

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



STAND-OFF

CDF-Asho conducts 'show-of-force' patrol in Ngape town to challenge junta legitimacy

● **Min Aung Hlaing inaugurated as president of Myanmar's quasi-civilian military regime in Naypyidaw** ●

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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.

NOTHING TO CELEBRATE

As the festive days of Thingyan end, a celebration traditionally marked by cleansing, renewal, and collective joy, the country finds itself trapped in a deepening political and moral crisis. The symbolism of washing away the past feels painfully hollow against the backdrop of a nation gripped by repression, conflict, and institutional decay.

The military's recent attempt to legitimize its rule through a widely discredited election has only intensified public anger and international concern. Far from representing a return to civilian governance, the installation of a quasi-civilian military administration is broadly perceived as a calculated maneuver to entrench military power behind a thin democratic façade. For millions of Myanmar citizens who had once placed hope in a fragile democratic transition, this moment underscores the complete collapse of that trajectory.

Thingyan, once a unifying cultural ritual, now unfolds in a fractured society. In urban centres, participation is subdued, with many choosing quiet observance or abstention altogether. In conflict-affected regions, particularly in border areas, the festival is overshadowed by ongoing violence between the military and resistance groups. Entire communities remain displaced, their lives defined not by celebration but by survival. The contrast between official state-sponsored festivities and the public's lived reality reveals a widening gulf between authority and society.

Economically, Myanmar continues its downward spiral. Inflation, unemployment, and the collapse of basic services have left households struggling to meet even fundamental needs. The informal economy has expanded as people adapt,

but this coping mechanism offers little long-term stability. The erosion of education and healthcare systems further deepens the crisis, threatening a generation's future and undermining any prospects for recovery.

Internationally, Myanmar remains increasingly isolated. While some actors – notably China and Russia – maintain cautious engagement, global pressure has failed to produce meaningful change on the ground. Sanctions and diplomatic condemnation have constrained the regime but have not altered its strategic calculus. Meanwhile, humanitarian access remains limited, exacerbating the suffering of civilians caught in the conflict.

Yet beneath this bleak landscape, resistance persists. Civil society networks, grassroots organizations, and local communities continue to demonstrate resilience and defiance. Their efforts, though fragmented and often operating under extreme risk, represent an enduring aspiration for genuine federal democracy and accountability. As seen in this week's cover story – the Spring Revolution fighters are highlighting the military regime's failure to rule a sizeable proportion of the country.

In this context, Thingyan becomes less a celebration and more a poignant reminder of what has been lost – and what remains contested. The rituals of water and renewal cannot wash away systemic injustice or imposed legitimacy. Instead, they highlight a people's enduring desire for dignity, representation, and peace.

Myanmar's crisis is not merely political – it is profoundly human. And as the new year begins under the shadow of military dominance, the question is not what is being celebrated, but whether there is anything left to celebrate at all.

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Managing Director and Editor In-Chief
Soe Myint

Managing Editor
Thaw Zin Tun

Network Engineer
Wai Min Han

Video and Graphics Editor
Wai Yan Shein Zaw

General Manager
No No Lin

Mizzima Weekly is published by
Mizzima s.r.o

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

Contact email:
sm@mizzima.com

Phone/Signal/WhatsApp
+420 608 616688

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Cover photo of resistance fighters in Ngape town by CDF-Asho



Resistance fighters in Ngape. Photo: CDF- ASHO

STAND-OFF

CDF-ASHO CONDUCTS

"SHOW-OF-FORCE"

PATROL IN NGAPE TOWN

TO CHALLENGE JUNTA

LEGITIMACY

As the Myanmar military were lining up Min Aung Hlaing for the country's presidency, one resistance group in the centre of the country sought to challenge their legitimacy and hold on the country.

It was a small but important gesture.

The Chinland Defence Force-Asho (CDF-Asho) released footage on 7 April, documenting a "show-of-force" operation and security inspections conducted within Ngape Town, Minbu District, Magway Region.

The group's comrades reportedly entered the town in the early hours of 5 April to carry out inspections at the Township Education Office and the local office of the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), both of which are under the administration of the junta.

According to video footage released on social media, no combat occurred during the mission because junta troops were not present in the northern part of the town at the time.

While resistance forces carried out their patrols and documented their presence, junta soldiers remained stationed in their defensive positions in the southern part of Ngape. The operation was described as a "strategic mission" to demonstrate that resistance forces remain close to the local community and can operate within urban centres despite the junta's claims of control.

During the release of the footage, CDF-Asho urged the public to remain vigilant and not to forget the ongoing war crimes being committed by the military. They specifically highlighted that these atrocities are continuing under the leadership of the new Armed Forces Commander-in-Chief, General Ye Win Oo, who officially assumed command from Min Aung Hlaing on 30 March 2026.

The group stated that their presence in Ngape serves as a reminder that the shift to a "semi-civilian" administration does not change the fundamental nature of the military's rule.



USDP office in Ngape. Photo: CDF-ASHO

ANALYSIS & INSIGHT



Photo: AFP

JUNTA LEADER MIN AUNG HLAING PULLS TOGETHER LOYALISTS

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing has reshaped the military and administrative leadership following his move to the presidency, appointing close allies to key positions in a move to consolidate his personal control over both the armed forces and the government.

Min Aung Hlaing transferred the commander-in-chief position to General Ye Win Oo, the former head of Military Affairs Security. The appointment is seen as unusual within the military hierarchy, which has traditionally been dominated by officers trained at the Defence Services Academy (DSA). In contrast, Ye Win Oo is a graduate of the Officers Training School (OTS), specifically Intake 77, considered equivalent to DSA Batch 30.

The promotion has reportedly caused dissatisfaction among DSA-trained officers, who have historically held the most senior roles. While such discontent is rarely expressed openly within the ranks, analysts and members of the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) say frustrations have surfaced indirectly through military defectors.

Ye Win Oo is also noted for lacking significant battlefield experience, similar to his predecessor. Instead, his career has been closely tied to military intelligence and internal security operations. He has been widely accused by pro-democracy groups of overseeing harsh interrogation practices against detainees, further shaping perceptions of his leadership style.

Analysts say the elevation of a military intelligence figure to the army's top post signals the continued centrality of intelligence networks in Myanmar's power structure, echoing past eras of military rule. This trend is reinforced by other appointments, including the selection of two former police generals as chief ministers of Yangon and Magway regions, suggesting a governance approach that prioritizes surveillance and control.

At the same time, General Kyaw Swar Linn, previously a Chief of the General Staff (army, navy, and air), has been appointed as deputy commander-in-chief. Despite what appears to be a generational transition, analysts and military insiders believe Min Aung Hlaing continues to exercise direct influence over the armed forces. A senior general has been placed as defense minister in his cabinet, reinforcing perceptions that strategic decisions remain centralized.

Sources within the military have indicated that the new commander-in-chief does not have full operational authority, with Min Aung Hlaing reportedly continuing to issue instructions through established channels. Symbolically, some units have yet to replace official portraits of the army chief, further suggesting continuity of command behind the scenes.

Meanwhile, members of the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) have expressed dissatisfaction over their limited role in government. Despite securing a parliamentary majority, the party has been allocated only around 10 percent of union-level positions. Of 30 cabinet posts, USDP members hold just three ministries - labour, hotels and tourism, and culture - portfolios widely seen as lacking significant political influence.



The China connection. Photo: AFP

Russia, China and India respond to Min Aung Hlaing being appointed president

Following his appointment as president, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received congratulatory messages from key allies including Russia, China, India and Belarus, underscoring continued diplomatic backing from a small group of partner states.

Myanmar extended invitations to more than 50 countries for the presidential inauguration ceremony. However, only 11 nations sent representatives, mostly at the level of deputy ministers or special envoys, indicating limited international recognition. Among those present, delegations from China and Russia were the highest-ranking, reflecting their close political ties with the junta and ongoing support.

