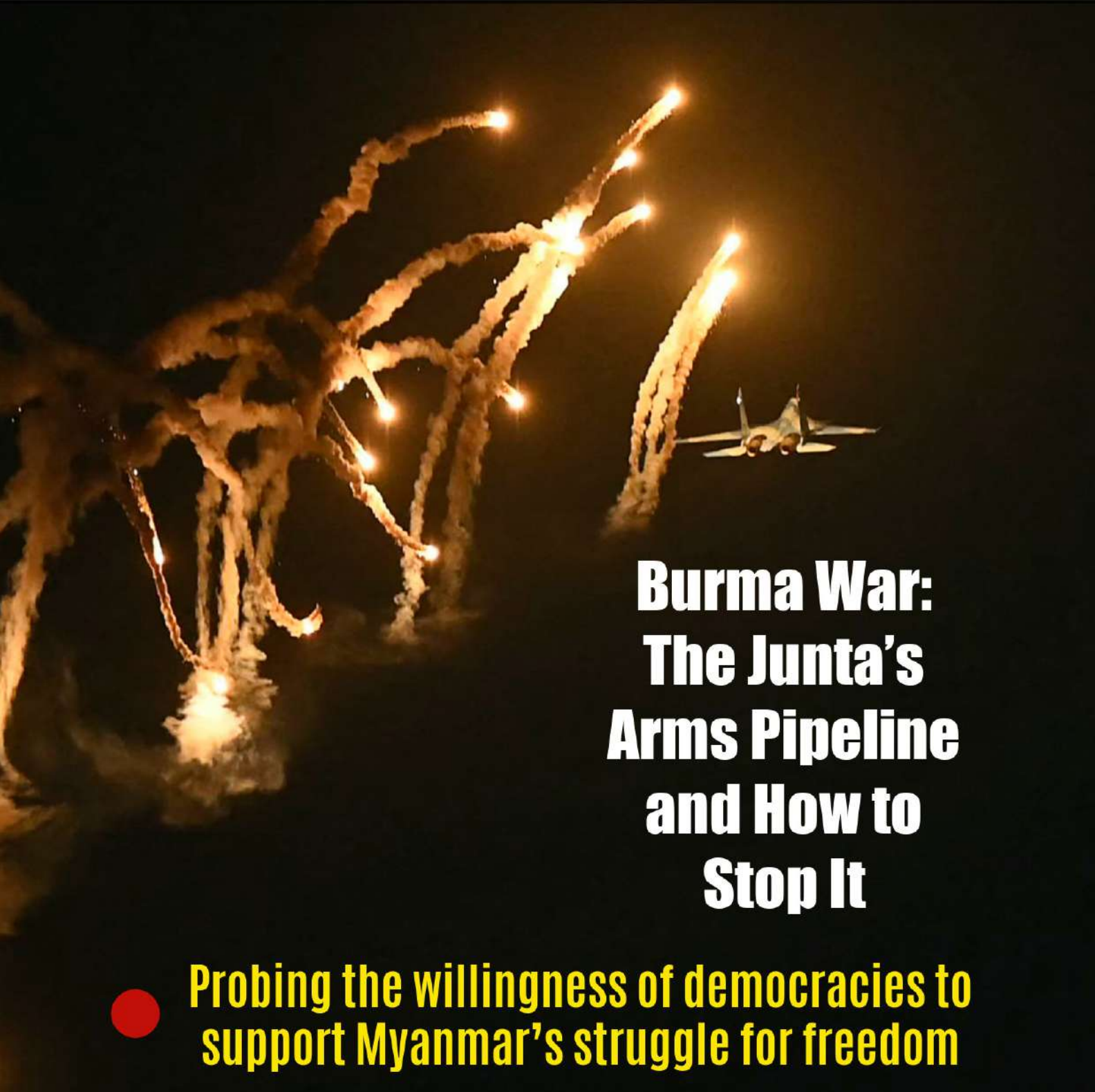


ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



Burma War: The Junta's Arms Pipeline and How to Stop It

● Probing the willingness of democracies to support Myanmar's struggle for freedom

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.

A CALL TO REJECT THE MYANMAR JUNTA ELECTIONS

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia Dato' Sri Saifuddin Abdullah and other critics argue forcefully that the Myanmar junta's plan for elections in December and January should not be recognized because the process is inherently flawed and lacking legitimacy. Their objection rests not merely on procedural defects, but on the deeper reality that in the absence of peace, inclusivity, and meaningful competition in Myanmar, such elections would serve as a façade to entrench military rule.

One central criticism is that the elections cannot be truly nationwide. The junta itself has acknowledged that ongoing conflict and territorial fragmentation make it impossible to hold polls across all townships. The fact that only about 145 of Myanmar's 330 townships are included in the census for preparing voter lists is a stark admission that large portions of the country will be excluded. Critics claim that conducting elections under such conditions means that significant segments of the population - especially in contested ethnic areas - will be disenfranchised.

Equally important is the suppression of the political opposition. Numerous pro-democracy parties are banned, leaders remain detained - including Aung San Suu Kyi and Win Myint - and many opposition groups have either refused to participate or deemed the process a sham. The rules set by the junta - such as requiring parties to have a minimum membership and financial threshold—are seen as discriminatory filters designed to ensure that only regime-friendly or proxy parties can qualify. Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy refused to take part. In other words, the electoral landscape has already been engineered to produce a compliant legislature.

Saifuddin has also pointed to past instances where the junta unilaterally altered election rules without broad consultation or consensus with stakeholders. To him and like-minded critics, this further undermines the moral

and legal credibility of the process. When the rules of the game are imposed by the very actors whose legitimacy is in question, the result cannot fairly be called a democratic election.

Another major argument is that peace must come first. ASEAN's so-called Five-Point Consensus, agreed in 2021, calls first for an immediate cessation of violence and inclusive dialogue among all parties. The critics insist that elections held amid active hostilities will exacerbate conflict, not resolve it. They argue it is illogical and counterproductive to hold partial elections while Myanmar is still embroiled in war and its people are displaced. Malaysia's current push in ASEAN is to ensure that hostilities stop and stakeholder dialogue takes root before any credible election is contemplated.

Recognition of such elections would also undercut ASEAN's own credibility. If the regional body accepts a vote that is neither free nor fair, it risks being seen as complicit in legitimizing authoritarianism. As one gathering of ASEAN stakeholders declared, voting under military control without genuine accountability undermines the bloc's principles of democracy, human rights, and rule of law. For Saifuddin, who has urged ASEAN to question whether its Five-Point Consensus remains relevant in light of the junta's persistent defiance, betraying those principles is precisely the danger.

In sum, the critics reject recognition of the 2025-26 Myanmar elections because the conditions for genuine, inclusive, and peaceful participation do not exist. Far from being a step toward democracy, the election is seen as an attempt by the junta to cloak itself with legitimacy — a move to consolidate power while silencing dissent and circumventing accountability. In such circumstances, they argue, ASEAN and the international community must refuse to grant it legitimacy.

EDITORIAL

mizzima
WEEKLY

**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

**Mizzima Weekly is
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 Burma War: The Junta's Arms Pipeline and How to Stop It - Antonio Graceffo

10 ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR
Analysis & Insight

14 FORUM 2000 CONFERENCE
Probing the willingness of democracies to support Myanmar's struggle for freedom

18 Forum 2000 Conference reminds audience of Aung San Suu Kyi's plight and hosts call from 2025 Nobel Peace Laureate

20 Forum 2000 appeal for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners in Myanmar

22 CORE DEVELOPMENTS
ASEAN urged to denounce Myanmar junta's election

24 Myanmar's UN Ambassador calls for ICC referral and global rejection of junta's election

26 Myanmar junta chief says second phase of elections to cover 100 townships

27 Burma Campaign UK demands resumption of UK sanctions on Myanmar

28 Myanmar rights activist criticizes ASEAN's inaction on women's plight

29 ASEAN must 'push for change' in Myanmar: top EU rights official



30 MILITIA & BORDER GUARDS

What's next for Myanmar's Militias and Border Guard Forces?

33 CORE DEVELOPMENTS

Arakan Army says fighting ongoing to capture junta outpost on Rakhine-Magway border

34 AA surrounds Nat Ye Kan base in Magway Region, cutting off all supply routes to junta troops

35 Junta-linked forces inspect Thai-Myanmar border crossing in Myawaddy

36 KNU says ex-leaders attended Myanmar junta's NCA event in personal capacity

37 Myanmar junta airstrikes target villages sheltering IDPs, eight civilians shot dead in Natogyi

38 Myanmar junta troops torch villages, arrest civilians in southern Shan State offensive

39 Myanmar junta airstrike kills 4th-grade student in Namhsan Township

40 Funding shortages threaten free schools for war-displaced children in Rakhine State

41 Myanmar junta airstrikes kill six students, wound dozens in Chin State

42 RCSS urges renewed dialogue to build federal democratic union under NCA framework

43 Myanmar junta recaptures Hsipaw town on China trade route

44 ASEAN award recognises Hpa-an city for environmental sustainability

45 Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary in northwest Myanmar to install 72 more camera traps for tiger research

46 SCAM CENTRES

Myanmar scam cities booming despite crackdown - using Musk's Starlink

51 UK and US take action against Myanmar scam centres amid-region wide crackdown

52 China boasts of crackdown on scam centres on Myanmar border

53 INSIGHT MYANMAR

At the breaking point - A deep dive into shifting morale, overstretched armies and the unrelenting resistance – Anthony Davis

57 ASIAN & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Sharm El-Sheikh Summit: Peace for a Gas Pipeline

59 Tibet Bears the Brunt of China's Renewable Energy Ambitions

61 COLUMNS

INSIGHT MYANMAR – A Narco State of Mind

62 JUNTA WATCH

63 SOCIAL WATCH

Cover photo of a Myanmar junta fighter jet in an air display for Armed Forces Day by AFP





BURMA WAR: THE JUNTA'S ARMS PIPELINE AND HOW TO STOP IT

ANTONIO GRACEFFO

The war in Burma is being fought on extremely asymmetrical terms. The junta enjoys unrestricted access to weapons, while the resistance is barred by international law from purchasing or transporting arms through third countries. In addition to its complete air superiority, the State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC) has ample supplies of ammunition, artillery shells, and small arms. By contrast, resistance fighters are forced to scrounge for weapons and often withdraw from battles, ceding territory simply because they run out of bullets.

Although the UN, ASEAN, EU, and other international bodies acknowledge that the junta routinely bombs IDP camps, schools, and hospitals, no binding UN Security Council sanctions have been imposed on Burma. The UN General Assembly's 2021 resolution urging member states to halt arms sales, supported by 119 of 193 nations, was non-binding and carries no enforcement power. In March 2025, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk again called for an arms embargo and targeted sanctions, particularly on jet fuel and dual-use goods, but the Security Council remains blocked by China and Russia, both major arms suppliers to the junta and permanent members with veto power.

The European Union has maintained an arms embargo on Myanmar since the 1990s, banning the export of weapons, munitions, military equipment, and any items that could be used for internal repression. In 2018, the EU expanded these restrictions to include dual-use goods intended for military or border police use,

surveillance equipment, and military training or cooperation. These measures were most recently extended until April 30, 2026.

However, the embargo has little practical effect on the junta's ability to obtain weapons. EU member states were never major arms suppliers to Myanmar; the junta's primary sources are Russia, China, Singapore, India, and Thailand—none of which are bound by EU law. The EU has no authority to enforce its embargo outside its own borders, and weapons can still reach Myanmar through transit routes in countries such as Singapore and Thailand.

As a result, the embargo mainly serves as a political statement of disapproval and prevents European companies from selling arms directly to the regime, but it does not meaningfully restrict the junta's access to weapons. For this reason, activists and UN officials continue to urge the adoption of a binding UN Security Council arms embargo, which would compel all UN member states to comply.

The United States has imposed extensive sanctions on Burma since the 2021 coup. In February 2021, Executive Order 14014 targeted the military junta, its leaders, and affiliated businesses, introducing export restrictions on sensitive goods and freezing junta-controlled assets. These measures aimed to limit the regime's access to funds and technology essential for sustaining its war effort.

From 2023 to 2024, imports of military equipment by the junta declined by more than 30 percent, partly due to U.S. sanctions and similar actions by allied nati-



ons. However, in July 2025, the U.S. lifted sanctions on five individuals and companies linked to the regime's arms trade, prompting sharp criticism from UN experts. The delisted entities had previously been accused of brokering deals for weapons, aircraft, surveillance systems, naval guns, and armored vehicle technology.

While sanctions have disrupted parts of the junta's supply chain, inconsistent enforcement and selective removals have limited their overall impact, allowing the regime to continue sourcing weapons through regional intermediaries.

Canada maintains an arms embargo and asset freeze measures under its Myanmar sanctions regime, while the United Kingdom has imposed its own restrictions alongside those of the European Union. Despite these efforts, large quantities of weapons continue to reach the Burmese military. Since the 2021 coup, the junta has imported at least \$1 billion worth of arms and dual-use goods, primarily from Russia (\$406 million) and China (\$267 million), with additional supplies from Singapore, India, and Thailand.

These sanctions are easily circumvented through front companies and newly created entities that exploit lax enforcement. A major loophole in the international response is the absence of an embargo on aviation fuel, which continues to enable airstrikes on civilian areas. Compounding the problem, Myanmar has developed limited domestic arms production through reverse engineering, with at least a dozen KaPaSa military factories manufacturing artillery ammunition and other

weapons.

One way resistance forces and reporters on the ground are helping is by photographing weapons and munitions seized by the resistance to record brand names, maker's marks, and serial numbers in an effort to prove the origin of the weapons.

In February the KDNF gave me access to their arsenal, where we found a captured Carl Gustaf launcher. From the photographs we filed a complaint with the Swedish government, which tracked down and confronted the company that supplied it. That success was small next to the hundreds of thousands of weapons and millions of rounds of ammunition the junta continues to acquire through companies willing to circumvent the law.

Inventorying captured arms is difficult. Many EAOs refuse outside access to their caches, the total haul is often small, and every weapon must be examined individually. Trained weapons inspectors tell me it can take up to six hours to disassemble a single firearm and document each component, brand names, maker's marks, serial numbers, even screws, nuts, and bolts, and days more to trace those parts back to a manufacturer.

Drones add another layer of complexity. Inspectors strip them to the motors and tiny electronic components to determine country of origin and, sometimes, the purchasing company. One inspector described dismantling a drone that was found to contain a Japanese motor later traced to a Yangon firm already sanctioned for attempting to import Russian helicopter parts.



The use of fighter jets in bombing has been devastating.
Photo: AFP

Inspectors tell me the junta often buys weapons abroad or acquires foreign arms through third parties, then repaints or re-marks them to look like they were made in Burma in government factories. Many items the regime claims are domestically produced are in fact assembled from imported components. Metallurgical analysis now underway aims to compare the number of weapons the junta says it has manufactured with the realistic output of Burma's factories. Early results suggest those factory capacities are overstated and a far larger share of arms must be imported. For example, some 40-millimeter grenades consistently contain Singaporean fuses, a component Burma does not appear able to produce at scale.

That gap matters because munitions and ammunition require sophisticated manufacturing. A crude firearm can be improvised from piping or bored steel, but primers, fuses and other detonating components are industrial products that must be imported. Reloading spent brass is something U.S. shooting enthusiasts do, but it is not a reliable source of primers or manufactured fuses in Burma. Without those inputs, large-scale ammunition production is effectively impossible.

Drones illustrate the same pattern. On the surface they can look homemade—PVC frames and simple housings—but the motors, flight controllers and electronic components come from abroad. Inspectors have found motors and circuitry traceable to foreign suppliers, and in some cases entire drone kits and explosive components are being produced outside Burma so they can be passed off as locally made when captured.

Geography compounds the problem. Shan, Karen and Karen states are the easiest to reach from Thailand and therefore host most of the reporters and the limited number of trained weapons inspectors. Gaining access to Chin, Arakan and Kachin states is far harder because it requires routes through China, India or Bangladesh, countries where entry is politically and logistically fraught, and in some cases nearly impossible.

Cutting off the junta's access to weapons and munitions requires a single, sustained campaign of coordinated measures.

1. Establish a binding, universal arms embargo that explicitly covers weapons, munitions, dual-use goods and aviation fuel, and organize a coalition of willing states to enforce it through shared intelligence and synchronized legal measures.

2. Target the entire supply chain: impose secondary sanctions and criminal penalties on brokers, front companies, freight forwarders, carriers, insurers, banks and payment processors used to move weapons and funds.

3. Close transit and transshipment loopholes by requiring mandatory end-use verification, inspecting suspicious cargo, denying port services to repeat offenders, and imposing penalties on carriers and terminals that facilitate undocumented transfers.

4. Tighten export controls on critical components—primers, fuses, propellant chemicals, precision electronics, motors, flight controllers and specialized metallurgy inputs—by demanding credible, public end-use certificates, blacklisting suspicious buyers and vetting downstream purchasers.

