

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



THE PHANTASMAGORIA OF POWER

Unmasking Myanmar's Junta and Their Sham December Elections

ELECTION UPDATE

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DIGITAL MAGAZINE

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

2026: MYANMAR'S YEAR OF HUNGER

For millions of people across Myanmar, 2026 looms as a year of hunger and despair. The country's deepening civil conflict has already displaced vast numbers of civilians, destroyed livelihoods, and fractured access to food and medical aid. What was once a political and military crisis has metastasized into a humanitarian catastrophe, where the most basic human need – food and clean water – is becoming increasingly scarce. The convergence of relentless military offensives, economic collapse, and shrinking international assistance threatens to push entire communities into starvation.

Since the 2021 military coup, Myanmar has been engulfed in widespread conflict between the junta and resistance forces, spreading violence into previously stable rural areas that once served as the country's breadbasket. Airstrikes and ground assaults have forced millions from their homes. Fields lie untended, irrigation systems have fallen into disrepair, and rural trade networks have been shattered. The military's deliberate targeting of civilian infrastructure, including food warehouses and transport routes, has exacerbated the crisis. In many conflict zones, the regime's "four cuts" strategy – cutting off food, funds, intelligence, and recruits to opposition-held areas – has turned hunger into a weapon of war. Villages suspected of harbouring resistance fighters face blockades that starve out their inhabitants. In northern and western states, humanitarian convoys are routinely denied passage, leaving displaced families to survive on foraged roots, scraps and even grass and leaves.

This manufactured scarcity comes at a time when Myanmar's economy is in freefall. Inflation has eroded the purchasing power of households already reeling from conflict and displacement. Rice prices have surged to levels unaffordable for the poor, and local markets, once vibrant with trade, are struggling. For families in camps for internally displaced people, food insecurity is chronic. Malnutrition rates among children are climbing, and humanitarian agencies warn that without immediate intervention, the country could

face famine-like conditions in the year ahead.

Yet the international response has faltered just when Myanmar's people need it most. Donor fatigue, competing global crises, and bureaucratic barriers have led to steep reductions in humanitarian funding. US government cutbacks in international aid are taking their toll. As wars in other regions dominate headlines and resources, aid to Myanmar has quietly dwindled. International organizations face immense logistical and political challenges in reaching affected populations. Many rely on local networks and volunteers – often operating at great personal risk – to deliver what little aid they can. The moral burden of this crisis, however, should not fall on these courageous local actors alone. The international community's disengagement threatens to turn Myanmar's suffering into a silent tragedy.

Behind the statistics are lives marked by fear, hunger, and uncertainty. In Kayah State, families displaced multiple times now survive on minimal rations, hoping for rain to sustain makeshift gardens. In Rakhine and Chin states and Sagaing, once fertile lands now bear the scars of conflict and neglect. Children too young to remember peace are growing up surrounded by scarcity, with the pain of empty bellies.

The humanitarian crisis unfolding in Myanmar is not an inevitable consequence of nature or misfortune – it is a man-made disaster born of violence and indifference. The year 2026 looks like the situation will be particularly acute.

As 2026 approaches, Myanmar stands on the brink of a humanitarian abyss. The world must not avert its gaze. Renewed pressure on the junta to allow unhindered humanitarian access, alongside increased and sustained international aid, is urgently needed. Without such action, hunger will not merely be a symptom of Myanmar's conflict—it will be its most devastating legacy.

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Cover photo by AFP



Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing hopes to hang onto power through an election. Photo: AFP

THE PHANTASMAGORIA OF POWER: UNMASKING MYANMAR'S JUNTA AND THEIR SHAM DECEMBER ELECTIONS

ALAN CLEMENTS

In the shadowed corridors of Naypyidaw, where generals play dress-up in the tattered robes of democracy, Myanmar's military junta is orchestrating what can only be described as a grotesque carnival of deceit. As December 2025 looms like a bad punchline in a tragic farce, the regime under Senior General Min Aung Hlaing is poised to stage its so-called "general election" - a multi-phase mockery designed not to empower the people, but to entrench the tyrants who stole their voice four years ago.

This isn't an election; it's a scripted ritual of self-coronation, where ballots are props, voters are extras, and legitimacy is as illusory as a mirage in the Irrawaddy Delta. To unmask this absurdity is to peel back layers of propaganda, revealing a core of desperation, violence,

and delusion that has plunged a nation into chaos since the 2021 coup.

Let us rewind to the last genuine expression of Myanmar's will: the November 2020 elections, where Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) secured a resounding victory, capturing over 80 percent of the seats in a turnout that electrified the world with hope for a fledgling democracy.

The people spoke unequivocally, rejecting the military's proxy parties and affirming a path away from decades of authoritarian rule. But on February 1, 2021, the Tatmadaw - the Burmese military - responded not with grace, but with guns. They arrested elected leaders - including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and pre-



Critics have slammed the election as a "sham".
Photo: AFP

sident Win Myint - dissolved the parliament, and declared a state of emergency that has since morphed into a perpetual nightmare of civil war, economic collapse, and human-rights atrocities. Min Aung Hlaing, the coup's architect, promised "free and fair" elections to restore order - a pledge repeated ad nauseam as deadlines slipped from 2022 to 2023, then 2024, and now, absurdly, to this fragmented December spectacle.

What makes this upcoming vote so profoundly absurd? Start with the structure: a "phased" election, announced piecemeal by the junta's military-appointed Union Election Commission (UEC). Phase 1 targets junta-controlled areas; Phase 2, revealed just days ago, brazenly includes resistance strongholds where armed ethnic groups and People's Defense Forces hold sway - regions where the military's writ is as enforceable as a whisper in a typhoon.

Scores of townships are excluded entirely, citing "security concerns," effectively disenfranchising millions in conflict zones where the junta's forces have been routed. This isn't democracy; it's gerrymandering on steroids - a selective sampling of loyalty that ensures the outcome before a single ballot is cast. The Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) has already condemned it as falling woefully short of democratic standards, highlighting a lack of inclusivity, transparency, and freedom from intimidation.

The cast of characters further exposes the charade. The NLD, the people's choice, has been dissolved by the junta's courts, its leaders like Aung San Suu Kyi languishing in prison on trumped-up charges ranging from corruption to sedition. In their place? A ballot bloated with generals, regime ministers, and loyalists from the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) - the military's political arm, which suffered a humiliating defeat in 2020.

Recent reports detail how high-ranking officers

and their cronies dominate candidate lists across states and regions, turning the polls into a family affair for the elite. Campaigns kicked off two months ago, amid a media blackout and under the watchful eyes of security forces, while opposition voices are silenced through arrests - or worse.

This is engineering continuity through institutional redesign, as one analysis aptly puts it: a redesign where the military retains veto power over any "elected" government via constitutional provisions that allocate them 25 percent of parliamentary seats outright.

But the absurdity deepens when we confront the human toll underpinning this theater. While the junta rebrands itself for international consumption - touting "peace initiatives" and electoral legitimacy - evidence of escalating atrocities mounts. Children killed, villages bombed, civilians conscripted into a war that has displaced over three million and killed close to ten thousand since the coup.

The United Nations has documented systematic war crimes, including sexual violence and forced labor, all while the regime claims to be guiding Myanmar toward stability. International IDEA, a global democracy watchdog, minces no words: these elections are not genuine but a calculated bid to undermine the legitimate interim government formed by exiled lawmakers and resistance groups.

In resistance-held territories, the vote is dismissed as irrelevant; ethnic armed organizations and the National Unity Government (NUG) have vowed to boycott and disrupt, viewing it as a ploy to divide and conquer.

Globally, the response has been a tepid mix of condemnation and pragmatism. Some regional powers, weary of the conflict's spillover, might grudgingly accept the results to normalize relations, but this would be a grave error. As experts warn, legitimizing this

sham offers no end to Myanmar's suffering; it merely prolongs the junta's grip, emboldening further repression.

The international community must see through the façade: sanctions should tighten, not loosen - targeting the military's economic lifelines like oil-and-gas revenues. ASEAN's five-point consensus, already in tatters, needs revival with teeth - excluding the junta from summits until genuine dialogue resumes. And the West? Beyond rhetoric, provide concrete support for the resistance - humanitarian corridors, recognition of the NUG, and measures that could tip the scales toward real change.

Yet in the heart of this absurdity lies a poetic irony: the junta's leaders, many of whom profess devotion to Theravada Buddhism, invoke spiritual rhetoric to justify their rule. Min Aung Hlaing himself has posed as a pious figure, visiting pagodas and meditating amid the ruins of his making. But true Vipassana - insight meditation - demands confronting impermanence, suffering, and the illusions of ego. What greater illusion than clinging to power through a vote that mocks the very Dhamma they claim to uphold? The people of Myanmar, resilient in their defiance, embody the true spirit of metta (loving-kindness) and karuna (compassion), rising against oppression in a revolution that blends ancient traditions with modern resistance.

It's time to end this farce. The December elections aren't a step toward democracy; they're a desperate gasp from a regime on the ropes, facing battlefield losses and economic isolation. They won't heal wounds or restore trust - they'll only deepen divisions in a nation already fractured by ethnic strife and colonial legacies. The path forward isn't through rigged ballots but through reconciliation: disband the UEC, lift the state of emergency, and initiate inclusive talks with all stakeholders, including ethnic minorities and the NUG.

To the generals: your time is up. Release the elected leaders - Aung San Suu Kyi, Win Myint, and the thousands of political prisoners rotting in your cells. Step aside from the stage you've bloodied. And perhaps, in a moment of genuine reflection, take some time off to refine your Vipassana practice. In the quiet of meditation, you might finally glimpse the truth: power seized by force is as fleeting as a breath, and the people's will endures like the eternal flow of the Irrawaddy.

About Alan Clements

*He was among the first Westerners to be ordained as a Buddhist monk in Burma, later expelled by the dictatorship. For decades he returned as a journalist to document human rights abuses until permanently blacklisted. He co-authored *The Voice of Hope* with Aung San Suu Kyi, *Burma: The Next Killing Fields?* (with a foreword by the Dalai Lama), and *Burma's Voices of Freedom* (with Fergus Harlow). He is also the author of *Unsilenced: Aung San Suu Kyi - Conversations from a Myanmar Prison* and *Conversation with a Dictator: A Challenge to the Authoritarian Assault*. He co-founded *UseYourFreedom.org*, a campaign advocating for Aung San Suu Kyi's release by gifting copies of these works, along with personal letters to world leaders.*

ANALYSIS & INSIGHT



Photo: AFP

JUNTA INVITES FOREIGN OBSERVERS TO THEIR POLL

Myanmar's military regime has begun inviting foreign governments and international organizations to observe its planned general election, which critics have dismissed as a political charade aimed at legitimizing military rule.

