

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



DRONE CRISIS

**Burma Resistance Forces
Struggle Against Advancing
Drone Technology**

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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.

JUNTA STEPS UP ITS REPRESSION

Since the military seized power in Myanmar in February 2021, peace has been shattered. The Myanmar junta, desperate to maintain control, has treated many of its own civilians with relentless cruelty and disregard, turning everyday life into a battle for survival.

As we recall, it began with the protests. When people flooded the streets in towns and cities, demanding the restoration of democracy, the junta responded with live ammunition. What started as rubber bullets and tear gas quickly turned into sniper fire and indiscriminate killing. Teenagers carrying nothing but banners were shot in the head. In Mandalay, a seven-year-old girl named Khin Myo Chit was killed in her own home when soldiers fired through the door during a raid. Her only crime was being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The violence did not stop at protests. The junta declared war on anyone suspected of opposing them. In small towns, night raids became routine. Soldiers stormed homes without warrants, dragging civilians out and accusing them of ties to resistance forces. Often, no evidence was given. Once taken, many never returned. Families were left in the dark, searching morgues or bribing guards for information. Torture centres, hidden in military compounds or unused buildings, operated with impunity. Survivors spoke of beatings, mock executions, and electrocution. Some were forced to sign false confessions before being sent to prison for decades.

Whole villages in Myanmar have been razed. Schools and clinics have been bombed. The junta's forces have burned homes, looted food and livestock, and set fire to rice stores, leaving families

with nothing. When resistance fighters launch attacks on military positions, the junta retaliates not against combatants, but civilians. In Sagaing and Chin states, bodies have been discovered bound, burned, and dumped in mass graves. Satellite images have shown entire communities turned to ash. Only last week, a 15-year-old boy escaped to tell the story of how six civilians in his Sagaing village were burnt alive by junta soldiers. These are not accidents - they are deliberate acts of punishment.

Access to healthcare has collapsed in many areas of the country. The military targets medical volunteers, accusing them of aiding rebels. Doctors who once worked in public hospitals have gone into hiding. Those still operating clinics risk arrest or worse. The junta has occupied hospitals, using them as military bases, making them unsafe for both staff and patients. During the COVID-19 pandemic, oxygen supplies were hoarded by the military while civilians suffocated in their homes. Appeals for help were met with silence or threats.

Freedom of expression is nearly extinct. Speaking out, even on social media, can result in arrest. Artists, poets, teachers, and students have all been jailed under vague laws meant to criminalize dissent. News outlets have been shut down, and journalists face years in prison for reporting the truth. The military fears information almost as much as it fears armed resistance.

Through it all, the people of Myanmar endure. But the price of their endurance is high - paid for in fear, suffering, and countless lives lost to an illegal regime that treats its own citizens as enemies.

EDITORIAL

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**Mizzima Weekly is
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Cover photo of Mandalay resistance fighters preparing their drone by AFP

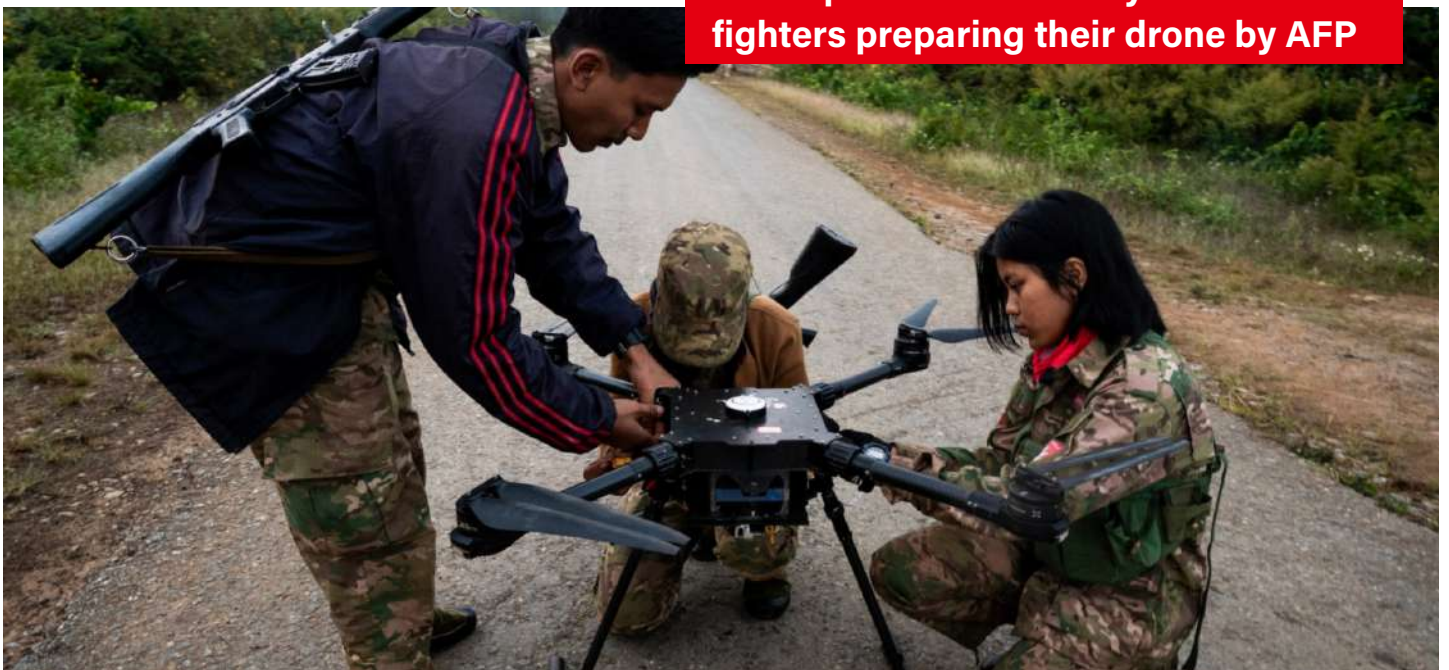




Photo: AFP

DRONE CRISIS

**BURMA RESISTANCE FORCES
STRUGGLE AGAINST ADVANCING
DRONE TECHNOLOGY**

ANTONIO GRACEFFO

The past four years have been a David-and-Goliath struggle between Burma's resistance armies and the junta, which is backed by China and supported by Russia. The resistance fights with a hodgepodge of mismatched weapons, some homemade, others captured from the junta, while constantly facing shortages of arms, ammunition, and any form of air defense. By contrast, the junta fields modern technology, advanced munitions, and drones in abundance.

Burma resistance forces are closely watching the war in Ukraine, seeing it as a similarly asymmetric struggle between a smaller resistance force and a much larger, better-equipped aggressor.

A Free Burma Ranger recently returned from a mission in Ukraine described how drones have become a major game changer. Russia is producing them en masse, while Ukraine relies on small factories and individual teams. He explained that Western-supplied air defense systems have made it too costly for Russia to deploy aircraft, forcing Moscow to adopt a dro-

ne strategy that is proving effective, particularly with fiber-optic drones. In Burma, he noted, there have only been isolated reports of such drones being used. "But it's coming," he warned.

On a hopeful note, the Rangers said they are exploring ways drones could be used to save lives, such as for reconnaissance or for delivering blood, medicine, and medical supplies to the frontline when casualties and medics are trapped under fire. At the same time, they warned that the latest technologies being used by the Russians will likely soon be adopted by the State Administration Council (SAC), which has now rebranded itself as the National Security and Peace Commission (NSPC).

Recently, the resistance has tested a few interceptors, a device that allows operators to hack into an enemy drone and view its live feed. It is unsettling to see yourself appear on the screen while tracking an enemy drone overhead. These tools can confirm if you are being targeted, but they offer no real protection. Drone



jammers provide some defense, with the more advanced models able to disrupt across multiple frequencies. Yet the latest drones can shift frequencies constantly, making them difficult to jam, while fiber-optic drones cannot be hacked by interceptors or disabled with jammers at all.

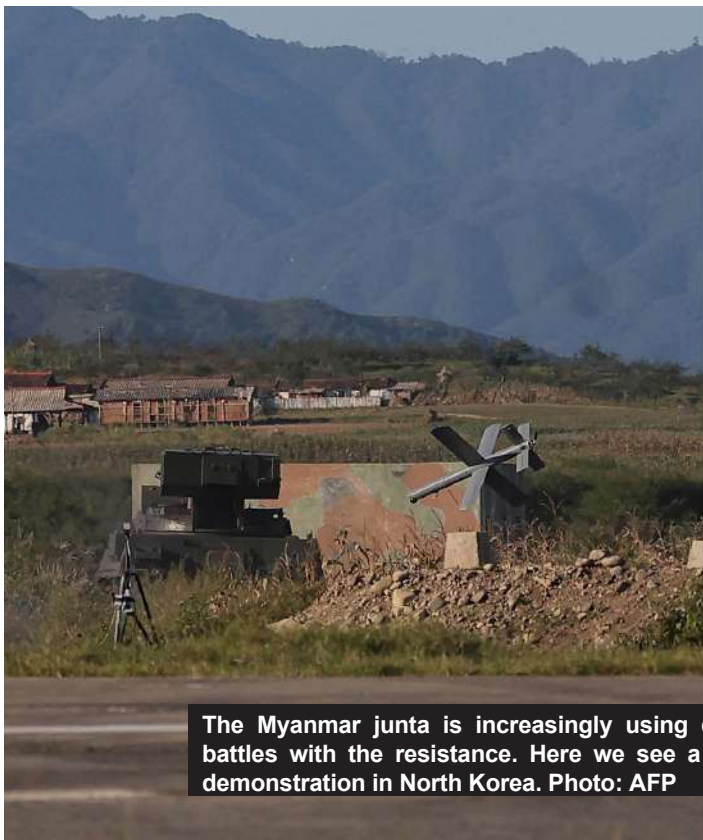
"The drones are the biggest problem," said one frontline resistance commander, speaking on condition of anonymity due to operational security concerns. "Both sides are using drones, but the NSPC's anti-jamming technology is more advanced. When we activate jamming, our drones are grounded. But theirs are equipped with anti-jamming capabilities, so they stay up and drop bombs directly on our positions."