5. Scale up standardized forensic documentation: train and fund weapons and drone inspectors, adopt common dismantling and chain-of-custody protocols, pair maker's marks and serial numbers with metallurgical and component analysis, and maintain a shared, searchable international database validated by an independent panel.

6. Use legal and financial tools in concert with forensic evidence: criminalize relabeling or remarking of weapons, seize assets tied to illicit brokers, freeze accounts, deny correspondent banking and insurance, and pursue asset forfeiture and criminal prosecutions where jurisdiction allows.

7. Cut technical support and maintenance by banning repair, spare parts, training and technical expertise for imported platforms so complex systems degrade without access to spares and servicing.

8. Implement maritime enforcement measures: seize vessels carrying illicit cargo, deny reflagging, blacklist offending ships and companies, and provide legal cover for interdiction actions.

Sustain these measures over time and coordinate enforcement, forensic work and prosecutions so financial, transport, component and maintenance channels are sealed simultaneously.

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



Myanmar resistance group captures a Myanmar military drone. Photo: CJ

ANALYSIS & INSIGHT



AA AND ARSA FIGHT IN RAKHINE INTENSIFIES

Fighting between the Arakan Army (AA) and the Rohingya armed group Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) has intensified in Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships, northern Rakhine State, amid growing concerns about border security and alleged cross-border support from Bangladesh.

Local media Narinjara News reported that ARSA launched three attacks in Maungdaw between the afternoon of August 22 and the early hours of August 23. The timing of the assaults coincided with the conference called Stakeholders' Dialogue: Takeaway to the High-Level Conference on the Rohingya Situation, August 24-26, held in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh—an apparent attempt by ARSA to draw international attention to the issue, according to local observers.

Sources in Maungdaw told Narinjara that several ARSA fighters were killed after the AA responded swiftly to the attacks. Since then, ARSA's movements in the region have reportedly increased, sparking renewed clashes with AA forces that have been ongoing since September.

Although the AA has strengthened security along the Bangladesh border, local residents say the situation remains tense. One trader in Maungdaw told DVB: "Even though the AA

has reinforced security near the border, some northern areas are still unsafe. We rely on cross-border trade with Bangladesh, but now we cannot go there because of ARSA threats. Our businesses have slowed down as a result."

The AA has accused elements within Bangladesh's Border Guard Force (BGB) of aiding ARSA and the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) by providing weapons, training, and encouragement to launch attacks inside Myanmar. The group's statement issued on September 27 warned that such support endangers border stability and bilateral trust.

According to the AA, ARSA temporarily captured one of its outposts located between border milestones No. 56 and 57 in mid-September before AA troops retook it. The statement urged the Bangladeshi government to take decisive action against corrupt officials allegedly involved in supporting ARSA and RSO. "If these actions continue, both sides' stability, security, and trust will be severely damaged," the AA cautioned.

Analysts say the growing presence of Muslim militias on the border complicates the Rakhine conflict and poses risks to Myanmar's sovereignty. A Rakhine writer and former political prisoner told local media that "Bangladesh has a hidden agenda. While the AA faces the junta's heavy offensives, Bangladesh supports ARSA and RSO to gain control of Buthidaung and Maungdaw. Their interference has now become open."

Bangladeshi outlet The Territory News also reported that clashes between the AA, ARSA, and RSO took place throughout the night of October 20 near border milestones 36, 37, and 56, underscoring the worsening security situation along the Myanmar-Bangladesh frontier.

International response to the Myanmar junta's planned election

Regional and international opposition to Myanmar's military junta's planned election is growing, following Malaysia's foreign minister's one-day visit to Naypyidaw earlier this month.



Myanmar junta leader pushes on for his plan for an election. Photo: AFP

During his visit, Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad bin Hasan met with junta chief Min Aung Hlaing and Foreign Minister Than Swe. The following day, Myanmar's state-run Global New Light of Myanmar claimed that Mohamad was "delighted" with the junta's preparations for a "multi-party democratic general election." The report immediately sparked backlash in Malaysia, where eight Members of Parliament—from both ruling and opposition parties—issued a joint statement on October 10 calling on the government to clarify its stance.

In their statement, the lawmakers questioned how Malaysia could appear to support an election in Myanmar amid escalating armed conflict, widespread repression, and a deepening humanitarian crisis. They said any endorsement of the junta's planned vote would contradict Malaysia's democratic principles and ASEAN's credibility.

Mohamad bin Hasan later clarified that ASEAN would "discuss" the junta's request to send electoral observers but stressed that he did not expect the regional bloc to approve it. This clarification came after Global New Light of Myanmar falsely reported that the Malaysian minister had "vowed to send electoral observation teams."

Calls to reject the junta's election plan have also come from prominent regional and international figures. Malaysia's former foreign minister, Thailand's former foreign minister, and three former UN human rights experts jointly urged ASEAN to refuse to legitimize the military's attempt to stage elections. They emphasized that any political process must include all key stakeholders, including the National Unity Government (NUG), ethnic resistance organizations (EROs), and civil society groups.



A variety of drones have been supplied to the Myanmar military by China. Photo: Supplied

The European Union also made its position clear. On October 17, Kajsia Ollongren, the EU's Special Representative for Human Rights, announced that the bloc would not send election observers to Myanmar, describing the planned vote as neither "free nor fair." She urged ASEAN and neighbouring countries to take a firm stance against the junta's attempt to gain legitimacy through an election held under oppressive and unstable conditions.

"As long as Myanmar remains unstable, it should be ASEAN's number one concern," Ollongren said. "We cannot recognize these as real elections, as fair. Therefore, we will not send observers to something that we don't recognize as an election."

Meanwhile, in Thailand, opposition MP Kannavee Suebsaeng of the Fair Party echoed similar sentiments. After meeting with NUG ministers for foreign affairs and humanitarian management on October 19, he stated that any election organized by Myanmar's junta should not be recognized internationally, warning that legitimizing it would only worsen the country's ongoing crisis.

Resistance faces junta drone challenge

Myanmar's pro-democracy resistance forces are facing growing challenges in countering the junta's increasingly sophisticated drone warfare, largely fueled by foreign support, according to National Unity Government (NUG) Defense Minister Yi Mon.

In an interview with PVTv, Yi Mon said the junta's advantage comes from direct backing by a "powerful country" that openly supports the regime and exerts pressure on ethnic revolutionary groups. "We have a huge gap in weapons and ammunition. A powerful country stands openly with the junta and interferes in our domestic affairs by pressuring our ethnic brotherhood forces, hindering our ability to obtain military assistance," he said.

The minister's remarks follow the junta's recent territorial gains in northern and southern Shan State, where its troops have recaptured several townships previously controlled by anti-regime forces. Military analysts attribute these advances to both financial and manpower support, which have allowed the junta to strengthen its drone programme and expand its use of new battlefield technologies.

Tactical Raptor, a military weapons expert, told DMG that while the junta's drones are not highly advanced, their growing numbers have tipped the balance in several recent offensives. "Their domestically

made long-range suicide drones are of low quality," the analyst said. "However, with financial resources and backing from both Russia and China, the junta now possesses a significant drone fleet."

The junta established a formal drone force in April 2024, with operations beginning in June. These units primarily conduct reconnaissance and aerial bombing missions, as drones offer a cheaper alternative to conventional airstrikes. Analysts believe many of the drones come from China, while Russia has provided technical expertise, drawing on its own experience in the Ukraine war.

On the other hand, resistance groups are limited to using agricultural drones, which are adapted for basic reconnaissance or modified to drop small explosives. They also struggle against the junta's electronic warfare systems, including advanced jamming technology that can disable or mislead resistance drones.

"Without effective countermeasures such as electronic jammers and financial resources, the revolutionary forces remain vulnerable to the junta's aerial attacks," a security analyst noted. Experts have urged resistance groups to adjust their battlefield strategies, warning that traditional formations are highly exposed to drone assaults.

To close the gap, analysts stress the need for greater coordination among the anti-junta forces under unified command structures. "The key for the resistance movement now is central leadership and improved cooperation," one expert said.



PROBING THE WILLINGNESS OF DEMOCRACIES TO SUPPORT MYANMAR'S STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

An important panel discussion on Myanmar's struggle for freedom was held during the Forum 2000 Conference focused on democracy held in Prague, Czech Republic on 13 October.

The discussion was entitled: "Myanmar: Are democracies truly unwilling to help the struggle for freedom?"

Speakers included: Mr Maw Htun Aung, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Electricity and Energy, National Unity Government, Myanmar; Mr Soe Myint, founder and chief editor of Mizzima, Myanmar; Ms Maiko Ichihara, Professor, Hitotsubashi University, Member, Program Council, Forum 2000 Foundation, Japan; and Ms Kelley E. Currie, Founding Partner, Kilo-Alpha Strategies, USA. The panel was moderated by Mr Igor Blažević, Senior Advisor, Prague Civil Society Centre; Member, Program Council, Forum 2000 Foundation, Bosnia and Herzegovina/Czechia.

The discussion was part of the three-day 29th Forum 2000 Conference entitled "Facing the Odds: Democratic Resilience in Action" that hosted an online call to free Myanmar democracy icon Aung San Suu

Kyi by her son, Kim Aris, and an online call from the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize winner Ms Maria Ms Corina Machado, the Venezuela opposition leader currently facing challenges in her country.

ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

As Mr Blažević explained in the opening to the Myanmar panel discussion, the Myanmar crisis – which typically focuses on the cruel actions of the junta – could be approached from a different angle.

He suggested a move away from tragedy, doom, and gloom toward agency and possibility, to emphasize the strategic stakes, and highlight the responsibility and interests of democracies.

"We have not started with the question of how bad the Myanmar military junta is, we have just highlighted that they are among the worst. I also did not want to start the conversation on how much suffering, pain, atrocities, and destruction are the consequences of the junta's war of terror against the entire nation. We just mentioned that there is enormous amount of pain, loss and trauma.

"But I know very well, after many discussions about Myanmar, that if we start with all that, nobody will feel attracted to engage with the country described only in these terms.

"So, I navigated panelists to begin from another angle — by explaining the heroic resistance of the people of Myanmar and to tell the story of the extraordinary courage and political creativity of Myanmar's people — who have not been defeated by an extremely brutal regime for five years and have liberated over half of the country's territory," Mr Blažević said.

Ms Currie, who has spent three decades as a policymaker, partner of civil society on the ground, and academic researcher focused on Burma, noted the homegrown, DIY nature of the Myanmar revolution in the wake of the 2021 military coup: It is self-funded, self-supported, self-sustaining and does not rely extensively on any outsiders to support it.

"It has raised awareness and solidarity among the Bamar majority around the ideals and necessity of federalism as part of the fight against the military, and the long brutal struggle of the ethnic nationalities against a repressive unitary Bamar-Buddhist dominated state. This solidarity has been imperfect and continues to require confidence building and trust building but directionally it is unprecedented in the Burma context.

"I especially noted the role reversal of Bamar leaders having to learn from and serve under ethnic leaders in the liberated areas, how young, educated people are driving so much of the work on the ground, and the role of women—especially young and ethnic women—in driving solidarity, resilience and creativity."

Ms Currie stressed the importance of the current process of building a new national identity based on something other than Bamar-Buddhist chauvinism and unitary rule. Linked to this is the determination to never return to living under military rule.

Ms Currie's last point is particularly important - and echoed by the other participants. Essentially, the panelists stressed that there is no going back to the military rule that has damaged the country for decades, despite moves by the junta to gain more legitimacy.

RESISTANCE STRENGTH

Mr Soe Myint, whose roots go back to Burma's 1988 democracy uprising, noted that years and decades of the resistance against the military rule for democracy and federal union itself is a strength in Myanmar. That itself is a reason why the Myanmar people should continue working for it and they should support it.

"In the 2020 elections, Myanmar had a half million first time voters who are around 18-20 years old and many of them today are leaders in different capacities and different fields including in political organizations, armed resistance organizations, CSOs, media, etc.

"With little or no support from outside world, the resistance movement in Myanmar has already liberated at least half of the country's territories from the Myanmar military yoke. The movement for democracy and federal democracy in Myanmar, I would say, is already halfway through in terms of the areas liberated, in terms of governance taking place in those areas and in terms of the attempts for democratization and uniting the different stakeholders.

"It is not perfect yet. It is not 100 per cent done yet but the process continues. If we can, by one way or another stop the air strikes of the junta, we would easily achieve another 25 per cent of the process.

"The daily air strikes of the junta with the fighter planes supplied by Russia and with the military weapons and technology provided by China, are the ones that are stopping the democratization process and killing the civilians in the liberated areas. If we can provide a little of support, including financial support to the resistance movement in Myanmar, that will accelerate the process.

"Some of the actions can be done easier as well. For example, there are products coming out of the liberated areas in Myanmar and if European countries can buy the products made in liberated areas, the people can sustain their livelihood and the movement can sustain itself," Mr Soe Myint noted.

Ms Ichihara said the very fact that the resistance movement continues today is a source of inspiration, but there is also inspiration in the realm of democratic

governance. For example, the fact that the governance in Sagaing Region, in central Myanmar, which began simply as mobilization for armed resistance, is changing its governance style to improve accountability in response to reform pressure from the people, demonstrates that despite difficult circumstances, Myanmar's pro-democracy forces are striving to bring about objective and democratic governance.

But there are more to the challenges than physical resistance and improving local governance, as seen in the moves to prevent the junta trying to gain more legitimacy.

ELECTIONS AND GEOPOLITICS

Mr Blaževic moved the panelists to discuss the “scam” elections and geopolitics, to expose the political danger of fake elections and external enablers. The Myanmar junta has set the poll for December and January – but only largely pro-military parties, including the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) are allowed to take part.

“We explained that the military junta is staging something they call ‘elections,’ which are a complete fraud and scam. What junta will perform will be nothing similar to anything anybody in the world understand as elections. But then we warned where the danger is – the junta calls this scam ‘elections,’ and many have accepted this narrative.

“We highlighted that it is of critical importance that ASEAN member states, particularly Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, together with Japan, South Korea, European Union, UK and the US do not fall for the junta's effort to repeat the same trap they used in 2010 – allowing elections and opening the door to foreign investment.

For a decade, the Myanmar military allowed a democratic experiment to be allowed, only to slam the door shut with the military coup in 2021.

ELECTIONS NOT A PATH TO PEACE

Mr Blaževic said the main message about the scam elections – they are not a path to de-escalation,

ceasefires and peace. Fake elections are already now reason for significant escalation of junta's war against the people. If the junta will be emboldened by the recognition from Russia, China, Belarus and India, they will just escalate further terror, atrocities and destruction and continue the war against the people of the country, the war they cannot win, but the war which can indeed break the country beyond the point of recovery.

“There is only one path to peace and stability in Myanmar, and that is through alliance of Bama and ethnic groups alliance for a federal democratic country,” Mr Blaževic said.

Foreign governments and NGOs are starting to take notice and beginning to see through the Myanmar junta's move to build a “democratic” façade.

Ms Ichihara said regarding the elections the military claims will be held starting in December, the Japanese government also takes the position that they should not be held. Elections without freedom and fairness are meaningless.

“Beyond the lack of fairness—such as the limited areas under (Myanmar junta) control and the refusal to allow NLD (National League for Democracy) participation—there is also a lack of freedom. Individuals criticizing the elections are being arrested. Moreover, the fact that surveillance technology from Chinese companies is supporting these actions is something Japan, wary of China's influence penetration, cannot overlook.

POSSIBLE PATH FOR INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

What can the international community do to help democracy find its feet in brutalized Myanmar?

Ms Currie said she was asked to identify concreted steps that the international community can take to support the revolution.

“My first point was that western countries in particular should learn the lessons of the 2010 elections and the subsequent so-called transition period.

Because of the deeply undemocratic nature of the 2008 Constitution, and the flawed sham elections of 2010, the reforms of that period were shallow and superficial. While initially rejecting both the constitution and the elections, the western democracies ultimately accepted and legitimized both by accepting them as “good enough for Burma” and used the small democratic foothold of the NLD’s participation in the 2012 elections to launder the military’s agenda. As a result, there was no accountability and meaningful reforms that would really curb the military’s prerogatives never happened.

“The NLD, seeing the cynical approach of western countries, itself became quite transactional after the 2015 elections. They failed to build coalitions with the ethnic nationalities, change repressive laws that were within their power to repeal, or build any meaningful mechanisms for accountability. With the prospects of the junta running the same play again with fake elections in 2025, the western democracies should not accept the whitewash and understand that it won’t lead to a stable, sustainable Burma. They should also avoid pressuring democratic actors to accept an illegitimate regime and compromise on matters of deep principle that serve as their sources of legitimacy. Basically, stop chasing China around Burma and getting in a race to the bottom with them. I had some other thoughts about India, Thailand and others who should be better and stop passively or tacitly supporting the regime,” Ms Currie said.

Ms Ichihara said that among the Japanese government, lawmakers, civil society, and media, there is significant resonance with these developments and many initiatives to support Myanmar’s democracy movement. While Japan’s efforts may be quiet and less visible, they include lawmakers establishing NGOs for Myanmar support and strong media coverage. Fundraising efforts during the earthquake in March 2025 in Myanmar were also robust.