According to the junta-controlled Union Election Commission (UEC), the vote will be conducted in three phases — the first on December 28, the second on January 11, and the final phase two weeks later. The UEC announced on September 16 that invitations would be extended through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to embassies, consulates, and permanent representatives, while some observers would be invited directly by the commission.

The move has been widely criticized by opposition groups and independent analysts. Toe Zaw Latt, General Secretary of the Independent Press Council Myanmar (ICPM), told local media that the process lacks legitimacy. "This election is just a game where both the

referee and player are the same,” he said. “International observers will only serve to applaud the junta and reinforce its legitimacy.”

Bangladeshi media reported on November 6 that Myanmar had sent a formal invitation to Dhaka in early November, confirmed by Bangladesh’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, sources suggested that Bangladesh is unlikely to send an observer team, citing diplomatic and political sensitivities.

Meanwhile, junta spokesperson Major General Zaw Min Tun announced on March 10 that Russia and Belarus had already pledged to send election monitoring teams following Min Aung Hlaing’s visits to both countries earlier this year.

During the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit, India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi reportedly expressed support for the junta’s plan,

urging the election to be “all-inclusive.” Chinese leader Xi Jinping also spoke positively with Min Aung Hlaing during their meeting on the sidelines of the SCO conference in Tianjin, according to junta media reports.

Myanmar faces labour shortage

Myanmar’s economy is facing an alarming labour shortage as young workers continue to leave the country to escape forced conscription, conflict, and worsening economic conditions. The impact is being felt most severely in the agriculture and fisheries sectors, which together account for nearly 70 percent of the nation’s GDP.

Farmers across the country are reporting that daily wages have nearly doubled, reflecting the scarcity of available workers. Even pro-junta media outlets have acknowledged the growing labour crisis in the countryside.



Thousands of young people have been fleeing Myanmar due to military conscription and the ongoing civil war. Photo: AFP

"Young people are very few now," said a farmer from Bago Region. "For paddy fields, it's still manageable, but for peanuts and sesame fields, it's very hard to find labour. Because of the fighting and conscription, many young people go to China to work, and some even take their whole families."

In the Ayeyarwady Region, fish farms are facing similar challenges. Labourers who once worked seasonally have now migrated permanently to Thailand, China, or Malaysia. The daily wage for farmworkers has doubled in some areas, farmers said, making it increasingly difficult to maintain production levels.

While the rural workforce is shrinking, the junta is reportedly filling military ranks through forced recruitment of deported migrant workers. On November

5, Thai authorities deported 47 Myanmar nationals — including 14 women — through the Ranong-Kawthaung border crossing. It marked the 13th such deportation in 2025, bringing the total to 1,807 people so far this year. The majority of those deported were men under the age of 35.

Labour rights activists and family members claim that many of the deportees have been conscripted upon arrival in Myanmar. "No deportees aged between 18 and 35 return home. They are conscripted," said a Myanmar labour affairs activist based in Ranong. "According to the information I received, it seems Thai authorities are indirectly sending people to the junta army." Families who can afford to pay large sums of money have reportedly been able to prevent their sons or brothers from being taken.



The junta has demolished vendor stalls in Mandalay. Photo: AFP

The exodus of working-age citizens has sparked serious demographic and economic imbalances. A UNDP report released on October 10, titled “A Generation on Edge: Youth Safety and Well-being in Myanmar,” revealed that 30 percent of Myanmar youth are worried about conscription. The report also noted a shift in parental fears — while families once worried mainly about their daughters’ safety, many now fear more for their sons.

A mother told BBC Burmese: “My son got married and lived separately. He visited me once a week. When he stopped coming, I didn’t realize for two weeks. Later, he called me — he had been conscripted.”

Labour activists say the ongoing instability, lack of job security, low wages, and fear of forced recruitment are driving Myanmar’s workforce abroad. “Our main problem is conscription,” a young worker told Than Lwin Times. “We are commuting every day with fear. Youths’ futures are gone.”

Despite these concerns, junta leader Min Aung Hlaing recently claimed that Myanmar still enjoys a “demographic bonus,” insisting that the country retains a sufficient labour force. He made the remarks during the presentation of the Union Report on the 2024 Census — a statement that stands in stark contrast to the lived reality of farmers, workers, and youth across the country.

Street vendor stalls demolished, courtesy of the junta

More than 300 houses were demolished in Ngwetawgone Ward, Pyigyitagon Township, Mandalay, on October 30 after junta authorities claimed residents were squatting on government land, leaving hundreds of families suddenly homeless.

According to local sources, authorities began announcing eviction orders through loudspeakers on October 28, giving residents only two days to vacate their homes. Many were unable to move their belongings or find alternative shelter before bulldozers arrived.

Despite pleas from residents to extend the deadline - citing the presence of students, workers, and elderly family members - officials refused. On October 30, municipal authorities, accompanied by heavy machinery, destroyed more than 300 homes, including a Buddhist monastery.

Residents said they had lived in the area for between 10 and 30 years. “My sister’s family was still carrying whatever they could salvage from the debris— zinc roofs, pillars. They couldn’t take the bricks,” a Mandalay resident told Mandalay Free Press. “They have now become tenants instead of homeowners. They were devastated by what happened.”

Witnesses said pro-junta militias known as Pyusawhti were deployed during the demolition, armed with sticks and reportedly threatening anyone who attempted to record the incident on their phones.

Authorities had first issued a notice to vacate in December 2024, followed by another in early October 2025, but residents said there had been no clear resettlement plan. The destroyed neighbourhood lies near a military furniture factory and a construction machinery battalion, raising suspicions that the land may be repurposed for military or industrial use.



WAKE-UP CALL: MYANMAR'S ELECTIONS UNDER THE SHADOW OF CHINA

SUN LEE

A SEAN's decision not to send observers to Myanmar for December elections has come as a big blow to China. Beijing, which has been quietly pressuring Southeast Asian countries to treat the upcoming elections as a step toward resolving Myanmar's long-running political crisis, may not have expected this move.

For China, Myanmar is an important neighbour due to its vast economic interests. From infrastructure corridors to resource extraction, Beijing's stakes in Myanmar are enormous. China recently rolled out the red carpet for Myanmar's military ruler, Min Aung Hlaing, hosting him at both the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in Tianjin and a grand military parade in Beijing. Whether the proposed elections are held amid widespread violence, boycotts, and repression or whether they represent a genuine transition or just a tactical reset, China is essentially bothered about protecting its strategic interests.

China's Strategic Interests in Myanmar

It is China that has been pressuring Myanmar's generals to hold elections by repeatedly offering its support. Experts suggest that China wants elections—even if they are merely symbolic—to help Myanmar pull out of its violent impasse. Beijing believes that elections alone can stabilize the situation enough to safeguard its substantial economic and strategic interests, such as the multibillion-dollar corridor cutting across the country and giving China's landlocked regions direct access to the Indian Ocean.

They also note that China would endorse the election results—whatever their credibility—and back whichever government emerges. Critics accuse Beijing of playing a double game in Myanmar: while claiming to promote peace and stability, it props up the faltering junta and simultaneously builds ties with ethnic armed organizations to keep every side under its influence.

For China, Myanmar is a key battleground where Beijing's regional ambitions, economic interests, and security concerns intersect. A weakened Myanmar is central to China's goal of establishing uncontested regional dominance. Publicly, Chinese officials insist they want to restore stability and promote "fraternal" relations, but in reality, Beijing seeks to consolidate control, side-line pro-democracy forces, and keep Myanmar dependent on Chinese support.

Finding Opportunity in Chaos

China has benefited from the lack of sustained Western engagement in Myanmar. When Western nations did little after the March earthquake, Beijing swiftly rushed humanitarian assistance to the affected regions as part of a high-profile charm offensive. Experts agree that China finds opportunity in chaos—using aid and diplomacy to consolidate power.

Through this approach, Beijing has strengthened its grip by enabling the junta's operations, undermining resistance unity, and expanding its influence over various local factions. A divided Myanmar under lasting military rule will be far easier for Beijing to manage.

China's Election Calculus

Experts express doubt over Beijing's newfound enthusiasm for elections in Myanmar. Historically, China has preferred dealing with strong military regimes rather than democracies that might invite Western influence. As China itself is not a democracy, it has rarely encouraged democratic systems elsewhere.

The recent tonal shift suggests a pragmatic recalibration. Many observers believe Beijing now doubts the junta's ability to restore full control and instead views elections as the most practical means to stabilize the country while protecting its economic projects and investments.

Myanmar's Strategic Value to China

Myanmar is more than just another neighbour—it is a vital overland gateway to the Indian Ocean, offering Beijing a crucial alternative to the vulnerable chokepoint of the Malacca Strait. Developing this economic corridor is a cornerstone of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China's vast infrastructure and connectivity programme.

The China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) links Yunnan Province with Myanmar's energy reserves, natural resources, and ports, creating a direct land bridge to the Indian Ocean. Myanmar also supplies critical raw materials, including rare earth elements,

natural gas, hydropower, and agricultural commodities. Over half of China's heavy rare-earth imports come from Myanmar—key inputs for high-technology and defence industries.

Security considerations also shape China's deep involvement. Beijing is wary of Western powers gaining a foothold near its borders. It fears that if a pro-Western or democratic government came to power in Myanmar, it could lead to sustained Western presence in the region—posing a long-term security challenge.

China's Double Game

China has carefully balanced relations with both the Myanmar military and ethnic armed organizations, many of which have gained territorial control since the 2021 coup. Beijing remains their chief weapons supplier and trading partner, giving it leverage over nearly every major actor in a fragmented Myanmar.

This strategy works like a hedge: if the junta collapses, China retains influence through these groups. Meanwhile, Beijing continues to distrust Myanmar's pro-democratic National Unity Government (NUG), viewing it as too closely aligned with the West, even though Western nations have provided it limited support.

Ultimately, China's goal is not peace or stability—it is strategic dominance. If maintaining that dominance requires keeping Myanmar weak, divided, and dependent, Beijing appears willing to do so.

As Myanmar heads toward its elections in late December and early January, the coming months will test not only the junta's credibility but also the resolve of the international community. Western countries must monitor developments closely to ensure that the electoral process does not become a façade legitimizing military control or advancing Beijing's interests under the guise of democracy.

ASEAN nations, too, cannot remain passive observers or merely issue condemnations. They must actively watch both Myanmar and China, as Beijing's growing involvement threatens to reshape Southeast Asia's political and economic landscape. Turning a blind eye would only embolden the authoritarian Xi Jinping government and allow it to dictate regional outcomes.