One of the problems with jammers is that they disrupt all drones operating on those frequencies, whether friendly or enemy. The wider the range of jamming signals, the harder it becomes for resistance drones to fly. In practice, deploying jammers often means being unable to deploy your own drones.

This technological disparity creates a tactical nightmare for resistance forces attempting to hold territory or mount offensive operations. "This is one of the worst challenges every frontline soldier faces when fighting NSPC troops, whether defending or counterattacking," the commander explained.

The problem extends across multiple theaters of operation. "It's the same in Mobe, it's the same across Shan State. In the Mandalay region, there's heavy fighting, and everyone is afraid of drones. The technology keeps advancing, and every fighter on the ground knows we're at a disadvantage in the air." And with the far more expensive and advanced fiber-optic drones likely to reach the NSPC soon, the resistance will face even greater challenges.

Beyond the immediate tactical challenges, the junta's air superiority serves a broader strategic purpose of collective punishment designed to undermine resistance support among civilian populations.



The Myanmar junta is increasingly using drones in their battles with the resistance. Here we see a drone weapon demonstration in North Korea. Photo: AFP



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"Air defense is mostly for the civilians now," the resistance commander noted. "The NSPC is bombing civilian areas to break the will of the people and pressure the resistance. Civilians can't defend themselves. At the front line, jet strikes don't cause as many casualties, but when they hit villages, that's when it's devastating."

This deliberate targeting of non-combatants creates additional operational burdens for resistance forces who find themselves fighting a war while simultaneously protecting vulnerable populations. "Every time civilians are bombed, it forces our groups to divert resources to help them. We have to care for the wounded, evacuate people, and respond to the aftermath."

The civilian protection mission also complicates military planning and logistics. "Then people criticize us or pressure us not to be near civilians, which makes planning and logistics harder. It takes so much more time and energy just to operate," the commander explained.

According to the Rangers, arms support from the US and Europe has allowed the Ukrainians to effectively neutralize the Russian air force, leaving ground forces and civilians to contend mainly with drones. In Burma, however, the absence of international military aid, particularly anti-aircraft systems—remains one of the most critical gaps in resistance capabilities, limiting their ability to hold territory or launch large-scale operations.

At this point, most civilian and military casualties are caused by air and drone strikes, yet international support could provide defenses against both. The US maintains a policy of supplying only nonlethal aid to Burma, but surely air defense systems qualify as non-lethal, even life-saving, and should be provided.

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



Drones are becoming more sophisticated - and deadly.
Photo: supplied

ANALYSIS & INSIGHT



Injured civilians receive medical treatment.
Photo: EPA

JUNTA COUPLES MILITARY ATTACKS WITH ELECTION PLAN

Myanmar's military-appointed Union Election Commission (UEC) has confirmed plans to hold a national election in three phases, beginning on December 28, 2025, though dates for the remaining two rounds have yet to be announced. The phased approach reflects the regime's struggle to secure enough territory to conduct voting, with opponents dismissing the process as a sham designed to legitimize military rule.

Alongside the announcement, the junta amended the election law to ease requirements for political parties seeking to campaign nationwide. Under the previous law, a party had to contest at least half of all constituencies to remain registered. The amendment lowers the threshold to just 25%. On September 9, the UEC dissolved three parties that had aimed to compete nationally, leaving only six parties eligible. They are the pro-military Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), National Unity Party (NUP), People Pioneer Party (PPP) led by ex-NLD lawmaker Thet Thet Khaing, People's Party (PP) led by 88 Generation leader

Ko Ko Gyi, the Shan and Nationalities Democratic Party (White Tiger Party), and the Myanmar Farmers Development Party (MFDP).

The junta has tied its election preparations to military efforts to expand or consolidate control. In Kachin State, operations are ongoing with militia groups in Waingmaw, Monghnyin, and Hpakant townships. In northern Shan, the regime has sought China's backing to retake Theinni and increase pressure on the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) in Kyaukme and Thibaw. In Karenni State, junta columns are attempting to hold positions in Moebye and Demoso, areas previously dominated by the Karenni Nationalities Defense Force (KNDF). In Karen State, the army regained Myawaddy, a key border trade town with Thailand, with support from the Democratic Karen

Buddhist Army (DKBA) and Border Guard Force (BGF).

In Rakhine State, four townships seized by the Arakan Army (AA) during last year's offensives have been reclassified as eligible for polling, even though they remain firmly under AA control. The move highlights the junta's determination to project the appearance of nationwide voting, despite lacking authority on the ground. In Sagaing Region, one of the strongholds of armed resistance, military columns continue operations aimed at stabilizing areas for election activity.

Meanwhile, authorities have arrested nine people, including three minors, under election-related laws. Local sources say the cases reflect the regime's broader attempts to tighten control ahead of the polls,



Trucks waiting for passage.
Photo: EPA

further raising concerns that the process will be neither free nor fair.

Junta consolidates control of trade hub Myawaddy

Myanmar junta forces regained control of Myawaddy's Asia Highway and the town's strategic command centre on September 6, ending months of resistance control but leaving the border trade crossing shuttered.

The Karen National Union (KNU) and allied resistance forces had held stretches of the Asia Highway since December 2023 and seized the strategic command centre in April 2024. The military launched its "Aung Zeya" column in April 2024 in an attempt to retake the town but faced heavy resistance from the KNU and People's Defense Forces (PDF).

The breakthrough came after the junta enlisted the support of Bo Bi, a local armed commander who split from the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA). Ground sources said Bo Bi and his men guided the

junta column into Myawaddy after receiving weapons and ammunition from the regime. At the same time, the Border Guard Force (BGF) retreated from their posts in Myawaddy as the junta's No. 275 Regiment advanced to link up with other columns moving under Bo Bi's guidance.

Although the junta now holds Myawaddy—a key trade hub on the Thai border—and controls the Asia Highway linking it to Yangon, the road remains insecure. Resistance forces still control or contest both sides of the highway, and some cargo trucks continue to use alternative routes through areas held by Karen armed groups, including the BGF, DKBA, and KNLA-PC, which signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).

Despite the takeover, the junta has not reopened the Myawaddy border trade. The closure has driven Thai goods in Myanmar into short supply, pushing prices sharply higher. Businesspeople in cargo and transportation say they are also suffering heavy losses, compounding the economic strain on consumers across the country.



KIA fighters. Photo: EPA

Kachin rebuttal of US rare earth plans

Reports of U.S. interest in Myanmar's rare earth minerals have drawn attention in recent weeks, but the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) has denied any such connections.

A Reuters report in late July cited sources suggesting that Washington was considering a proposal to purchase rare earths from Kachin State, a resource-rich region along the Myanmar-China border. The story followed earlier speculation that Beijing had pressured the KIO to halt its offensive at Bhamo by warning it would stop buying rare earth supplies.

However, KIO spokesperson Col. Naw Bu dismissed both accounts. "There has been no letter, no contact in person, and no connection at all with the U.S. government regarding rare earth extraction,"

he told local media. He added that no warnings were issued from Beijing over the fighting at Bhamo.

On the ground, Chinese-backed companies that previously struck extraction deals with the junta-affiliated Border Guard Force (BGF) are still operating in the region, despite shifts in territorial control. The Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the KIO's armed wing, seized Chihpwe and Pan Wah townships—rare earth hubs—last October. Col. Naw Bu confirmed that while no new companies have entered the sector since then, existing operators have continued extraction by negotiating directly with the KIO/KIA.

Rare earths, vital for technologies ranging from smartphones to electric vehicles, are a key geopolitical resource. The contested mining in Kachin highlights both the region's strategic importance and the swirl of rumours linking local conflict to global power competition.

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LIFE IN MYANMAR-JUNTA-CONTROLLED SHAN STATE UNLIVABLE

ANTONIO GRACEFFO

After the Burma Army seized power, “things changed, corruption, no rule of law. Many different armed groups appeared, fighting each other...this made our lives more difficult.” That was the experience of 61-year-old Luang Seng, from Merng Kueng Township, Shan State, who ultimately fled to Thailand.

Before the 2021 coup, he described life as stable and secure. “I worked as a firefighter and I had a salary, and my family members worked on the farm, so our daily life was going well,” he said.

But the coup shattered that security, with his family suffering under both junta rule and the conflicts between multiple armed groups, all of whom imposed forced conscription and taxation on civilians.

His situation worsened in 2023 after a serious car accident. A large truck crashed into his vehicle, leaving him badly injured and hospitalized for weeks. Once he recovered, instead of returning to normal life, he was arrested. “The police came, arrested me, and locked me up. Then they sent me to jail in SSPP/SSA

headquarters at Ban Hai, Kesi Township,” he recalled.

Seng described his time in the SSPP/SSA jail as “like hell.” Most of the prisoners, he said, were elderly men and women with heartbreaking stories. Many had been arrested because the army wanted to pressure their children into joining. “They told us we would never be released until our children came to join the army or money was paid,” Seng explained. Families were forced to pay as much as one million kyat, about 100,000 Thai baht, for a prisoner’s freedom. Without money, or if children refused to enlist, detainees faced life imprisonment.

Conditions inside were brutal. According to Seng, torture, rape, and disease were rampant. Men and women were separated. Men were forced into dangerous, degrading labor with little food. Those who fell ill were often executed, with soldiers later telling families the prisoner had died from sickness.

Women fared even worse. Seng said they were confined in narrow cages and subjected to repeated sexual assault. “All females had to work as prostitutes,”

he said. "Some were raped to death, others were left disabled." After such abuse, soldiers extorted families for money; those who could not pay saw their loved ones kept in jail until death.