“Democratic nations should also cooperate in investigative research exposing the negative developments surrounding the (Myanmar junta’s) governance and election plans. One approach could be to form a network of journalists and researchers, similar to Bellingcat, to investigate and expose issues like election fraud by the (military junta), misuse of aid supplies, China’s export of surveillance technology and weapons, and the presence of weapons exports and front companies from Russia, India, Thailand, Singapore, and others,” Ms Ichihara added.

The Myanmar discussion panelists called for the need to do more to highlight the success of the Myanmar revolution, to support it, to understand that there was no option than to remove military control, and to recognize the “democratic façade” the military junta is trying to impose through the “sham” elections.



Mizzima Founder and Editor In-Chief Soe Myint speaks during the panel discussion.



The three-day Forum 2000 Conference in Prague, Czech Republic ended 14 October with the reiteration of a call for the release of Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi from jail and a call to support democracy from 2025 Nobel Peace Laureate Ms Maria Corina Machado.

The calls were the culmination of the three-day 29th Forum 2000 Conference entitled "Facing the Odds: Democratic Resilience in Action".

At a time when democracies face unprecedented internal rifts, in parallel with rising authoritarianism, widespread disinformation, and the rapid pace of technological change, the conference chiefly examined how people can reconfigure the cooperation between global democratic actors to address these challenges.

On day one of the conference, Mr Kim Aris, son of Myanmar's democracy icon and Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, called for his mother's release from prison in Naypyidaw, citing concerns for her health. He called for the release of all political prisoners in Myanmar and the return to democracy. Mr Aris's call was made in an online video call to the conference. Suu Kyi is 80 years old.

The three-day conference included a panel discussion entitled: "Myanmar: Are democracies truly unwilling to help the struggle for freedom". The panelists reminded the audience of the challenges Myanmar faces in the wake of the 2021 military coup, which has plunged the country into a bitter civil war.

This year's Venezuela opposition leader and

Nobel Peace Prize winner Ms Machado addressed the delegates and attendees at the conference. She was awarded the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize "for her tireless work promoting democratic rights for the people of Venezuela and for her struggle to achieve a just and peaceful transition from dictatorship to democracy".

An attendee asked Ms Machado whether she would be able to go to Oslo to collect her Nobel Prize.

"Believe me, ... we're doing everything. Our people are committed and the only way I can be there and meet you all is if we free Venezuela first. And that's precisely what we are dedicated to," she said.

Ms Machado addressed a question concerning claims that there is the perception that there is an American struggle to impose democracy on Venezuela.

"I understand that it's very hard to understand from abroad the magnitude of the tragedy that's going on in Venezuela," Ms Mechado said. "This is a matter of saving lives. We Venezuelans, as you know, have done incredible things. Using all democratic means, we've gone to 33 elections. They were all fraudulent. The last one, we proved our victory. Nonetheless, by force, they stayed in power. We've gone hundreds and hundreds of times to the streets peacefully and the response has been, they have shot our children, they have tortured, they have detained, they have killed. We have gone to 17 episodes of dialogues and we have complied.

"We have given our word and stick to it. And the regime has violated every single thing they had stated they would do. As I say, we're facing a criminal transnational structure.

"It is a narco-terrorist structure, a cartel that has taken over control and power in Venezuela. The way to stop this is to cut the inflows of resources that come not

only from drug trafficking, it comes from the smuggling of gold, minerals, arms, even human trafficking. And what we are asking the international community and Western democracies is to cut those flows.

"It is inconceivable for us that these resources that come from criminal activities and from the death and hunger of our people end up in Western financial systems. And they look at justice in those countries looks the other way. So, what we are demanding is you need to stop this, stop the flows that help to support the regime and to put this repressive structure in place.

"And that is what we're seeing right now. So this international coalition to stop drug trafficking is one of the demands we have had for years and it's finally in place. And it is about saving lives," Ms Machado said.

The idea for the Forum 2000 Conference originated in 1997, when President Havel and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Elie Wiesel invited world leaders to Prague to discuss the challenges humanity was facing on the threshold of the new millennium. Since then, Forum 2000 has evolved into a successful and widely recognized conference series, where distinguished guests address a diverse international community on topics ranging from the situation of human rights to the state of democracy and challenges to the international rules-based order.

Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize for her "non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights" in Myanmar. She was under house arrest at the time, and the prize recognized her leadership in the pro-democracy movement against the country's military rulers. She is currently serving 27 years of imprisonment in Naypyidaw under trumped up charges.



Archive photo of Aung San Suu Kyi.
Photo: AFP

FORUM 2000 APPEAL FOR THE RELEASE OF AUNG SAN SUU KYI AND ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS IN MYANMAR

The 29th Forum 2000 Conference in Prague, Czech Republic issued an official appeal calling for the release of Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners in Myanmar.

The following is their statement:

We, the members of the International Coalition for Democratic Renewal (ICDR) and the participants of the 29th Forum 2000 Conference, call urgently upon:

- the political leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states, as well as of India, China, Japan, South Korea, and Australia,
- and the leaders of the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the member states of the European Union, to use their influence to secure the immediate and unconditional release of Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners in Myanmar.

Grave concerns for Aung San Suu Kyi's health and treatment

Aung San Suu Kyi, the 80-year-old Nobel Peace Prize laureate and leader of Burma's democratically elected National League for Democracy (NLD), has been unjustly held in solitary confinement since the military coup of February 2021.

She is imprisoned in a specially constructed facility in Naypyidaw under extremely restrictive conditions, with minimal legal access and no contact with her family. She suffers from worsening heart disease, has requested to see a cardiologist, and is deprived of adequate medical care, proper nutrition, and sunlight. Her son, Kim Aris, has received only one letter from her in over two years, and he fears she may have been injured when the prison was damaged in a recent earthquake.

We demand that she be granted unrestricted medical treatment without any delay, immediate visit of her son, and ultimately her full and unconditional release.

A wider tragedy: Myanmar under siege

Aung San Suu Kyi's plight reflects the suffering of the people of the country. Since the 2021 coup, Myanmar has been plunged into a war of terror waged by its own military against the population.

Civilians have been bombed in their homes, schools, and villages. In one attack, a school was struck by warplanes dropping heavy bombs, killing children as they slept. Such atrocities are not isolated — they represent a campaign of deliberate violence that has left thousands dead, maimed, or displaced.

The regime claims it is fighting terrorism, but in reality, it is waging war against civilians. Airstrikes, summary executions, systematic torture, sexual violence, and the destruction of entire communities have become routine. The junta has blocked humanitarian aid even after natural disasters, worsening hunger and suffering. Millions have been forced from their homes.

These are crimes against humanity, committed with impunity in full view of the world. Myanmar today is a microcosm of the global assault on democracy and human rights — and the silence or complicity of powerful states only deepens the tragedy.

The illegitimacy of the junta

The people of Myanmar spoke clearly in the 2020 general election, giving Suu Kyi's NLD a decisive democratic mandate. The military staged its coup to prevent parliament from convening and has since tried to cloak itself in false legitimacy by announcing sham elections designed to cement its rule.

The generals have never won a mandate. They have no legitimacy. By contrast, the people of Myanmar continue to resist at enormous cost: over 29,000 political prisoners, nearly 10,000 dead, 4 million displaced, and 20 million in urgent need of aid.

Our moral responsibility

Aung San Suu Kyi has now spent a total of 19 years in detention since 1989. She is not only the symbol of Myanmar's democratic struggle but also a close friend of President Václav Havel, founder of Forum 2000, and a member of its International Advisory Board. Her lifelong commitment to democracy embodies the principles upon which this gathering stands.

Her son Kim Aris has appealed to us all, stressing the urgency of her release and the restoration of democracy in Myanmar. His plea is the plea of millions who cannot be ignored.

Our appeal

We call upon the governments of ASEAN, India, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the European Union to:

- Press the Myanmar junta for Aung San Suu Kyi's immediate release and that of all political prisoners.
- Demand that, pending release, she be provided with unrestricted medical care and immediate access to her by her son Kim Aris.
- Increase coordinated international pressure on Myanmar's military regime to end its brutal campaign of terror and to honor the democratic will of the Burmese people, rather than granting legitimacy to the junta's fraudulent electoral farce.

The people of Myanmar have risked everything to defend democracy and to achieve federalism. They face daily atrocities, crimes against humanity, and a humanitarian crisis of staggering scale.

Myanmar's neighbors, Asian and global democracies, and the broader international community cannot continue to look away. Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners must be freed immediately. The democratic mandate and the will of the people of Myanmar must be respected.



ASEAN URGED TO DENOUNCE MYANMAR JUNTA'S ELECTION

On 14 October, former officials and UN experts urged ASEAN to reject Myanmar's sham election at its upcoming summit. They called for a reset in strategy, punitive measures against the junta, engagement with democratic forces, and support for accountability for junta crimes.

The statement is as follows.

This statement is issued by Dato' Sri Saifuddin Abdullah, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia; Khun Kasit Piromya, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand; Leila M. de Lima, former Secretary of the Department of Justice of the Philippines, former senator, and current member of the House of Representatives of the Philippines; and three former UN experts on Myanmar who are founding members of the Special Advisory Council for Myanmar (SAC-M)

Following his 9 October visit to Myanmar, Malaysian Foreign Minister Dato' Seri Utama Haji Mohamad bin Haji Hasan set out firm minimum benchmarks for a credible Myanmar election, clarifying that it must be conducted "in accordance with the principles of free, fair, transparent, and credible processes" and "should be held throughout the country with the participation

of all political parties and stakeholders"

On these grounds alone, the junta's planned election, slated to begin on 28 December 2025, fails. ASEAN must outright reject it. Anything short of this would be a callous betrayal of the Myanmar people and a dangerous reward to violent authoritarianism throughout the region.

The military junta's blatant lie on 10 October that Foreign Minister Hasan had "vowed to send election observation teams to Myanmar" exposes the junta's continuing propaganda campaign to fabricate legitimacy, again at ASEAN's considerable expense.

After more than four years of handwringing, dissembling and futile attempts to revive its dead-on-arrival Five-Point Consensus (5PC), ASEAN must concede that it has totally failed the Myanmar people. It has been fooled, outmanoeuvred and humiliated by the junta at every turn. But the true calamity of ASEAN's failure is its real-world consequences. It has abandoned thousands of civilians to slaughter, surrendered the political initiative to powers outside its bloc, enabled transnational crime to flourish and greenlit future coups among member states.

An emboldened junta is ramping up its targeted killings of civilians, including children, confident in its total impunity. Last week, a junta paramotor bombed a candlelight gathering of people in Chaung U township of Sagaing region as they observed Thadingyut, the Buddhist festival of lights. At least 26 people were killed and another 40 were wounded in the 6 October attack. As Foreign Minister Hasan met with junta leader and accused war criminal Min Aung Hlaing in Naypyitaw on 9 October, junta forces were obstructing desperate efforts by locals to secure medical assistance for the Sagaing survivors. A month earlier, a junta airstrike on a boarding school complex in Thayat Tabin village of Rakhine State reportedly killed at least 22 people, mostly students, and injured at least 20 more.

With junta violence peaking as the sham election bears down, ASEAN has one final chance to act.

First, ASEAN should make it absolutely clear that it opposes the junta's sham election, that it will not have any involvement in it, and that it will reject the outcome. Genuine and credible nationwide elections can only take place in Myanmar once an authentic and inclusive peace agreement has been secured, all fighting has stopped, all political prisoners have been released, all legitimate political parties can participate, and independent international election monitors are granted access—the only conditions in which a free and fair election is possible.

Second, ASEAN must tighten the screws on the junta. It has undermined its own authority by allowing the junta's contempt for the 5PC and ASEAN itself to go unpunished. ASEAN should expand its ban on junta leaders from high-level meetings to include all junta representatives at every level of ASEAN engagement. This should be the first in a series of graduating punitive steps ASEAN must take in response to the junta's continued intransigence.

Third, ASEAN must use its 47th Summit this month to launch a new strategy on Myanmar with a clear endgame—a democratic, durable and inclusive approach, as envisioned by the people. Malaysia as current ASEAN Chair and Philippines as incoming Chair—supported by ASEAN Special Envoy Tan Sri Othman Hashim—should champion a policy that includes the following ASEAN actions:

Intensifying diplomatic efforts to secure an immediate end to all attacks, particularly airstrikes, the immediate release of all political prisoners, and a total countrywide ceasefire supported and enforced by ASEAN and the UN Security Council and monitored by international observers.

Expanding coordination with key stakeholders including the National Unity Government (NUG), the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC), the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), Ethnic Resistance Organisations (EROs), Consultative Councils, Federal Units, minority communities, including those who have been forced to leave Myanmar, and civil society, as well as with neighbouring countries and UN agencies, to support the urgent, impartial and unobstructed delivery of humanitarian and material assistance by all available means to all communities in need in Myanmar, to ensure aid is not weaponised, and to secure scaled-up financial support to bolster recovery and reconstruction efforts and to address the broader humanitarian crisis. Full and unimpeded access must be granted to humanitarian agencies and actors.

Augmenting recent Stakeholder Engagement Meetings on Myanmar by creating a formal ASEAN platform to support the key stakeholders listed above in their negotiation of a new federal democratic constitution for Myanmar in accordance with the will and interests of the people and inclusive of all communities including minorities and those among them forced to leave Myanmar. As a core condition, the Myanmar military, in whatever form it exists, must be made permanently subordinate to a democratically elected civilian government and parliament.

Delegitimise the junta and confirm a series of graduating punitive steps that ASEAN will take if the junta refuses to abide by ASEAN decisions, fails to end its attacks on civilians and to release political prisoners, or continues to withhold and manipulate access to humanitarian assistance.

Supporting accountability for international crimes committed in Myanmar and cooperating with international and national courts and tribunals and accountability mechanisms to secure justice, including courts exercising universal jurisdiction. There can be no amnesties for international crimes and grave violations and abuses. The cycle of impunity must end.

ASEAN should also extend the term of Tan Sri Othman Hashim as Special Envoy on Myanmar to ensure continuity in ASEAN's Myanmar engagement.

The people of Myanmar feel utterly abandoned. For ASEAN to have any hope of reversing the damage that its years of failure have inflicted on both Myanmar and itself, it must act now. Otherwise, how will ASEAN ever face the people of Myanmar?



Myanmar Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun.
Photo: AFP

MYANMAR'S UN AMBASSADOR CALLS FOR ICC REFERRAL AND GLOBAL REJECTION OF JUNTA'S ELECTION

On 15 October, Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun, Myanmar's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, delivered an intervention during the Interactive Discussion with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Third Committee of the 80th UN General Assembly, urging the international community to take strong, coordinated action against Myanmar's military junta.

The text of his statement is as follows.

I wish to thank the High Commissioner, Mr. Türk, for his comprehensive global update, which is a vital reminder of our shared responsibility to safeguard human rights in a world increasingly challenged by conflicts and eroding international law.

Myanmar deeply appreciates the High Commissioner's persistent focus on our country, especially for reflecting the devastating human rights situation of Myanmar in the 2024 annual report and subsequent statements.

Also, I cannot agree with you more on your statement identifying the crisis in Myanmar as a catastrophic human rights crisis fueled by relentless military violence and systemic impunity.

While your annual report has already documented a record high number of civilian casualties, the death toll has tragically continued to soar this year. It is the visible result of the junta's intensification of aerial attacks and artillery shelling on the civilian population.

Schools, hospitals, and displacement camps are no longer safe for the people, but rather regarded as venues for targeted attacks by the junta. Many other civilian properties and infrastructures have also been heavily destroyed.

As the heinous junta disregards human lives, they have been continuously committing crimes amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity, violating the international law and the international humanitarian law, let alone showing any adherence to or implementation of the ASEAN Five-Point Consensus and the UNSC Resolution 2669.

By now, the international community must come to a realization that cessation of hostilities was never and will never be on the junta's agenda.

They are flagrantly escalating vicious acts on the civilian population across the country ahead of its planned sham, scam elections only to instill fear on the

dissent.

We regret that they can do so with the support of some member states.

I hereby stress again that any elections organized by the inhumane junta will never be free, fair and inclusive. It will create more violence and instability. Setting aside their fabricated electoral process, we cannot observe any genuine motives.

Moreover, peace is not prospected, but further loss and casualties are.

I request the international community to join us in our effort and categorically reject their sham elections which lack credibility, legitimacy and fall short of democratic principle.

To this date, almost 22 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

Rohingya refugees cannot make safe, dignified and voluntary returns.

Transnational organized crimes have found a safe haven with Myanmar be the center.

Economy has collapsed and people are at high risk of poverty.

Education sector is heavily interrupted, social development has lost momentum and health emergencies are alarming, especially in the conflict-affected areas.

Women and children are still bearing the brunt of the junta's atrocities.

Youths are fleeing outside the country from fear, with their futures wasted and filled with uncertainties.

Meanwhile, people are struggling from mental health issues and traumas every single day.