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



NEARLY 2,000 PEOPLE ARRESTED FOR CRITICIZING MYANMAR'S JUNTA ON SOCIAL MEDIA

A total of 1,993 people across Myanmar have been arrested for criticizing the junta on social media since the 2021 coup, according to a report released by Data for Myanmar, a research group.

The group said the findings, made public on 3 November, were based on a survey conducted over nearly four years, from February 2022 to the end of October 2025.

Among the 1,573 documented arrests, 499 were from Yangon Region, 458 from Mandalay Region, 258 from Bago Region, 125 from Ayeyarwady Region, 122 from Magway Region, and 111 from Shan State, the report stated.

Data for Myanmar also noted that 25 people were arrested in October under the Election Protection Law for criticizing the junta's planned election on social media.

The Election Protection Law, enacted on 29 July, has led to the arrest of nearly 90 people within the past

three months, according to figures released by the military commission.

Lt-Gen Tun Tun Naung, the junta's Home Affairs minister and chairman of the Central Committee on Security Supervision for the Multiparty Democracy General Election, said on 31 October that a total of 88 individuals – 83 men and 5 women – were arrested in 40 cases for alleged propaganda and agitation activities deemed to threaten election security. His statement appeared in junta-controlled newspapers on 1 November.

Since the law's introduction, the junta has continued arresting individuals who post, share, or react to anti-election content on social media.

According to the military-controlled Union Election Commission, Phase 1 of the planned election is scheduled to take place in 102 townships on 28 December 2025, followed by Phase 2 in 100 townships on 11 January 2026.



APHR URGES ASEAN TO REJECT JUNTA ELECTIONS AND SUPPORT MYANMAR'S DEMOCRATIC FORCES

On 3 November, the ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) issued a statement after the 47th ASEAN Summit. At the Pathways to Democracy Conference in Kuala Lumpur, regional lawmakers and civil society leaders called for decisive action from ASEAN to restore democracy in Myanmar.

The text of the statement is as follows.

Days after ASEAN leaders concluded the 47th annual Summit, Southeast Asian lawmakers gathered in Kuala Lumpur with one message; restoration of democracy in Myanmar cannot wait. The Pathways to Democracy Conference brought together legislators, civil society leaders and allies determined to move beyond performative diplomacy and push ASEAN bloc towards concrete, principled action under the Philippines' 2026 Chairship.

The conference came at a pivotal moment, directly following the 47th ASEAN Summit where the Myanmar crisis once again dominated discussions but failed in realizing tangible and urgent progress.

In fact, APHR member lawmakers called for ASEAN to adopt a bolder, people-centered approach to democracy and humanitarian response in Myanmar, grounded in regional solidarity and moral responsibility.

Mercy Chriesty Barends, APHR Chairperson and Member of the House of Representatives of Indonesia, delivered a powerful message of shared purpose, "we see you, we hear you, we stand by you [in] your struggle for democracy. We will not ever abandon you. Your fight is our fight, not because it is easy but because it is right."

Wong Chen, APHR Board Member and Member of the Malaysian Parliament, emphasized that democracy extends beyond politics or diplomacy, "while governments and diplomats negotiate, we parliamentarians, civil society actors and citizens have a different but equally vital role to play," he reminded. "Democratization is also social, educational and cultural; it requires rebuilding trust, healing divisions and restoring the idea that governments exist to serve people, not power."

Sarah Jane Elago, APHR Member and Member of the Philippine House of Representatives called for a people-centered stance. "As ASEAN transitions leadership, the voices of Myanmar's people that includes the Rohingya must not fade into silence. Their struggle for genuine peace and democracy is the region's collective responsibility."

Throughout the conference, participants expressed deep frustration with ASEAN's failed Five-Point Consensus and called for stronger accountability mechanisms. Lawmakers urged the regional bloc to engage directly with Myanmar's democratic forces and ethnic groups, restrict the junta's access to funding, arms and jet fuel and ensure that humanitarian aid reaches displaced communities including Rohingya refugees.

Kannavee Suebsang, APHR Member and Member of the Thai Parliament, added that parliamentarians must not be constrained by diplomatic silence, "we cannot have the same diplomatic constraints as governments. Parliamentarians have a duty to speak out clearly and collectively against the situation in Myanmar."

APHR stresses that support for Myanmar's democracy is not merely a diplomatic ceremony but a moral imperative. The sham elections must not be recognized in any shape or form; and when we talk about democracy, no one must be left behind, including the Rohingya people. A new constitution for Myanmar must be for all its peoples.



CRPH WELCOMES NEW ZEALAND PARLIAMENT'S REJECTION MYANMAR JUNTA'S SHAM ELECTION

On 7 November, the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), representing Myanmar's elected lawmakers, praised the New Zealand Parliament's resolution condemning the military junta's upcoming election and supporting the democratic struggle of the Myanmar people.

The statement is as follows.

The Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) and the elected representatives of Myanmar in 2020 election welcome the unanimous adoption of the resolution regarding military junta's planned elections by the New Zealand Parliament on 5 November 2025. We also thank the mover of the resolution, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rt. Hon. Winston Peters. This action is a good initiative for the global parliamentary community to reject military junta's elections as these cannot be credible and meaningful elections under this current situation.

This resolution demonstrates, once again, the New Zealand Parliament's democratic solidarity and support for the people of Myanmar. It also reflects the true will of the people of Myanmar and strong principles of democracy and human rights of both parliament and government of New Zealand.

Junta's planned elections are only elections of military generals to legitimize their unlawful military rule and cannot be considered as a path to peace and democratic transition as over 3.5 million are internally displaced and millions have been forced to flee from the country. In addition, the junta has continued its unspeakable violent acts – including deadly airstrikes

and largely restricted freedom of speech in multiple ways. At least 99 citizens including famous artists have been arrested for online criticism, social media posts, and even reacting to Facebook posts under their General Election Protection Law.

Behind these undemocratic elections, the junta continues to permit and benefit from online scamming operations inside Myanmar targeting the citizens of countries around the world. These criminal operations have destabilized international peace, security and rule of law. Supporting the junta's elections and accepting the results will further undermine democracy, endangers global security and stability.

The very first critical steps for peacebuilding in Myanmar are ending the military junta's ongoing violence and releasing all unjustly detainees including civilian officials – President U Win Myint and State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. These are also required under the United Nations Security Council resolution (2669) and ASEAN Five-Point Consensus on Myanmar.

The global parliament organization – the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) at the recent 151st Assembly held in October 2025 has continued its recognition of the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw as its parliamentary interlocutor. Therefore, we urge all parliaments to take similar or stronger actions as standing in solidarity with us – the elected parliamentarians in 2020 and the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) as well as our own citizens we represent.



PPP CONFIRMS ARREST OF ELECTION CANDIDATE AND HIS SON OVER MURDER CHARGE IN SOUTHERN SHAN STATE

The People's Pioneer Party (PPP) has confirmed that its candidate, U Sai Shwe Htee, and his son, Sai Kyaw Soe Moe, have been arrested and charged with murder following the death of a man accused of theft in Aye Tharyar Township, southern Shan State.

The incident occurred on the night of 4 November, when the father and son allegedly beat to death a man named Law Tar, also known as Sai Tun Sar, after he was caught stealing chickens from U Sai Shwe Htee's house, according to local sources.

PPP vice chairman U Saw Han Aye said U Sai Shwe Htee is running as a candidate under the proportional representation (PR) system and confirmed that several others are also contesting under the same system for the party.

Both U Sai Shwe Htee and his son have been detained at Aye Tharyar Police Station and are facing charges of murder and aiding and abetting a crime, according to the PPP statement.

In a separate development, PPP chairperson Daw Thet Thet Khaing has been removed from the candidate list for the upcoming military-backed elections for violating Section 8(d) of the Election Law, which stipulates that candidates must be free from improper public or private obligations.

Daw Thet Thet Khaing has appealed to the junta's Election Commission to review the decision, but no ruling has yet been announced regarding her reinstatement.



French President Emmanuel Macron.
Photo: AFP

MACRON REQUESTS IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF AUNG SAN SUU KYI

French President Emmanuel Macron has urged Myanmar's military junta to immediately release detained democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, expressing deep concern over reports of her deteriorating health in prison.

In a letter sent to the 80-year-old Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Macron said he was "very concerned" by information from her son, Kim Aris, about her worsening condition and lack of medical care in what he called an "unfair detention."

He reiterated France's call for the "immediate and unconditional release" of Suu Kyi, former president Win Myint, and all others jailed for political reasons since the February 2021 coup.

Macron said the coup had "flouted" Myanmar's democratic aspirations and plunged the country into "a long-term crisis with dramatic consequences for its populations and neighbouring states." He pledged France's support for "paths to peace charted by legitimate political leaders."

Aris welcomed Macron's intervention, saying it was "hugely appreciated" and should spur broader international action. He revealed in September that his mother was suffering from heart problems requiring urgent treatment, claims the junta dismissed as "fabrications."

Suu Kyi, who led Myanmar's elected government until the 2021 military takeover, is serving 27 years in detention on charges she denies.



Kim Aris. Photo: AFP

KIM ARIS THANKS FRANCE FOR SUPPORTING MYANMAR'S DEMOCRATIC STRUGGLE

On 3 November, Kim Aris, the son of imprisoned democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, issued a statement from London expressing heartfelt gratitude to President Emmanuel Macron, the Government of France, and the people of France for their steadfast support for Myanmar's struggle for freedom, democracy, and human rights.

The text of the statement continues below.

Kim Aris, son of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, expresses his profound gratitude to President Emmanuel Macron, the Government of France, and the people of France for their enduring support and compassion toward the struggle for freedom, democracy, and human rights in Burma.

During a recent meeting with Mr. Christian LECHERVY, Special Envoy for Myanmar, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the French Government, Kim received a personal letter from President Macron addressed to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. In his message, President Macron conveyed his deep concern about her deteriorating health and the lack of access to appropriate medical care during her unjust detention, a situation France has consistently and publicly condemned.

President Macron reaffirmed France's call for the immediate and unconditional release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, President U Win Myint, and all political

prisoners detained since the military coup of February 1, 2021. He also reiterated France's unwavering support for the democratic and federal aspirations of the Burmese people, the restoration of the rule of law, and the peaceful development of Burma.

As a nation with a long history of defending liberty, France once again demonstrated its commitment to stand beside the Burmese people in their pursuit of freedom, dignity, and peace.

