck at the border, prices of imported goods including food and medicine, have risen sharply inside the country.



SOCIAL MEDIA USERS REJECT JUNTA'S DECEMBER 28 ELECTION PLAN

The Union Election Commission (UEC) announced on 18 August that Myanmar's general election will begin on 28 December 2025, marking the first nationwide vote since the 2021 coup. The announcement immediately became one of the most discussed topics online, with many citizens questioning the legitimacy and timing of the polls.

Social media platforms saw a surge of criticism, with users arguing that the election is a façade designed to provide the junta with a veneer of legitimacy. Posts expressed widespread fears that voting will take place amid armed conflict, displacement, and military control of large areas of the country. A widely shared comment on Facebook read, "How can we talk about elections when bombs are still falling on our towns?"

While some voices cautiously welcomed the possibility of a political process, the overwhelming

sentiment online was skepticism and distrust. Hashtags calling the election a "sham" or "military show" trended on Burmese Twitter, while memes comparing the vote to staged performances went viral on Facebook.

Observers noted that the announcement came just days after a deadly military airstrike in Mogoke, fueling anger about the junta's priorities. Civil society groups have warned that the election could deepen divisions and further endanger civilians rather than offer a path to stability.

For many online, the December 28 date is not a moment of hope but a reminder of the country's ongoing crisis. As one activist posted, "Elections without freedom are not elections at all."

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



DIGITAL MAGAZINE

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