Mr. Chair, Mr. High Commissioner,

I believe the world clearly sees the sufferings of our people under the cascading crises caused by the military junta since the unlawful coup.

This military dictatorship must end once and for all in Myanmar.

It is now high time for the international community to translate words and awareness into effective, coordinated and impactful actions.

Echoing the High Commissioner's recommendations, we urge all member states to stop providing political, military and financial support to the military junta. The UNSC, a mandated body to maintain international peace and security, must transform divisions into proactive actions. We urge members to overcome obstacles and step up to refer the issue of Myanmar as a whole to the ICC to bring perpetrators accountable and justice to the victims.

Here, I wish to raise a question to the High Commissioner. While we are witnessing stagnant at the UN Security Council for further effective action to save lives and to protect the helpless people of Myanmar, what are your recommendations to this esteemed Committee and the international community at large including all relevant mandate holders related to Myanmar to save the people of Myanmar and their future from the junta's continued heinous crimes?

The NUG alongside our EROs and CSOs are working together, upholding human rights and adhering to the international law. Our commitment to building a federal democratic union is unshakeable.

Our people may be exhausted, but we remain resilient.

We therefore seek stronger support from the international community to advance our efforts towards a better, prosperous and peaceful Myanmar.

တစ်နိုင်ငံလုံးပေါ်မတ်တိုက်နိုင်မှု
ရပ်စဲရေးသဘောတူစာချုပ် (NCA)
[၁၀]နှစ်ပြည့်နှစ်ပတ်လည်နေ့ အခမ်းအနား
LIVE

MRTV
HD



Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing.

MYANMAR JUNTA CHIEF SAYS SECOND PHASE OF ELECTIONS TO COVER 100 TOWNSHIPS

Myanmar's military ruler Senior General Min Aung Hlaing said the second phase of the junta-organized elections will be held in 100 townships, following an initial phase covering 102 townships.

He made the announcement during a ceremony marking the 10th anniversary of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in the capital Naypyidaw on Tuesday.

"We will hold elections in the remaining townships during a third phase. I admit in advance that we will not be able to complete them 100 percent," Min Aung Hlaing said in his speech.

He added that in areas where the junta is unable to organize voting, the next government and election commission would consider holding by-elections to fill the vacant constituencies.

Following the 2021 coup that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, the junta announced

it plans to stage nationwide polls in several phases, with the first round scheduled for 28 December in townships near regional and state capitals.

According to Min Aung Hlaing, 57 political parties have registered to contest the polls, including six national parties and 51 regional and state-based groups, collectively fielding more than 5,000 candidates.

However, reports of voter registration errors emerged during the first phase, and Min Aung Hlaing did not address those concerns in his remarks.

Opposition groups and observers have dismissed the planned elections as lacking credibility, warning they could deepen unrest in the country.

Fierce fighting has spread across Myanmar since the coup. The shadow National Unity Government (NUG) said in a 7 September report that, as of August 2025, the junta controlled only about 39 percent of the country's townships.



BURMA CAMPAIGN UK DEMANDS RESUMPTION OF UK SANCTIONS ON MYANMAR

On 15 October, the Burma Campaign UK urged the British government to resume its imposition of sanctions on Myanmar's military junta. Those sanctions should aim to cut revenue to the junta and access to arms and military equipment it uses to oppress its population.

The text of Burma Campaign UK's statement is as follows.

It is almost a year since the British government imposed any new sanctions on the Burmese military. The last sanctions targeting the Burmese military were on 29th October 2024.

Following the latest military coup in Burma in 2021, the British government and allies adopted a policy of systematically identifying and sanctioning sources of revenue, arms and equipment to the Burmese military.

Britain led the world in adopting coordinated targeted sanctions to help reduce the capacity of the Burmese military to carry out human rights violations and violations of international law. However, the pace of sanctions from the British government has slowed to a standstill.

The British government has not even kept up with all the sanctions imposed by the USA, EU, Canada and

Australia. The British government frequently imposes more sanctions on Russia in a single day than it has on the Burmese military in almost five years.

"After the coup in 2021, the British government led the world in targeted sanctions against the Burmese military, now it doesn't even follow," said Mark Farmaner, Director at Burma Campaign UK. "With the people of Burma doing everything they can to resist military rule, the least we can do is try to reduce the money and arms going to the Burmese military."

The failure of the British government to continue imposing sanctions will have been noticed and have provided encouragement for the Burmese military at a time when they are escalating attacks ahead of sham elections planned in December. The 'elections' are designed to secure military control over Burma indefinitely.

For sanctions to be effective they need to be imposed on a wide range of targets, to have a cumulative impact, and to be imposed on an ongoing basis.

Burma Campaign UK is asking supporters to write to Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper calling on her to resume sanctioning the Burmese military. The online action is available [here](#).



MYANMAR RIGHTS ACTIVIST CRITICIZES ASEAN'S INACTION ON WOMEN'S PLIGHT

Daw Khin Ohnmar, chairwoman of the rights-based advocacy group Progressive Voice, has voiced strong disappointment over ASEAN's handling of Myanmar's political crisis, accusing the bloc of ignoring the suffering of women amid ongoing violence.

Speaking at the "Joint Forum on Strengthening Regional Accountability: ASEAN's Failure on Women, Youth, Peace and Security in Myanmar," held in Kuala Lumpur on Wednesday, Khin Ohnmar said ASEAN's decisions on regional stability had failed to consider the voices of Myanmar's women.

"We are deeply disappointed with ASEAN. While decisions have been made in the name of ensuring long-term regional security, in reality, Myanmar's women have been ignored," she said.

She added that it was "unthinkable" that ASEAN had not consulted relevant stakeholders while women in Myanmar continued to face rape, abduction, and village burnings.

Khin Ohnmar also alleged that individuals linked to Myanmar's military were participating in ASEAN-related bodies despite not representing the country's people who are actually suffering. She urged the bloc to engage legitimate representatives in discussions on peace, security, and political representation.

The forum, held from 7:30 am to 11 am, opened with remarks by the chairperson of Malaysia's Human Rights Commission (SUHAKAM) and the ASEAN Chair's Special Envoy to Myanmar.

Panellists included Khin Ohnmar, Karenni women's rights defender Zu Padonmar, Zu Zu May Yoon of the Women's Organization of Political Prisoners, Cecilia from the Chin Women's Organization, Anna of the Burma Women's Union, and ALTSEAN-Burma coordinator Debbie Stothard, who discussed sexual violence against women.

A second session focused on youth and featured speakers from several Myanmar civil society groups, along with Malaysian MP and former Foreign Minister Dato' Sri Saifuddin Abdullah, who joined a Q&A session.

The event, jointly organized by SUHAKAM, Progressive Voice, and ALTSEAN-Burma, aimed to highlight the resilience and challenges of women and youth in Myanmar and to urge stronger ASEAN and international support for a democratic federal future.

The forum took place shortly after Malaysian Foreign Minister and ASEAN Chair's Special Representative for Myanmar met junta leader Senior General Min Aung Hlaing in Naypyidaw on 10 October.



ASEAN MUST 'PUSH FOR CHANGE' IN MYANMAR: TOP EU RIGHTS OFFICIAL

The European Union will not send observers to Myanmar's upcoming election, its top human rights official said Friday, dismissing the vote as neither free nor fair and urging Southeast Asian nations to "push for change".

"We're calling upon all neighbouring countries, including the ASEAN countries, to really firmly push for a change of course," EU commissioner Kaja Ollongren told AFP in an interview in the Malaysian capital.

Myanmar junta chief Min Aung Hlaing has touted the December 28 elections as a path to reconciliation in the civil war he sparked by snatching power in a 2021 coup.

But international monitors, including a UN expert and Amnesty International, have dismissed the vote as a ploy to legitimise continuing military rule.

"As long as Myanmar is unstable, as long as it's sort of a source of instability for the whole region, it should be the number one concern... for the ASEAN countries," she said.

Ollongren's call comes ahead of a major ASEAN summit in Kuala Lumpur next week, where the issue of sending election observers to represent the 10-nation bloc is expected to be discussed.

ASEAN has been battling to implement a five-point plan, which calls, among other issues, for an immediate ceasefire in Myanmar.

Malaysia is this year's rotating chair of ASEAN -- long derided by critics as a toothless talking shop -- and calls at previous summits and meetings for an end to fighting have yielded little effect.

Myanmar's vote will be blocked in huge enclaves of the country captured by an array of pro-democracy guerillas and long-active ethnic minority armies which have found common cause fighting the junta.

Naypyidaw has already conceded elections will not take place in one in seven national parliament constituencies, many of them active war zones, while martial law remains in place in one in five townships.

Ollongren called on all parties in Myanmar to stop the violence, "that they change course, that they enter into a true dialogue with all parties concerned."

"And from there on, transition to peace and start building a country where you will have free and fair elections in the future," she said.

The planned vote was "not free and fair by the way it is being organised," Ollongren said.

"That means that we cannot recognise these as real elections, as fair."

"Therefore, based on these criteria, we will not send observers to something that we don't recognise as an election," she said.

AFP



Border Guard Forces fighters.
Photo: AFP

WHAT'S NEXT FOR MYANMAR'S MILITIAS AND BORDER GUARD FORCES?

SAI TUN AUNG LWIN

Militias - armed groups tied to ethnic, religious, or political interests - have long shaped Myanmar's wars from behind the scenes. More than just foot soldiers, they link local power, business, and conflict.

Some were created or coerced by past military regimes, while others emerged from community defense or economic opportunity.

Militias after the 2021 coup

Since the 2021 coup, their roles have grown more volatile. As the military struggles to hold territory, loyalties among pro-junta militias and Border Guard Forces (BGFs) have fractured. Many now fight, defect, or simply survive between warring sides. In Sagaing Region, the Pyusawhtee militias - armed and financed by the junta - became a key, if unstable, pillar of local control. The regime has since sought to reintegrate them through its new conscription law.

Meanwhile, in Karen State, Saw Chit Thu's BGFs (Border Guard Forces) illustrate how militia structures intertwine with illicit business, ranging from border trade to online scam hubs. Once instruments of state control, militias now expose the junta's growing weakness. Their shifting allegiances show how Myanmar's wars are no longer fought only by armies - but by networks of local power, profit, and survival.

Categories of militias

Myanmar's militia landscape is messy, but four broad categories can be drawn:

A. Myanmar Army-integrated militias - units

transformed into BGFs, under nominal army control.

B. Non-integrated militias - groups tolerated by the military but outside the chain of command.

C. Pro-junta militias - village and town-based militias raised during emergency periods.

D. Ethnic armed organizations' militias

The 2021 coup accelerated a wave of realignments across northern Shan State. During Operation 1027 in late 2023, several militias once loyal to the junta switched sides, joining forces with the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Shan State Progressive Party/Army (SSPP/SSA). Many of these groups had long histories as ethnic armed organizations before being coerced into the junta's orbit.

One telling case is the Sein Gywat militia, formerly Brigade 3 of the SSPP/SSA, which rejoined its parent organization on September 6, 2024. Under heavy military pressure around 2010, then-SSA chairperson Sao Loi Mao transformed two SSA brigades into local militias - later known as Sein Gywat. The arrangement allowed them to remain neutral, avoid clashes, and operate within their territory under a quiet pact with the Tatmadaw. In 2023, Min Aung Hlaing attempted to break that long-standing agreement by offering Sao Loi Mao (Sein Gywat militia's leader) a senior command position to draw his forces into renewed conflict. The veteran commander refused, citing poor health and his commitment to the peace that had kept his men out of the fighting for more than a decade.

A similar trajectory was seen in the Kachin

Defense Army (KDA), once the Kachin Independence Army's 4th Brigade based in Kutkai. As the junta's control weakened in 2023, the KDA rejoined its original organization, reaffirming its historical allegiance. In the Palaung areas, the Man Ton militia - descended from the former Palaung State Liberation Army (PSLA) - had been forcibly transformed into a Sit-Tat-controlled militia two decades ago. After twenty years, it too was absorbed back into its kin organization, the TNLA.

Even staunchly pro-military groups such as the Pan Say militia, backed by the Kholon Lishaw community in Namkham Township, eventually folded under TNLA pressure. Their defections reflected not ideological conversion or ethnic solidarity, but sheer survival in a shifting balance of power. Taken together, these cases reveal that the recent wave of defections was driven less by newfound sympathy for the resistance than by a return to old loyalties and pragmatic recalculations amid Myanmar's fracturing military landscape.

Upon examining this incident, two key factors emerge in explaining why these groups chose to join the Ethnic Revolutionary forces.

The first concerns ideology and worldview.

For example, the Karenni Nationalities People's Liberation Force (KNPLF), originally a Border Guard Force operating in Hpruso and Mese townships of Karenni State, has now revolted against the junta. It has switched back to its original identity as an ethnic armed organization.

Similarly, the Sein Gyawt militia traces its roots to two SSPP/SSA brigades that were forced to transform into militias around 2010 under the leadership of Sao Loi Mao, who had come under heavy pressure from a previous junta.

The second factor is more pragmatic: some groups were formed primarily around business interests, and when conditions became uncertain, they switched allegiance to whichever side seemed most advantageous.

Business first, politics later

Many militias were never purely military actors. Their survival has always depended on access to border trade, logging, mining, narcotics, or taxation of local populations.

When those business models are threatened, loyalties shift quickly. Khun Sa and Lo Hsing Han, infamous militia leaders of the 1970s and 1980s, built empires by striking deals with both rebels and military generals as circumstances required.

This pattern repeats today. Some militias cut ties with the junta in 2023–24, not out of political conviction but because the junta could no longer guarantee their security or business interests. Like the Man Pan militia in Northern Shan and the Pan Say militia of Nam Kham township.

In fact, Pan Say is a community militia backed by ethnic Chinese in the Nam Kham area and notorious in growing poppies. A split of Khun Sa, Man Pan militia base in Tang Yang township, and their leader, ethnic Wa Bo Mong, have a good relationship between Myanmar Sit Tat and UWSA Wa.

In Kachin State, the New Democratic Army-Kachin (NDA-K), which had originally split from the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) under Zahkung Ting Ying, saw its Pan Wa headquarters overrun by the KIA.

In Shan State, Pa-O militias have found themselves caught between rival Pa-O ethnic armed organization factions and the growing pressure of advancing Karenni rebels.

When the junta is weak, some militias choose to hedge their bets. The Kayan New Land Party, once a leftist Kayan nationalist movement, has shifted its position in southern Shan as the balance of power changes.

The BGF legacy

The origins of BGFs lie in the ceasefire politics of 1989–2009. When the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) collapsed in 1989, its ethnic wings — the Wa, Kokang, and others — struck deals with the junta, keeping their weapons and territory in exchange for peace.

By the late 2000s, the junta pushed for deeper integration through the BGF scheme: ethnic forces could retain some autonomy but had to wear army uniforms, accept salaries, and operate under military command.

Some were accepted, like parts of the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) and ethnic Chinese Kokang militias. Others — notably the United Wa State Army (UWSA), some parts of SSA/SSPP, and the KIA—refused, seeing it as surrender.

Their defiance set the stage for renewed fighting in 2011 and beyond. The BGFs' experiment secured temporary control for the junta but planted seeds of future instability.

Once folded into state structures, militias were neither fully controlled nor fully autonomous. Their hybrid nature ensured they would become wild cards in future conflicts.

Shan and Pa-O militias

Nowhere is the militia puzzle more complex than in Shan State. Many current groups trace their lineage to Khun Sa's Mong Tai Army, which splintered in the 1990s. Others, like the Sein Gyawt militia, were once part of the SSPP/SSA before being pressed into junta service.

The Pa-O National Organisation (PNO) and its armed wing, the Pa-O National Army (PNA), stand out as one of the strongest pro-junta militias, and their influence has grown significantly in the years following the 2021 coup.

In Shan today, many existing militias trace their origins to Khun Sa's Mong Tai Army. Others, such as Sao Loi Mao's Sein Gyawt militia, or the KDA Kaung Kha militia, have different historical roots.

Some reasons to be absorbed into ethnic armed organizations are business ties.

Bo Mong, a former Member of Parliament from the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), led the Man Pan militia. This was a splinter group of the Khun Sa-led Mong Tai Army.

It maintained close ties with the UWSA 171st regiment. In times of uncertainty within their region, the Man Pan militia also cooperated with the TNLA. TNLA had deep ties with UWSA.

Their limited engagement in the peace process underscores Myanmar's failed attempts at forced national integration. Militias and BGFs have historically shifted loyalties in times of crisis.

Similarly, the Shanni Nationalities Army (SNA), founded in 2016 and backed by the Red Shan (Tai Lyan) community, has expanded its presence in Sagaing and Kachin regions with military support.

It positions itself as a buffer against the KIA and the PDF. Although relatively small, the SNA's nationalist appeal complicates any future peace process, as it demands recognition of Shanni identity and autonomy.

Since the 2021 coup, the group has also become an important ally of the junta.