Kim Aris expressed his deep appreciation, stating:

"I am profoundly grateful to President Macron, the French government, and the people of France for their compassion, courage, and continued support for my mother and the people of Burma. My mother, now elderly and unwell, has spent much of her life deprived of freedom for the sake of her country. Her release is not only a matter of justice and humanity but also essential for Burma's freedom and peace. France's voice of conscience reminds the world that compassion and moral courage can guide us through even the darkest times. My sincere thanks also go to Ambassador Christian LECHERVY for his kind assistance and efforts in facilitating this communication."

Kim Aris reaffirmed his determination to continue his advocacy for the freedom and well-being of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and for a peaceful and democratic Burma where truth, compassion, and justice prevail.

MYANMAR REVOLUTIONARY FORCES ATTACK POLICE OUTPOST IN MAGWAY REGION, KILLING AT LEAST SEVEN OFFICERS

A police outpost in Yè Nan Thar village, Kàmma Township, Thayet District, Magway Region, was attacked by Myanmar revolutionary forces on 6 November, leaving at least seven police officers dead, according to the Thayet District Battalion (4) of the People's Defense Force under Military Region (1).

The assault began at around 6 am when the revolutionary forces stormed the fortified outpost located along the Thayet-Kàmma road.

"We can say seven police were killed based on what we witnessed. There might be more fatalities than that, and there were also injuries," Ko Myat, the Information and Public Relations Officer of Battalion (4), Thayet District, told Mizzima.

The outpost was reportedly manned by around 30 personnel led by a captain and protected by fences and brick bunkers. During the two-and-a-half-hour battle, the attackers seized four of the six bunkers before withdrawing due to the threat of air strikes and possible reinforcements.

Battalion (4) confirmed in a statement issued on 7 November that two members of the revolutionary forces were killed in the fighting.

Following the attack, the Myanmar junta deployed joint forces from the Directorate of Defence Industries (Ka Pa Sa 12) and local units to rescue personnel by

both land and water routes, reportedly firing heavy weapons indiscriminately.

Air strikes by a jet fighter caused explosions near Sone Kone and Thit Ngote Ta Htaung villages in Kàmma Township, destroying a bridge along the Thayet-Kàmma road.

At the same time, revolutionary forces launched five 122mm rockets at Ka Pa Sa (12), four of which struck and exploded inside the defense industry compound. The extent of the damage is still under investigation, an official from the Thayet District Battalion said.

Ka Pa Sa (12) retaliated with heavy weapons, which hit Nyaung Pin Thar village in Thayet Township, severely injuring a woman and damaging houses. Shells also landed in Pa Zin Nake and Oak Pone villages, causing fires and destruction.

The Yè Nan Thar police outpost serves as a key checkpoint for transporting arms and ammunition from the Directorate of Defence Industries. It is also responsible for local security, election oversight, and gambling operations, according to Ko Myat.

The Thayet District Battalion (4) has warned civilians to avoid travel along the Thayet-Kàmma road, citing the risk of further attacks and military reinforcement operations.



FIVE CIVILIANS KILLED, NINE INJURED IN MYANMAR MILITARY AIRSTRIKES ON PONNAGYUN TOWNSHIP

Five civilians were killed and nine others injured when the Myanmar junta carried out two airstrikes and artillery attacks on villages in Ponnagyun Township, Rakhine State, on the morning of 7 November, according to local residents.

At around 11:30 am, a jet fighter from the Military Commission dropped two consecutive bombs on Yoe Tayoke village, killing four women and one man, local sources said. Three women and four men from the same village were also injured in the attack.

Around the same time, two more bombs were dropped on Aung Phyu Pyin village, injuring one woman, according to reports from residents.

"When I heard the sound of the plane approaching, the bomb dropped immediately. Everyone was terrified and ran for cover as the aircraft launched its strikes. Afterward, it circled overhead once or twice," a resident told Mizzima.

Earlier, at around 11 am, a 55-year-old man was injured when a 120 mm artillery shell fired from the Sittwe-based Light Infantry Battalion 344 struck Kwan Taung village in Ponnagyun Township, local residents said.

"The children are suffering so much. People are helpless and don't know what to do. They're brutally dropping bombs on civilian areas," one local resident said, describing the aftermath.

"There are people whose flesh is scattered and their limbs are completely torn off. There are also people who were buried without their heads," he added.

The latest attacks follow a series of airstrikes carried out by the Military Commission on 30 and 31 October across Kyaukphyu, Ponnagyun, and Rathedaung townships in Rakhine State.

On 30 October, a bombing in Out Zee Kai village in Moe Sai Kyun, Rathedaung Township, killed an elderly man and injured two others. Later that afternoon, around 4 pm, two 500-pound bombs were dropped on Zin Chaung Khon Bwe village in Kyaukphyu Township, killing five civilians, including two women, and injuring more than ten others.

On 31 October, a military airstrike struck Pannila village in Ponnagyun Township, killing four displaced people — including two children — and injuring six.



Photo: Supplied

EIGHT MYANMAR JUNTA PERSONNEL KILLED IN PDF ATTACK ON CHECKPOINT IN MYINGYAN TOWNSHIP

At least eight members of the military junta, including a village administrator, were killed and several others injured when People's Defence Force (PDF) groups launched an attack on a checkpoint operated by junta troops and Pyu Saw Htee militias in Lae Thit village, Myingyan township, Mandalay Region, according to a statement released on 5 November by the Zero Guerrilla Force of Myingyan District Battalion 7.

The clash occurred at around 2 pm on 4 November and lasted about 20 minutes, said Ko Thet Gyi, the leader of the Zero Guerrilla Force.

"We were in face-to-face combat, and two or three of them were killed instantly. Then, they ran into a bunker in disorder. One of our fighters fired an RPG, which hit the bunker directly and nobody was able to move," he said.

Thet Gyi added that although PDF fighters tried to collect weapons after the attack, they were forced to retreat when they learned that three junta trucks carrying reinforcements from the nearby Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) 15 were approaching.

About 50 junta personnel, including Pyu Saw Htee militia members, police, and soldiers, were normally stationed at the Lae Thit village checkpoint, but only around 20 were present during the attack. One of the

dead was identified as Ko Min, also known as Ngamin, the local village administrator who had served under the junta for several years, according to the Zero Guerrilla Force.

The group said eight junta personnel were killed, though the death toll could rise as several of the injured were in critical condition. Independent verification of the casualties has not yet been possible.

The Lae Thit checkpoint, located on the Myingyan-Tada U-Mandalay road about two miles from the LIB 15 camp, is considered strategically important for the junta.

"They won't abandon that gate since it is strategically significant to them. I believe they'll repair and reinforce it," Ko Thet Gyi said.

Following the attack, junta troops reportedly conducted searches, detained locals, and raided nearby villages.

The revolutionary forces said they captured two junta informants during their withdrawal and handed them over to the district People's Defence Team (PDT).

According to the Zero Guerrilla Force statement, the operation was led by the commander of Peacock Soldier Zero Column 5, in coordination with Yangon Ah Kyi Kaung Command 1 and Shwe Kan Thar Column 2.

Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA ACCUSED OF TARGETING CIVILIANS AND CROPS IN KARENNI STATE, RAISING FAMINE FEARS

The Karenni Human Rights Group (KnHRG) has accused the Myanmar junta of deliberately targeting civilians and displaced communities in Karenni State, obstructing their ability to harvest crops in what the group described as an attempt to cause food shortages that could lead to famine.

According to a report released by KnHRG on 5 November, the junta launched artillery strikes on farmland and used drones to attack civilians harvesting their crops throughout October.

The attacks were concentrated in Hpruso and Pekon townships, where one person was killed and three others were injured in Hpruso, KnHRG founder Ko Banyar told Mizzima.

"As many have heard, the Military Commission entered Demoso town and moved toward Hpruso. They are now stationed in a village on the other side of the road," said Ko Banyar. "When local residents go to harvest their rice and monsoon crops, the military attacks them with drones."

Despite the ongoing attacks, displaced residents and farmers continue to risk their lives to harvest their crops, according to KnHRG. The group reported that large numbers of military troops have advanced into agricultural areas across Karenni State, reducing crop cultivation and preventing farmers from harvesting due to escalating security threats.

Farmers working in the fields have also been kidnapped, held hostage, and tortured, leaving them in fear for their lives and the safety of their families, KnHRG said.

The group warned that the deliberate targeting of food sources has severely affected both local residents and displaced people, raising the risk of widespread hunger.

Ko Banyar estimated that with agricultural productivity sharply down this year, a potential famine could affect between 40,000 and 50,000 people across nearly all internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in Karenni State.

"I can say we have never faced such a dire situation in our state," he said. "Over the past four or five years, we have worked with civil society organizations and relevant governments to provide assistance wherever possible. However, international aid has recently declined, and prices have soared. The military council has blocked nearly all transportation and food supplies, worsened shortages and driving up costs."

With conditions for displaced communities expected to deteriorate further, Ko Banyar called on Myanmar citizens and the international community to provide urgent humanitarian support.

KnHRG also reported that the junta has been reinforcing its presence and establishing new military lines in Karenni State, sparking intensified clashes with resistance forces.

Additionally, the group said the military and the Pa-O National Army (PNO) have repeatedly burned civilian homes without justification. Human rights violations by the junta in October alone left seven people dead and 21 injured, including children, according to KnHRG.