Seng recalled the case of one young couple who had gone to their farm. Soldiers tied up the husband and raped his wife in front of him, before sending both to prison, where they remain till this day.

He explained that under SSPP/SSA control, almost any action could bring arrest: "young couples dating, giving incorrect names of relatives, failing to pay tax, leaving the village without permission, farming without approval, or even leaving to work in Thailand without permission..." All were punishable by imprisonment.

After eight months in jail, Luang Seng was finally questioned. When he explained that he had worked for the junta as a militia member and firefighter in his hometown, he was released. The SSPP/SSA tried to recruit him into their ranks, but he refused, citing his age and concern for his family.

Back home, he briefly considered resuming farming but decided it was too dangerous. Landmines littered the fields, and the area had become crowded with armed groups, SSPP, RCSS, SAC, MNDAA, TNLA, UWSA, and PNLO all operated nearby. The Burma military sent a list of names to the village, ordering him to join the army. Refusal, he said, meant five years in prison. That was the tipping point that made him decide to flee to Thailand.

He and his son-in-law went first, later joined by his daughter and three grandchildren. To avoid military checkpoints, they traveled on foot through the jungle. "I felt not safe during the journey," he recalled. "The biggest fear was the army checkpoints." The detours made the trip longer and harder, but it was the only way to avoid capture.

For women, families with small children, the elderly, disabled, or the wounded, walking through the jungle was not an option. Many came by road in convoys of trucks, despite the danger of checkpoints manned by different armed groups. When Seng's daughter and three grandchildren followed, they hired a driver who knew the way to Thailand. "It cost 15,000 Thai baht per person," Seng said.

Although the drive was quicker than the walk through the jungle, it carried enormous risks. His daughter's convoy was stopped by SSPP/SSA soldiers, who arrested about 700 people, including the drivers. Seng said his daughter was released only because her children were crying.

Eventually, Seng was reunited with his daughter and her children. A widower, he now lives with six family members, including his daughter, son-in-law, and three grandchildren. His son, however, remains in Shan State, unable to leave because Burma's forced conscription rules prevent young people from crossing the border.

After arriving in Thailand, Seng spent two months in Fang District before reaching Chiang Mai Province. None of his family members have ID cards or work authorization. Today they live in the unofficial Shan refugee camp called Koung Jor, located in Wiang Haeng District. The camp has no UN protection and receives little outside support; food rations largely stopped about a year ago, and most residents are barred from working legally in Thailand.

Seng said that, although he no longer faces immediate danger from the military while in Thailand, life remains precarious. Without documents and no way to work legally, the family has no reliable income and worries about daily food. When asked about his hopes for the future, he answered that he will not return to Burma unless there is real peace.

"I didn't want to leave my hometown, but I had no choice," he said. "If our country gets peace, I will go back for sure. Life in the refugee camp is safe, but I don't know how to make money or work." In Burma, he said, he lived in constant fear. Now, waiting out the war in Thailand, he observed, "Life is risky. And I feel hopeless."

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



HUMAN RIGHTS MYANMAR SEES HOPE FOR MYANMAR'S REVOLUTION IN YOUTH-LED MOVEMENTS IN NEPAL AND BANGLADESH

Human Rights Myanmar issued a statement on 17 September noting the political and human rights victories by youth-led uprisings in neighbouring Bangladesh and nearby Nepal. The successful changes in government are in notable contrast to the five years of political upheaval, armed conflict, and widespread human rights abuses in Myanmar which followed its own youth-led protests in 2021.

They are also a source of deep reflection and a stark reminder of the uniquely brutal path that Myanmar has been forced to walk. While young people in Nepal and Bangladesh successfully challenged entrenched establishments, Myanmar's youth—who rose with such incredible bravery—have been met with a scorched-earth war waged by the very institution meant to protect them.

The full text of the statement is as follows.

Recent and rapid change among Myanmar's neighbours has brought a moment of profound hope. In Bangladesh, a youth-led uprising has led to a new government headed by a Nobel laureate civil society leader. In Nepal, a similar youth-driven movement has appointed a bold anti-corruption judge as the first woman to lead an Asian country without being the wife, daughter, or sister of a powerful man.

These are not just political victories but human rights victories. They represent the powerful demand for accountable governance, an end to corruption, and a State that serves its people.

The architecture of brutality

The critical question for the human rights community is not why Myanmar's dissenters are any less determined, but why the structures they face are so uniquely resistant to change. The answer does not lie in politics, but in the fundamental architecture of human rights abuse that defines the Myanmar military.

Unlike in Nepal and Bangladesh, where militaries are ultimately arms of the State, Myanmar's military has long operated as the State itself. It is guided by a perverse doctrine that it is the nation's sole "guardian," a belief it uses to justify any atrocity in the name of national unity.

Second, Myanmar's military is not just an army but a vast economic conglomerate. Through its sprawling business empire, it has the independent wealth to fund its own campaigns of terror, buying weapons and running operations completely outside of any public scrutiny. This economic self-sufficiency insulates it from the pressures that can sway governments. This is not a business enterprise but a financial engine of a human rights crisis, fuelled by the nation's resources to oppress the Myanmar people.

These two factors culminate in the ultimate barrier to progress: a complete and total culture of impunity. For generations, Myanmar's military has committed the gravest crimes under international law—from the atrocity crimes against the Rohingya to the systematic use of torture, sexual violence, and mass killings since the 2021 coup—without a single soldier ever facing a court of law. This has created a military that does not believe the law applies to it. It is this institutional DNA that makes its response to protest not tear gas and arrests, but fighter jets and mass executions.

A blueprint for a rights-based future

Understanding this structure is essential because it informs the path forward. A future, rights-respecting Myanmar cannot be built by simply replacing the individuals in power or replacing one military with many. The very architecture of State-sponsored violence must be dismantled. From a human rights perspective, three core reforms are non-negotiable:

1. Establishing the primacy of the rule of law

First and foremost, the military must be made subject to the law, not its arbiter. This requires a new constitution that establishes permanent, unambiguous civilian control over the armed forces. Any military that can legally overthrow a government is a military that will always be the single greatest threat to human rights. Security sector reform, including the vetting of personnel for rights abuses, is essential to creating a professional service that protects people, rather than preys on them.

2. Demilitarising the economy

The economic independence that funds the military's atrocities must end. Dismantling the military's conglomerates and bringing the entirety of the defence budget under transparent, civilian parliamentary control is a human rights imperative. When the flow of money is made public, the ability to wage a secret war on civilians is drastically curtailed.

3. Ending impunity through transitional justice

There can be no durable peace or respect for human rights without accountability. The cycle of violence will only continue if its perpetrators believe they will never face consequences. A future Myanmar must establish credible, independent judicial mechanisms to prosecute those responsible for atrocity crimes. A comprehensive truth commission is needed to officially document the abuses of the past, and a reparations program is essential to acknowledge and address the suffering of millions of victims. This is not about revenge but affirming the universal right to justice and ensuring these horrors can never be repeated.

The journey of Myanmar is undeniably hard and soaked in blood. The lesson from Nepal and Bangladesh is not one of tactics but of principle. They have shown that a generation's demand for dignity and accountability can, and must, win. The struggle in Myanmar is a fight for those same fundamental principles. It is a fight to build a nation where the rights and security of the people are the State's only priority, and where no one is above the law.




Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA BOMBS CHRISTIAN CHURCH AS FIGHTING INTENSIFIES IN DEMOSO TOWNSHIP

Fighting has erupted again in Demoso Township, Karenni (Kayah) State, with junta forces bombing a Christian church amid an ongoing offensive, according to the Karenni National Defence Force (KNDF).

The KNDF said the junta resumed its assault on Demoso on 16 September, after a brief pause, moving troops from the town toward Daw Ngan Kha village in the Demoso village tract.

"The clashes have continued for two to three days as junta troops have been advancing from the town toward Daw Ngan Kha village," a KNDF information officer said.

On the morning of 17 September, the junta bombed a Christian church in one of the villages, leaving the building damaged.

The offensive began on 4 August, and by 19 August, the junta had seized control of most urban areas in Demoso. Out of the four districts in Karenni State – Loikaw, Demoso, Bawlakhe, and Mese – the junta currently controls only Loikaw. Resistance forces say the military aims to retake Demoso to facilitate its planned elections.

In a 14 September announcement, the junta said elections would not be held in Hpasaung, Mese, and Shadaw townships, but Demoso remains on its list.

Since the launch of Operation 1111, revolutionary forces have claimed control of several townships, including Demoso, Moby, Nanmekhon, Shadaw, Mawchi, Ywarthit, and Mese. However, the junta's latest offensive has forced resistance forces to withdraw from the urban areas of both Demoso and Moby.



A rare earth mine.
Photo: Supplied

SHRF SAYS FARMLAND DOWNSTREAM FROM RARE EARTH MINES DESTROYED BY MUD-LADEN FLOODS IN EASTERN MYANMAR

The Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) released a statement on 18 September describing the damage inflicted by mud-laden floodwaters on agricultural land downstream from rare-earth mines in eastern Shan State. The mines are located in United Wa State Army (UWSA)-controlled areas of Mong Bawk in Mong Yang Township.

The text of the SHRF report continues below.

Scores of acres of farmlands along the Lwe River in Mong Khark, eastern Shan State, have been destroyed by unprecedented mud-laden flooding since late July 2025, about 20 kilometers downstream of rare earth mines in the UWSA-controlled area of Mong Bawk.

Heavy rain first caused the Lwe River to burst its banks on July 27, covering fields on both sides of the river with water up to two meters deep. When the floodwaters receded after three days, 60-cm-deep mud was left on about half of the flooded fields, destroying local crops -- mostly rice, but also corn, peanut and soybean.

Farmers replanted crops on the field areas which had not been covered in mud, but again on August 5, the Lwe River flooded, bringing new deposits of mud. The newly planted crops were again destroyed by the flooding, which lasted three days.