Some of the Shanni militias in Kachin state are keeping the growth of their strengths, notably Min Zay Thant-led militia group in western Kachin. Having most militia groups in Kachin brought in Naypyidaw's drone training recently, their capability are bouncing back.

The coming DDR dilemma

Any post-coup political settlement will face the thorny question of DDR — disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration.

If elections are held under the junta's roadmap in December, militias formally responsible for town security would need to stand down.

But history suggests few will disarm voluntarily. Militias like the PNO/PNA or the SNA, strengthened by recruits and battlefield experience, will resist giving up their weapons without guarantees of political autonomy.

This is not just a technical challenge. Forced disarmament or complete surrender risks sparking fresh conflicts, as seen when remnants of the Mon Tai Army re-emerged as new armed groups in 1996.

The junta's own divide-and-rule tactics — favoring certain militias while suppressing others — ensure that any disarmament effort will be riddled with mistrust.

What does the future hold?

Myanmar's militias and BGFs are not relics of the past. They remain embedded in the country's political economy and security fabric.

For the junta, they are both a crutch and a liability: useful in plugging manpower gaps but prone to defection when the winds shift.

For ethnic armed organizations, militias are both rivals and potential allies, depending on the moment.

The real danger is that militias, far from fading, may entrench Myanmar's fragmentation. Groups like the PNO/PNA or the SNA are carving out semi-autonomous zones, raising new generations of fighters, and normalising militarised governance at the local level.

From the historical evidence, there is no means to make the DDR issue upon an ethnic armed organization an easy one. Even though Khun Sa led the Mong Tai Army, which had surrendered, Yawd Serk led some remnants to emerge as the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS).

After the coup, the army strengthened BGFs and militias, but this has complicated future disarmament and public security. In truth, the Tatmadaw has planted the seeds of its own troubles - short-sighted and reckless.

One question remains: what will happen to junta-allied militias in the post-junta era?



Arakan Army. Photo: AFP

ARAKAN ARMY SAYS FIGHTING ONGOING TO CAPTURE JUNTA OUTPOST ON RAKHINE-MAGWAY BORDER

The Arakan Army (AA) said on Tuesday that its forces are still battling to seize full control of the junta's Nat Ye Kan air defence outpost, located on the Ann-Padan road, a key route linking Rakhine State and Magway Region.

In a statement, the ethnic armed group said several camps remain under junta control but that its troops are conducting assaults to capture the remaining positions.

"In order to fully capture the strategic Nat Ye Kan hill, we are carrying out assaults on a few remaining positions. Fighting continues in some areas as scattered junta troops flee. Those who have surrendered are being treated humanely in accordance with the laws of war," the AA said.

The Nat Ye Kan outpost is among the largest military bases guarding the western approach to Magway Region.

The AA said the military is attempting to retake outposts, battalion headquarters, and towns it has lost, while also mounting both offensive and defensive operations nationwide to prevent further losses.

It said clashes are occurring almost daily along the Rakhine State border with Bago, Magway, and Ayeyarwady Regions. The group added that its forces are both defending against junta offensives and carrying out counterattacks.

As part of those counter-offensives, the AA said it launched an assault on a junta position known as Point 666 Hill, about nine kilometres south of Bagan Gway village in Bago Region's Padaung Township, on 14 October.

According to the AA, its fighters captured the outpost after a three-hour battle from three directions, recovering bodies, weapons, and military equipment from junta troops. The group also paid tribute to its fighters killed in the operation.

The AA further reported an escalation in artillery and drone attacks near Sittwe in recent days, as well as a brief clash near Set Set Yo village in Yekyi Township, Ayeyarwady Region, on 15 October.



AA SURROUNDS NAT YE KAN BASE IN MAGWAY REGION, CUTTING OFF ALL SUPPLY ROUTES TO JUNTA TROOPS

The Arakan Army (AA) and its allied forces have nearly encircled the junta's strategic Nat Ye Kan mountain base along the Ann-Padan road in Ngape Township, Magway Region, effectively cutting off all communication and supply routes, according to military sources.

Following the seizure of Fighter Hill and the Goke Gyi outpost in early October, the AA has now blocked the line of communication (LOC) for Nat Ye Kan, a critical stronghold used by the junta to launch offensives toward the Padan front from the Rakhine Mountain Range, said Captain Zin Yaw, a member of the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM).

"The junta troops remain stationed at Nat Ye Kan, but most of the surrounding area is under the AA's control. The main supply and administrative routes from Goke Gyi and Fighter Hill near Pazi have been sealed off. Since those positions were captured, the junta's communication lines have been almost entirely severed," Captain Zin Yaw told Mizzima.

Although some reports have claimed that the entire base has fallen, local sources said fighting was still ongoing as of this morning, with the junta resorting to airstrikes to defend the camp and attempt to recapture lost positions.

"The AA is extremely close to taking full control of Nat Ye Kan hill, but it hasn't been confirmed yet. With supply routes blocked, the junta can only send rations and ammunition by air, and troops inside are reportedly running short on food," a local military source said.

Nat Ye Kan, the largest defence outpost in the Rakhine Mountain Range, serves as a key strategic base for protecting Ka Pa Sa 14 factory, an important military production and munitions plant. The base is expected to fall soon, as junta forces from the crucial Fighter Hill outpost have reportedly fled in recent days, the source added.

Captain Zin Yaw said the junta is still attempting to reinforce its troops along the Ann-Padan road, noting that a convoy of 11 military vehicles arrived at Pyinwa junction in Ngape Township on the morning of 12 October.

"We saw 11 vehicles arrive this morning. It's certain they can't reach Nat Ye Kan by road anymore. Whether they'll try to proceed on foot or attempt to block the route from Pyinwa is unclear," he said.

Military observers noted that with all access routes now cut off, reaching Nat Ye Kan by land is impossible, leaving the junta reliant solely on airdrops to sustain its remaining troops.

Captain Zin Yaw added that if the AA captures the entire Nat Ye Kan base, it will cripple the junta's military operations between Padan and Ann, potentially halt production at Ka Pa Sa 14, and weaken Artillery Operations Command Headquarters 905 and its subordinate units.

Mizzima attempted to contact AA spokesperson Khaing Thukha for comment on the situation but has not yet received a response.

The AA and its allied forces have been advancing in the area for nearly ten months, already capturing the MPT tower hill near Nat Ye Kan and several smaller outposts near Goke Gyi and Pazi villages.

The AA currently controls 15 towns across Rakhine State, as well as the Western Regional Military Command headquarters, and continues its advance toward the remaining coastal towns of Sittwe, Kyaukphyu, and Manaung.



Border crossing at Myawaddy.
Photo: AFP

JUNTA-LINKED FORCES INSPECT THAI-MYANMAR BORDER CROSSING IN MYAWADDY

Groups under the Myanmar junta inspected the Zero Gate border crossing operated by the Karen People's Militia on the bank of the Thaungyin River in Myawaddy Township, Karen State, on Sunday, according to sources close to Karen armed groups.

The inspection reportedly focused on individuals crossing the river and goods being transported across the Thai-Myanmar border.

"The inspection was due to a change in leadership. They were checking what was being ferried across the river. They said that if they found anything incompatible with the military commission, they would seize it and arrest any PDF [People's Defence Force] members crossing the river," said a source close to the Border Guard Force/Karen National Army (BGF/KNA).

The Zero Gate serves as a transport point for auctioned vehicles, construction materials, and second-hand goods imported from Thailand.

Buildings housing casinos and online scam

operations including Jack Dragon Knight, Suncity, and Royal One are located near the gate and are reportedly owned by Brigadier General Saw Moe Tho, commander of BGF/KNA Battalion 4.

"They came to inspect the river crossings. They didn't even go into the casinos. The gambling and online scam operations continued as usual, and people kept working inside. When the inspection took place, fewer people crossed the river, but things returned to normal once they left," a local resident told Mizzima.

Residents said social media reports claiming that junta forces had inspected casinos and scam centres were inaccurate.

The Karen People's Militia, which manages the Zero Gate, was originally formed under General Ne Win's government before 1988. There are more than 20 border crossings along the Thaungyin River in Myawaddy Township, operated by the BGF/KNA, the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), the KNU/KNLA-Peace Council, and other militia groups.



Photo: Supplied

KNU SAYS EX-LEADERS ATTENDED MYANMAR JUNTA'S NCA EVENT IN PERSONAL CAPACITY

The Karen National Union (KNU) said its former chairman and several ex-leaders attended the 10th anniversary ceremony of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in Naypyidaw in their personal capacity, stressing that their participation did not represent the organisation.

KNU spokesperson Padoh Saw Taw Nee told Mizzima that the former officials joined the junta-organised event on their own initiative, without the KNU's approval.

"They went there of their own accord. They no longer hold any official positions within the organisation. However, even as ordinary members, their actions contradict the KNU's policies," he said, adding that their attendance runs counter to the group's principles and policy stance.

When asked how the KNU leadership would respond to the breach, the spokesperson declined to comment.

Among those attending the ceremony were former KNU chairman Saw Mutu Say Poe and former Dooplaya District chairman Padoh Saw Shwe Maung.

The event, which runs through 17 October, also drew other groups and individuals, including Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) Deputy Commander-in-Chief Lt. Gen. Saw Shwe Wa, Peace Council (PC) Vice Chair Naw Kapaw Htoo, Saw Mya Yazar Lin of the Arakan Liberation Party (ALP), Nai Aung Min from the New Mon State Party (NMSP), and Col. Khun Okkar, a former representative of the Pa-O National Liberation Organization (PNLO).



Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKES TARGET VILLAGES SHELTERING IDPS, EIGHT CIVILIANS SHOT DEAD IN NATOGYI

The military junta carried out aerial bombardments of villages sheltering internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Natogyi Township, Mandalay Region. Soldiers also shot to kill eight civilians in the area, according to aid workers assisting the IDPs and local residents.

After clashes broke out with revolutionary forces around 12 pm on 15 October, the junta targeted and attacked IDPs in Kan Hnaung, Thayarkone, Thamantaw, and Lone Taw villages, a local resident assisting IDPs told Mizzima.

"Even though they knew there were IDPs at public rest houses in those villages, they directly bombed them. The bombing attacks took place at more than two villages far from the clash site. They came with two fighter jets and dropped [bombs] from a Y-12. And five drones dropped spherical objects that release a lot of bombs like clusters," local source said.

Currently, casualties are increasing due to the ongoing airstrikes, and exact numbers are still being compiled, according to one IDP aid worker.

The source further related that the military junta launched a ground assault on 14 October into Kan Hnaung village where intense fighting is currently ongoing and they shot to death two middle-aged men who had not fled and stayed in the village.

In addition to that village, they killed four civilians

on 14 October in Ywar Kyi Ywar Thit where clashes also occurred, one local resident told Mizzima.

"Two men in Kan Hnaung and six in Ywar Kyi who stayed in the villages were executed, and there could be more executions in other unconfirmed areas," a local source said.

In addition, the military junta is burning and destroying entire villages where fighting is occurring. The Myingyan People's Movement Committee released a statement that junta forces set fire to about five houses, a tea shop and a car workshop in Kan Hnaung village on the evening of 14 October.

According to revolutionary force members, both sides have suffered casualties in the recent clashes in Nyaung Pin, Ywar Thit, and Kan Hnaung villages, and the junta is intensifying attacks with airstrikes now.

According to locals, thousands of IDPs are fleeing to safe areas, but the military junta is launching airstrikes even against the supposed places where IDPs are sheltering.

Because of ongoing airstrikes in Natogyi Township, Mandalay Region, military analysts have warned and advised revolutionary forces that the junta may launch an offensive along the Myinchin-Nyaung-U-Kyaukpadaung road, and they should not take these attacks lightly.



Damaged village in Ywangan Township.
Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA TROOPS TORCH VILLAGES, ARREST CIVILIANS IN SOUTHERN SHAN STATE OFFENSIVE

Myanmar junta troops have carried out a wave of arson attacks and arbitrary arrests in Ywangan township, southern Shan State, destroying homes, food stores, and an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp while displacing hundreds of civilians, the Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) reported on 16 October.

According to SHRF, operations began in the last week of July 2025 when about 500 troops from Kalaw-based Light Infantry Division (LID) 55 and Meiktila-based LID 99 launched “area clearance” sweeps against local People’s Defence Forces (PDF) along the Ywangan–Meiktila border, sparking clashes that lasted into mid-August.

On August 18, a junta helicopter dropped bombs on Kyauktaw and Nyaung Pin Thar villages, damaging civilian homes. Between August 19 and 21, troops fired 155 mm artillery into nearby forests where villagers were sheltering, followed by further airstrikes on August 21. A column of 80 soldiers then occupied Kyauktaw on August 23, looting homes and slaughtering livestock before torching 37 houses two days later.

The attacks escalated in September. Around 100 junta troops and militia burned down temporary shelters used by displaced residents of Min Palaung village. They had been living in the forest since their homes were destroyed in December 2024.

On September 13, about 120 troops returned to Kyauktaw, burning farm huts and later destroying 23 more homes and 90 rice granaries worth an estimated 150 million kyat.

Soldiers also arrested five civilians, including an eight-year-old girl, after discovering a hiding place in nearby forests on September 15. Later that month, a landslide struck an IDP camp, killing ten people, including three children. Junta forces subsequently destroyed additional shelters used by displaced villagers.

Nearly 500 civilians remain displaced in forests around Kyauktaw and Nyaung Pin Thar, too afraid to return home and in urgent need of food and shelter, SHRF said. The rights group condemned the military’s actions as part of a pattern of collective punishment against civilians in areas supporting the resistance.



MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKE KILLS 4TH-GRADE STUDENT IN NAMHSAN TOWNSHIP

A 4th-grade girl was killed and another student seriously injured when the Myanmar military junta carried out an airstrike on Um Swam village in Namhsan Township, northern Shan State, according to local residents.

The attack occurred around 6:45 am on 14 October, when a Y-12 aircraft dropped four bombs on the village, which lies in an area controlled by the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA).

"The Y-12 aircraft dropped four bombs. One 4th-grade student died and another was severely injured," a

local woman from Um Swam village told Mizzima.

The victim, identified as 4th-grade student Mi Thin Nwe, died after being struck by shrapnel in the abdomen. A 7th-grade girl was critically injured, and five houses were destroyed in the attack.

Junta forces have continued launching airstrikes on towns and villages under TNLA control in northern Shan State in recent weeks.



Schoolchildren leaving school.
Photo: Supplied

FUNDING SHORTAGES THREATEN FREE SCHOOLS FOR WAR-DISPLACED CHILDREN IN RAKHINE STATE

Free schools in Rakhine State that serve war-displaced children are facing severe funding shortages, forcing some to consider closure, according to the Tan Khoe Saya Htun Free Education Centre.

The centre announced on 8 September that it may have to shut down three schools in Ann Township and two in Kyauktaw Township within a month if donations do not increase, citing rising costs and limited financial support.

"Other schools are also experiencing considerable difficulties. We're all in the same situation. With low support for education, it's challenging to determine the next steps. As an education organization, we are forced to carefully consider how to continue operating," a public relations officer from the centre told Mizzima.

The Tan Khoe Saya Htun Free Education Centre provides free education to war-displaced and vulnerable children, operating 13 schools across five townships

under the control of the Arakan Army (AA) in Rakhine State. Around 2,900 students, from kindergarten to Grade 8, currently attend these schools.

Monthly operating costs exceed 200 million kyats (US\$95,200). Due to limited donations, the centre is currently sustaining operations by borrowing money. The five schools at risk of closure currently serve 1,067 students.

"Closing these schools would significantly disrupt the education of the children attending them. However, we have not yet confirmed how we will handle this, and we are still evaluating possible solutions," the official said.

The centre emphasized that even if the schools do close, it is exploring alternative arrangements to continue supporting affected students. In the meantime, it is appealing to donors to contribute and help maintain operations.



Two of the children killed in the attack.
Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKES KILL SIX STUDENTS, WOUND DOZENS IN CHIN STATE

Myanmar's junta carried out two airstrikes on schools in Chin State within five days, killing six students and injuring more than 40 others, local administrative bodies and resistance forces said.

The first air raid took place around 7 pm on 8 October, targeting schools in Wamathoo and Htin Chaung villages, Mindat township. The second strike hit a school in Van Har village, Hakha township, at 10:25 am on 13 October.

Zar Kyone Lian, Secretary General of the Chin Defence Force (CDF) – Hakha, condemned the attacks, describing them as part of a growing pattern of strikes against civilian targets.

"We strongly denounce the Military Commission's deliberate bombing of schools, which has killed children and sown fear among our new generation – the future of our nation," he said.

During the 13 October strike, three bombs were dropped. One detonated near a pond to the west of the school, killing two children and injuring more than 20 others, several critically. Two school buildings were destroyed in the blast, Zar Kyone Lian said.

He noted that the airstrike occurred despite the absence of any clashes near Van Har, a village situated

roughly 25 miles from Hakha, the state capital.

"The CDF-Hakha will continue to resist until the military dictatorship is completely removed," he added.