China was among the first to respond. President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory message within hours of Min Aung Hlaing's appointment. A few days later, the

Chinese ambassador formally delivered the letter in person. Beijing also dispatched a special envoy, Jiang Xinzhi, vice chairperson of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, to attend the inauguration ceremony on April 10. Jiang held separate talks with Min Aung Hlaing on the same day.

Russia similarly demonstrated its support. President Vladimir Putin sent a message congratulating Min Aung Hlaing on his new role. In addition, Sholban Kara-ool, vice chairman of the State Duma, attended the ceremony and met separately with the Myanmar leader, highlighting continued ties between the two governments.

As a major regional neighbour, India sent a lower-level delegation led by Minister of Environment, Forestry and Climate Change Kirti Vardhan Singh. He delivered a felicitation letter from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and held separate talks with Min Aung Hlaing on April 10.



The Myanmar military hold most of the cards.
Photo: AFP

Thailand also sent a delegation led by a former foreign minister, who met with the junta leader during the visit.

Analysts say the limited attendance, contrasted with higher-level representation from China and Russia, highlights the junta's continued diplomatic isolation, while underscoring its reliance on a narrow circle of international partners for political support and legitimacy.

Myanmar analysts assess the country's 'disciplined democracy'

Myanmar analysts say the administration led by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing shows little departure from previous military regimes, arguing that while it presents a transition from authoritarian rule to a form of "disciplined democracy," real power remains concentrated in the hands of the military leadership.

According to these analysts, the State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC), chaired by Min Aung Hlaing, has ostensibly transferred authority to a civilian government headed by a president selected by the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), following elections widely criticized as neither free nor fair. However, they argue that this process mirrors past practices in name only.

Historically, former junta leaders fully retired from both military and political roles after handing power to trusted successors. In contrast, Min Aung Hlaing has retained significant influence, relinquishing the commander-in-chief position only to a close ally while assuming the presidency himself. This move has drawn criticism not only from pro-democracy groups but also from some military supporters, who believe the 2021 coup was driven largely by his personal ambition to secure the presidency.

Analysts frequently compare the current situation with the administration of former President Thein Sein, a retired general who led a quasi-civilian government from 2011 to 2016. Despite tensions between the military and democratic forces during that period, there were visible efforts to create space for political dialogue, including peace negotiations with ethnic

armed groups, concessions to opposition parties, and efforts to allow a largely free media environment.

The Thein Sein government also sought to improve international relations, particularly with Western countries, partly through engagement with ASEAN. Reforms included allowing opposition parties to register, permitting independent media outlets to operate, and granting amnesty to political exiles by removing them from blacklists.

In contrast, despite initial promises of peace and national reconciliation, Min Aung Hlaing's administration has struggled to engage resistance groups, many of which refuse to enter talks. Most pro-democracy parties have declined to register under the current system, citing a lack of electoral credibility.

Analysts also note that many cabinet members are drawn from the SSPC, suggesting that the current government is largely a rebranded extension of the same military body. Increased restrictions on political organizing and close surveillance of party activities, they say, signal a reversal of earlier liberalization and a return to more entrenched authoritarian control.



MIN AUNG HLAING INAUGURATED AS PRESIDENT OF MYANMAR'S QUASI-CIVILIAN MILITARY REGIME IN NAYPYIDAW

The inauguration ceremony for Myanmar's 11th president and vice presidents was held at the Hluttaw Complex in Naypyidaw on the morning of 10 April, 2026, marking the formal transition to a semi-civilian military regime.

During the sixth-day meeting of the Third Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's first regular session, 30 newly appointed Union Ministers were officially sworn in. Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker U Aung Lin Dwe confirmed a cabinet lineup dominated by military figures and USDP members, including General Tun Aung as Minister of Defense, Lieutenant General Nyunt Win Swe for Home Affairs, and Lieutenant General Phone Myat for Border Affairs. Other key appointments include U Tin Maung Swe as Minister of Foreign Affairs, U Htein Lin for Information, Dr. Maung Thin for Youth Affairs, and U Maung Myint for Hotels, Tourism and Culture.

Following his swearing-in as president of quasi-civilian military regime, Min Aung Hlaing revisited the military's long-standing grievances regarding the previous administration. He stated that in the 2020 multi-party democratic general election, the then-ruling party committed "ugly and unsightly electoral fraud," failing to conduct a fair and genuine election and engaging in dishonest politics that caused the

democratic system to deteriorate.

In his inaugural address, he acknowledged the formidable challenges facing the nation, specifically citing complex global and domestic affairs that he claimed must be overcome through national unity and collective strength.

As part of his governance strategy, the new president announced the planned establishment of a Union Consultative Council, an advisory body intended to provide expert guidance on international relations and the implementation of laws.

Regarding regional diplomacy, he affirmed that Myanmar would maintain regular engagement with ASEAN member states, signaling an intent to return to established diplomatic norms.

The ceremony saw attendance from foreign delegations and 26 ambassadors representing 23 countries, indicating a degree of regional recognition for the new administrative structure despite ongoing domestic conflict and international sanctions and the widespread belief that the new regime was brought to power through a "sham election" and corrupt electoral process.

Photo: AFP

MYANMAR JUNTA APPOINTED AYEYARWADY CHIEF MINISTER AMID CONTROVERSY OVER LAST-MINUTE PARLIAMENTARY AGENDA CHANGES

The 2026 Ayeyarwady Region Parliament appointed U Aye Kyaw as Chief Minister on 6 April, a move that has sparked significant dissatisfaction among representatives from minor political parties.

A lawmaker stated that the agenda for the 6 April session, distributed on the afternoon of 5 April, did not include the appointment of the Chief Minister. It was only after arriving at the assembly hall on 6 April that the parliamentary office staff distributed a new agenda, revealing the changes.

"We only found out about the schedule change minutes before the session started. Such a last-minute change does not comply with parliamentary rules and regulations. Although representatives from minor parties are unhappy about the alteration, they do not dare to speak up," said a source close to the 2026 Ayeyarwady Parliament.

A person close to the parliament mentioned that only representatives from the Union Solidarity and

Development Party (USDP), the National Unity Party (NUP), and military appointees were granted prior knowledge of the appointment ceremony.

The lawmakers who were kept in the dark include three from the People's Pioneer Party (PPP), three from the People's Party, three from the Kayin People's Party (KPP), and one from the Farmers' Development Party.

Mizzima has received both the agenda distributed on 5 March and the one issued on the morning of 6 March; however, the source has requested not to publish them for security reasons.

During the session on 6 April, U Aye Kyaw was appointed as the 2026 Chief Minister of Ayeyarwady Region without any objections. He is a former secretary of the Region government who had previously resigned due to illegal land confiscation issues during U Thein Sein's administration.



General Ye Win Oo. Photo: AFP

GENERAL YE WIN OO LAUNCHES MYANMAR MILITARY YOUTH SCHOOLS TO ADDRESS RECRUITMENT SHORTFALLS

General Ye Win Oo, the newly appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, has announced the establishment of "Tatmadaw Youth Education Training Schools" designed to cultivate the children of military personnel into future officers and soldiers.

The announcement was made on 9 April, 2026, during the 79th Anniversary Ceremony of the Directorate of Public Relations and Psychological Warfare in Nay Pyi Taw.

The program is set to launch in the 2026–2027 academic year with initial campuses in Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw.

According to state-run media, these schools will provide advanced basic education to the children of active-duty officers, retired personnel, and fallen soldiers.

General Ye Win Oo stated that the initiative aims to steadily cultivate a "new generation of capable youth" for national defense, ensuring they serve as a reliable source of well-educated personnel for the military.

Students who excel academically will be fast-tracked into military universities, medical programs, and specialized technical institutes.