Farmers again tried to replant their crops, but there was fresh flooding of the Lwe River on August 10, again destroying the newly planted fields.

Locals say the damage caused this year by the mud deposits is unprecedented. Despite bad flooding of the Lwe River between July and October 2024, with up to two-meter-deep floodwaters in Mong Khark, crops

were left undamaged as there was no mud residue.

Given the recent expansion of rare earth mines in the Mong Bawk area, which mostly drain into streams joining the Lwe River upstream of Mong Khark, it is assumed that the increased sediment load in the Lwe River was caused by these mines.

The rare earth mines in Mong Bawk use environmentally damaging in-situ leaching methods, which involve injection of chemicals into wide swaths of mountainside, causing large-scale deforestation and land collapse.

According to a report by Wa News Land, a mine worker was killed in a landslide at a rare earth mine in Mong Bawk on August 9. His body was retrieved the day after the landslide.

Most of the original residents of Mong Khark town are Shan, who rely on agriculture as their main livelihood.

Mong Khark township is under the control of the Burmese military regime. Next to the town is a junta Tactical Operations Command, as well as four battalions, IB 227, LIB 327, LIB 328 and an Artillery Battalion, all under the Triangle Regional Military Command.

After flowing through Mong Khark, the Lwe River flows between Kengtung and Mong La townships, then through areas of Mong Yawng township under control of the National Democratic Alliance Army (a.k.a Mong La group), before reaching the Mekong River at Sob Lwe. Apart from the rare earth mines in Mong Bawk, there are a further nineteen rare earth mines in the NDAA area draining into the Lwe River.



Photo: AFP

SIX MYANMAR JUNTA SOLDIERS AND POLICE KILLED IN RAID ON ZIGON POLICE STATION

Six junta soldiers and police officers were killed and 12 firearms seized during a raid on the Zigon police station in Kanbalu Township, Sagaing Region, according to a statement released on 18 September by the Sagaing Region People's Defence Organization.

The statement said the police station was attacked in a surprise guerrilla operation on 17 September under the command of the Kanbalu District Command of Military Region 1. The clash left six people dead, including two police officers.

The People's Defence Organization also reported that 11 people were captured alive during the raid. Among them were three prisoners, two company sergeant majors, two soldiers, the wives of two soldiers, and two children.

A total of 12 firearms were seized, including nine G3 rifles, one G4 rifle, one MA15 rifle, and one pistol.

The fighting lasted around 30 minutes. According to the Kyunhla activists' group, the Zigon police station called for reinforcements, but none arrived in time. Troops from the Zigon Sugar Mill and the Wettoe Base, located two and three miles from the police station, respectively, arrived at about 5 pm, two hours after the clash had ended. They later took up camouflage positions around the town.

"The people in the town will bear the brunt of the fighting, and the surrounding villages will be completely destroyed – just as they've done elsewhere," a Kyunhla activist said.

Revolutionary forces and the Sagaing Region People's Defence Organization have urged residents to remain vigilant and monitor military movements closely, warning that troops could launch arson attacks, carry out arrests, and commit killings at any time.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE OUTBREAK KILLS 11 CHILDREN IN MINDAT, OVER 600 INFECTED AMID MEDICINE SHORTAGE

An outbreak of infectious diseases in Mindat Township, southern Chin State, has killed at least 11 children under the age of five and infected more than 600 people in just over a month, according to a local township health committee official.

The outbreak, which began around 10 August, includes cases of influenza, severe pneumonia, and diarrhoea. The diseases have rapidly spread across the township, with children making up the vast majority of patients.

"We have enough health workers, including striking CDM [Civil Disobedience Movement] staff, but there is a severe shortage of medicines. The situation is very difficult," the official told Mizzima.

The official added that only limited medical supplies had been received from the Chin Health Organization (CHO), and warned that without further assistance, more lives could be lost.

The figures are based on preliminary data, with updated reports still being compiled from across the township.

Doctors in the area say the infections can be transmitted through the air and also via contaminated

food, flies, and mosquitoes. Medical personnel are urging residents to avoid gatherings and have recommended the closure of schools.

"Closing schools would be more effective. Most of the patients are under 12," said one local doctor.

Several schools have already suspended classes in response to the outbreak. Mindat Township has an estimated population of 55,000.

Humanitarian workers said the situation is worsened by military-imposed restrictions on the transportation of food and medical supplies into Chin State, leaving health workers unable to respond adequately.

Meanwhile, a similar outbreak of seasonal influenza has been reported in Paletwa Township, which is under the administration of the Daai Regional Council. According to local sources, three infants under one year old and one youth have died there due to a lack of access to healthcare.

Health officials continue to call for urgent international support to prevent further deaths in both affected regions.



Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKES HIT THREE DAWEI DISTRICT TOWNSHIPS, KILLING CIVILIANS AND DISPLACING RESIDENTS

At around 10:30 am on 17 September, the Myanmar military junta launched coordinated aerial bombings across three townships in Dawei District – Dawei, Launglon, and Thayetchaung – using Y-12 support aircraft, according to local sources.

Multiple villages were targeted in the strikes. In Dawei Township, the eastern villages of Wetthay, Pakhet, and Pakari were bombed. Simultaneously, Waydi, Kyetyettwin, Thapyayshaung, Yabeinn, and Kyaukpon villages in Launglon Township and Oketu, Kinshey, and Moeshowegon Sha villages in Thayetchaung Township were attacked.

A resident of Dawei told Mizzima, “They said Min Aung Hlaing, or someone important, is in Dawei. They’ve deployed a large number of forces because a high-ranking leader is there, but today’s airstrikes are intentionally targeting civilian areas.”

The airstrikes took place despite the absence of active conflict in the targeted zones, killing and injuring civilians. The exact number of casualties remains under investigation, but reports confirm that several residents have fled their homes in fear of further attacks.

A local from Launglon shared the tragedy of a couple who had taken refuge in Waydi village, believing it to be a safer location.

“Both the mother-in-law and son-in-law were killed in the airstrike. The woman was severely injured, and around four other people were also wounded,” the resident said.

The Dawei District Democracy Movement Strike Committee (DDMSC) issued a public advisory warning civilians to remain vigilant and seek shelter, as airstrikes continue across Launglon and Thayetchaung townships.

Tensions escalated after a clash on 14 September between the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and junta troops near Kyaukme Taung Camp, in eastern Dawei Township.

The confrontation reportedly resulted in casualties among the junta forces, according to the Karen National Union (KNU) Myeik-Dawei District.

Following the battle, the junta carried out airstrikes on Pakaryi village in Dawei Township, damaging religious structures and civilian homes and injuring at least two civilians.

Mizzima is continuing to verify casualty figures and monitor developments as the situation in Dawei District remains tense and volatile.



Hpakant. Photo: AFP

DRONE STRIKE KILLS MOTHER AND SON IN HPAKANT AS JUNTA ESCALATES ATTACKS IN KACHIN STATE

A mother and her son were killed in a drone strike carried out by Myanmar's military junta in Htonebo village, Hpakant Township, around 9:15 am on 19 September, according to local sources.

The victims were identified as Ko Nay Min Htun, approximately 30 years old, and his mother. The attack, believed to have been launched by a drone, also caused structural damage to several buildings in the area, a resident told local media.

Hpakant resident Ko Soe Gyi condemned the attack, blaming the junta and its allies for increasingly targeting civilians.

"The brutal military commission, along with the Shanni Nationalities Army (SNA) and allied militias, are deliberately targeting us in Hpakant with drones and heavy weapons. People are being wounded and killed every day," he said.

Although some residents have fled the area due to intensified bombings and ground offensives, most of Hpakant's population remains. Locals described worsening conditions as heavy artillery continues to fall on residential areas.

"They've dug foxholes, but when 120 mm rounds hit, it's unbearable. Those heavy weapons are overwhelming," another resident explained.

Tensions remain high across the region. On 17 September, fighting broke out near Hsan Kywe Pagoda Hill around 4:30 am. Later that day, at about 4:30 pm, the junta shelled the area, killing a child and seriously injuring two others, according to residents.

The military has stepped up its ground operations in Hpakant Township, where clashes with resistance forces have intensified throughout September. Drone attacks and artillery shelling have become increasingly frequent, with mounting civilian casualties and damage to homes and infrastructure.

Lonekhin village tract, near the recent strike zones, has also reported heightened fear and concern among villagers, local sources said.



Republic of the Union of Myanmar National Unity Government



MANDALAY REGIONAL PARLIAMENT APPROVES INTERIM POLITICAL PROGRAM FOR RESISTANCE-HELD AREAS

The Mandalay Regional Parliament approved a draft interim political program on 16 September, aiming to establish a governance framework for areas currently under the control of resistance forces.

During a special parliamentary session, National Unity Government (NUG) Acting President Duwa Lashi La emphasized the importance of adopting a political framework amid ongoing revolutionary efforts.

"During such a difficult revolutionary period, it is extremely important that we are able to discuss and coordinate on frameworks, laws, and program drafting," Duwa Lashi La said.

"The Spring Revolution involves people of many ethnicities, regions, and forces, but it is not a revolution without principles or a plan. We have goals and objectives. We also have systematic processes to follow, along with frameworks designed for respective regions and sectors."

He further stated that the move signals the revolution's commitment to upholding laws and principles, contrary to narratives that portray it as leaderless or disorganized.

The draft program consists of 12 chapters and was developed by a 43-member committee formed in October 2024, following increased territorial control by revolutionary forces in parts of Mandalay Region. Known as the "Working Committee for Coordination and Drafting the Interim Political Program," the group brings together representatives from six anti-junta organizations. Its goal is to fill any political vacuum and ensure functioning administrative and judicial mechanisms in liberated areas.