In the earlier attack on 8 October, a boarding school in Htin Chaung village was struck, killing a disabled woman and three students, while 22 others sustained injuries, according to Salai Yawman of the Mindat township People's Administration.

A separate bombing in Wamathoo village that day damaged several school buildings but caused no casualties. Local officials said the strike happened during a recess, when most students were outside the classrooms.

The junta has increased aerial bombardments nationwide in recent weeks. On 10 October, at about 8:30 pm, junta forces also bombed Matupi town in Chin State, damaging one building but causing no injuries, according to sources within CDF-Matupi.

The junta has announced that the first phase of voting in the upcoming elections will take place in Hakha and Tedim on 28 December. Among the nine townships in Chin State, elections are not scheduled in Mindat, Kanpetlet, Matupi, and Paletwa.



Photo: AFP

RCSS URGES RENEWED DIALOGUE TO BUILD FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC UNION UNDER NCA FRAMEWORK

The Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) has urged all sides to resume negotiations toward establishing a Federal Democratic Union, saying it remains the central goal of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).

In a statement released on 16 October, the RCSS said Myanmar's peace process has stalled since the 2021 military coup, which derailed political dialogue and undermined commitments made under the NCA.

The RCSS cited a lack of mutual trust, unfulfilled promises, and the military's insistence on upholding the 2008 Constitution as major obstacles to implementing the peace accord. It said genuine political will and reform are essential to achieving lasting peace.

The group called on the Military Commission and ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) to rebuild trust and resume talks focused on federal principles, stressing that dialogue is the only viable path toward national reconciliation and stability.

RCSS leader General Yawd Serk did not attend the 10th-anniversary ceremony of the NCA signing currently taking place in Naypyidaw, sending a delegation to represent the organization instead.

On 13 October, six NCA signatories — the All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF), Chin National Front (CNF), Karen National Union (KNU), New Mon State Party (NMSP-AD), Pa-O National Liberation Organization (PNLO), and Lahu Democratic Union (LDU) — issued a joint statement declaring the agreement "suspended" and effectively a "scrap of paper," citing the coup and ongoing violence by the junta.

The RCSS, one of the most influential ethnic armed groups in Shan State, has continued to express support for the NCA framework but maintains that peace cannot be achieved without addressing core political grievances and ensuring genuine federalism.



MYANMAR JUNTA RECAPTURES HSIPAW TOWN ON CHINA TRADE ROUTE

Myanmar's ruling junta said Saturday that it had recaptured a town on a trade highway to China from THE Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) in the country's war-wracked north.

Following a 16-day operation, "on 16 October, Tatmadaw reoccupied Hsipaw completely," the state-run Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper said, referring to the military by its Burmese name.

Northern Shan state has been rocked by fighting since June 2024 when an alliance of ethnic armed groups renewed an offensive against the military along the highway to China's Yunnan province.

The TNLA captured the last remaining military base in the town of Hsipaw in October that year after weeks of fighting.

Hsipaw is normally home to around 20,000 people and sits on a highway from Myanmar's second city Mandalay to the China border, along which hundreds of millions of dollars of trade travels annually.

There were 28 clashes and "engagements" in the two weeks leading up to Hsipaw's recapture, the GNLM said, with the military "seizing 13 dead bodies of terrorists", referring to members of the anti-junta TNLA.

"The military council is committing war crimes against innocent civilians ... whether by manpower, heavy weapons, drones or airstrikes," read a statement Friday by the TNLA's Department of News and Information channel on Telegram, adding that 29 people had been killed since the junta began its latest offensive.

Myanmar's ruling junta has been fighting a myriad of ethnic armed groups and People's Defense Forces opposed to its rule since it seized power in a February 2021 coup, ending a brief experiment with democracy.

Since the coup, the TNLA -- one of Myanmar's most powerful ethnic armed groups -- has strengthened its control of a swathe of Shan territory, seizing around a dozen key towns and the country's main ruby-mining hub.

Fighting between the TNLA and the military caused widespread destruction in Shan state's Kyaukme township -- another key town on the trade route from Mandalay to the Chinese border -- as the junta retook control of it in early October.

AFP

Photo: AFP

ASEAN AWARD RECOGNISES HPA-AN CITY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Hpa-an, the capital of Kayin State, has been honoured with the 6th ASEAN Environmentally Sustainable Cities Award for 2025, highlighting its efforts to balance urban development with environmental protection.

The award, presented every three years since 2008, was announced by the ASEAN Working Group on Environmentally Sustainable Cities (AWGES) at a ceremony held on 3 October in Langkawi, Malaysia.

The Kayin State government said it will work closely with local communities, government departments, and organizations to ensure sustainable development in Hpa-an. Planned initiatives include safeguarding clean water and air, preserving green spaces, protecting biodiversity, and maintaining natural ecosystems, particularly in areas popular with tourists.

Hpa-an, known for its scenic limestone mountains, caves, and riverfront landscapes, is also the focus of new ecotourism initiatives promoted by the Myanmar Tourism Federation.

The Myanmar Tourism Federation hopes these efforts will attract visitors while encouraging environmentally conscious practices among locals and tourists alike.

"With this award, Hpa-an is not only recognized for its environmental achievements but also for its commitment to creating a greener, sustainable future for our communities," a local said.



Photo: AFP

HTAMANTHI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY IN NORTHWEST MYANMAR TO INSTALL 72 MORE CAMERA TRAPS FOR TIGER RESEARCH

The Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary in Khamti District, Sagaing Region, will install 72 additional camera traps this November to expand its monitoring of Bengal tigers and other endangered species, according to the sanctuary's warden office.

The new equipment, part of the 2025–2026 fiscal year plan, follows last year's deployment of 24 cameras that recorded images of Bengal tigers, Sun bears, and several rare wildlife species. The additional cameras are intended to enhance the accuracy of the ongoing tiger census and assess the survival conditions of wildlife within the protected area.

According to the record, 24 camera traps captured footage of nearly 22 tigers in 2024.

Camera traps will be installed at four main streams – Nanpilin, Naneisu, Nanbugun, and Nanyanyin – with particular focus on the Nanbugun area, where tiger activity has been most frequent, according to the sanctuary's warden office.

The presence of Bengal tigers in Htamanthi in northern Myanmar and Indochinese tigers in the Tanintharyi Forest Reserve in the south represents an important aspect of national biodiversity, necessitating calls for cooperation to ensure their long-term protection.

The 531,456-acre Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary was established in 1974 and designated as an ASEAN Heritage Park on 8 October 2019. The sanctuary's tiger monitoring project is part of Myanmar's broader biodiversity conservation program under Section 19(a) of the Conservation of Biodiversity and Protected Areas Law.

Tigers are now found in only 13 countries – Myanmar, India, Thailand, Russia, China, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, and Vietnam and continue to face threats from habitat loss and poaching.

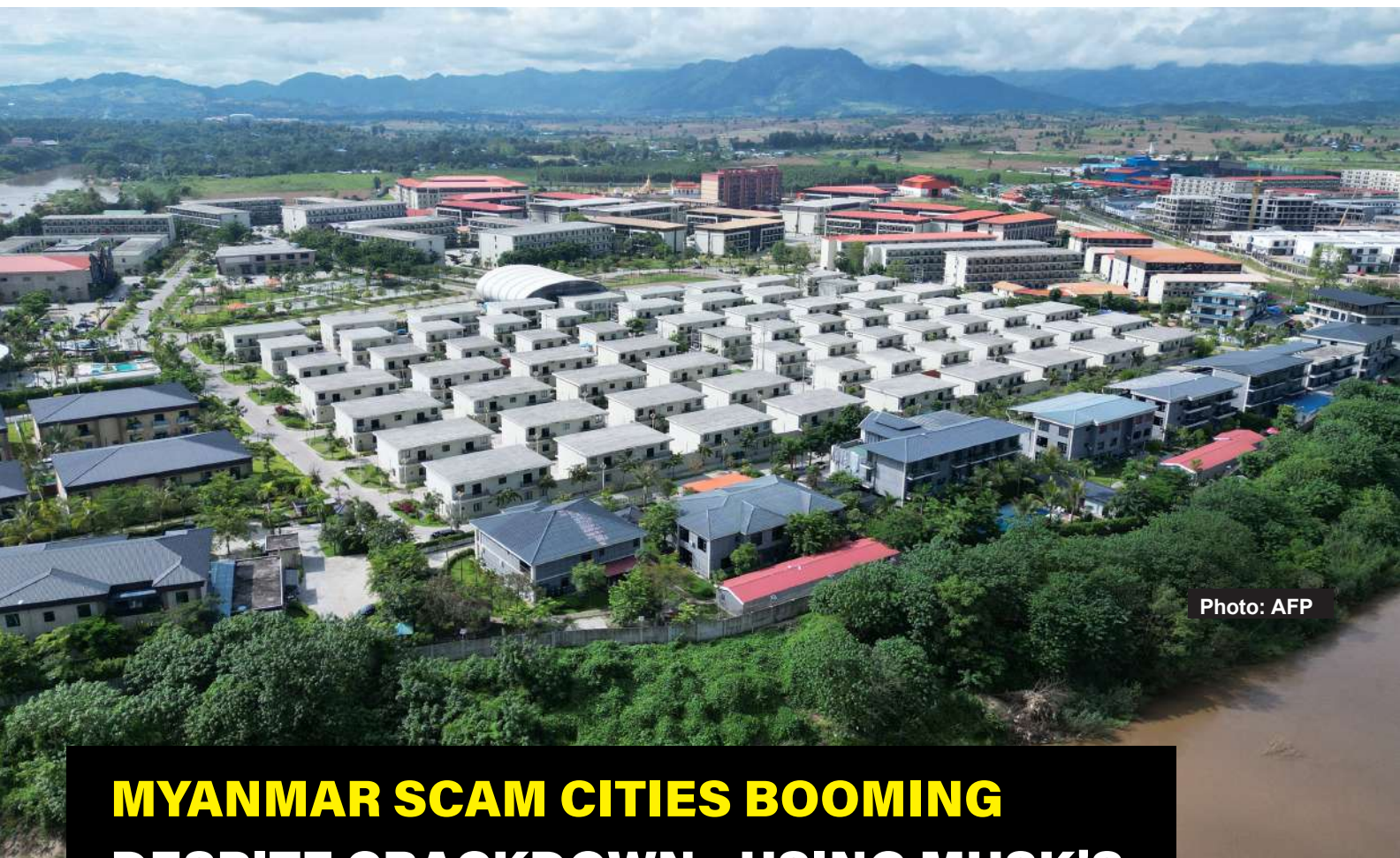


Photo: AFP

MYANMAR SCAM CITIES BOOMING DESPITE CRACKDOWN - USING MUSK'S STARLINK

They said they had smashed them. But fraud factories in Myanmar blamed for scamming Chinese and American victims out of billions of dollars are still in business and bigger than ever, an AFP investigation can reveal.

Satellite images and AFP drone footage show frenetic building work in the heavily guarded compounds around Myawaddy on the Thailand-Myanmar border, which appear to be using Elon Musk's Starlink satellite internet service on a huge scale.

Experts say most of the centres, notorious for their romance scams and "pig butchering" investment cons, are run by Chinese-led crime syndicates working with Myanmar militias in the lawless badlands of the Golden Triangle.

China, Thailand and Myanmar pressured the militias into vowing to "eradicate" the compounds in February, releasing around 7,000 people from a brutal call centre-like system that runs on greed, human trafficking and violence.

Freed workers from Asia, Africa and elsewhere

showed AFP journalists the scars and bruises of beatings they said were inflicted by their bosses.

They said they had been forced to work around the clock, trawling for victims for a plethora of phone and internet scams.

Sun, a Chinese national who was sold between several compounds, was able to give AFP a rare insider's account after being freed with Beijing's help.

But a senior Thai police official said after the crackdown began that up to 100,000 people may still toil in the compounds -- often mini cities surrounded by barbed wire fences and armed guards -- that have sprung up on the border with Myanmar since the Covid pandemic.

Satellite images show rapid construction work resuming at several compounds only weeks after the crackdown. Flocks of Starlink satellite dishes soon began to cover many scam centre roofs after Thailand cut their internet and power connections.

Nearly 80 Starlink dishes are visible on one roof alone in AFP photographs of one of the biggest

compounds, KK Park.

Starlink -- which is not licensed in Myanmar -- did not have enough traffic to make it onto the list of the country's internet providers before February.

It is now consistently the biggest, topping the ranking every day from July 3 until October 1, according to data from the Asian regional internet registry, APNIC.

It first appeared at number 56 in late April.

California prosecutors officially warned Starlink in July 2024 that its satellite system was being used by the fraudsters, but received no response. Worried Thai and US politicians have also conveyed their alarm to Musk, with Senator Maggie Hassan calling on him to act.

Now the powerful US Congress Joint Economic Committee, on which she is a leading member, has told AFP it has begun an investigation into Starlink's involvement with the centres.

SpaceX, which owns Starlink, did not reply to AFP requests for comment.

Erin West, a longtime US cybercrime prosecutor who resigned last year to campaign full-time for action, said "it is abhorrent that an American company is enabling this to happen".

Americans are among the top targets of the Southeast Asian scam syndicates, the US Treasury Department said, losing an estimated \$10 billion last year, up 66 percent in 12 months.

Buildings shooting up

The building boom since the crackdown is "breathtaking", West said. Satellite images show what appear to be office and dormitory blocks shooting up in many of the estimated 27 scam centres in the Myawaddy cluster, strung out along a winding stretch of the Moei River, which forms the frontier with Thailand.

A whole new section of KK Park has sprung up in seven months. The security checkpoint at its main entrance has also been hugely expanded, with a new access road and roundabout added.

At least five new ferry crossings across the Moei have also appeared to supply the centres from the Thai side, satellite images show.

They include one serving Shwe Kokko, which the US Treasury calls a "notorious hub for virtual currency investment scams" under the protection of the Karen National Army, a militia affiliated with Myanmar's junta.

Last month, the US sanctioned nine people and companies connected to Shwe Kokko and the

Chinese criminal kingpin She Zhijiang, founder of the multistorey Yatai New City centre. Construction work in Shwe Kokko has also continued apace.

The borderlands where Myanmar, Thailand, China and Laos meet -- known as the Golden Triangle -- has long been a hotbed of opium and amphetamine production, drug trafficking, smuggling, illegal gambling and money laundering.

Corruption and the power vacuum created by civil war in Myanmar have allowed organised crime groups to dramatically expand their scam operations.

Southeast Asian scam operations conned people in the wider region out of \$37 billion in 2023, according to a report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which said the gangs ruled the centres with an iron fist.

Many workers extracted from the compounds in February said they were trafficked through Thailand and beaten and tortured into working as scammers. Others said they were lured by false promises of well-paid jobs. However, experts and NGOs said some also go willingly.

Beijing pushed authorities in Myanmar and Thailand to crack down in February after Chinese actor Wang Xing said he was lured to Thailand for a fake casting and trafficked into a scam centre in Myanmar.

Last month, China sentenced to death 11 members of a scam syndicate that operated just over the border with Myanmar, with five more given suspended death penalties.

AFP has been able to build up a picture of the murky world of the centres and the overlapping militias who guard them after months of investigation. It is a ruthless industry full of slippery characters willing to sell people into the compounds or broker their release -- for the right price.

Inside the compounds: Sun's story

Sun -- a pseudonym AFP is using to protect his identity -- is one of thousands of Chinese people swallowed up by the scam factories.

The soft-spoken young villager from the mountains of southwestern Yunnan province told AFP how he and other workers were repeatedly beaten with electric rods and whips if they slacked or did not follow orders.

"Almost everyone inside had been beaten at some point... either for refusing to work or trying to get out," he said.

But with high fences, watchtowers and armed

guards, "there was no way to leave", until he was released with 5,400 other Chinese nationals since the February crackdown.

Sun's testimony is a rare insight into the internal workings of the centres, as he was sold on between several when bosses realised that a slight physical disability limited his usefulness.

AFP journalists managed to talk to him as he was being released and later on the phone, as well as back in his poor, isolated village.

Sun said his trouble began in June 2024, when he left his home some 100 kilometres (60 miles) across the mountains from Myanmar.

With one child already and another on the way, the 25-year-old wanted to provide for his family and had heard there was money to be made selling Chinese goods online through Thailand.

"I heard it was very profitable," he told AFP.

The trip turned into a nightmare in the Thai border city of Mae Sot, where Sun said he was abducted and taken over the slow river that divides it from Myanmar's Myawaddy and its infamous scam centres.

He said he was "terrified. I kept begging them on my knees to let me go."

Once in Myawaddy, he said, his plight quickly worsened.

Sun said he was brought to a militia camp where he was sold for 650,000 Thai baht (\$20,000) to a scam centre -- the first of several such transactions.

There, he was ordered to do online exercises to speed up his typing. Sun, however, had a problem: a deformed finger that slowed him down and drew the ire of his overseers.

The disability, verified by AFP, meant he was repeatedly sold on to other compounds and given menial tasks.

But in the last facility -- bristling with high fences and gun-toting guards -- he got a taste of the real work, sending unsolicited messages to scam targets in the United States.