The Office of the Directorate of Public Relations and Psychological Warfare under the Commander-in-Chief (Army) already operates educational schools attended by the children of soldiers, and under the current military leader Ye Win Oo, access has been expanded to include the children of deceased and retired personnel, CDM Captain Zin Yaw told Mizzima.

He said the move reflects a shortage of long-term recruits, as new entrants are being enlisted primarily as part-time personnel under the military conscription law, prompting authorities to focus on military families as a key source of future permanent soldiers.

CDM Captain Zin Yaw said, "To put it simply, it's a case of 'buying the slave and getting the offspring as part of the deal. They will start by pulling from the family members of their own core loyalists that is the first stage. Later on, they will likely target orphanages and families facing economic hardship, presenting it as a 'free education' system. It's the same tactic used in the past with border development schools: enticing people with the promise of guaranteed military employment right after graduation. In my view, their goal is to keep spreading the 'military virus' by ensuring the next generation is bound to the service from the start."

In contrast, former military leader Min Aung Hlaing said the military commission has seen a decline in enrolment in the military academy cadet course following the coup.

In addition, the military commission is enforcing the Military Service Law and recruiting young people to compensate for reduced troop strength, which it attributes to the departure of officers and soldiers through the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) and ongoing clashes with revolutionary forces following the coup.

Photo: AFP

INDONESIAN COURT ACCEPTS GENOCIDE COMPLAINT AGAINST MYANMAR'S NEW PRESIDENT

An Indonesian court in Jakarta has formally accepted a criminal complaint accusing Myanmar's newly-elected President Min Aung Hlaing of genocide against the Rohingya people.

The filing, submitted on 6 April, marks the first time a case has been officially received under Indonesia's new penal code, which allows for "universal jurisdiction" in cases involving serious international crimes, regardless of where they were committed or the nationality of the victims.

Political analysts say the case could increase pressure on the military regime's efforts to gain political legitimacy.

According to a press conference held the same day, Indonesia's Attorney General's Office in Jakarta accepted the complaint filed by the Rohingya Maiyafuinor Collaborative Network, THEMIS Indonesia, and the Myanmar Accountability Project (MAP).

The court confirmed that it will proceed with a legal investigation following the acceptance of the case.

Political analyst Dr. Sai Kyi Zin Soe stated that the case could affect the transitional government's plans to consolidate power after the 2026 elections.

"These cases could influence international relations and political legitimacy and may also disrupt the military's current consolidation plans by creating internal disagreements among its leaders," he said.

He also noted that Indonesia's move could be controversial within ASEAN, given the bloc's principle of non-interference.

"Indonesia's potential effort to arrest the leader of an ASEAN member state may raise concerns among

other member countries," he said.

Sai Kyi Zin Soe further explained that the decision to proceed with prosecution ultimately lies with Indonesia's executive branch, and that no official response has yet been made by the Indonesian president.

He added that the president must carefully consider the implications for international relations, ASEAN affairs, and domestic politics.

Meanwhile, Zin Mar Aung, foreign minister of Myanmar's National Unity Government (NUG), emphasized that the allegations against Min Aung Hlaing cannot be erased regardless of his political position.

"Indonesia has amended its domestic laws to accept this case at a time when he is attempting to become president. This demonstrates that no matter how much he claims legitimacy, the crimes attributed to him remain," she said.

The complaint was submitted by Rohingya genocide survivor Yasmin Ullah along with 10 prominent Indonesian figures, including former Attorney General Marzuki Darusman and Busyro Muqoddas, chairman of Indonesia's largest Muslim organization, Muhammadiyah.

Previously, in February 2025, an Argentine court issued international arrest warrants for 23 military officers including Min Aung Hlaing and Soe Win following a successful genocide case concerning the Rohingya.

ASEAN



PHILIPPINES TO MAINTAIN MYANMAR ENGAGEMENT WHILE URGING PROGRESS ON ASEAN PEACE PLAN

The Philippines has said it will continue engaging with Myanmar's military-led quasi-civilian government while pushing for progress on a regional peace plan, following the election of junta chief Min Aung Hlaing as president.

Manila called for "renewed momentum" toward ending violence in Myanmar, while reaffirming support for ASEAN-led efforts to address the crisis, according to a statement from the presidential palace.

"The Philippines remains committed to support ASEAN's collective efforts," Palace Press Officer Claire Castro said, urging implementation of the bloc's Five-Point Consensus, which calls for a cessation of violence, dialogue, and humanitarian access.

At the same time, officials said the Philippines would maintain diplomatic engagement with Myanmar's authorities and other stakeholders, including through Foreign Affairs Secretary Ma. Theresa Lazaro, in her role as the ASEAN chair's special envoy to Myanmar.

The position reflects a dual-track approach of continued engagement alongside calls for political

and humanitarian progress, as regional governments navigate Myanmar's prolonged crisis.

Separate reports claim Manila would continue ties with Myanmar despite the recent political developments. This indicates that cooperation channels will remain open following the military leader's consolidation of power.

Min Aung Hlaing, who seized power in a 2021 coup, was elected president by a military-dominated parliament, formalising his leadership under a civilian-style system.

The Philippines' stance aligns with broader ASEAN efforts to mediate the conflict, though the bloc has struggled to enforce its peace plan amid ongoing fighting between the military and resistance groups.

While Manila's continued engagement signals pragmatic diplomacy, its call for renewed momentum on the Five-Point Consensus highlights persistent concerns over the lack of progress in resolving the crisis.



Photo: AFP

MYANMAR IN 2026 IS A FAR CRY FROM WHAT IT WAS IN 2010

Commentary by Soe Myint, founder, managing director and editor in-chief of Mizzima Media

Let us address today's post-election climate in Myanmar and recognize the major changes in comparison to the military-directed "democratic experiment" that began to unfold half a lifetime ago.

Let us shine a light on the situation today in comparison to what we witnessed following the 2010 election in Myanmar. As the reader may know, in the wake of the 2010 election Mizzima and I were the first independent Myanmar media to return to Myanmar in 2011, at a time when many others were reluctant and still considering the options. We knew that the country was not a full democracy, and we knew that there would be challenges, including personal safety. But we viewed the situation as a limited space for democracy, in which we could participate and expand the democratic process to realize a better society and cultivate conditions more favorable for a federal union.

At first, it appeared we had made a shrewd bet. General Thein Sein delivered openness and started a process of democratic reformation that appeared to offer hope and led to the 2015 election of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (after its first win in the 2012 by-election), the people's choice, and a further landslide for the party in the 2020 elections. The democratic infrastructure was far from perfect – given

the military maintained substantial control through the military-written 2008 Constitution – but the process appeared to offer the people a say in their future.

However, the 2021 coup by Min Aung Hlaing has changed most of everything about what we knew of Burma/Myanmar, and we are not going to return to what we had gained in the years between 2011 and 2021. I am very sure of this, unless Min Aung Hlaing is removed from Myanmar politics (and it is unlikely that he will remove himself from the scene). Min Aung Hlaing has more blood on his hands than any previous ruler, and is accused of genocide in international courts.

The people of Myanmar, particularly those who want peace, democracy, and a genuine federal union (including ethnic minorities), have completely lost trust in Min Aung Hlaing and the Myanmar military. The people are not looking for a regime change. They are looking for a system change. The people this time will never forget and forgive what they did to the people and the country since the coup. There must be justice and truth. Therefore, the struggle for democracy and a genuine federal union is poised to continue, at the very least in areas that the Myanmar military does not control.

To further elaborate on the situation today, I would like to respond to some common questions with regard to post-election Myanmar:

1) What are the chances of what happened after U Thein Sein took over, 15 years ago, repeating itself? Can we expect similar things, such as an opening up of the press and the economy to foreign visitors?

Changes such as this will not happen at all for at least the next two years. The regime will attempt some cosmetic actions to try and attract Western and Asian investments, but no major responsible business investments will take the risk of investing in Myanmar. The business trust is gone. What is going to happen with the regime is completely the opposite of what happened after the 2011 openings.