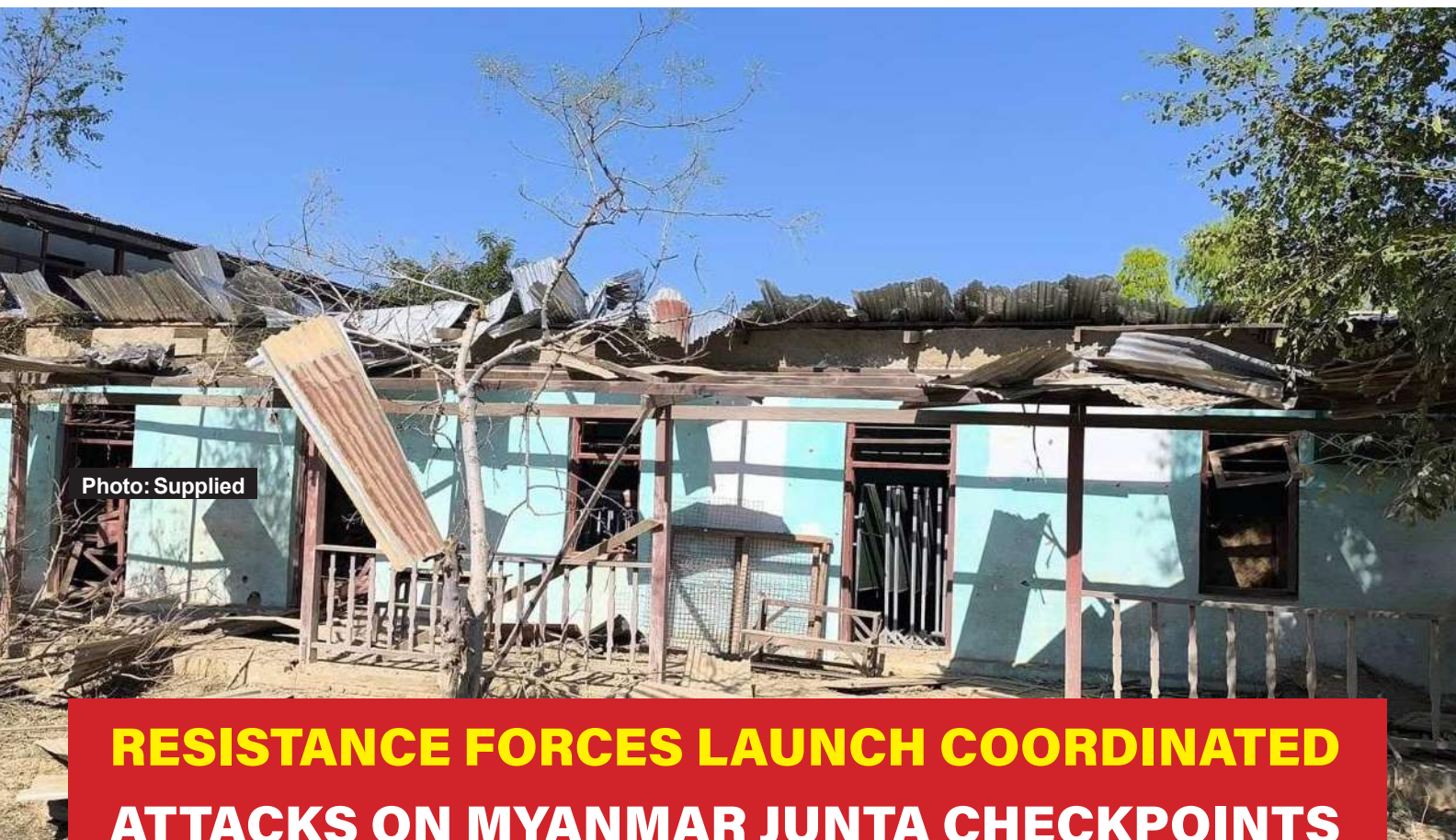


Photo: Supplied

RESISTANCE FORCES LAUNCH COORDINATED ATTACKS ON MYANMAR JUNTA CHECKPOINTS IN TAUNGTHA, KILLING THREE SOLDIERS

Resistance forces carried out simultaneous attacks on junta checkpoints at the entrance of Taungtha town in Myingyan District, Mandalay Region, early on 5 November, killing three junta soldiers and injuring several others, according to Myingyan District People's Defence Force (PDF) Battalion 3.

The coordinated assaults began around 6 am, targeting three junta positions, the Makyiye checkpoint, the Peikthanoe Mountain outpost, and the railway gate at the Zagyan village exit, the battalion said.

Bo Mu Tu, the spokesperson for Myingyan District PDF Battalion 3, told Mizzima that junta troops stationed at the Makyiye checkpoint fled with their weapons as resistance fighters advanced.

"When we entered Makyiye, they had already taken their weapons and fled. We found two people inside a bunker with hand grenades and another body in front of it, making three in total," Bo Mu Tu said.

Although no weapons or ammunition were seized as the junta troops escaped, resistance forces later confiscated a jammer and several generators during a clearing operation before setting fire to the bunkers to prevent reuse.

"We could have used those bunkers to hold a ground position, but an airstrike would have endangered civilians in the town, and we wouldn't have been able to hold it for long. So, we decided to destroy them," he added.

The Peikthanoe Mountain outpost was also attacked at the same time, with the resistance capturing 11 of 12 bunkers, though no bodies were found. Reports indicated that several junta soldiers were wounded, according to Battalion 3.

At the railway gate in Zagyan village, junta troops exchanged fire from their bunkers before the resistance forces withdrew.

Following the coordinated attacks, junta troops reportedly sealed off Taungtha's entry and exit routes and imposed tight inspections across the area.

In apparent retaliation, junta forces launched an airstrike on Thanbo village around 7 pm the same day, killing a woman, Myingyan District Battalion 3 said.

Resistance sources added that the junta currently maintains control only over Taungtha's urban areas, while the rest of the township remains under the control of resistance forces.



Photo: AFP

MYANMAR JUNTA TROOPS DETAIN AT LEAST 40 RESIDENTS IN WETLET TOWNSHIP RAID

Myanmar junta troops detained at least 40 residents after storming Moakkadee village in Wetlet Township, Sagaing Region, early on 3 November, according to local sources.

A representative from the Wetlet Information Network told Mizzima that a column of about 50 troops from Ywar Thar Gyi, a Pyu Saw Htee militia village in western Wetlet, raided Moakkadee village around 6 am.

"They left Ywar Thar Gyi during the night and suddenly entered Moakkadee village early this morning, leaving residents no time to escape, so they were arrested," the official said, adding that the identities of those detained had not yet been verified.

A local People's Defence Force (PDF) official confirmed that about 40 civilians had been taken, saying the arrests occurred alongside the movement of the junta column.

After the detentions, the troops reportedly withdrew

to Hle U Gyi Kone village by the afternoon, according to the Wetlet Information Network.

Ywar Thar Gyi, a pro-junta Pyu Saw Htee militia village, has been under siege by local resistance groups since October. The junta has carried out air reinforcement operations in the area, according to resistance sources.

On 1 November, resistance fighters said they opened fire on a junta Mi-17 helicopter attempting to reinforce Ywar Thar Gyi village.

"Two Mi-17 helicopters tried to land twice, and during the second attempt, we hit one of them. The other couldn't land and retreated," a revolutionary fighter said.

Clashes have continued as resistance forces jointly attack Ywar Thar Gyi, while junta troops attempt to advance through surrounding areas, local sources said.

A photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a white shirt, looking down at a white smartphone she is holding in her hands. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be an outdoor setting with some structures.

HRM WARNS OF GENDERED “DIGITAL DICTATORSHIP” FUELLED BY AI SURVEILLANCE

Human Rights Myanmar (HRM) has accused Myanmar’s junta of transforming the digital space into a gendered battlefield where women face targeted repression through surveillance, online abuse, and the weaponized AI.

In a new submission to the UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls, HRM said the junta has built a “digital dictatorship” since the 2021 coup, combining internet controls, data surveillance, and AI-powered technologies to silence dissent – particularly that of women and girls.

The report, titled “Gender Equality, the Digital Space and AI in Myanmar,” argues that the junta’s digital repression is “inherently gendered,” amplifying patriarchal norms to exclude women from political and public life.

According to the report, Myanmar leads the world in internet shutdowns, with frequent blackouts timed to coincide with protests or military operations. The junta has blocked social media platforms, inflated mobile data prices, and expanded censorship laws – such as Article 505A of the Penal Code – to criminalize online speech. HRM said these measures disproportionately harm women, who already face lower income and digital literacy levels.

The group warned that the 2025 Cybersecurity Law grants sweeping powers to monitor citizens, compel service providers to hand over user data, and prosecute online dissent. AI-powered CCTV networks supplied by Chinese firms Huawei, Dahua, and Hikvision now blanket major cities, creating what HRM called “open-air prisons” that deter women from participating in protests or public life.

The report documents a sharp rise in technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV). Analysis of 1.6 million social-media posts showed politically motivated abuse against women increased fivefold between 2021 and 2022. Pro-military networks routinely “doxx” women activists and journalists, releasing personal information alongside sexualized disinformation and threats of arrest, rape, or death.

HRM urged the UN and member states to condemn the junta’s digital coup, sanction foreign technology suppliers, and compel social-media companies to curb abuse by investing in Myanmar-language moderation. It also called for expanded international support for digital-security initiatives protecting women human-rights defenders and for accountability mechanisms to preserve evidence of digital crimes.

THAZAUNGDAING FESTIVAL BRINGS FLEETING LIGHT AMID ONGOING CONFLICT IN MYANMAR

Photo: AFP

Despite ongoing armed conflicts and political turmoil, people across Myanmar celebrated the Thazaungdaing Festival – the full moon day marking the end of the rainy season with traditional festivities, religious offerings, and a longing for peace.

Known as the Festival of Lights, Thazaungdaing is one of Myanmar's most cherished occasions. It falls on the full moon day of the lunar month of Tazaungmon, usually in November, and symbolizes the offering of lights and robes to Buddhist monks after the Kathina season.

In cities such as Yangon, Mandalay, and Naypyidaw, streets and pagodas shimmer with candlelight and colourful electric lanterns. Families prepare traditional snacks, make merit at monasteries, and take part in communal robe-weaving ceremonies that last through the night. Young people release hot-air lanterns carrying candles and prayers into the night sky, reviving an age-old custom that once symbolized the lifting of worries and wishes toward the heavens.

For many city dwellers, the festival provides a rare moment of relief and unity amid years of political and economic uncertainty.

"Some people are enjoying the festival because they haven't had any fun at all since the coup. It's been nearly five years, and everyone is exhausted. People in conflict areas are suffering the most, but even those in big cities are struggling in their own ways. Sometimes people just need a little joy, even for a moment and this festival gives that chance. It's also a time to make merit

and pray for better days," a local in Yangon said.

However, in conflict-torn regions such as Sagaing Region and Chin, Kachin, and Rakhine States, the mood was far more subdued. In areas where airstrikes and clashes between the military junta and resistance forces continue, villagers could not freely celebrate the festival. Instead of lanterns lighting the night, darkness covered many villages that remain without electricity or safety.

A resident from Sagaing Region said, "We couldn't hold any celebrations or light candles outside. Everyone stayed quiet in their houses because drones were flying over the area."

In displacement camps scattered across northern and western Myanmar, internally displaced people marked the full moon day by praying silently and sharing small offerings of rice and snacks – simple gestures symbolizing endurance and hope.

For many, Thazaungdaing this year became not only a religious celebration but also an act of quiet resistance, a reminder of the light that continues to flicker amid widespread suffering.

As the sound of festival fireworks echoed faintly in some cities and the distant roar of artillery rolled through rural hills, the contrast between peace and conflict in Myanmar was stark. Yet across the country, the soft glow of candles and lanterns served as a fragile but enduring symbol of resilience and faith – a light that refuses to fade, even in the darkest times.