Once the victims were on the hook, he said, he passed the target on to a more specialised scammer who would continue the conversation.

Experts confirmed that many Chinese-run compounds split the workforce according to their scamming ability.

The centres also provide workers with detailed scripts on how to bait their targets.

One 25-page text seen by AFP suggested workers adopt the persona of "Abby", a lovesick 35-year-old Japanese woman. It advised them to build a romantic rapport with the target.

"I feel we are so destined," the document suggests Abby could say.

Murky business

Much about the industry is opaque, mirroring China and Thailand's complex relations with Myanmar's military regime and various rebel and junta-allied groups, many of whom profit from the illegal mining, logging and drug manufacturing going on amid the war there.

Scam centre staff run the "whole gamut", from expendable grunts held in slave-like conditions to skilled programmers working for high salaries, said veteran Myanmar expert David Scott Mathieson, a former Human Rights Watch monitor.

Chinese authorities are treating those like Sun who were brought out in February as "suspects" who may have ventured knowingly into war-torn Myanmar.

AFP verified key pillars of his story, consulting several experts on the centres. But other portions were harder to confirm -- with Thai authorities not providing information, and Chinese officials tailing our reporters and impeding efforts to talk further with him.

AFP journalists were followed by multiple unmarked cars while travelling to see Sun in his mountain village, three hours from the nearest city, Lincang.

Minutes after AFP met with him, a flurry of officials arrived to "check up" on his welfare. When Sun returned after half an hour, he declined to speak further.

The double sting

In the weeks before his extraction, Sun wondered if he would ever be able to escape the drudgery, threats and violence of the scam centres. "I thought about the possibility (of dying)... almost every day," he told AFP.

AFP obtained a copy of a "work contract" from one centre forbidding staff from chatting or leaving their posts, and giving managers the right to "educate" workers who violate the rules.

China has warned its citizens for years about cyber fraud -- from the scams themselves to jobs posted online that lure people into the compounds.

But a steady stream of Chinese people still disappear into them, prompting desperate searches from loved ones -- searches that expose them to another whole level of scams and fraudsters.

Fang, a woman from northwestern China's Gansu province, told AFP her 22-year-old brother, a school dropout, vanished in February in Yunnan, which borders Myanmar.

He was likely under "financial pressure" and had travelled to Xishuangbanna, near the Golden Triangle border with Myanmar and Laos, for a job smuggling goods like watches and gold into China, Fang said.

Fang said she is now convinced her brother was enticed there and trafficked into Myanmar, with phone records indicating his last known location in the Wa region, home to the country's biggest and best-equipped ethnic armed group.

Like other relatives, she said she felt anxious despite appealing to Chinese authorities for help.

"He's the youngest child in the family," she said. "My grandmother, who is in the late stages of cancer... cries at home every day."

'Snakeheads'

Most Chinese scam workers cannot bank on Beijing's efforts alone to get out.

Instead, they may have to pay a ransom that can expose people to the same murky networks that supply the centres in the first place.

Fang said she had joined several groups on the Chinese messaging app WeChat filled with dozens of people searching for relatives who disappeared near the Myanmar border.

She said she had been approached on social media by self-styled private "rescuers" who claimed to be able to extract people trapped in the compounds.

AFP contacted more than a dozen such rescuers advertising their services on Chinese social media platforms Xiaohongshu and Kuaishou.

Many seemed to have worked in compounds themselves or touted links to smugglers.

They said they could tap underground networks of compound staff, Chinese fugitives and "snakeheads" -- smugglers with ties to multiple centres -- to track the person and broker their release.

Most quoted ransoms equivalent to tens of thousands of dollars, depending on which centre the worker was in and if they owed money to the scam syndicate.

Some claimed to take no money for themselves. Others were open about their fees, saying a network of fixers would also get a cut.

One self-styled fixer, Li Chao, said he earned

thousands of yuan (hundreds of dollars) per month arranging rescues in Cambodia -- another major fraud and money-laundering hub -- scoping out compounds and whisking away escapees in rental cars.

The job was lucrative, but "there are risks for me too", he told AFP.

Rescuers 'just another scam'

Ling Li, a modern slavery researcher who operates an anti-trafficking NGO, said the shadowy private rescue sector made her work freeing workers more "complicated".

Her organisation helps families search for workers in Myanmar and Cambodia, contacting police and negotiating ransoms.

She told AFP that many online "rescuers" were either scammers themselves or charged wild sums for extractions that often never materialised.

Families "can easily be cheated by opportunists", she said.

Fang said some handed over thousands of yuan without success. The rescuers "claim to have connections... but in reality, it's just (another) scam", she said.

Release came for Sun on February 12, after Thailand cut power to scam-ridden parts of Myanmar.

That morning, as he was repairing phones, an armed group arrived, piled him and dozens of others into pickup trucks and drove them to a militia camp.

Within hours, he was on a ferry back into Thailand. "I never imagined... that I would be rescued so suddenly," he told AFP.

Ten days later, he was put on a plane to the Chinese city of Nanjing -- flanked by police officers.

Sun was one of thousands rounded up in the joint operation between Beijing, Thailand and local Myanmar militias -- the Border Guard Forces (BGF) and the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), former ethnic-Karen rebel groups now allied with the Burmese army.

They are two of several, often overlapping, militias operating around Myawaddy.

The scammers operate in a "highly permissive environment... with permission from junta-affiliated Burmese militia", concluded a report last month by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

The think tank, which is partly funded by Australia's defence ministry, noted that while fighting between rival militia groups often rages near the centres, they

are reportedly never hit, so as not to endanger the "pure profits available through the scamming industry".

AFP sought comment from the BGF, but they did not respond.

The report's author, Nathan Ruser, told AFP it was "shocking" that syndicates have been given "such a permanent, established infrastructure" for smuggling "construction materials, goods and the trafficking of people".

'Like an enemy state'

China has said its clampdowns show its "resolute" commitment to stamping out the scammers, but Ruser and other experts say they only temporarily disrupt the syndicates.

"As long as the (military) junta (in Myanmar) enables and fuels this industry, I think it's only ever going to be a game of cat and mouse," Ruser said.

New ones will simply "pop up elsewhere", he added.

Sun insisted he was forced into the compounds and never tricked anyone into handing over money.

Traumatized, exhausted and still on bail, he said he found the "mental burden" of his ordeal hard to bear.

Beijing has not said how it plans to deal with the freed workers. Experts said many of them try to play down their role to avoid punishment.

But Chinese society has scant sympathy, regardless of whether they are brutalized victims of trafficking, said researcher Ling Li. "People will judge you for being greedy and stupid."

Governments, however, have been "insanely negligent" about the gravity of the problem, warned cybercrime expert Erin West.

"A generation's worth of wealth is being stolen from us," she said.

"I don't know how we shut this down. It is way too big now, like an enemy state."

AFP



Rescued workers. Photo: AFP

Photo: AFP

UK AND US TAKE ACTION AGAINST MYANMAR SCAM CENTRES AMID-REGION WIDE CRACKDOWN

The UK announced on 14 October the sanctioning of an illegal scam centre network operating across Southeast Asia. The move, aimed at exposing and disrupting scam centre operations and protecting individuals and the UK and the region, was conducted jointly with the US.

The text of the UK announcement regarding the sanctions is as follows.

The UK has sanctioned a multi-billion-pound global network involved in operating scam centres which torture their trafficked workers.

Scam centres based in Southeast Asia, are defrauding victims across the world on an industrial scale. In East and Southeast Asia alone, estimated losses from cyber-enabled fraud in 2023 reached up to US \$37 billion, with much larger global losses attributed to scams originating from the region.

This is why the UK, in coordination with the US, has announced sanctions to combat the growing transnational threat posed by this network, and uphold human rights. These actions will also expose and

disrupt the network's operations, helping to protect nationals from the UK and Southeast Asia from the damaging impact of fraud.

UK Foreign Office Minister Stephen Doughty said:

"Scam centres cheat British people out of their hard-earned money, while trapping vulnerable victims in the headquarters of their web of deception - so we are taking decisive action.

"Scam centres do not respect borders. This is a transnational threat that requires coordinated, collective action to stem the tide of illicit finance that threatens human rights, economic growth, and national security in equal measure.

"We have taken decisive action to protect British citizens and the integrity of our financial system. We recognise the harms caused by illicit finance to this region and are committed to working in partnership with countries in Southeast Asia, supporting their local efforts to clamp down on scam centres and the networks that operate them."

CHINA BOASTS OF CRACKDOWN ON SCAM CENTRES ON MYANMAR BORDER

Chinese authorities are boasting of a sweeping crackdown on scam centres across the country's southern border with Myanmar, days before a key political meeting in Beijing.

Government statements published since Wednesday mention the arrests of more than 57,000 Chinese citizens for their alleged involvement in fraud and detail accounts of torture and murder in the murky compounds.

An AFP investigation revealed Tuesday that despite China's efforts to smash them with security forces in Myanmar and Thailand, scam centres are still in business and bigger than ever.

Satellite images and AFP drone footage showed frenetic building work in the heavily guarded compounds around Myawaddy on the Thailand-Myanmar border.

They appeared to be using Elon Musk's Starlink satellite internet service on a huge scale.

People trafficked or lured by false promises into scam centres are forced to work around the clock, extracting billions of dollars from victims around the world through phone and internet scams.

Some also go willingly.

Experts say most of the centres, notorious for their romance scams and "pig butchering" investment cons, are run by Chinese-led crime syndicates working with Myanmar militias in the lawless badlands of the Golden Triangle.

Their fate has sparked wideranging discussion in China, with in-depth accounts of Beijing's crackdown on fraud rings dominating social media this week.

The revelations, shared by China's Ministry of Public Security, come before a closely watched four-day gathering of top officials in Beijing for deliberations on long-term economic planning.

A court in September held a hearing against prominent gang leader Xu Faqi and his associates, the ministry said in a statement Friday.

Xu, arrested last January, is accused of helping run 14 scam centres in Myanmar's northern Kokang region, the ministry said.

He allegedly oversaw a 400-man militia that beat and killed people who failed to meet scam targets.

The ministry said in a statement Wednesday that members of another prominent gang known as the Wei family have been indicted and will soon face trial.

"Violence and brutality were everywhere in the cyber fraud complex," the ministry said of the Wei-run parks also in Kokang.

It added that "dog cages" featured at the compounds where "beatings, corporal punishment, nail pulling, finger chopping and shootings were commonplace".

The park-runners had "hands stained with the blood of the Chinese people", the ministry said.

AFP



Journalist and security analyst Anthony Davis with Thai soldiers during Thai political protest in 2010.

AT THE BREAKING POINT A DEEP DIVE INTO SHIFTING MORALE, OVERSTRETCHED ARMIES AND THE UNRELENTING RESISTANCE THAT REFUSES TO YIELD

INSIGHT MYANMAR

"We are in Myanmar, and nothing is clear cut."

Nearly five years on, the ongoing conflict continues to be complex, brutal, and ongoing, and Anthony Davis delivers a hard-edged analysis that cuts through illusions and sentiment. Davis has spent decades studying guerrilla conflict from Afghanistan to Southeast Asia, and in his earlier appearance on this podcast he described Myanmar's struggle as nothing less than a revolution—a spontaneous national uprising without precedent in the region. Building on that framing, Davis now examines how the revolution and the war have evolved into an even more dangerous and unpredictable confrontation.

Davis begins his analysis with the United Wa State Army (UWSA), a thirty-thousand-strong force running a state the size of Belgium. "It would be entirely wrong to see the Wa as simply Chinese puppets or Chinese proxies," he insists, noting that the UWSA is heavily armed and commercially minded. Chinese pressure has forced them to scale back overt arms transfers to other ethnic armed groups, but Davis stresses they will not simply abandon their influence. Their most immediate goal, he argues, is recognition as a state on par with

Kachin or Shan. Central to this would be linking their two territories—Special Region 2 on the Chinese border and Military Region 171 near Thailand. If the regime were to implode, Davis suggests, the Wa would act with extraordinary speed, moving "before breakfast" to unite them and "by lunchtime" to consolidate their state. He also highlights their rapid rearmament after 2009–2011, which established a level of deterrence they have maintained ever since.

Since the coup, the Wa have steadily expanded their influence west of the Salween, forging deep ties with the Ta'ang (TNLA), leveraging the Shan State Progress Party, and sidelining rivals like the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS). Davis characterizes this not as reckless expansion but as a strategy of ascendancy—quiet dominance across Shan State. The presence of Wa troops disguised in TNLA uniforms in Mogoke, deep inside Mandalay Region, illustrates the reach of their networks and the subtle shifts in Myanmar's wars.

"The Wa have become a critical player in the overall

struggle for Myanmar," Davis concludes, emphasizing that their ambitions are as political as they are military: to preserve autonomy on their own terms while avoiding the regime's familiar cycle of ceasefire, rearmament, and betrayal. He draws a parallel with the Arakan Army (AA), which is now following a similar path toward near-total autonomy in Rakhine State.

From there he turns to drones, which he identifies as a decisive new factor. Davis recalls how PDFs first experimented with small quadcopters, which the Burmese military initially dismissed. By late 2023 and into 2024, drones had become central to resistance victories, especially during Operation 1027. Shocked, the junta created a directorate for drone warfare, importing Chinese systems and benefitting from Russian expertise drawn from Ukraine. What resistance fighters improvised, the regime scaled into an organized machine. By 2025, drones, artillery, air power, and a flood of conscripts came to be used in concert, transforming the military from a faltering force into a more dangerous adversary. As Davis underscores, "you are looking at a machine which is still very much an operating machine, with an integrated command and control structure, with a strategy. It's an army in the way that the resistance, clearly, by definition, is not."

Morale, Davis warns, is now split. Among soldiers in the military, battlefield confidence has rebounded, while conscripts are often treated as expendable and

suffer heavy casualties. Resistance morale remains fierce—they fight knowing there is no way back—but the logistical strain is immense. Ammunition shortages, drone attrition, and fragile coordination threaten to blunt their determination. As Davis puts it, courage cannot refill empty magazines.

On the subject of morale, past guests, such as Mie Mie Wynn Byrd, have pushed back, arguing that the spirit of local fighters remains unbroken, that communities continue to support them, and that belief in eventual victory is as strong as ever. Davis acknowledges this view, adding that morale is fluid, varying from unit to unit and day to day. What matters most, he argues, is how capability and morale interact—whether the junta can sustain battlefield momentum, and whether the resistance can endure losses without breaking. To him, there are more factors that need to be considered. "It's not morale," he says. "They have got plenty of morale. They're not short of guns. But if you don't have enough ammunition, then you're in trouble." The core problem, in his view, is material, not spirit.

On the problem of overstretch, Davis notes that it is now an issue on both sides. The military can seize towns and reopen roads like the Mandalay-Lashio corridor, but every capture creates vulnerable outposts isolated among hostile populations. The resistance risks the opposite—burning through scarce munitions and exhausting itself before decisive action. Davis



PDF fighters in Sagaing.
Photo: AFP

suggests the junta may deliberately aim to drain the resistance's ammunition stocks before the planned December elections. And on that point, Davis is clear-eyed: "elections will happen come hell or high water," but they will not resolve the conflict nor restore legitimacy to the regime.

China, he emphasizes, overshadows everything. It backs the junta to safeguard pipelines and trade routes, betting on stability through rigged elections. Yet this creates a dangerous paradox. If the resistance turns to striking Chinese interests, Beijing may face dilemmas it cannot manage at arm's length. Davis draws parallels to China's frustrations in Pakistan, where it demands protection of its assets while distrusting the very security forces assigned to guard them. Myanmar presents the same risks. He also notes the curious naivety of NUG officials, such as Foreign Minister Zin Mar Aung, who continue to appeal to Beijing to "get on the right side of history," a line he finds detached from political reality. He feels that the NUG has repeatedly misread Beijing, clinging to wishful rhetoric rather than grappling with China's cold strategic calculations.

Looking ahead, Davis is blunt. Elections may proceed but will not bring peace. The military could overextend itself, while the resistance might be too

depleted to mount a coordinated counterstrike. Rakhine State looms as the true pivot: if the Arakan Army seizes Kyaukphyu, with its seaport and pipeline terminals, the political and diplomatic board will change overnight. China's leverage, the junta's credibility, and the resistance's standing would all be recalibrated.

Davis concludes that Myanmar is heading toward a reckoning. "The bottom line is, you can have a ceasefire today, but [the Burmese military is] going to come back, they're going to rebuild, they're going to re-equip, and they're going to come back at you." He warns that this cycle of conflict leaves little room for complacency and makes the coming months especially uncertain. "By the end of January, we'll be looking at a very different situation, and it's not clear whether that very different situation will favor the military's project in Myanmar, or, as I think many of us would hope, the resistance's project."