The country will be tightly controlled by Min Aung Hlaing and the military, if they get their way, at least for the next two years.

2) Some regions and states are not fully controlled by Naypyidaw. Will the new government initiate political dialogues with rebel groups to try and achieve reconciliation?

Min Aung Hlaing and the regime will make some cosmetic and superficial calls, such as a nationwide ceasefire and/or temporary ceasefire with specific groups. However, nothing such as this will lead to genuine national reconciliation and/or peace, although there might be some on-and-off fighting or a temporary halt to fighting in some areas of the country. The bottom line is that the fight for democracy and self-determination in Myanmar will continue.

3) What are the chances of all political prisoners being released, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi?

It is expected that Min Aung Hlaing will release political prisoners this month, and possibly Daw Aung San Suu Kyi as well (to some extent), to try to show that they are changing. But all the repressive laws are in place. And with the support of China and Russia, those who oppose the regime in any way or any form will be arrested again. Therefore, the Myanmar jails under the regime will still have political prisoners, including media and journalists.

4) Who are the prominent civilian faces in the new government and possible experts who could lend sound advice to the government, including on economic and development matters?

It is unlikely that any of these people will have any real impact on what Min Aung Hlaing and the military thinks and decides. They cannot do much except to take orders from Min Aung Hlaing. They do not have an alternative; rather, they have to be loyal to Min Aung Hlaing. This is a military-led and military's tightly controlled setup where Min Aung Hlaing remains as an absolute dictator.

That being said, we can expect that the regime will likely soon make an offer that exiles and the media can return to the country. Our response since the coup in 2021 has not changed. Mizzima and I will not return to areas such as Yangon, Mandalay, and Naypyidaw controlled by the junta unless there is genuine democracy, human rights, and a federal union. Enough is enough with the Myanmar military regime. Mizzima already operates openly in areas (at least 50% of the country) not controlled by the junta, and we are clandestinely operating in areas controlled by the junta. We do not need to depend on Naypyidaw to do our work.

In recognition of these realities, Mizzima's Editorial Policy as of April 2026 and until further notice is anchored in the following principles:

(1) Mizzima will focus on the liberated areas.

(2) Mizzima will expose the wrongdoings of Min Aung Hlaing and military regime (along with China, Russia, and Belarus, which are supporting Min Aung Hlaing and the regime).

(3) Mizzima will highlight the struggle for democracy, human rights, and a genuine federal union both in liberated and not-yet-liberated areas.

(4) Mizzima will highlight the self-determination efforts of different ethnic nationalities.

We have time to continue the fight against Min Aung Hlaing and the Myanmar military and the fight for democracy, human rights, and a genuine (bottom-up) federal union. The Myanmar military has already lost at least half of the country's territory over the last five years, and it is only a matter of time before they lose more. We have time, but the regime does not.

The reason we have time is that we have been and will be on the right side of the story – democracy, human rights, a genuine federal union – for which the people of Burma/Myanmar have been struggling and fighting for decades.



ASEAN PARLIAMENTARIANS URGE REGIONAL ACTION TO AVERT ROHINGYA FOOD CRISIS

The ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) urged ASEAN and the international community on 9 April, to address the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh. With World Food Programme funding dwindling, over one million refugees may face hunger by November 2026. They called for a regional humanitarian fund and better protection against trafficking and child labor.

The APHR statement is as follows.

During APHR's advocacy mission to Cox's Bazar in 2025, the World Food Programme (WFP) warned of imminent food shortages as funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and other international donors continued to decline.

As conditions in the camps worsen, WFP recently implemented its Targeting and Prioritization Exercise (TPE), recognizing that levels of vulnerabilities vary among the Rohingya. Under this tiered system, approximately 17% of refugees, classified as "food insecure" receive as little as USD 7 per person, while about one-third of the population, categorized as "extremely food insecure," continue to receive USD 12 per person.

Amid protests from Rohingya refugees over continued cuts to food rations, WFP stated that available funding will only sustain assistance until November 2026.

Hungry in overcrowded camps, Rohingya communities continue to face threats in their security

with rising cases of crimes including arms and drug smuggling, kidnapping, and trafficking. The closure of learning centers in the camps last year has further exacerbated vulnerabilities of children, leading to increased cases of child marriage and child labor.

The ongoing persecution of Rohingya and worsening human rights crisis in Myanmar mean that safe, voluntary, and dignified repatriation remain impossible. As the camp population continues to grow with the influx of refugees and childbirths in the camps, sustained aid and resources must flow in to meet the needs of the Rohingya.

APHR urges ASEAN and its member states, the newly appointed UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situations in Myanmar Kelley Anne Eckels-Currie, and the broader international community—including non-ASEAN nations like China—to take immediate action, including:

- Establishing an ASEAN Humanitarian and Crisis Fund to deliver life-saving support and prevent mass hunger among Rohingya refugees and host communities;

- Increasing humanitarian aid, through WFP and other agencies, to prevent mass hunger and meet the needs of Rohingya;

- Strengthening protection measures in the camps, including efforts to combat trafficking, child labor, and gender-based violence; and Supporting ongoing cases seeking justice and accountability for Myanmar junta's war crimes and genocide against the Rohingya APHR further calls on the government of Bangladesh to:

- Adopt targeted and regulated measures to expand livelihood opportunities for Rohingya refugees, including access to sector-specific work permits, to reduce aid dependency and enhance self-reliance.

- Continue to uphold protection standards and work with international partners to sustain and restore access to education, healthcare, and livelihood support programs.

With no sustainable solution in sight, Rohingya communities continue to suffer in the overcrowded camps, uncertain if there will be food on the table and a safe path back home. The struggle to survive of more than one million Rohingya in the world's largest refugee camp demands urgent, coordinated action and sustained international attention. ASEAN and the international community must act urgently.



Photo: AFP

FORTIFY RIGHTS CALLS ON THAILAND TO PROTECT ROHINGYA REFUGEES ABANDONED AT SEA BY INDIA

On 8 April, Fortify Rights called on Thailand to provide legal status and support third-country resettlement for 36 Rohingya refugees who arrived in the country in February, after Indian authorities forcibly returned them to Myanmar ten months earlier.

The Fortify Rights statement continues as follows.

“Rohingya refugees are being pushed from one danger to another, and no one should have to live like this,” said Puttanee Kangkun, Director at Fortify Rights. “Governments in the region must stop forcing refugees into harm and instead ensure coordinated, lawful pathways to protection that respect their human rights and dignity. We are ready to support them in this.”

In February 2026, Fortify Rights interviewed 14 Rohingya survivors from the group of 40 Rohingya—both Christian and Muslim—who reached Thailand that month after Indian authorities forcibly returned them

to Myanmar from New Delhi, India, approximately ten months ago. The whereabouts of four of the 40 survivors are unknown, according to Fortify Rights. All hold refugee cards issued by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)—the U.N. agency mandated to protect refugees.

Fortify Rights is withholding the identities of survivors and using pseudonyms to protect them from retaliation.

In May 2025, under the pretext of a routine biometric verification exercise for refugees, New Delhi police detained Rohingya men and women, flew them to a remote island in the Andaman Sea, equipped them with life jackets, and abandoned them at sea near Myanmar, where they face an ongoing genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. The group—ranging in age between 21 and 60 and including 11 women—then spent several months in an armed-conflict zone in Myanmar’s Tanintharyi Region before fleeing to Thailand in February 2026.

The U.N. Special Rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, Tom Andrews, referred to India's actions as "unconscionable, unacceptable acts" and presented evidence of the allegations to the Government of India in May 2025. The BBC, Associated Press, and others also reported on the situation.

"Laila," a 24-year-old Rohingya Christian woman, told Fortify Rights that Indian police verbally harassed her and other women during the February 2025 biometric verification exercise. "He asked intrusive and humiliating questions, including: 'How did your husband treat you sexually? Did he force you to have sex with him?' I felt dehumanized," said Laila.