Photo: CJ

YAY PU SAYADAW U EINDAKA PASSES AWAY IN MOGOK AT 55

Yay Pu Sayadaw U Eindaka, a revered Buddhist monk who was arrested for trying to stop the junta from violently dispersing protesters following the 2021 coup, passed away in Mogok Township on the evening of 23 November, according to sources close to him.

Sayadaw U Eindaka, the abbot of Yay Pu Monastery in Yay Pu ward, Mogok Township, was arrested on 11 March 2021 and sentenced to three years in prison under Section 505(a) on 9 April.

He was released under an amnesty on 18 October 2021 but later went into hiding due to instability in the region. When he returned to his monastery in December 2024, he began suffering from a severe neurological disease, according to locals familiar with his situation.

"The Sayadaw has been bedridden since December of last year. He couldn't get up at all. It seemed like a brain tumour. His remains are still at the monastery, and we are still discussing funeral arrangements," said a person close to Yay Pu Sayadaw.

Sayadaw U Eindaka was 55 years old at the time of his death. Locals said his passing is a great loss, as he stood firmly with the people and devoted himself to social and educational causes, including running a free school for local children.

"We political prisoners all know how the Sayadaw lived both inside and outside prison. His passing is a great loss not only for Mogok but for the entire country," said a former political prisoner close to the Sayadaw.

Yay Pu Sayadaw was also active during the 2007 Saffron Revolution and had joined local protests against the construction of the Gem Association office in Mone Inn, Mogok.

In 2015, he was charged by the jade department for allegedly illegal jade mining while clearing land for monastery expansion and separately sued under the Forest Law for timber used in monastery construction. He spent about a year in Obo Prison due to those cases.



Aung San Suu Kyi. Photo: AFP

THE WORLD'S SILENCE AND THE WOMAN WHO WOULD NOT BE SILENT: AUNG SAN SUU KYI AND THE WORK OF TRUTH

ALAN CLEMENTS

There are moments when truth pierces history's distortions like lightning through fog—sudden, irreversible, illuminating everything.

At the request of Kim Aris—son of Aung San Suu Kyi—Fergus Harlow's Letter to Religions for Peace Italy and its accompanying fifteen-minute video were created as acts of service and solidarity. They are acts of conscience in an age of moral sleepwalking—unfiltered, unafraid, unforgettable.

I urge every journalist, faith leader, and citizen of conscience to take those fifteen minutes and watch. It may alter how you see not only Aung San Suu Kyi, but the very idea of moral courage itself.

Watch the video and read the letter. <https://useyourfreedom.org/religions-for-peace/>

Fergus Harlow—a forensic journalist, scholar, and moral historian—is my long-time colleague, co-author, and friend. His life's work is devoted to Myanmar's struggle for freedom and democracy. Together, we co-created Burma's Voices of Freedom, a four-volume oral history documenting the conscience of a nation under siege.

His recent letter and film culminate that work—the flowering of years of devotion distilled into one unflinching act of truth-telling. They restore integrity to one of the most misrepresented figures of our time and expose the global complicity that allowed her vilification to eclipse understanding.

Let us be clear: Aung San Suu Kyi was never silent. Not on the Rohingya crisis. Not on her people's suffering. Not on the imperatives of peace and reconciliation. Her speeches and policies were documented, verified—not rumor, but record. Yet global media, unable or unwilling to hold complexity, chose caricature over conscience. It was easier to condemn her than comprehend her; easier to flatten a human into an abstraction than face the world's own failure.

Harlow's work restores that depth. It gives us back the woman behind the myth—not an icon, but a human who embodied freedom under tyranny and now endures her fifth year of solitary confinement, reportedly gravely ill and needing urgent cardiac care.

Aung San Suu Kyi's crime was not complicity. It was conscience. She awakened moral intelligence in a culture addicted to obedience, revealing tyranny's real

battleground: the mind. For this, she has been silenced and imprisoned—along with over twenty-two thousand political prisoners in Myanmar. Yet her captors cannot imprison her moral clarity. Her revolution remains a spiritual one—rooted in forgiveness, courage, and the radical belief that love can disarm hate.

As part of the Use Your Freedom campaign, Kim Aris hand-delivered *The Voice of Hope: Aung San Suu Kyi from Prison – and a Letter to a Dictator*—a book Fergus Harlow and I co-created—to Religions for Peace Italy. It was no symbolic act but an invocation: a call to faith communities to defend truth where governments fail.

Burma's revolution is not a distant tragedy. It is a mirror—reflecting our moral choices: to be silent or speak; to look away or see; to comply or awaken.

For years, commentators claimed Suu Kyi was “silent” during the Rohingya crisis. The record shows otherwise. She spoke to the BBC, VOA, and CNN-IBN; called for investigations; denounced violence; urged equal rights; and described the Rakhine tragedy as a “huge international calamity.” She labeled discriminatory laws “criminal” and “in breach of human rights.” She collaborated with the Annan Foundation on reconciliation and redevelopment, using “Rakhine Muslim” to reduce incendiary rhetoric that extremists exploited for more killing.

While condemned for nuance, the real genocide perpetrators—Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and his military cabal—remain free, unrepentant, signing repatriation agreements for refugees they created. The irony is grotesque: a Nobel Peace laureate imprisoned by mass murderers, while the world repeats her jailers' propaganda.

This is not mere political failure but moral collapse—a global poverty of imagination. Western media, missing the spiritual-political dimensions of Burma's revolution, reduced decades of sacrifice to headlines of betrayal. What they overlooked—and what Fergus refuses to let die—is reconciliation's heartbeat.

For Aung San Suu Kyi, reconciliation was sacred practice—forgiveness as statecraft, compassion as realism, dialogue as defiance. To misread that as weakness misunderstands nonviolence's architecture. She sought transformation, not vengeance. “Hatred can only be overcome by love,” she said, echoing the Buddha. Her politics extended her meditation: seeing through illusion to restore humanity, even in enemies.

This is why Fergus's letter matters. It restores moral clarity to a narrative hijacked by cynicism. It demands

those who vilified her confront their complicity. But I call not for apologies—for action. Use your freedom to demand hers. It is time for the immediate, unconditional release of Aung San Suu Kyi, President U Win Myint, U Win Htein, and all prisoners of conscience in Myanmar's prisons. Time to restore dignity to discourse and truth to the record.

Fergus Harlow's work is revelation—a moral autopsy of propaganda and power. His voice invites us beyond cynicism into empathy, recovering courage to care in a world numbed by algorithms and spectacle.

Fifteen minutes. That's all it takes to listen. Fifteen minutes to undo years of distortion. The video is testimony, restoring what propaganda erased: moral clarity's sound.

To leaders of nations who speak of freedom yet stay silent before tyranny: use your freedom. Speak her name. Demand her release. Governments trading with the junta while professing democracy stain their credibility. Journalists recycling false narratives become accomplices in censorship. Citizens who shrug risk forfeiting the conscience defining humanity.

Aung San Suu Kyi remains unjustly imprisoned. But her spirit—and those fighting for her—is unbroken. Fergus Harlow's letter, like her life, is fierce love: a reminder that truth, spoken with precision and compassion, can move mountains.

Read it. Watch it. Share it. <https://useyourfreedom.org/religions-for-peace/>

In doing so, you restore not just a woman's truth, but a nation's dignity—and perhaps the world's conscience.

About Alan Clements

*He was among the first Westerners to be ordained as a Buddhist monk in Burma, later expelled by the dictatorship. For decades he returned as a journalist to document human rights abuses until permanently blacklisted. He co-authored *The Voice of Hope* with Aung San Suu Kyi, *Burma: The Next Killing Fields?* (with a foreword by the Dalai Lama), and *Burma's Voices of Freedom* (with Fergus Harlow). He is also the author of *Unsilenced: Aung San Suu Kyi – Conversations from a Myanmar Prison* and *Conversation with a Dictator: A Challenge to the Authoritarian Assault*. He co-founded *UseYourFreedom.org*, a campaign advocating for Aung San Suu Kyi's release by gifting copies of these works, along with personal letters to world leaders.*

CHINA'S INFLUENCE EXPOSED AS MYANMAR TARGETS FRAUD STRONGHOLD

SUN LEE



The recent U.S. sanctions against the Prince Group and its chairman, Chen Zhi, have triggered a dramatic chain of events in Southeast Asia, culminating in Myanmar's military launching raids on KK Park, a notorious scam compound in Myawaddy. While the world watches the chaos unfold, a deeper, more sinister narrative emerges: the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its state apparatus have long nurtured and protected the very networks now under fire. The Prince Group saga is not merely a tale of cybercrime and human trafficking, it is a window into how Beijing's covert influence has enabled transnational criminal enterprises to flourish under the guise of economic development and regional diplomacy.

On October 14, 2025, the U.S. Department of Justice unsealed an indictment against Chen Zhi, the flamboyant chairman of the Prince Group, accusing him of orchestrating a vast criminal network involving forced labour, human trafficking, and cryptocurrency fraud. The indictment revealed that Chen controlled over \$15 billion in illicit Bitcoin assets and operated scam compounds across Cambodia and Myanmar,

where trafficked workers were forced to run online fraud operations targeting victims worldwide.

Chen's rise was meteoric. Originally from Fujian, China, he acquired Cambodian citizenship and was even granted the aristocratic title of "Duke." His conglomerate, the Prince Group, became a dominant force in Cambodia's real estate and finance sectors. But behind the glitzy façade lay a brutal system of exploitation, enabled by high-level political protection.

According to multiple corroborated reports from reputable sources, Chen's operations were not rogue endeavours. They were allegedly backed by China's Ministry of Public Security and Ministry of State Security, two of the most powerful arms of the CCP. These agencies provided cover and logistical support, allowing Chen to expand his operations with impunity.

Further reports suggest that Chen is related by marriage to Huang Kunming, the Party Secretary of Guangdong province and a key figure in Chinese leader Xi Jinping's inner circle. Allegations also link Chen to the

"Fujian faction" within Zhongnanhai, the CCP's central power base, where he is believed to have laundered money for elite families, including Xi's own. This web of connections raises troubling questions: Was the CCP merely turning a blind eye to Chen's crimes, or was it actively complicit? The evidence increasingly points to the latter.

The KK Park compound in Myawaddy, Myanmar, became ground zero for this unfolding drama. Long known as a hub for cybercrime and human trafficking, KK Park operated with impunity until the U.S. sanctions hit. Within days, the Myanmar military launched a relentless crackdown against the compound, levelling buildings and forcing over 2,000 people mostly Chinese and other neighbouring nationals to flee across the border into Thailand.