The special session was attended by key NUG figures, including Union Prime Minister Mahn Win Khaing Than; the Chairman and representatives of the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH); as well as the interim chairman and members of the Mandalay Regional Parliament and invited guests.



Photo: Supplied

OVER 160 CIVILIANS KILLED IN TAMU DISTRICT SINCE MYANMAR COUP

At least 161 civilians have been killed in Myanmar's Tamu District, located along the India-Myanmar border in Sagaing Region, since the military seized power in 2021, according to a new report released by the Kuki Women's Human Rights Organization (KWHRO) on 12 September.

The report, which covers incidents from May to August 2025, highlights the ongoing violence, displacement, and human rights abuses in the conflict-torn district. KWHRO has been issuing quarterly updates since 2024, documenting the conditions faced by civilians, particularly women, in the region.

According to the report, the deaths were caused by a combination of airstrikes, heavy artillery fire, drone bombings, and violence by both the Myanmar military and India's Assam Rifles along the border.

"Torture by armed groups, heavy artillery shells, bombs, landmines, and killings by the Indian military's Assam Rifles caused civilian deaths," the KWHRO statement said.

Over the past four years, the junta has launched numerous airstrikes using jet fighters and helicopters, and carried out 236 heavy artillery attacks, often targeting residential areas and revolutionary camps.

The report also notes that 136 civilians have been injured due to landmines, bombs, shootings, and beatings by junta-backed Pyu Saw Htee militias.

Additionally, 176 locals were reportedly arrested, while at least 580 homes in 20 villages were documented as destroyed by arson or bombing. However, the organization estimates that over 1,000 buildings have actually been lost on the ground.

Tamu Township, located next to India's Manipur State, has been a hotspot for clashes since the February 2021 military coup. While the junta controls only the town centre and a handful of villages, revolutionary forces are in control of most of the surrounding areas, including Myothit and Khampat towns.

The report states that 23,800 people have been displaced due to ongoing clashes, artillery attacks, and airstrikes, with many fleeing across the border into India.

KWHRO's report also compiles broader data on the region's humanitarian situation, including issues related to livelihoods, health, education, women's rights, drug use, and local elections. The organization encourages anyone with unreported information to submit it for documentation.

Founded in January 2000 by Kuki women along the India-Myanmar border, KWHRO advocates for justice, ethnic equality, and the end of military rule. It is a member of the Women's League of Burma.



Photo: Supplied

THE MECHANISM CALLS FOR INFORMATION ABOUT DEADLY AERIAL ATTACK IN RAKHINE STATE

On 16 September, the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM) issued an appeal for witnesses and evidence related to the deadly airstrike on a boarding school in Thayat Tabin village, Kyauktaw Township, Rakhine State.

The statement is as follows.

This tragic incident is one of the deadliest attacks on schools since the military takeover in February 2021. It compounds the suffering of civilians in Rakhine State where people of all ethnicities have been subjected to attacks, killings, displacement, and starvation. Airstrikes that are indiscriminate or which target civilians may be war crimes or crimes against humanity. Attacks against children are particularly heinous, and the Mechanism prioritizes their investigation.

This airstrike follows dozens of attacks on schools which have caused the death and injury of children, including in Ye-U District, Sagaing Region (September 2022); Matupi Township, Chin State (November 2023); Demoso Township, Kayah State (February 2024); Pekon

Township, in the border area of Shan and Kayah States (September 2024); Ponnagyun Township, Rakhine State (December 2024) and Oe Htein Kwin village, Sagaing region (May 2025).

The Mechanism is looking for relevant information on this attack or any other airstrike, such as:

- photographs or videos of injuries, damage, aircraft and weapons;
- information about victims;
- information about aircraft and weapons that were used; and
- information about the pilots involved and the orders that were given.

Anyone with information to share should please contact the Mechanism on Signal +41 76 691 12 08. Turn on disappearing messages in Signal so that the messages in the chat are automatically deleted. The Mechanism urges people to prioritize their safety and to only make contact when it is safe to do so.

Photo: AFP

MYANMAR'S UN AMBASSADOR URGES DECISIVE ACTION AGAINST JUNTA AMID RISING ATROCITIES

On 17 September, Myanmar's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun, sent a letter to UN Secretary-General António Guterres detailing the worsening humanitarian and human rights crisis in Myanmar.

His letter states that since the February 2021 coup, over 7,200 people have been killed, nearly 29,000 arrested, and 3.5 million displaced, with 22 million needing aid. It calls for the UN and Security Council to act against the junta by cutting off arms, fuel, and funds.

The report is as follows.

It has been over 55 months since the military attempted an illegal coup. The military has brutally murdered 7,265 people. Over twenty-nine thousand have been arrested, detained, and tortured, and more than 3.5 million have been displaced. Almost 22 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. Half of the population is now living under the national poverty line. The military junta has executed four democracy activists who were given death sentences, and the military courts have sentenced many civilians to years of imprisonment including life imprisonment without

just cause.

The junta continues to ignore the will of the people and violate their fundamental rights. Amidst people's suffering caused by the manmade and natural disasters, the military junta has continued carrying out of aerial and artillery attacks across the country.

As with my previous letters, I would like to draw your attention to the unspeakable tragedy unfolding in Myanmar.

The military junta has perpetrated 104 massacre cases resulting in 1,069 deaths across Myanmar in first eight months of 2025 alone and 196 children under the age of 18 were among those killed in these massacres, representing a deliberate targeting of Myanmar's most vulnerable populations. Women accounted for 314 of the deaths, whilst 415 men were killed. A further 340 victims were of unknown gender, highlighting the brutal and indiscriminate nature of these attacks.

Moreover, the junta's use of aerial bombardments has proven particularly deadly, with airstrikes accounting for the vast majority of civilian casualties across the country. From 1 January 2023 to 31 August 2025, the junta conducted 3,402 airstrike cases, killing

3,689 people nationwide. Beyond massacre and airstrikes, the junta has committed 5,192 documented human rights violations across Myanmar in 2025. The violations include 1,066 cases of extrajudicial killings, 1,044 incidents of property destruction, 634 cases of forced labour, 359 arbitrary arrests, and 226 cases of forced displacement. These figures represent clear violations of international humanitarian law and constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity.

According to AAPP, from 1 to 31 August 2025, (139) people in total; (56) women and (83) men, were killed by the junta across the country, including (24) children under the age of 18. The identities of these victims have been verified. Among these deaths, Karenni (Kayah) State recorded the highest number of fatalities, totalling (27). Meanwhile, (85) people were killed by the junta's airstrikes, marking the highest cause of death.

On 31 August, five villagers were killed and seven others wounded in an airstrike conducted by the military junta on Ngatayaw Village, Yesagyo Township, Magway Region. Four civilians, including three men and one woman, were killed in an airstrike carried out by the military junta in Wetlet Township, Sagaing Region, on 27 August. On 20 August, the military junta launched drone attacks on Thayet Gone Village, Gyobingauk Township in western Bago Region, killing a couple.

Moreover, on 17 August, the junta carried out airstrikes and indiscriminate attacks using military aircrafts targeting civilian areas in Mawchi Town, Karenni (Kayah) State, killing 32 civilians, injuring five others, and leaving several still missing. In its statement, the Interim Executive Council of Karenni State (IEC) stated that in 2025 alone, the junta has already conducted approximately 11 aerial attacks in the Mawchi area. The IEC strongly urged the international community, including the United Nations and ASEAN, to give serious attention and take decisive action against the unlawful junta committing these serious crimes against civilians.

The junta has been committing at alarming scale of systematic grave abuses and widespread violation of human rights across the country including in prisons. Recent testimonies from released political prisoners provide grave evidence of the junta's systematic use of torture, deliberate starvation, and fatal abuse as tools of political repression. Conditions in Hpa-An Prison illustrate this pattern, where torture and deliberate deprivation of food are carried out against political detainees under the authority of prison officials. Twelve

political prisoners were placed in solitary confinement and subjected to prolonged beatings while shackled. One of them, Ko Nyan Min Tun, died from torture on 13 July.

Prisoners in Hpa-An and across Myanmar endure severe overcrowding, inadequate food often described as little more than watery broth, and water rationing that forces detainees to pay even for the most basic needs. Such inhumane conditions underscore the gravity of the crisis and demand urgent international attention and intervention to protect the lives and dignity of those arbitrarily detained.

Furthermore, Kim Aris, son of arbitrarily detained State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, recently expressed his concern about the health condition of his mother who is suffering from a serious heart condition and is being denied access to adequate medical care. The National Unity Government of Myanmar also called upon the international community including the United Nations to take immediate and effective action to release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners in line with the aspiration of the people of Myanmar.

Many people stressed the important role of the ICRC in helping promoting condition of prisons and living conditions of prisoners. In this regard, I wish to appeal to the ICRC to consider seriously the situation in Myanmar including conditions of prisons and prisoners and help distressed political prisoners in Myanmar.

For over 55 months, the people of Myanmar have suffered dreadfully from the military junta's inhumane and brutal atrocities.

To help the helpless people of Myanmar, the international community, in particular the UN and the UN Security Council, should be bold and take immediate and decisive actions without further delay. Only through a concerted and coordinated effort from the international community to isolate the military and cut it off from all support including the flow of arms and weapons, jet fuel money to the military junta will Myanmar return its path towards democracy and create a peaceful and stable environment.

Under this devastating circumstance, on behalf of the people of Myanmar, I with a very heavy and painful heart appeal again to the international community, in particular the United Nations Security Council, to put humanity first and take concrete action now to save lives and bring peace and bright future back to the people of Myanmar.

OCHA DETAILS SEVERE HUMANITARIAN ACCESS CONSTRAINTS ACROSS MYANMAR

On 18 September, OCHA reported 76 access incidents in Myanmar, disrupting aid to 115,000 people. Most incidents, at 57%, were due to armed conflict; 25% stemmed from bureaucratic restrictions.