Another 21-year-old Rohingya Christian woman, "Sabika," shared a similar experience, saying Indian officials used degrading language during the biometric verification exercise.

Indian authorities later arrested, detained, and interrogated Rohingya refugees at Dwarka District Police Station in Uttam Nagar, a suburb in New Delhi, before initiating their refoulement. Sabika said:

The police forced us into a crowded police van with black-curtain-covered windows that brought us to the airport, where we boarded an Air India plane with only 40 of us. After four hours in the air, we landed at a naval facility, as the Navy had accompanied us. It is an island. I don't know the exact name of the place, but I heard it is in the Nicobar Islands.

At the Navy facility, Indian Navy personnel handcuffed and blindfolded the Rohingya men. Several men also reported to Fortify Rights that Navy personnel beat them. For example, a 23-year-old Rohingya man, "Amjad" told Fortify Rights:

The Navy personnel hit other men and me. They hit me on the head and body when I couldn't answer their questions. When I asked for water, one of the Navy officers shouted at me, "Why don't you follow the instructions?" and beat me again. They stuffed cloth in my mouth. When someone asked for a toilet or anything, the Navy personnel hit them. I saw three other young men beaten badly.

Indian Navy personnel also sexually assaulted some Rohingya women in detention. Laila told Fortify Rights: "A naval officer groped my body. I cried a lot. This incident has stuck in my mind for days and months. I have never faced such harassment. I can never forget it."

On May 7, 2025, around 2 a.m., the Indian Navy confiscated most of the refugees' mobile phones and documents, including their UNHCR cards, gave them life jackets, and loaded them into two small boats, telling them that they would be taken to Indonesia. The Navy officers accompanied the two motorboats carrying the refugees, each carrying approximately 20 people.

After reaching the Myanmar shoreline, Indian Navy personnel tied a rope from a tree to the boats and forced the refugees into the sea, leaving them to pull themselves to shore.

"I did not know where we were," Harres, a 60-year-old woman, told Fortify Rights. "Some of us were able to keep our mobile phones, and when we turned them on, we received a text message in Burmese. Then, we realized we were in Myanmar territory."

The refugees later discovered they had landed on the mainland in Dawei, Tanintharyi Region, Myanmar—a site of heavy armed conflict between the Myanmar military junta and People's Defense Forces (PDFs). Local fishermen assisted the group in reaching territory controlled by the local PDF group, where they remained for approximately nine months amid active armed conflict. The refugees reported that the group had taken good and appropriate care of them; however, the area is an active war zone and unsafe.

Romiz, a 22-year-old Christian Rohingya man, told Fortify Rights:

The PDF unit instructed us to move from place to place during the fighting. We heard of the fighting and sometimes the jet sounds. The PDF informed us that the Myanmar military would kill us if they found us. We had to keep hiding. It was scary. The situation worsened during the monsoon season. Our shelters

were temporary, a kind of tarpaulin material. It is wet and difficult to live.

Fearing the regular aerial bombardments and shelling by the Myanmar military junta and unable to safely relocate within Myanmar due to the ongoing genocide and war crimes against the Rohingya, the group fled to Thailand.

The 40 refugees arrived in Thailand in February 2026, and 36 of them are now in an undisclosed location.

All survivors said they cannot return to Rakhine State due to decades of persecution, discrimination, and violence. They described land confiscations, forced labor, torture, segregation, and religious persecution at the hands of Myanmar authorities. Many fled as children or young adults, first to Bangladesh and later to India.

More than one million Rohingya refugees, many of whom fled genocidal attacks by the Myanmar military in 2016 and 2017, live in overcrowded refugee camps in Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh. Several hundred thousand live in Southeast Asia, primarily in Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia. An estimated 500,000 Rohingya remain in Rakhine State, Myanmar, and continue to face genocide and other international crimes as well as restrictions on basic rights, including freedom of movement and equal access to full citizenship rights.

In January this year, the International Court of Justice in The Hague held public hearings in *The Gambia v. Myanmar*, a landmark case under the 1948 Genocide Convention alleging that Myanmar committed genocide against the Rohingya people in Rakhine State. A verdict is expected later this year.

Thailand does not recognize refugees and provides few protections to them, routinely subjecting them to arrest, detention, exploitation, and refoulement. UNHCR confirmed to Fortify Rights that the agency does not have permission to facilitate a refugee determination process for these newly arrived Rohingya refugees.

In 2019, the Thai government endorsed the National Screening Mechanism (NSM) to screen and protect persons who fled persecution in their home country. However, Rohingya are arbitrarily excluded from the NSM on broadly defined "national security" grounds. Since October 2024, Thai authorities have only granted protected status to seven individuals, despite an estimated tens of thousands of refugees and asylum seekers in Thailand who could qualify for screening and protection under the NSM.

Under Thailand's 1979 Immigration Act, undocumented persons found in Thailand, including those recognized by UNHCR as refugees and holding UNHCR refugee cards, are considered in violation of the Act and subject to arbitrary arrest and detention.

Although Thailand enacted the Prevention and Suppression of Torture and Enforced Disappearance Act in October 2022, which prohibits refoulement — the forced return of a person to a country where they face a real risk of torture or other serious harm— Fortify Rights continues to document Thai authorities forcibly returning refugees to places where they face a high risk of such harm.

Moreover, returning Rohingya refugees to Myanmar, where they face genocidal violence and ongoing armed conflict, violates the general principle of non-refoulement, which is binding on all states as part of customary international law.

"These Rohingya survivors were unlawfully forced back into a conflict zone and are now left without protection," said Puttanee Kangkun. "India should investigate and hold to account officials involved in any and all forced returns and abuse of refugees. Thailand has an obligation to protect these and all refugees from arbitrary arrest and refoulement."



Photo: AFP

MAI RESUMES FLIGHTS TO MYITKYINA AND PUTAO FOLLOWING SERVICE DISRUPTIONS

Myanmar Airways International (MAI) is set to resume regular flight services to the Kachin State capitals of Myitkyina and Putao starting this week, ending a period of suspended connectivity due to regional security concerns and aviation fuel shortages.

According to the Ministry of Transport and Communications, regular services to Myitkyina officially resumed on 4 April, while flights to Putao followed on 5 April.

MAI's updated schedule includes twice-weekly flights from Yangon to Myitkyina, operating on Tuesdays and Fridays. Connectivity to Putao will be available once a week, specifically on Fridays.

These routes were identified as high-priority by the ministry on 25 March, alongside other isolated destinations such as Kengtung, Tachilek, Kawthaung, and Sittwe, because they are difficult to access via road or rail.

The resumption comes after a significant disruption in late February when an drones ပျံ targeted at Myitkyina Airport, leading to a temporary halt in civilian air traffic to the region.

To facilitate the return of these services, the government has arranged emergency jet fuel supplies for domestic carriers to stabilize flight operations amid global fuel supply shocks linked to ongoing Middle Eastern tensions.

Residents in Myitkyina have expressed hope that the return of regular air travel will alleviate the severe social and economic pressures caused by the suspension. During the hiatus, ground transportation costs skyrocketed, with bus fares for the Mandalay-Myitkyina route more than doubling to approximately 1 million MMK per passenger. The return of scheduled flights is expected to stabilize travel costs and restore essential links for healthcare and trade in northern Myanmar.



Queuing for water in Yangon.
Photo: AFP

SEVERE WATER CRISIS GRIPS 14 YANGON TOWNSHIPS AS POWER OUTAGES PARALYZE PUMPING SYSTEMS

Drinking and household water shortages are reaching critical levels across 14 townships in Yangon, forcing the Myanmar Fire Services Department and various social welfare organizations to deploy water tankers to provide essential relief.