The timing was no coincidence. The Myanmar junta, under pressure from international scrutiny and perhaps seeking to carry favour with Washington, moved swiftly to dismantle the scam networks. Thai authorities, meanwhile, intercepted a truck carrying 60 Starlink satellite devices en route to Myawaddy, likely intended to support the scam operations. The crackdown was sudden, brutal, and effective, something years of Chinese diplomatic "warnings" had failed to achieve.

China's response to the U.S. sanctions and subsequent crackdowns has been conspicuously muted. There have been no strong condemnations, no offers of humanitarian aid for the fleeing Chinese nationals, and no public disavowal of Chen Zhi. This silence speaks volumes.

For years, Beijing has promoted its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a benevolent force for regional development. Yet in Cambodia and Myanmar, BRI-linked investments have often served as fronts for illicit

activities, from illegal casinos to scam compounds. The Prince Group was a poster child of this model lavishly funded, politically protected, and deeply embedded in local economies.

The U.S. action against Chen Zhi may mark a turning point in the fight against transnational cybercrime. But it also exposes the limits of China's soft power and the dangers of its opaque political economy. While Washington's sanctions achieved in days what Beijing failed to do in years, the question remains: will the CCP now distance itself from its criminal proxies, or simply find new ones?

Some Chinese netizens have already drawn their own conclusions. "After years of taking Chinese medicine with no effect, one shot of Western medicine cured it," one user quipped online. Others were more direct: "It's not that the CCP couldn't handle Myawaddy. It's that the CCP itself is the instigator and the force behind it."

The Prince Group scandal is more than a regional crime story, it is a geopolitical parable. It reveals how authoritarian regimes can weaponize corruption, exploitation, and digital fraud to project influence and accumulate wealth. It also shows the power of targeted international action to disrupt these networks.

As the dust settles over KK Park and scam centre refugees stream into Thailand, the world must ask: how many more "Prince Groups" are operating under Beijing's shadow? And how long will the international community tolerate a global scam empire built on the suffering of the voiceless?

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



Photo: AFP

MYANMAR SCAM HUB SWEEP TRIGGERS FRAUDSTER RECRUITMENT RUSH

Recent raids on one of Myanmar's most notorious internet scam hubs sparked a recruitment rush as fleeing workers scrambled to enlist at nearby fraud factories, experts and insiders told AFP.

Online scam hubs have mushroomed across Southeast Asia, draining unsuspecting victims of billions of dollars annually in elaborate romance and crypto cons.

Many workers are trafficked into the internet sweatshops, analysts say, but others go willingly to secure attractive salaries.

Late October raids roiled Myanmar fraud factory KK Park, sending more than 1,500 people fleeing over the border to Thailand -- but many stayed behind to pursue new opportunities in the black market.

A Chinese voluntary scam worker told AFP that a few hundred people who left KK Park arrived at his own compound three kilometres (two miles) away on October 23 -- lured by monthly salaries of up to \$1,400.

The man spoke on condition of anonymity for security reasons, but shared with AFP a live location on a messaging app showing he was in Myanmar, near the Thai border.

"Some people will be picked up by unscrupulous bosses, while others will be picked up by good companies," he said. "It all depends on your luck."

Jason Tower, senior expert at the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, told AFP many KK Park scammers have simply been "re-recruited" by other gangs.

"There are some people looking for a new location to engage in scamming from," he said. "They might see this as a job."

'Our chance to escape'

Webs of anonymous crypto payments and chronic under-reporting by embarrassed victims make losses to scam centres hard to quantify.

But victims in Southeast and East Asia alone were conned out of up to \$37 billion in 2023, according to a UN report, which said global losses were likely "much larger".

War-torn Myanmar's loosely governed border regions have proven particularly fertile ground for the hubs.

The embattled junta -- which seized power in a 2021 coup -- has been accused of turning a blind eye to scam centres enriching its domestic militia allies.

But it has also faced pressure to curb the black market by its international backer China, galled at hubs recruiting as well as targeting its citizens.

Last month, the junta said its troops had occupied around 200 buildings in KK Park and found more than 2,000 scammers.

Analysts say the raid was likely limited and heavily choreographed -- designed to vent pressure to take action without too badly denting profits.

But it nonetheless prompted an exodus of 1,500 people from 28 nationalities into Thailand, according to provincial Thai authorities.

Among them were around 500 Indian nationals and around 200 Filipinos.

Authorities face the daunting task of discerning trafficking victims from willing scammers.

Speaking to AFP on condition of anonymity, one Filipino man described fleeing KK Park on October 22 with around 30 compatriots as a pro-junta militia arrived to aid the crackdown.

"Everyone ran outside," he said. "This was our chance to escape."

Grabbing what few possessions he could, the man fled the compound he says he was trafficked into and crossed by boat to western Thailand.

Sold for scamming

With one expert estimating around 20,000 people had been working in KK Park -- the vast majority believed to be Chinese nationals -- those who fled to Thailand likely made up less than 10 percent.

But those who stayed behind are not necessarily willing participants.

After the KK Park exodus, the Chinese scammer at the nearby compound told AFP local armed groups scrambled to cash in -- with unemployed scammers "sold" to other operations for up to \$70,000.

Whether they are willing workers being headhunted or human trafficking victims is unclear.

The scammer who spoke to AFP reported hearing "booms every evening" after the raids, but dismissed it as "all for show" rather than a meaningful crackdown by Myanmar authorities.

And with the continuing flow of scam workers -- willing or coerced -- rights advocates say the problem can only be solved by targeting the Chinese bosses running the show.

"(They) must be arrested, prosecuted, and have all their assets seized," Jay Kritiya from the Civil Society Network for Human Trafficking Victims Assistance told AFP.

"That's the real crackdown."

AFP



CHINA ISSUES DEATH SENTENCES TO 5 MEMBERS OF MYANMAR GANG

China sentenced five people to death on Tuesday for their involvement in a violent criminal gang with fraud operations in Myanmar's Kokang region along the border, state media reported.

Scam compounds have flourished in Myanmar's lawless borderlands, staffed by foreigners -- many of them Chinese -- who often say they were trafficked and forced to swindle people online, part of a multibillion-dollar illicit industry.

Beijing has stepped up cooperation with Southeast Asian nations in recent months to crack down on the compounds, and thousands of people have been repatriated to China.

The crimes of the five people sentenced Tuesday had led to the "deaths of six Chinese nationals, one Chinese national's suicide and injuries to several others", official news agency Xinhua said, citing a court in the southern city of Shenzhen.

"The criminals were found to have built 41 compounds in the Kokang region," said Xinhua, adding that their activities included "telecom fraud, operating gambling dens, intentional homicide, organising and

coercing prostitution (and) organising others to illegally cross national borders".

The Shenzhen court also handed two other defendants death sentences with two-year reprieves -- a verdict that often results in life imprisonment.

Five defendants were given life imprisonment, while sentences ranging from three to 20 years were given to nine others.

In April, the United Nations warned that Chinese and Southeast Asian gangs are raking in tens of billions of dollars a year through cyber scam centres.

The industry was spreading to South America, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and some Pacific Islands, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime said.

The UN estimates that hundreds of thousands of people are working in scam centres globally.

In late September, a Chinese court issued death sentences to 16 members of a family-run gang with operations in Kokang -- five with two-year reprieves.

AFP



MYANMAR JUNTA AND KAREN BGF ACCUSED OF DESTROYING EVIDENCE IN KK PARK SCAM COMPOUND DEMOLITION

SAW HAN HTOO ZAW

Myanmar junta troops and the Karen Border Guard Force (BGF)/Karen National Army (KNA) have jointly demolished the notorious KK Park compound, a major hub for cross-border online scam operations, sparking allegations that crucial evidence of criminal activities is being deliberately destroyed.

According to technology experts and online scam monitors, members of scam gangs from various countries fled the 500-acre KK Park site on 22 October. The compound is located between Mae Hta Lay and Ingyin Myaing villages near Myawaddy town on the Thailand-Myanmar border.

Beginning 23 October, local residents reported that military and BGF/KNA troops were using excavators to demolish buildings inside the compound during the evenings.

Technology experts say the demolition is a systematic effort to destroy evidence linked to large-scale cybercrime and human trafficking.

“They are destroying all the servers, records, and communication equipment used in the online scam operations without seizing them as evidence. Those are crucial pieces of evidence,” a technology expert told Mizzima. “Selling the phones used for the scams to the public at low prices can also be seen as destroying evidence.”

Observers monitoring online scam operations confirmed that detention rooms, torture chambers, and dark rooms where human trafficking victims were reportedly confined, are being destroyed without documentation.

International media previously reported testimonies from escapees describing severe abuse inside KK Park.

“Every operational building had detention cells and dark rooms,” said a 30-year-old former security guard who once worked inside KK Park. “There were electric batons, barbed-wire canes, handcuffs, and crucifixion stands used for torture. If workers escaped and were caught, we had to send them back to those rooms.”

A Myanmar political analyst, who requested anonymity, criticized the junta for allegedly erasing evidence rather than pursuing justice.

“If they truly wanted to take action against these online scam networks, they would cooperate with the international community, preserve the evidence, and prosecute those responsible,” the analyst said. “Destroying the buildings without arresting the leaders shows this is an attempt to cover up.”

Junta spokesperson Major-General Zaw Min Tun recently accused the Karen National Union (KNU) of operating KK Park. The KNU has firmly denied the allegation.

“If the KNU had run the place, the Military Commission could present the evidence,” said a KNU member who spoke anonymously. “They’re destroying all the evidence because the area was actually operated by the BGF.”

A report by Justice For Myanmar stated that the BGF/KNA had been providing security for KK Park, where severe human rights abuses were committed.

U Saw Ba Oo Lay, spokesperson for the National Public Lawyers Union (NPLU) and a Supreme Court advocate, emphasized the importance of preserving physical evidence.

“Documentary evidence often carries more weight than testimony. Some news agencies already have detailed records of the detention rooms and torture items. It remains to be seen how this evidence will influence legal proceedings in the future,” he said.

The Thai government announced that more than 1,000 foreign nationals linked to the online scam syndicates who fled KK Park on 22 October have been detained after crossing the Moei River into Mae Sot, Thailand.

The junta has not released details on how many suspects have been arrested or whether the leaders of the operation are in custody.

According to Mizzima’s investigation, KK Park was established in 2019 and divided into six zones, employing over 40,000 foreign nationals and Myanmar citizens, in its online scam operations.

Local sources reported that some leaders, technology experts, and other syndicate members were later taken by BGF/KNA and DKBA troops to other compounds still operating under their control.