This report shows Rakhine State had the most incidents, followed by Mandalay and Northern Shan. Access issues and violence against aid workers are hindering humanitarian efforts.

The text of the report is as follows.

With 57 per cent of the total reported incidents, access constraints related to armed hostilities largely affected relief operations in twelve states and regions, including Northern Shan, Kayah, Chin, Mandalay, Kayin, and Eastern Bago. Various humanitarian activities planned for implementation by aid organizations, including members of the UN system, were temporarily suspended for over ten days—particularly in Mandalay, Southern Shan, Tanintharyi, Rakhine, and Kachin. In Southern Shan, due to heavy artillery fire at the project site, an international organization was forced to cancel its activities. Meanwhile, in Hpasawng Township of Kayah, reported airstrikes damaged a school, resulting in three children being injured.

Administrative and bureaucratic constraints accounted for 25 per cent of all reported incidents, with Rakhine, Mandalay, and Kachin collectively recording 68 per cent of the total cases. In Rakhine, a joint travel authorization was granted to the UN and humanitarian partner organizations, to access displacement sites and IDP camps located in Sittwe Township till 18 August.

Meanwhile, airport authorities introduced new verbal instructions requiring humanitarian organizations to submit details of local staff movements in advance for flights departing/arriving from Sittwe. In Magway, a locally imposed lockdown in Ngape Township forced relief organizations to postpone their activities for a day.

Similarly, in Mandalay, the local administration paused all humanitarian movements for up to five days toward Nyaung U Township, citing security concerns, which significantly delayed planned deliveries. International organizations were also forced to suspend their movements to Hakha Township in Chin State for more than ten days following the blockage of all key routes. In addition, international organizations experienced denial of passage through Momauk checkpoints, where they were asked to provide additional validation from local authorities for each mission. In Southern Shan, a local organization was instructed by a township authority to conclude their distribution early, although no reason was given.

Seven incidents involving violence or threats against humanitarian personnel were reported throughout August in five states and regions, including in Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw. Eight staff members were detained in two separate incidents reported in Yangon and Rakhine.

Three of them were freed the following day, while no updates are available regarding the others. In Kachin, a truckload of humanitarian aid was confiscated by a non-state armed group at a checkpoint in Waingmaw Township but was released the next day.



Photo: AFP, Royal Thai Army

THAILAND FACES RISING MIGRATION PRESSURES, NEW REPORT CALLS FOR COORDINATED RESPONSE

Thailand is grappling with increasingly complex migration flows from Myanmar that are reshaping its labour market, economy, and social fabric, according to a new report titled "Migration From Myanmar in Thailand: Situation, Attitudes and Impacts After 2021."

The study was developed by the Thailand Migration Reform Consortium (TMR) in collaboration with the Royal Thai Armed Forces, Mahidol University's Institute for Population and Social Research, Chulalongkorn University's Human Security and Equity Centre, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Public Sociology Association, the Nelson Mandela Centre at Chulalongkorn University, and the Institute of Just Society.

The report finds that migration from Myanmar is now driven by a combination of conflict-induced displacement and economic migration. Refugees fleeing armed conflict and instability increasingly overlap with workers seeking job opportunities in low-wage, labour-intensive sectors critical to Thailand's competitiveness. However, this dual nature raises pressing challenges for governance, security, and social cohesion.

Economically, the impact is substantial. Myanmar migrants currently contribute an estimated 6.6% of Thailand's GDP, with their labour sustaining industries where domestic workforce participation remains low. The report highlights their role as net fiscal contributors,

generating significant tax revenue while reinforcing Thailand's position in the regional economy.

At the same time, policymakers face urgent coordination challenges. Estimates suggest the number of Myanmar nationals in Thailand could reach between 4.7 million and 11 million by 2025. Fragmented data systems and weak inter-agency cooperation undermine effective policymaking and resource allocation. Public attitudes toward migrants also remain volatile, shaped by misinformation, geography, education, and age demographics.

To address these issues, the report outlines a series of strategic recommendations. These include establishing a unified migration data and registration system, implementing localized governance models, expanding education and social integration programs, and ensuring universal health and social protection coverage that includes migrants. The study also calls for a multi-stakeholder coordination framework linking government, academia, civil society, and the private sector.

By adopting a systemic, multi-sectoral approach, the report argues, Thailand can balance humanitarian responsibilities with economic imperatives. In the long term, Thailand is positioned to become a regional leader in evidence-based migration management, offering a model for other middle-income countries facing similar demographic and geopolitical pressures.



TIMOR-LESTE MOVES TO BLOCK MYANMAR ANTI-JUNTA GROUPS FROM OPERATING WITHIN ITS BORDERS

Timor-Leste will prohibit groups opposing Myanmar's Military Commission from opening offices or engaging in what it terms "illegal opposition activities," according to reports published in Myanmar Military Commission-controlled newspapers on 19 September.

The announcement follows a high-level meeting held on 18 September between Timor-Leste's Foreign Minister, Bendito dos Santos Freitas, and Myanmar's Foreign Minister under the military commission, Than Swe.

During the talks, Timor-Leste reportedly offered to establish a Myanmar embassy in Dili, the Timorese capital. The two sides also discussed broader diplomatic initiatives, including a proposed visa-free agreement among ASEAN member states for diplomats and special passport holders, and a separate bilateral visa exemption aimed at boosting tourism between the two nations.

The meeting marks a notable development in bilateral relations after months of tension. The Military Commission has been in direct contact with Timor-Leste since July, following the junta's objection to Dili's bid for ASEAN membership.

In July, the acting chargé d'affaires of Timor-Leste's embassy in Yangon met with the Military Commission's deputy foreign minister to seek support for its ASEAN accession bid. Despite these efforts, relations have remained strained due to Timor-Leste's earlier engagements with Myanmar's National Unity Government (NUG), the opposition government formed to combat the military regime.

At a press conference in January, NUG Foreign Minister Zin Mar Aung announced plans to open a liaison office in Dili in 2024. Timor-Leste had previously invited her to attend the inauguration of its new government in 2023 - a move that drew sharp criticism from Myanmar's military leaders.

In response, the Military Commission expelled the Timorese chargé d'affaires in August 2023, accusing the country of undermining its sovereignty by engaging with opposition entities.

While the latest announcement signals a shift toward formal diplomatic ties between Timor-Leste and Myanmar's military rulers, it also underscores the complex balancing act Timor-Leste faces as it seeks ASEAN membership while managing international expectations regarding Myanmar's political crisis.



Photo: AFP

MYANMAR JUNTA'S ELECTION COMMISSION EXCLUDES KEY SOUTHERN RAKHINE AREAS FROM NO-ELECTION LIST AHEAD OF DECEMBER POLLS

The junta's Union Election Commission (UEC) announced on 14 September that elections will not be held in 121 townships across Myanmar in the upcoming December general election. Notably absent from this list are three districts and one township in southern Rakhine State, all under the control of the Arakan Army (AA).

According to the UEC's statement, the no-election zones cover four townships in Kachin State, three in Karen (Kayah) State, four in Chin State, ten in Sagaing Region, five in Magway Region, three in Mandalay Region, ten in Rakhine State, and seventeen in Shan State. These areas are largely controlled by ethnic armed organizations, the People's Defence Force (PDF), and allied groups.

The UEC justified its decision by citing unsuitable conditions for free and fair elections in these townships.

The commission specified that 56 Pyithu Hluttaw (House of Representatives) constituencies, nine Amyotha Hluttaw (House of Nationalities) constituencies under the First Past the Post (FPTP) system, and 56 State/Regional Hluttaw constituencies under FPTP will not hold elections.

Yet, southern Rakhine's Thandwe District, Taungup District, Ann District, and Gwa Township – all under AA control – were not included in the no-election list.

Sources in Rakhine State report ongoing major military offensives by the junta against the AA, with intense clashes disrupting the region.

Analysts speculate that the junta may be aiming to seize these areas before the election period begins.

The Arakan Army currently controls 14 towns in Rakhine State and is actively attempting to capture remaining key towns such as Sittwe, Kyaukphyu, and Manaung. Fighting has also spilled over into neighbouring Magway, Bago, and Ayeyarwady Regions.

The UEC confirmed that the general election, scheduled to commence on 28 December, will proceed in 274 Pyithu Hluttaw constituencies, 75 Amyotha Hluttaw (FPTP) constituencies, 26 proportional representation (PR) constituencies, 266 State/Regional Hluttaw (FPTP) constituencies, 42 State/Regional Hluttaw (PR) constituencies, and 29 ethnic constituencies for the State/Regional Hluttaws.



Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA PUSHES CHIN IDPS TO VOTE IN DECEMBER ELECTION

The Myanmar junta is pressuring internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Chin State to participate in the upcoming military-organized elections, according to Chin National Front (CNF) spokesperson Salai Htet Ni.

Speaking to Mizzima, Salai Htet Ni said that election offices under the junta have already opened in Hakha Township, and authorities are planning to set up more branches in areas under junta control to reach displaced populations.

"In Chin State, there are areas where elections will be held and others where they won't. The junta's Election Commission plans to open branches in nearby townships, including towns where military commission members are stationed, and will urge displaced people to vote," he said.

The junta announced on 14 September that elections will not be conducted in four of Chin State's nine townships – Mindat, Kanpetlet, Matupi, and Paletwa. These areas are currently under the control of ethnic resistance groups, specifically, the Chin Brotherhood in Mindat, Kanpetlet, and Matupi, and the Arakan Army (AA) in Paletwa.

However, the junta intends to proceed with voting in Tedim and Hakha, which are controlled by the junta, as well as in Tonzang and Falam, held by Chin revolutionary groups, and Thantlang, which is partially contested.

According to Salai Htet Ni, the commission is setting up sub-offices in Tedim and Hakha and intends to mobilize IDPs originally from eligible townships to vote in their place of origin, despite the ongoing conflict and displacement.