The crisis currently affects Mayangone, Botahtaung, Thaketa, Kyimyindaing, Ahlone, South Okkalapa, Pazundaung, Thingangyun, North Dagon, East Dagon, Kawhmu, Kungyangon, Thongwa, and Kyauktan. Residents in these areas, many of whom depend on the Gyo Phyu reservoir, report that the lack of water has made daily survival a struggle.

“Most people in this area depend on water from the Gyo Phyu reservoir. Electricity is already unreliable, and when the reservoir water stops flowing, we have no choice but to rely entirely on water trucks provided by social welfare groups,” said a resident of Thingangyun Township.

The shortage is largely driven by a combination of irregular supply from the Gyo Phyu reservoir and frequent power outages. Since the Ministry of Electric Power under the military administration announced a rotating power distribution schedule on 17 March to manage summer demand, electricity access has dropped to as little as four hours per day.

An official from a social welfare organization noted that the problem is compounded by damaged pipelines

and the fact that when power is briefly restored, everyone tries to pump water simultaneously, causing a drop in water pressure that prevents the supply from reaching many households.

“I recently saw water being distributed in Saw Yan Paing (East) Ward. Households that have access to both Gyo Phyu water and private artesian wells are coping better,” said a resident of Ahlone Township.

Residents in affected townships are relying on limited water supplies distributed by the Myanmar Fire Services Department and charitable organizations with water tankers, an official from a social welfare organization said.

Despite the desperate situation in residential wards, the military administration is moving forward with extensive preparations for the upcoming Myanmar New Year, or Thingyan, festival.

Plans are currently underway to construct walking zones and water-throwing pavilions across the city, sparking concern among locals who believe resources should be prioritized for basic household needs.

Social welfare groups continue to carry out relief efforts in areas like Botahtaung and Kyauk Myaung, but the demand for clean water continues to outpace the capacity of available tankers as the summer heat intensifies.



Photo: AFP

YANGON FOOD PRICES SURGE 20 PERCENT IN TEN DAYS AS FUEL RATIONING AND INFLATION HIT HOUSEHOLDS

Basic food prices in Yangon have climbed by approximately 20 percent over a ten-day period spanning late March and early April 2026.

Local residents report that rice, meat, and fish prices rose by roughly 10 percent in the first week of April alone, while snacks and confectionery saw even sharper increases of 15 percent.

Specific staples like goat meat jumped from 80,000 to 90,000 MMK per viss within a week, and the cost of a single cup of tea at major shops rose to 4,500 MMK.

"I hadn't gone to the market for some time due to illness, and when I returned, these were the new prices. Vendors say they are only able to sell at these levels because they still have older stock," a local said.

Another Yangon resident said that while commodity prices continue to surge, wages have remained unchanged, creating serious challenges for daily living and food expenses.

"Prices of basic goods have risen, and house rents have also increased. A basic salary can no longer cover rent alone. I can't imagine how some people manage on certain income levels. It's only sustainable if multiple members of a household are earning," he said.

Global military conflicts have contributed to fuel shortages in Myanmar, creating difficulties for paddy harvesting, crop cultivation, and the transportation of

goods. This disruption is one of the key factors behind the sharp rise in commodity prices over a short period.

Travelers also report that fuel conservation measures imposed by the military commission such as quota-based sales, purchase limits, and an "even-odd" license plate system have driven up passenger bus fares.

However, fuel shortages are not the only factor affecting the market. Since the military coup, Myanmar has faced international sanctions from multiple countries, ongoing political instability, and hyperinflation. Over the past five years, prices have surged dramatically from the hundreds to the thousands, and from the thousands to the tens of thousands.

"Five years ago, you could buy boiled beans for 200 MMK. Now, even 1,000 MMK gets you very little. If two people share it with leftover rice, it's barely enough. In some areas, it's no longer even available. Back then, 100,000 MMK was enough to shop comfortably; now, it barely buys anything," said a Yangon resident.

The World Food Programme (WFP) has warned that displacement in Myanmar is likely to increase in 2026. An estimated 12 million people could face hunger, with around one million at risk of reaching emergency levels of food insecurity requiring life-saving assistance.


 A photograph of the Telenor logo on a building facade. The logo consists of a blue stylized 'T' shape on the left and the word 'telenor' in white lowercase letters on a dark background to the right.

MYANMAR CLIENTS SUE NORWAY'S TELENOR FOR GIVING DATA TO JUNTA

Myanmar customers of the Norwegian telecoms group Telenor have sued the company for sharing their sensitive personal data with the junta, in a civil class action lawsuit filed in Norway on 8 April.

The plaintiffs are seeking damages, arguing the military used the information to identify, arrest and prosecute pro-democracy activists suspected of opposing the 2021 coup in Myanmar, which constituted "serious human rights violations", they said in a statement.

The information included names, physical addresses, Facebook and bank accounts, location data and call logs, they said.

They allege that the data sharing led to, among other things, the 2022 execution of a prominent government opponent and lawmaker, Zewa Thaw, and the arrest and jailing of civil society activist Aung Thu, the statement said.

Telenor, in which the Norwegian state owns a 54 percent stake, denied responsibility.

"In Myanmar, refusing requests from the military authorities could, in the worst case, have led to imprisonment, torture or the death penalty," it said in a statement to AFP.

"Telenor Myanmar had no real options. We could not play Russian roulette with the lives of our employees."

Acknowledging that it was "terrible" if Telenor data had been "misused by the authorities," it said it was

"solely the military authorities in Myanmar who are responsible for how they treat their own population".

The plaintiffs said Justice and Accountability Initiative (JAI), a Swedish non-profit, and a Norwegian law firm had filed the lawsuit with the Asker og Baerum district court on their behalf.

If successful, the case would be "the first ever to hold a telecoms company to account for not sufficiently protecting user data from access by an authoritarian regime", according to Beini Ye, a lawyer for the Open Society Justice Initiative, which is supporting the suit.

Telenor Myanmar began operations in 2014 and had more than 18 million customers by 2021.

After a February 2021 coup, the junta launched a crackdown on the civilian resistance movement.

In July 2021, Telenor announced plans to sell its Myanmar subsidiary "despite warnings by civil society organisations", the plaintiffs said.

The company later cited junta demands that it install monitoring equipment on the network as a reason for leaving the country.

According to the plaintiffs, the transaction meant all customer data and surveillance technology that Telenor had installed were turned over to a military-linked company.

They said they were aware of "at least 1,253 phone numbers belonging to users whose data was shared".

Telenor exited Myanmar in March 2022.

AFP



Photo: AFP

MINIMUM WAGE IN MYANMAR REMAINS TOO LOW, SAYS EUROCHAM MYANMAR

On 6 April, the EuroCham Myanmar Garment Advocacy Group released a statement reiterating with “greater urgency” the inadequacy of the current minimum wage, noting that continued inaction is a serious risk for workers and manufacturers, as well as the long-term viability of their sector.

The text of the statement continues below:

European brands are the single largest source of buyers from Myanmar, with 64% of Myanmar’s total apparel exports destined for the European Union in 2024 (based on United Nations Comtrade’s data for HS codes 42, 61, 62, and 64). Accordingly, EuroCham Myanmar member garment brands regard an upward adjustment of the legal minimum wage — one that reflects both increased costs for manufacturers and the higher cost of living for workers — as the utmost priority to be addressed urgently, as part of their commitment to heightened due diligence and responsible sourcing from Myanmar.

The current low minimum wage is becoming a growing source of reputational concern for European brands sourcing from Myanmar, reinforcing the

business case for addressing the minimal wage levels in the export-oriented apparel sector. Many brands have taken measures to individually mitigate wage risks through individual supplier policies; however, we recognize that a sector-wide approach of improving the legal minimal wage is urgently necessary. Members of EuroCham Myanmar Garment Advocacy Group continue to engage with a trade union federation operating on the ground, factory-level trade unions, and labour rights organisations, and cooperate closely with the EU-funded MADE in Myanmar programme to support lasting improvements in labour rights across the sector.