Children gesture from a damaged building in Gaza. Photo: AFP

US CIRCULATES DRAFT UN RESOLUTION FOR TRUMP'S GAZA PLAN

The United States on Wednesday presented a draft UN Security Council resolution to partner nations aimed at bolstering President Donald Trump's Gaza peace plan, including by greenlighting an international security force, Washington's mission said.

US Ambassador Mike Waltz shared the draft with the 10 elected members of the Security Council and several regional partners -- Egypt, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Turkey -- a spokesperson for the US mission said in a statement.

No date has been set to vote on the draft.

The US statement said the resolution "welcomes the Board of Peace," a transitional governing body for Gaza envisioned in Trump's 20-point plan, which he would chair.

It also "authorizes the International Stabilization Force" (ISF) outlined in the peace plan.

According to diplomatic sources, several countries have indicated their willingness to participate in the ISF, but insist on a Security Council mandate before actually deploying troops into the Palestinian territory.

"Under President Trump's bold leadership, the United States will again deliver results at the UN -- not endless talk," the US spokesperson said.

The creation of the international force was one part of the agreement that led to the fragile October 10 ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, following two years of devastating violence triggered by the October 7 attack.

Under the terms of the deal, troops would be drawn from mostly Arab and Muslim countries and deployed to Gaza to oversee security as the Israeli army withdraws.

"The parties have seized this historic opportunity to finally end decades of bloodshed and make the President's vision of lasting peace in the Middle East a reality," the US spokesperson added.

Subsequent phases of Trump's plan include further Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, disarmament of Hamas and reconstruction of the decimated territory.

AFP



GOING OFF SCRIPT

"This shit is real... This is not a dream. This is real."

Burmese actor and public figure Khar Ra (born Myo Htut Naing) traces a straight line through the facts of his life — a childhood in Mogok, studies in Yangon, a public career from 2014, the rupture of February 2021, months of hiding and an exit from the city, and an ongoing effort to keep help moving while speaking plainly about what he sees.

Khar Ra grew up on the west side of Mogok, a city known as "Ruby Land" which is ringed by mountains and shaped by gem trading. He remembers morning Buddhist chanting over loudspeakers and recalls that outsiders could not freely enter the town without local permission, given the sensitivity of the local trade. At home, despite the riches all around, money was tight. His father died from alcohol, his mother remarried and left, and, with no siblings, he lived among relatives. He carried one rule forward into adulthood — don't drink, don't smoke — and a private vow he told a friend before leaving: he would not return to Mogok unless he had become an artist.

Yangon offered a path he could act on. He enrolled at Dagon University and chose English because it opened work and communication. To pay rent, he translated, worked restaurant shifts, and took shortterm jobs. A friend pushed him toward a modeling contest; he arrived in borrowed clothes and treated the experience as training, watching how to meet the lens and hold attention. In 2014 he was named Mr. Asia Myanmar and later placed second runnerup at the regional Mr. Asia pageant. Those results

brought commercials, hosting work, music opportunities, and film auditions. From 2014 to 2020 he worked steadily across those fields, first in supporting roles, then leads, paying attention to how sets functioned and keeping up fight and stamina training so action scenes would read as credible. Khar Ra adds that censorship set clear limits in those years — profanity was barred even in gangster scripts, intimacy on screen was restricted entirely. He points proudly to his work in Dimensions, a sci-fi action project he calls Myanmar's first in its genre, and notes that it won a national Academy Award for Sound Design in 2018.

COVID shut productions down and then returned them under strict rules. He filmed a Canal+ television series through testing and masks, then caught the virus himself and lost taste and smell for about ten days before returning when production restarted.

The night of January 31, 2021, he and his girlfriend were mapping out a slate of films for the year ahead. By morning, the military coup had begun. Within days he joined rallies with '88 Generation figures, raised the three-finger salute, listened to car horns answer protest chants, and at 8 p.m. every evening he took part in the coordinated banging of pots and pans from apartment windows. By this time Khar Ra's celebrity status was more than established, and he chose to redirect his platforms toward practical needs. He raised money for medicine, rent for safe houses, transport for escape routes; all while posting verified requests and highlighting the frontline work of teachers and medics. "We're in this together, and we will fight until the end, together," he says, recalling his optimism at the time, a sense he still holds today. "And we can do it! We can make it happen."

CATCH THE PODCAST

Read more and listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast here:

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2025/10/25/episode-420-going-off-script>



MYANMAR JUNTA TOUTS PORT EXPANSION, TRADE ENFORCEMENT AS ECONOMIC PILLARS

Myanmar's junta is concentrating on port development and anti-smuggling operations as key elements of its economic strategy, according to recent reports in the Global New Light of Myanmar.

In Mon State, Chief Minister U Zaw Lin Tun toured the Puma Power International Port Terminal in Mudon Township. He reportedly emphasized improving operational efficiency and integrating the facility into the country's regional trade network.

The inspection highlighted efforts to improve infrastructure along the Gulf of Martaban and strengthen junta control over private port concessions. The junta officials accompanying the chief minister were reported as stressing how reliable port logistics are essential to developing export revenues and ensuring a steady flow of fuel and industrial goods.

On the same day, state media reported stepped-up crackdowns on illegal trade across border regions. Junta officials said warehouses and checkpoints were

demolished at various points along the Thaungyin (Moei) River in Myawaddy Township, Karen State.

The move is part of a seven-day enforcement campaign which seized contraband valued at more than 1.68 billion kyat (US\$799,680). The drive, conducted under the direction of the junta's Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee, is aimed at cutting losses in state revenue and reducing cross-border trade outside the junta's control.

Junta efforts to develop maritime infrastructure and bring border trade gates under more direct control reflect efforts to rebuild effective economic management and fiscal control while continuing to deal with the ongoing armed conflict and political crisis.

In addition to potential for enhancing revenue generation for the junta, the moves are a show of administrative capacity in spite of tightening sanctions and a shrinking formal economy.

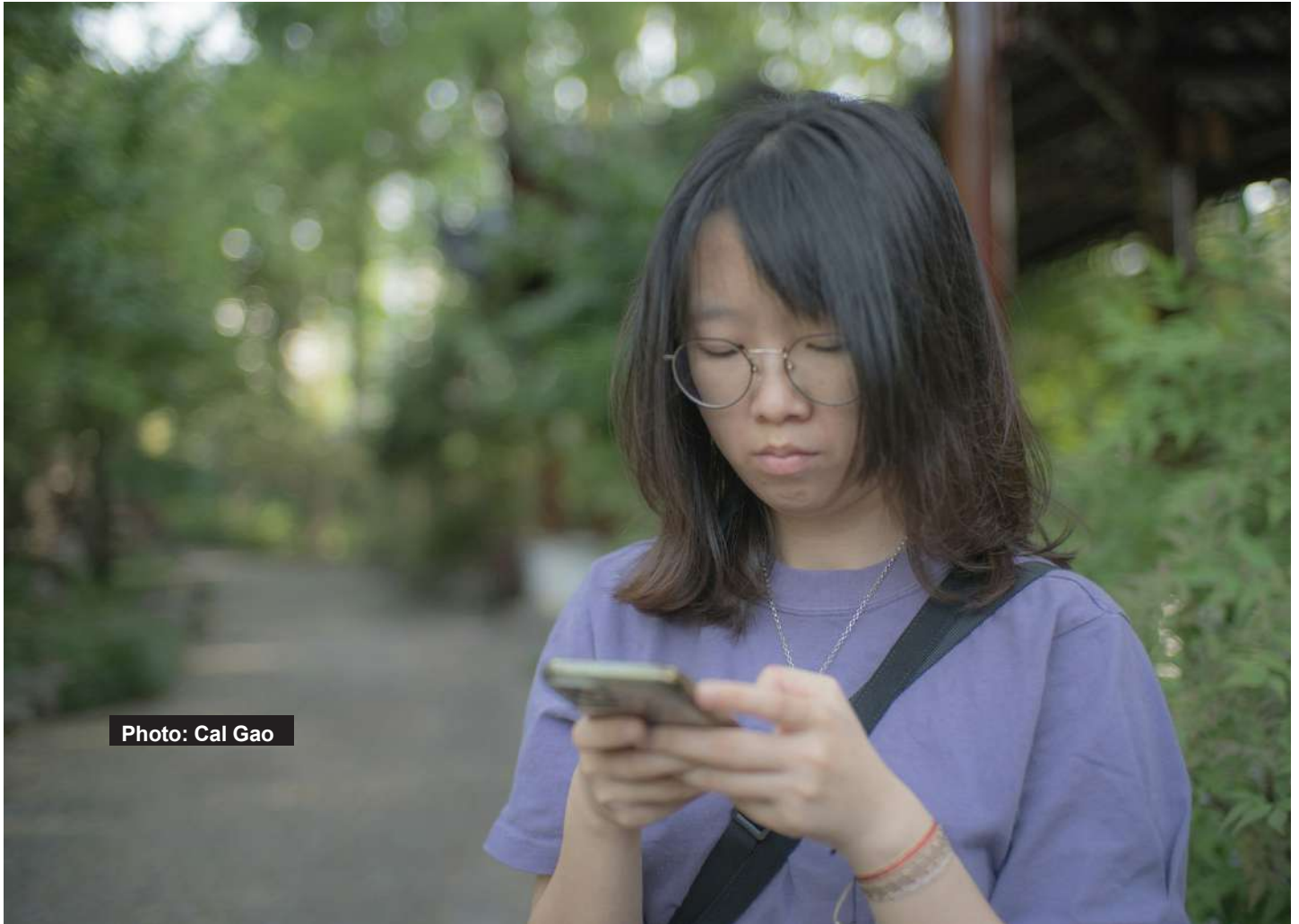


Photo: Cal Gao

SLOW WI-FI BEFORE THE MYANMAR JUNTA'S SHAM ELECTION VOTE

Over the past week, Myanmar social media users, especially those in Yangon, Mandalay, and Mawlamyine, have been complaining about unusually slow Wi-Fi and mobile data speeds.

Many users on Facebook, Instagram, and Telegram are sharing screenshots of their speed-test results, showing drops to under 5 Mbps in areas that previously reached 20–30 Mbps.

Posts linking the slow internet to the upcoming junta sham election have gone viral, with hundreds of comments accusing authorities of deliberately throttling connections to suppress communication and

independent reporting.

Users report difficulties accessing VPNs, online banking and even messaging apps. While some express frustration in humour, others warn that this could signal wider censorship or surveillance, comparing it to the shutdowns that followed the 2021 coup.

According to recent data from Speedtest and SpeedGeo, Yangon's average Wi-Fi download speed has dropped from around 25 Mbps to under 10 Mbps in October 2025, while mobile data speeds have also declined nationwide.

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.