"Even people who had to flee the war will be expected to vote for their hometowns," he added.

The upcoming election, scheduled to begin on 28 December, will exclude four townships in southern Chin State from among the 56 Pyithu Hluttaw constituencies, nine Amyotha Hluttaw constituencies, and 56 regional and state Hluttaw constituencies.

Despite widespread opposition to the military-organized poll, three political parties – the New Chinland Congress Party, Zomi National Party, and Khumi (Khami) National Party – have registered to participate.

On 11 September, the Hakha District Office hosted a demonstration and training session on the Myanmar Electronic Voting Machine (MEVM), attended by junta-appointed Chief Minister of Chin State, Dr. Vung Suan Thang.

The CNF and other resistance-aligned groups continue to reject the legitimacy of any election conducted under military rule.



MYANMAR MILITARY TIGHTENS RESTRICTIONS ON THAI IMPORTS, WORSENING SHORTAGES

The Myanmar junta has imposed new restrictions on the import of Thai goods through the Thai-Myanmar border in Karen State, severely disrupting trade routes and leading to growing shortages of everyday consumer products, according to local traders and residents.

The tightened controls have affected the flow of goods from border towns such as Myawaddy and Hlaingbwe into Karen State's capital, Hpa-an, and further onward to key cities including Yangon and Mandalay.

These measures are part of the junta's ongoing efforts to clamp down on illegal border trade and control foreign exchange spending. Drivers say they are now only allowed to carry items deemed for personal use.

"We are not allowed to transport Thai products like soap, coffee, snacks, and soft drinks. At the Thanlwin Bridge checkpoint, even small packages are inspected and seized as illegal. Additionally, drivers face extortion," said a driver.

Two traders and several locals from Hpa-an confirmed to Mizzima that the reports of these incidents are accurate.

Currently, locals say that to transport Thai goods from Hpa-an along the Hpa-an-Thaton route, you must use either the Salween River waterway or the Hpa-an-Mawlamyine road.

"As a result, there's a severe shortage of goods. The process is extremely slow, and importing goods

from Tachileik is no longer allowed. Water transport from Ranong has also been suspended," said a trader.

Since 18 August, the military junta has temporarily closed the Myanmar-Thai Friendship Bridge No. 2, citing orders from state officials and Naypyidaw. They have also declared that any goods imported through Myawaddy will now be deemed illegal.

It was then suggested that goods stranded in Mae Sot could be rerouted through the Mae Sai-Tachileik route or the Ranong-Kawthaung waterway for import. However, since early September, the military junta has also imposed restrictions on trade through the Mae Sai-Tachileik No. 2 trade bridge, including limiting the issuance of necessary import licenses.

Locals report that the junta has not only closed official trade routes but also halted the import of goods through boat trade routes. This has contributed to a growing shortage of Thai-made consumer goods and food products throughout the country.

"Now, if I see something I want in the store, I have to buy it right away. Otherwise, it might not be there the next day, and the prices aren't the same," said a local housewife.

The military junta recently regained control of the Myawaddy-Kawkaik Asian Road, the primary Thai-Myanmar border trade route, but trade along this route remains restricted.



NUG, NUCC AND CRPH DECLARE REBRANDED MYANMAR JUNTA ILLEGITIMATE

National Unity Government (NUG), the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC), and the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) have jointly declared the State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC) and its affiliated groups illegitimate.

The joint statement, issued on the morning of 18 September, said the NUG will take action against the rebranded junta under the Anti-Terrorism Law.

"There is a Central Committee for Counter-Terrorism within the NUG. There is also an Anti-Terrorism Law. In the past, the Central Committee for Counter-Terrorism declared groups involved in forced military

conscription and the Election Commission as terrorist organizations," U Nay Phone Latt, spokesperson for the NUG Prime Minister's Office, told Mizzima.

He added that following the joint statement, the Central Committee for Counter-Terrorism will continue to release further statements and take action to arrest members of the military in accordance with the law.

The statement also said that since the SSPC was formed out of the State Administration Council (SAC), it is to be regarded as an "enemy" of Myanmar and its people. It further declared that the designation of ethnic armed groups and revolutionary forces as terrorist organizations by the junta is illegitimate and void.



HOW TO RUN MEDIA FROM EXILE AND REMAIN RELEVANT IN YOUR COUNTRY

The Story of Mizzima and Myanmar's Independent Media

Discussion at the Václav Havel Library, Prague, Czech Republic

On September 22, the Václav Havel Library hosted a discussion titled "How to Run Media from Exile and Remain Relevant in Your Country – The Story of Mizzima and Myanmar's Independent Media." The event brought together Soe Myint, Managing Director and Editor-in-Chief of Mizzima, Toe Zaw Latt, General Secretary of the Independent Press Council of Myanmar, and No No Lin, Deputy Director of Mizzima Media.

The conversation explored how independent media from Myanmar have survived and remained relevant in the face of one of the world's harshest crackdowns on press freedom following the 2021 military coup.

Repression and Survival

Since the coup of February 1, 2021, Myanmar's military junta has waged a relentless war on both the civilian population and the independent press. Media organizations lost their licenses, offices were raided, bank accounts frozen, and journalists were harassed, arrested, tortured, or killed. Mizzima, one of Myanmar's most prominent independent outlets, saw seven of its team members imprisoned, including a co-founder who endured torture while in custody.

Yet Mizzima refused to stop reporting. Within weeks of the coup, the outlet reorganized, setting up

production centres abroad, establishing operations in liberated border areas, and relying on clandestine networks of reporters who continue to work inside the country despite constant threats. This strategy has allowed Mizzima to maintain its relevance, even as the junta tightens its grip on information.

Operating in Conditions of War

The panelists described the immense difficulties of reporting under conditions of war and repression: omnipresent police and informants, constant risk of raids and arrests, torture of detainees, widespread internet blackouts, power outages, and indiscriminate air bombardments. Despite these dangers, both professional and citizen journalists continue to document the resistance and the junta's atrocities.

Over the past five years of nationwide resistance and armed struggle for liberation, independent media have served as a lifeline of truth and accountability. Mizzima today reaches tens of millions of people. Its satellite TV channel is watched by an estimated 32 million viewers, while its Facebook page has 22 million followers. The outlet also remains active on shortwave and FM radio, YouTube, and its website.

Adaptation, Integrity, and Connection

Adapting to exile has required flexibility and creativity. Mizzima relies heavily on citizen journalists, underground contributors, and trusted local networks. It continues to train and mentor new reporters, despite the risks, while decentralizing teams and securing communication systems.

One central challenge discussed was the balance between resistance and objectivity. Independent media in Myanmar inevitably form part of the broader struggle against dictatorship, yet they remain committed to journalistic integrity, fact-checking, and professional reporting. This credibility, the speakers stressed, is the

reason why audiences at home and abroad continue to trust them.

Another important issue was the question of exile. While Mizzima now operates from Thailand and border areas, it does not consider itself cut off from realities on the ground. Through its clandestine networks, partnerships, and citizen reporting, it remains closely connected to events in junta-controlled territories, liberated zones, and active war fronts.

Financial Challenges

The discussion also addressed the severe financial strain facing independent media. The cancellation of USAID support and Sweden's announced withdrawal of assistance threaten the survival of outlets like Mizzima. While they are exploring diversification and alternative funding sources, the speakers warned that sustainability remains a pressing challenge. Without international support, independent voices may be silenced at a time when Myanmar needs them most.

Broader Significance

Mizzima's story is not unique. Other outlets—such as DVB, Myanmar Now, The Irrawaddy, Burma News International, and Khit Thit Media—share similar experiences of courage, adaptation, and resilience. Together, they form a vital ecosystem of independent journalism in Myanmar, ensuring that the struggle of the people and the crimes of the junta are documented and known to the world.

The discussion at the Václav Havel Library underscored the survival, endurance, and professional commitment of Myanmar's media under exile conditions. It also highlighted their crucial role in keeping truth, accountability, and hope alive for millions of people inside Myanmar, and the urgent need for international solidarity to ensure their survival.

Photo: AFP

INDIA'S MAOIST REBELS ANNOUNCE HALT IN FIGHTING

India's Maoist rebels announced Tuesday that they will be unilaterally suspending their "armed struggle" and are ready for dialogue with authorities, following the government's all-out offensive to crush the decades-long conflict.

"Because of the changed world order and national situation, and because of the continuous appeals from the Prime Minister, Home Minister, and senior police officials, we are deciding to suspend armed struggle," a spokesman for the Communist Party of India (Maoist) rebel group said in a statement.

"We are ready to start dialogue" with the government, added the spokesman, Abhay, who uses only one name.

There was no immediate government response to the Maoist announcement.

India is waging an intense offensive against the last remaining traces of the Naxalite rebellion, named after the village in the foothills of the Himalayas where the Maoist-inspired guerrilla movement began nearly six decades ago.

More than 12,000 rebels, soldiers and civilians have been killed since a handful of villagers rose up against their feudal lords there in 1967.

Abhay's statement, issued in Hindi, added the group was "committed" to peace initiatives and "that despite evolving national and global circumstances, we will keep engaging with leaders and influential organisations."

In recent months, the Indian government has issued repeated warnings that it intends to finish off the Maoist rebellion by the end of March next year.

On Monday, government forces killed a high-ranking "Naxal Commander" who had a bounty of around \$113,000 issued by authorities for his capture.

The group's chief, Nambala Keshav Rao, alias Basavaraju, was killed during a firefight with government forces in May, along with 26 other guerrillas.

In the mid-2000s, at the movement's peak, the rebels, who counted some 15,000 to 20,000 members, controlled nearly a third of the country.

But the rebellion has been significantly weakened in recent years with more than 400 rebels killed since last year, including some of the group's top commanders.