EuroCham Myanmar Garment Advocacy Group calls on the relevant authorities and all invested stakeholders to urgently work towards establishing a new and improved legal minimum wage for the export-oriented apparel sector — one grounded in current economic reality, that allows workers to meet their basic living needs with dignity, supports stable and productive workplaces, and keeps Myanmar a credible and competitive sourcing destination for responsible global buyers.




Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA OFFENSIVE AND AIRSTRIKES DESTROY OVER 160 HOMES IN PALE TOWNSHIP

A sustained military offensive involving heavy airstrikes and ground assaults has destroyed more than 160 civilian homes in Pale Township, Yinmabin District, between late February and 5 April.

Local residents and revolutionary sources report that the escalation followed a major shift in the local conflict landscape after Bo Nagar (also known as Naing Lin), the high-profile leader of the Burma National Revolutionary Army (BNRA), defected to the military on 18 February.

The defection of Bo Nagar, who was reportedly airlifted out of Pale by military helicopters alongside his family, provided the junta with critical intelligence on resistance hideouts and internal structures.

Residents said that this offensive differed from previous operations, as approximately 300 troops moved with precision toward specific targets in villages including Chin Pyit, North Pitauk Kone, Mon Thwin, and Ywar Naung.

The military utilized a diverse aerial arsenal to maintain pressure, including assault helicopters, drones, gyrocopters, and even paramotors to drop explosives. A monastery in Mon Thwin village was among the many structures completely destroyed by these daily aerial barrages.

"Some civilian homes have been so severely damaged that they are no longer habitable. Bombs completely destroyed some homes, leaving nothing but the bare ground. They (junta troops) have been dropping bombs almost every day over the past few days," the local said.

Despite the intense air support, junta forces reportedly suffered significant losses during ground engagements. In March, People's Defence Forces (PDF) launched a counterattack on junta troops stationed in Chin Pyit Village, where locals later discovered between eight and nine bodies of junta soldiers following their withdrawal.

"At the site of the battle, we discovered eight or nine bodies of junta troops. We found out that military commission troops stationed in Chin Pyit village were falling one after another. It can be said that the military side suffered more fatalities," another local said.

As of early April, junta troops have shifted their operations toward Pale town and surrounding villages, establishing strongholds in Mya Kone, Kokko Kone, and the pro-military Pyu Saw Htee village of Zee Phyu Kone.



Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR MILITARY DRONE ATTACK AND RAID DISPLACE RESIDENTS IN TAUNGTHA TOWNSHIP

Two women were killed, and another was injured following a drone attack launched by military junta forces in Taungtha Township, Myingyan District, on 5 April. The Taungtha Township People's Action Committee reported that the aerial assault was followed by a ground raid the next morning, resulting in widespread property destruction and civilian arrests.

The military operation began around 8:30 am on 5 April, when approximately 80 troops departed from Aungtha village. By midday, the column had reached Shweman Zayat and the Panpaung Gate along the Taungtha–Yonesigy Road.

At approximately 2:50 pm, the forces launched a targeted aerial attack on Panpaung village. Local resistance sources noted the unusual use of a paramotor

to drop explosives, which destroyed four houses and caused the reported casualties.

Local activists stated that the soldiers have since established a temporary base at the village monastery, where about 30 troops are currently stationed. Several residents who were unable to flee in time have reportedly been arrested and are being held for interrogation.

Local resistance groups have issued an urgent warning to nearby communities, noting that junta forces in the Myingyan District are increasingly relying on drones and paramotors to conduct strikes. Residents in the surrounding areas are urged to closely monitor military movements and remain vigilant as the troops are expected to continue their advance into neighbouring villages.

MYANMAR'S NUG AND REGIONAL FEDERAL UNITS FORM JOINT WORKING GROUP TO STRENGTHEN INTERIM ADMINISTRATION

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The National Unity Government (NUG) and interim administrative bodies for Sagaing, Mandalay, and Magway have formally agreed to establish a "Joint Working Group" to synchronize and strengthen public administrative mechanisms across their respective federal units.

The decision was reached during a two-day coordination meeting for the Interim Capacity Building Program (ICBP) held from 4 to 5 April.

The high-level meeting brought together key leaders from the NUG's Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration, the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), and the ICBP Board of Directors.

They were joined by Chief Ministers, Speakers, and parliamentary members from the interim governments of the Sagaing, Magway, and Mandalay Federal Units. The primary focus was to streamline administrative processes and clearly define the roles of various departments responsible for the professional development of civil servants working within the resistance-controlled territories.

Mizzima contacted the NUG Deputy Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration, the CRPH spokesperson,

and the Chief Minister and Deputy Minister of the Magway Federal Unit Interim Government for comment, however, no responses had been received at the time of publication.

During the discussions, participants pinpointed areas where administrative processes could be better coordinated and clearly defined the roles and responsibilities of various groups involved in capacity building for the civil servants.

Based on these agreements, a specialized Joint Working Group was formed to operationalize regional administrative mechanisms as quickly as possible.

According to the press release, the outcomes of this coordination meeting will serve as foundational models for both the current interim administration and the administrative mechanisms of future Federal Unit governments.

All participating organizations affirmed their commitment to work in unison through the newly formed Joint Working Group, advancing toward the shared goal of building a Federal Democratic Union.



A female journalist takes cover in a trench during a military attack. Photo: Supplied

SITUATION WORSENING FOR WOMEN JOURNALISTS FIVE YEARS AFTER COUP, MYANMAR WOMEN IN MEDIA SAYS

Women journalists covering Myanmar's conflict zones face escalating threats, gender-based violence, and declining institutional support five years after the military coup, according to a report released at the end of March.

The report by Myanmar Women in Media, titled *Frontline HerStories: Women Journalists Five Years After the Coup*, found that female reporters are operating in an increasingly dangerous environment shaped by armed conflict, economic decline, and weakening media protections.

Women working on the frontlines face a "complex interplay" of risks. These include air strikes, artillery bombardments, and psychological trauma, while also confronting gender-specific barriers that restrict access to sources and conflict areas, the report said. Many journalists reported normalising exposure to violence as part of their daily work, despite the long-term mental health impacts.

"In conflict zones, journalists often go where there is danger," the report noted. Indeed, reporters continue working under threat of attack and detention. Women, however, face additional challenges, including harassment, restrictions on movement, and discrimination from both armed actors and within news organisations.

The study also highlighted widespread sexual harassment and exploitation, particularly in interactions

with sources and armed groups. In some cases, access to information or safe passage was tied to inappropriate demands. Online harassment and threats against family members further compounded risks.

Female journalists often rely on informal networks and personal coping mechanisms rather than institutional protection. The report found that many media organisations lack effective safety policies, with existing guidelines poorly implemented or limited to paper commitments.

Economic pressures have further undermined safety conditions. Funding cuts to Myanmar's media sector since 2025 have reduced salaries, safety resources, and operational capacity. This has forced journalists to take greater risks to continue reporting.

The report concluded that the safety of women journalists depends on stronger institutional support, including the enforcement of protection policies, improved funding, and access to psychological services.

Without these changes, it warned, female media workers will continue to face life-threatening risks while reporting from Myanmar's conflict zones, highlighting the growing vulnerability of independent journalism in the country.



Aung San Suu Kyi, Media Bias, and the Failure of Moral Clarity

By Fergus Harlow

History rarely collapses in an instant; more often, it is quietly rewritten until reality itself feels negotiable. In the years leading up to Myanmar's 2021 coup, a story took shape in the international imagination - one that cast Aung San Suu Kyi not as a constrained civilian leader navigating a military-dominated state, but as a symbol of moral failure.

The conditions that made this possible - and made this month's elevation of military coup leader Min Aung Hlaing to the presidency all but inevitable - were set long before tanks entered Naypyidaw on February 1, 2021. From 2012, when Aung San Suu Kyi entered parliament, and as communal violence between Buddhist and Muslim communities spread, there were already signs that the military was deliberately and systematically stoking racial tensions.