LISTEN TO THE INSIGHT MYANMAR PODCAST

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2025/10/8/episode-412-at-the-breaking-point>

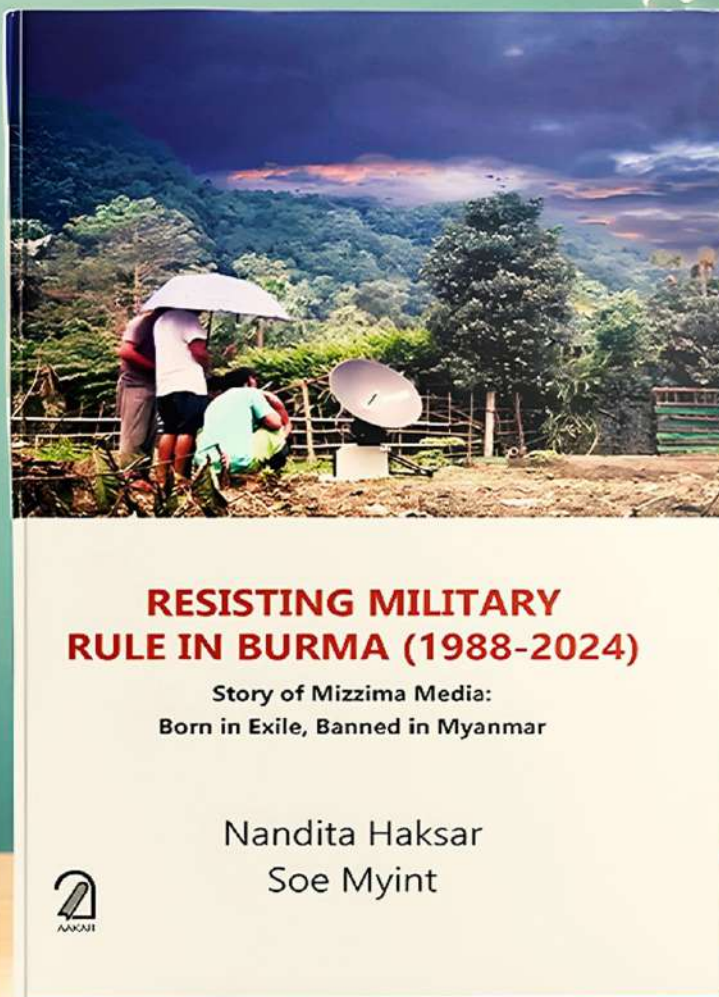


Photo: AFP

RESISTING MILITARY RULE IN BURMA (1988-2024)

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

by Nandita Haksar and Soe Myint



Published by
AAKAR BOOKS

TO PURCHASE THE BOOK ON AMAZON, CLICK HERE:

<https://amzn.in/d/5n9Lkhd>

TO DONATE AND HELP MIZZIMA'S WORK:

<https://donate.mizzima.com/>



Bobby Ciputra

SHARM EL-SHEIKH SUMMIT: PEACE FOR A GAS PIPELINE

BOBBY CIPUTRA

While thousands of families in Gaza still slept in ruins, world leaders gathered in Sharm El-Sheikh, a luxury resort on the Red Sea coast with five-star hotels and a verdant golf course in the middle of the desert.

Do these figures truly care about Gaza, which has been neglected for decades?

The Illusion of Peace and a New Order of Power

The Peace Summit on October 13, 2025 featured a lineup of big names: Donald Trump, Emmanuel Macron, Muhammad bin Salman, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, King Abdullah II and Antonio Guterres.

This is a systematic attempt to normalize Israel's relations with Arab countries under the umbrella of shared economic interests, ignoring the root cause of the problem: justice for the Palestinian people. The peace offered is a bought peace, with the Palestinian people becoming a mere byproduct in energy negotiations.

These global elites are actually reshaping the power structure in the Middle East following various proxy wars and shifting alliances. They are designing a

system in which they can control energy prices, secure trade routes, and marginalize uncooperative players.

This is the grand agenda hidden behind diplomatic smiles. It's about a gas pipeline from Qatar to Europe that must pass through Gaza. It's about the Suez Canal, which must remain secure for global energy interests. It's about restructuring energy capitalism after the Ukraine War.

So Gaza is no longer just an issue of peace in the name of humanity, but a vital locking point in a new power structure.

The Sharm El-Sheikh summit was not a moment of true peace, but a new chapter in the geoeconomic restructuring of the Eastern Mediterranean.

Egypt, Suez, and the Forgotten Gateway

There's a compelling reason why the summit was held in Egypt, not Geneva or New York. Egypt is a key player in this energy game.

First, the Suez Canal. Egypt's revenue from the Suez Canal plummeted from \$10.25 billion in 2023 to just \$3.99 billion in 2024, a drastic 61% drop. Regional conflict has forced ships to choose safer, albeit more expensive, routes.

The main factors are regional conflict and security pressures in the Red Strait. The Houthi group in Yemen launched attacks on ships passing through the waterway in solidarity with Palestine, disrupting shipping traffic, with many ships opting for a detour via Africa's Cape of Good Hope. The Egyptian president himself stated that regional disruptions caused a loss of approximately US\$7 billion in Suez revenues in 2024.

Egypt needs regional stability to revive the Suez Canal. Egypt also needs investment in liquefaction infrastructure to become a regional natural gas hub. Egypt's strategic location connects Africa, the Middle East, and Europe.

Second, Egypt is the largest Arab country to have had peaceful relations with Israel since 1979. Egypt could act as a "neutral" mediator, legitimizing this gas pipeline project in the eyes of the Arab world.

The Sharm El-Sheikh Summit is a bargaining platform. The US and its allies are offering Egypt energy investments in exchange for support for the Qatar-Europe gas pipeline project and help in pacifying Gaza.

Europe is cold, Qatar is smiling

Since Russia invaded Ukraine, Europe has lost 40% of its Russian gas supplies (via Nord Stream and pipelines) due to sanctions and contract cuts. LNG prices have soared 300% between 2021 and 2022. European countries are frantically searching for a replacement for Gazprom.

Qatar controls nearly 35% of the global LNG market. It is currently undertaking a massive expansion of its LNG capacity from 77 million tons per year to 142 million tons per year by 2030 (an 85% increase).

Qatar is seeking to secure a share of the European market, primarily due to its flexibility in spot LNG exports and short-term contracts. This is where Qatar comes to the rescue. Europe needs gas. Qatar has gas. But there's one problem: how to transport it efficiently and cheaply?

The answer is a gas pipeline. Instead of LNG that has to be cooled, loaded onto tankers, and then liquefied again, a direct pipeline from Qatar to Europe would save costs and ensure a stable supply.

The problem is, the pipeline would have to pass through a very sensitive area: Gaza and Palestine. The route would be Qatar to Saudi Arabia to Jordan to Gaza to Mediterranean to Greece to Italy and then spreading to European countries.

The European countries that need Qatari gas most are Germany, Italy, France, and Greece. They are the ones most affected by the loss of Russian supplies. They are the ones most aggressively supporting "peace" in Gaza.

But to build the pipeline, Gaza must be "stable." Palestine must be under control. Egypt must cooperate. Israel must feel secure.

Peace Without Justice

Guterres' presence is merely a "legitimate stamp" without any real power. And the absence of Vladimir Putin (Russia) and Xi Jinping (China) from the peace conference demonstrates the ongoing rift in the world order.

The global elite will never voluntarily grant true peace. Their peace is one that protects privilege, stabilizes capital accumulation, and normalizes structural injustice.

Peace in Gaza requires decolonization (the return of land and resources), redistribution (wealth from oligarchs to workers), democratization (decisions made by the people, not the elite), and reparations (historical accountability for colonialism). But none of these were discussed in Sharm El-Sheikh.

Let's return to the original question. Why has peace in Gaza suddenly become a priority? Because Gaza is blocking a trillion-dollar energy project.

Peace without justice is legitimized oppression. Sharm El-Sheikh is not the end of history. It is the ongoing struggle between extractive capitalism and ecological socialism.

In five years, we will see gas pipelines flowing again for Europe, Gaza becoming "peaceful" but still under occupation, and the world celebrating normalization while forgetting that this peace was bought with trillions of dollars in natural gas.

Bobby Ciputra - The Chairman of AMSI - Angkatan Muda Sosialis Indonesia - Indonesian Young Socialist Movement.



Photo: Eugene Nelmin

TIBET BEARS THE BRUNT OF CHINA'S RENEWABLE ENERGY AMBITIONS

SUN LEE

China's green energy dominance is increasingly built on extractive practices in Tibet that raise serious environmental and human rights concerns, according to media reports and studies. Recent developments in lithium and copper mining, along with mega-dam projects, expose the Chinese Communist Party's disregard for ecological sustainability and indigenous voices.

While international headlines often celebrate China's rapid ascent as a clean energy superpower, the reality unfolding in Tibet suggests a more troubling narrative. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), under the guise of climate leadership, has intensified resource extraction in the region, transforming Tibet into a strategic frontier for lithium and copper mining and hydroelectric expansion. These developments, while framed as progress, have sparked growing alarm over environmental degradation, forced relocations, and suppression of dissent.

In 2025, China's green energy ambitions reached new heights. The country installed more renewable energy infrastructure than the rest of the world combined, and its dominance in electric vehicle manufacturing and battery production continues to grow. However, this success is increasingly tied to the exploitation of Tibet's mineral-rich lands. Recent discoveries in Nyagchu County, Sichuan Province, revealed a spodumene belt stretching 2,800 kilometers, containing an estimated 6.5 million tonnes of lithium ore catapulting China's global lithium reserves from 6% to 16.5%.

This surge in lithium extraction has been accompanied by the launch of two major facilities in Nagormo, Qinghai Province, producing a combined 60,000 tonnes of lithium compounds annually. Meanwhile, Zangge Mining's Mamucuo Salt Lake project in Ngari, Tibet, received regulatory approval in June 2025. With a projected output of 50,000 tonnes

of battery-grade lithium carbonate and 17,000 tonnes of borax per year, the site is poised to become one of China's most significant lithium sources.

Yet, these projects are not without consequence. The Mamucuo site, located at an altitude of 4,700 meters, faces logistical challenges and threatens fragile ecosystems. Local communities, whose livelihoods depend on animal husbandry and freshwater resources, have reportedly been excluded from decision-making processes. The CCP's "high-altitude ecological relocation" policy has facilitated forced displacements, enabling easier access for mining operations while silencing resistance.

Copper mining has followed a similar trajectory. The Julong Copper Mine, already one of China's largest, is undergoing a massive expansion. Phase 2 aims to triple daily ore processing to 350,000 tonnes, with Phase 3 set to make it the world's largest standalone copper mine. The Yulong Mine in Chamdo Prefecture is also scaling up, targeting an annual capacity of 30 million metric tonnes. These operations, situated at altitudes above 4,500 meters, pose severe environmental risks, including glacial retreat and river pollution.

The CCP's approach to resource extraction in Tibet has been marked by opacity and repression. Environmental defenders like Tsawo Tsering have faced imprisonment for exposing illegal mining practices. Tsering's case, involving video evidence of sandstone mining threatening water supplies, resulted in an eight-month sentence in October 2024. Such incidents reflect a broader pattern of censorship and surveillance aimed at quelling dissent and maintaining control over Tibet's natural wealth.

Hydropower development has further compounded ecological concerns. The Yarlung Tsangpo River, home to one of the world's most biodiverse regions, is the site of a planned mega-dam projected to generate 300 billion kilowatt-hours annually, three times the output

of the Three Gorges Dam. Located in a seismically active zone, the project raises fears of landslides and earthquakes, with over 800 seismic events recorded in the area.

Despite the CCP's claims of ecological stewardship, the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau Ecological Protection Law, adopted in April 2023, has done little to safeguard the region. The law's vague language and loopholes have allowed mining to continue unabated, even within nature reserves. Evidence suggests that boundaries of protected areas have been redrawn to accommodate extractive interests.

Scientific assessments have underscored Tibet's vulnerability to climate change. The region is warming at more than twice the global average, threatening its role as the "Third Pole" and "Water Tower of Asia." Glacier retreat, water scarcity, and ecosystem disruption are accelerating, exacerbated by unchecked industrialization.

In light of these developments, the international community must critically reassess China's green energy narrative. While the CCP promotes its leadership in climate action, the reality in Tibet reveals a model of development rooted in exploitation and authoritarian control. A truly sustainable transition cannot ignore the rights of indigenous communities or the ecological integrity of their homelands.

Tibetans must be recognized not as obstacles to progress but as stewards of one of the planet's most vital ecosystems. Their exclusion from environmental governance undermines both human rights and climate resilience. As global demand for clean energy grows, so too must the scrutiny of its supply chains and the political structures that shape them.

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



A NARCO STATE OF MIND

“There is no way to tell the story of Myanmar and where it’s headed if you are leaving out the Wa,” insists Patrick Winn, a reporter with two decades experience in Southeast Asia and author of the book *Narcotopia*, speaking to the Insight Myanmar Podcast. “It’s just a giant piece of the puzzle missing.”

Many of Winn’s stories have addressed how global forces affect local lives, and this book is an object lesson in that theme, capturing the idea that entire societies can be transformed by drugs, just as Saudi Arabia is defined by oil. For some, this trade has brought wealth and power; for many, it has brought violence, stigma, and dependency. His book traces how this transformation came about in Myanmar’s northeast corner, weaving personal stories with regional history.

The Wa region is a mountainous region in far northern Myanmar near the Chinese border, a self-governing enclave nestled in Shan State. The Wa have lived there for centuries, fiercely independent and often caricatured as savages, even cannibals. When the British lumped its diverse colonial territories together into Colonial Burma, it included Wa lands on paper, even though it never

controlled them. After independence, Burmese leaders urged Wa chieftains to embrace schools and hospitals, but they refused, preferring self-rule. That stubborn independence underpins their role in today’s Myanmar, and is a theme that threads itself through this complex story.

A pivotal character in Winn’s narrative is Saw Lu, a Wa man born in the mid-1940s who grew into a warlord, Christian crusader, and sometime proxy for competing foreign powers, including being a U.S. DEA asset at one time (with the code name “Superstar”). Winn calls him “probably the most interesting person I’ve ever met.”

The Wa had been introduced to Christianity by American missionaries decades earlier. A small pocket of Wa, along with Lahu converts, revered William Marcus Young as an oracle— some even calling him the “Man-God.” Saw Lu was raised in this environment of missionary zeal. Through these religious connections, he was sent to lower Burma for schooling, where he became fluent in Burmese. He came to believe that literacy, cohesion, and ultimately conversion to Christianity could “civilize” the Wa. Burmese intelligence, recognizing his bilingual skills, vision, and fervor, recruited him in his early twenties and bankrolled his mission to Pang Wai, one of the largest and most fortified Wa settlements.

CATCH THE PODCAST

Read more and listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast here:

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2025/10/2/episode-408-a-narco-state-of-mind>



Photo: Mizzima

MYANMAR'S CENTRAL BANK STEPS UP FOREX SUPPORT TO STABILIZE KEY IMPORT SECTORS

The junta-controlled Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) continued its active intervention in the foreign exchange market this month, injecting more than US\$1.2 million and additional foreign currency into the import sector in a bid to curb volatility and support essential goods supply, according to the Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM).

On 16 October, the CBM sold US\$893,300 to edible oil importers and over US\$396,500 to fuel oil importers, along with 300,000 yuan, underscoring its ongoing commitment to easing pressure on vital imports.

A day earlier, the bank provided more than US\$1.19 million sourced from companies operating under the Cut, Make, and Pack (CMP) system to edible oil companies.

The latest move follows an earlier announcement on 14 October that the CBM would inject US\$27 million into the fuel sector, part of broader efforts to address foreign exchange market instability and currency depreciation.

Recent days have seen a series of sizable interventions, including more than US\$1.8 million

provided to edible oil importers on 13 October and US\$2.26 million on 10 October.

CBM's interventions are not limited to U.S. dollars. In September, the bank injected over US\$39 million purchased from CMP firms into the market, alongside over US\$680,000, 6.2 million yuan, and 300,000 baht via its online foreign exchange trading platform.

The central bank is pursuing a broader strategy of stabilizing the kyat and ensuring adequate foreign currency for essential imports. In a 15 March 2024 directive, the CBM reaffirmed its collaboration with law enforcement agencies to prosecute market manipulators and authorized private banks to trade foreign exchange online based on market supply and demand, a policy introduced on 5 December 2023.

The GNLM's reporting indicated these measures reflect the CBM's stepped up efforts to maintain currency stability and support key sectors such as fuel and edible oil amid ongoing market pressures.



SCAM OPERATIONS IN MYANMAR USING STARLINK INTERNET

Myanmar's online scam operations have begun utilizing Starlink satellite internet, making it more difficult to shut them down, especially during frequent internet and power outages.

These scam compounds, located along the Myanmar, Thailand border in areas such as KK Park and Shwe Kokko, are notorious for forcing individuals into fraudulent activities like fake investments, romance scams, and illegal gambling.

This alarming development has attracted international attention. A U.S. Congressional committee is currently investigating Starlink's connection to these fraudulent hubs.

U.S. Senator Maggie Hassan has urged Elon Musk to block access to these compounds that exploit Starlink for scamming activities.

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.