AFP

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.
Photo: AFP

RUSSIA VOWS TO PRESS OFFENSIVE, REJECTS IDEA UKRAINE CAN RETAKE LAND

Russia said Wednesday it would press on with its military offensive in Ukraine, and rejected US President Donald Trump's claim that Kyiv's army could retake territory seized by Russian forces.

The Kremlin also pushed back at Trump's characterisation of Russia as a "paper tiger", a day after the US leader dismissed Russia's army and said he could see Ukraine winning back every inch of land captured by Russia's forces.

Trump's remarks, which followed talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at the United Nations, were a major pivot in his stance on the three-and-a-half-year conflict, which he had at one point boasted he could end in hours.

In Moscow, Russians who spoke to AFP brushed off Trump's comments.

"America and Ukraine as a whole have absolutely

no chance of defeating Russia," said 20-year-old university student Stepan Lastochkin.

"His words mean nothing to our people now."

The Kremlin said earlier it would "achieve the goals" of its offensive.

"We are doing this for both the present and the future of our country. For many generations to come. Therefore, we have no alternative," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in a radio interview.

Russia launched its all-out offensive on Ukraine in February 2022, when its forces tried to capture the capital Kyiv and Putin publicly called for Zelensky to be toppled.

The conflict has since killed tens of thousands of people, devastated much of eastern and southern Ukraine and forced millions to flee their homes.

'Mistaken'

The Russian army controls around one-fifth of Ukraine's territory, including the Crimean peninsula annexed in 2014, and has been grinding forwards on the battlefield, with both militaries suffering immense losses.

Trump had on Tuesday dismissed Russia's military prowess and mocked its inability to quickly beat Ukraine.

In a post on Truth Social, he said Ukraine "may be able to take back their country in its original form and, who knows, maybe even go further than that".

Russia rejected that notion.

"The idea that Ukraine can recapture something is, from our point of view, mistaken," Peskov told reporters, including AFP.

Russia also bristled at the accusation it was weak.

"The phrase 'paper tiger' was used in relation to our economy," Peskov said.

"Russia is more associated with a bear. And paper bears don't exist. Russia is a real bear."

He did concede, however, that Russia's economy -- slowing after two years of rapid growth and with stubborn inflation -- was "experiencing tensions and problems".

Moscow's finance ministry on Wednesday proposed raising the sales tax from next year to help cover the costs of the offensive, which has pushed Russia into a budget deficit.

Kyiv and Washington want to cut off revenues from Moscow's vital energy exports to further squeeze the Kremlin.

Ukraine has stepped up attacks on Russian energy sites in recent months, with its drones hitting a major Russian oil refinery in the central Bashkortostan region overnight, triggering a large fire.

A Ukrainian drone attack also killed two people in the Russian port city of Novorossiysk, just east of the annexed Crimean peninsula, the local Russian governor said.

'Zero' results

Peskov also dismissed claims that Russia breached NATO's airspace as "hysteria", after Trump said the allies should shoot down Russian jets if they violate their territory.

NATO countries say multiple Russian fighter jets and drones have violated European member states' airspace in recent weeks, accusing Moscow of testing the alliance's boundaries.

With peace progress on Ukraine stalled, Peskov said a broader rapprochement between Moscow and Washington ushered in when Trump returned to the White House in January has yielded "close to zero" results.

Zelensky has hailed Trump's apparent change of position as a "big shift", though it is unclear if the US leader will follow through with concrete steps, such as more sanctions on Russia.

On the streets of Kyiv, there was scepticism.

"It's just another opinion from Trump, which changes every hour," 33-year-old Bogdan Tkachuk told AFP.

Svitlana Fetisova said she would want to see "more help, more action, not just words, because Ukraine is suffering".

"I really want to believe that this is true and that finally the country responsible for the balance of peace in the whole world will turn to us," she said.

AFP



YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE

"Being together is very important during this revolution. We fight together, we stay together, we serve together, and we work together. That kind of togetherness is very important!"

Being Bamar herself, Sandar's lifelong, active curiosity about her country's diverse cultures is quite unusual, given the military's relentless pro-Bamar "brainwashing" and the historical divide that has existed between Burma's majority Bamar population and its many ethnic communities. As a student, she was drawn to research and writing, which led her to study anthropology and ethnography. Over the years, she traveled extensively throughout Myanmar, visiting remote villages and ethnic territories, immersing herself in different communities, collecting their stories, and documenting their traditions. In particular, she spent a lot of time in Kachin state, where she studied local histories and developed close and trusting relationships. Through those experiences, she gained firsthand insight into their culture and how they maintained their dignity amid the struggle to survive against a brutal and oppressive military regime.

Although Sandar's primary focus was research-based writing, she also learned photography as a tool for ethnographic study. To her, the camera is a complementary medium for storytelling, allowing her to capture details that written words might miss. But photography remained secondary for her—that is, until the coup changed everything.

When the military seized control in 2021, Sandar's world was thrown into turmoil. Movement became restricted, intellectual freedom was suppressed, and the possibility of continuing fieldwork was shattered. When protests began erupting in Yangon, she decided to turn to photography more seriously, now as a tool to

document the growing resistance movement. She joined mass protests, capturing the determination of those taking to the streets against the military regime. The experience was harrowing! She and her fellow activists were chased and surrounded—and at times nearly shot—by the regime's forces. When protests could no longer be organized on a large scale, they became short, hit-and-run demonstrations. More concerning still, the military began to increasingly target photographers, which made just holding a camera a life-threatening proposition. When continuing to document the resistance in Yangon was finally no longer tenable, she sought another way to contribute.

At that time, many young people were either going to remote areas for military training or fleeing abroad for safety. Sandar originally planned to go to Kachin, as she was familiar with the region based on her previous time there. However, when she heard that Karenni had become one of the first states to organize to resist the coup, she decided to go there instead.

She connected with a friend who had already established a presence there. She arranged for Sandar's safe passage to an IDP camp, where she was issued a bed. From the camp, Sandar saw firsthand the destruction caused by military offensives: burned homes, displaced families, and the scars of relentless attacks. Wanting to be useful, she joined a group of medical students who had fled Yangon and were providing healthcare services to IDPs. She lived with them, documenting their work and learning about their struggles. "This is the situation that I have to face in a war zone. This is the situation that I have to embrace. That's it! I need to continue!" she exclaims, describing the attitude she came to adopt. "This is our real situation: 'Okay, we got destroyed. Start again, continue. Got destroyed. Start again, continue.' This is the situation we are embracing."

Later, Sandar made her way to a Karenni military training camp, where she stayed for three months. Though she did not train as a soldier, she immersed herself in their world, closely observing how ordinary individuals were transformed into resistance fighters. She documented every aspect of the training: physical drills, military lessons, social activities, and even the psychological and philosophical aspects of soldiering. She was fascinated by the internal narratives that shaped these young men and women—their personal histories, motivations, and the deep-rooted history of Karenni resistance. She studied their slogans, anthems, and training routines, seeking to understand what made someone a true Karenni soldier beyond just physical endurance.

CATCH THE PODCAST

Read more and listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast here:

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2025/9/7/episode-394-youll-never-walk-alone>



Myanmar junta Prime Minister U Nyo Saw on arrival in China.

MYANMAR JUNTA PRIME MINISTER CONCLUDES CHINA VISIT FOCUSED ON TRADE, INVESTMENT, AND REGIONAL COOPERATION

Myanmar junta Prime Minister U Nyo Saw has returned to Naypyidaw after a four-day visit to China, where he attended the 22nd China-ASEAN Expo (CAEXPO) and the China-ASEAN Business and Investment Summit in Nanning.

According to the state-run Global New Light of Myanmar, The Prime Minister departed Naypyidaw on 15 September with a delegation of senior officials, including Union Ministers Dr Charlie Than, U Chit Swe and Dr Thet Khaing Win, Kachin State Chief Minister U Khet Htein Nan, and Deputy Minister Dr Zaw Myint. The delegation was welcomed upon arrival in Nanning by Guangxi regional officials and Myanmar's ambassador to China.

On September 17, U Nyo Saw met Chinese Vice-President Han Zheng at the Liyuan State Guesthouse in Nanning. The two sides reportedly discussed enhancing bilateral trade and investment, advancing socioeconomic development, and expanding cooperation in combating narcotics, human trafficking, online fraud, and transnational crime. China also pledged continued humanitarian assistance, including support for rehabilitation efforts following the recent Mandalay earthquake.

That evening, the U Nyo Saw attended a dinner marking the opening of CAEXPO and the China-ASEAN Business and Investment Summit alongside leaders from other ASEAN countries.

During the visit, the delegation toured the China-ASEAN AI Innovation Centre (CAAIC), where officials briefed them on artificial intelligence projects in healthcare, agriculture, transport, and data security. U Nyo Saw inquired about specific applications of the technology for regional cooperation.

The Myanmar delegation departed Nanning on 18 September, seen off by local officials and cultural troupes at the airport. Upon arrival in Naypyidaw, they were welcomed by senior officials and members of the military junta.

The Global New Light of Myanmar claims the visit underscored Myanmar's efforts to deepen economic and technological cooperation with China while reinforcing its role within ASEAN frameworks.



ARAKAN ARMY REOPENS MOSQUES IN ARAKAN STATE

The Arakan Army (AA) has permitted several mosques in northern Rakhine State to reopen, a move that has quickly become a major topic on Myanmar social media.

The decision, announced through its administrative wing, the Arakan People's Authority (APA), affects communities in Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships where Muslim residents had been unable to gather for years due to conflict and restrictions under military rule.

Local reports confirm that Friday prayers have resumed in some villages, marking the first time in

years that Muslim residents could pray openly in their mosques. Videos and photos of the gatherings circulated widely on Facebook and Telegram, drawing both praise and debate.

At the same time, nationalist-leaning accounts criticized the decision, accusing the AA of using the issue to gain international legitimacy. Memes and counter-comments reflected broader mistrust among some ethnic Rakhine communities.

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.