Over the next decade, I transcribed and cross-checked hundreds of hours of interviews with activists, revolutionaries, and members of the National League for Democracy - many speaking at great personal risk. During the riots, I remained in close contact with Suu Kyi's inner circle, including U Win Htein and U Tin Oo, through my co-author, Alan Clements, reporting from within Myanmar under conditions of surveillance.

These testimonies became Burma's Voices of Freedom, a four-volume investigative work. A later distillation, *The Voice of Hope: Aung San Suu Kyi from Prison*, informed Argentina's Federal Criminal Court in its pursuit of universal jurisdiction over atrocities committed against the Rohingya.

What follows is not opinion but evidence - gathered where accuracy carried consequence. Across hundreds of hours of recorded conversations, I did not encounter a single expression of prejudice toward the Rohingya from Myanmar's civilian leadership. Not once - not in private, not in public, not in any recorded exchange.

In more than half a million words spoken publicly by Aung San Suu Kyi between 2010 and 2020, she consistently condemned violence against the Rohingya. She called it a "huge international tragedy," advocated for citizenship rights, criticized the military's failure to restrain anti-Muslim hatred, and repeatedly identified laws targeting the Rohingya as both criminal and discriminatory.

Yet in the United Kingdom, where I was transcribing these interviews, a different narrative took hold. Media

outlets accused Suu Kyi of an “inexcusable silence,” even complicity. In 2017, The Guardian reported pressure on her to halt military operations - but not that, under the military-drafted 2008 Constitution, she had no authority over the armed forces.

Public condemnations followed. George Monbiot called for her Nobel Prize to be revoked. Bono demanded her resignation. Bob Geldof returned his Freedom of Dublin award. These gestures drew attention to the Rohingya crisis but also contributed, however unintentionally, to the delegitimization of a civilian leadership already stripped of sovereign power.

Testimony from within Myanmar complicated the prevailing narrative. Veteran journalist U Win Tin told us the riots were facilitated by the same paramilitary networks responsible for the 2003 Depayin massacre. In Meiktila, U Win Htein described turning back buses of organized rioters. Multiple interviewees reported communications infrastructure being deliberately cut ahead of the violence, while police stood idle as civilians were killed in the streets.

The Depayin massacre, U Tin Oo told us, was the military's first attempt to assassinate Aung San Suu Kyi. Seen in this light, the 2021 coup appears less an aberration than a continuation - a second, more complete act of political annihilation.

Today, after years in solitary confinement, Suu Kyi remains held incommunicado. There is no verified proof of life. No credible indication of a post-election pardon. No meaningful international pressure. By all reliable accounts, she is confined to a windowless cell, her condition unknown - her absence now functioning as both political strategy and psychological warning.

Meanwhile, legal efforts to hold Myanmar's military accountable are advancing. Argentina continues to pursue universal jurisdiction. Timor-Leste has initiated proceedings within ASEAN. A new genocide case filed in Jakarta identifies Min Aung Hlaing directly and includes evidence of prior planning - a critical threshold long absent from earlier claims.

Despite years of accusations against her, Aung San Suu Kyi and her civilian government are absent from these proceedings. Even the United Nations' 2018 fact-finding mission - often cited as evidence of her failure

- found no indication that the civilian government enabled or directed military atrocities.

If Suu Kyi had been complicit in genocide, the record would show it. Journalists would not have needed to infer silence; they could have cited her own words. Instead, the evidentiary record - extensive, public, and verifiable - tells a more complex and less convenient truth.

What remains is not a lack of evidence, but a failure of moral clarity. When reporting substitutes narrative for fact, omission for context, and assumption for verification, it does more than misinform.

It prepares the ground for erasure.

And in Myanmar, that erasure has never been abstract. It has names. It has bodies. It has a cost measured not only in truth, but in lives.

About the Author

Fergus Harlow is a writer, scholar, and human rights advocate and Director of the global campaign UseYourFreedom.org, which calls for the release of unlawfully imprisoned State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi and all democratically elected leaders in Myanmar. He has co-authored multiple investigative works with Alan Clements, grounded in primary research, direct testimony, and long-term engagement with Myanmar's political and civil-society leaders, with a focus on evidentiary documentation and narrative accountability in contexts of state violence and democratic collapse.





Photo: Antonio Graceffo

ACROSS THREE EASTER IN THE BURMA CONFLICT - WAR DOESN'T TAKE A HOLIDAY

ANTONIO GRACEFFO

On Easter weekend 2026, there were no major massacres in Burma, as in previous years. However, there were many airstrikes and mortar attacks in different areas. Burma jets carried out an airstrike and destroyed a monastery in K6, Dooplaya District, Karen State. The Burma Army fired heavy mortars into the Demoso area of Karenni State. Mortars were also fired by the Burma Army in K5, Papun District, northern Karen State, wounding one person. A ground attack took place in Karen State, K3, but there are no details yet as to the casualty count. Additionally, there were multiple airstrikes and mortar attacks the day before and the day after Easter, affecting almost every district.

For all Christians, Christmas commemorates the birth of Jesus, but Easter is the most important religious festival of the year because it is the day Christians remember the resurrection of Christ. For Catholics, Ash Wednesday, 40 days before Easter, marks the beginning of the Easter season. The fact that the Burma Army would launch attacks on these days is particularly abhorrent for the sizeable number of Christians in Burma.

This year, 2026, marks my third Easter since returning to Burma in 2023. Previously, I had reported in Shan State in 2007 and 2008, and briefly in 2004.

In 2024, I spent Ash Wednesday in a small church on the border in Mae Hong Son, where nearly 100 percent of the congregation were ethnic minorities from Burma. Mass was held in the Thai language, which very few of the minorities spoke, but there was no common language that included everyone, as many of the ethnic minorities do not speak Burmese, particularly those born in Thailand. The service was held on a Sunday because it was too difficult for Burmese migrants to attend on a Wednesday, as many were working as laborers in agricultural fields or construction sites.

Every time we attended church, we would congregate in the parking lot afterward and talk about the war, who had fled, why they had fled, how hard their life was now, and how terrifying the circumstances were that they had left behind. They spoke about their families being displaced, wounded, or killed in Burma. One parishioner, a hotel owner from Karenni State, showed me a video of his hotel, his life, and his dreams being blown up by the military.

That year, I spent Good Friday and Easter in an IDP camp in Karenni State. The church had been hit by an airstrike several months earlier. The school and college in the camp were both destroyed in that attack, and the parishioners were afraid to go inside the church building for Mass because they felt it was a target easily seen from the skies. But on Good Friday, they gathered their faith and courage, dusted out the church, cleared some wreckage, and held a Good Friday service.

For Catholics in a war zone, a particular problem is that they must have a priest in order to hold Mass. Baptists and other Protestants can hold worship services led by a pastor, elder, senior church member, or any person the believers feel is qualified to lead the service. But Catholic Mass can only be said by a priest. Without a priest, Catholics also cannot receive sacraments, which means they cannot go to confession or receive the Eucharist. This is particularly worrying in the context of a war, where one could die at any moment.

On that Good Friday, fortunately, there were two qualified catechists in the IDP camp who could lead a worship service, although Mass would have to wait until the visiting priest made his rounds every two or three months. On Easter Sunday, we held service again, and while it was sad that we could not have a full Mass, it was encouraging to see people strong enough in faith to risk airstrikes in order to worship and to keep the feast day holy.

After the Catholic service, the camp's Baptist community invited me to attend their service. Once again, it was very encouraging to see nearly 200 people gathered together, irrespective of airstrikes, singing and smiling together. After both services, however, there was no communal meal or snack because there was no money to buy supplies.

Still, it had been a wonderful day, and I was feeling particularly hopeful as I walked back to the barracks. When I entered the Wi-Fi zone, however, my phone blew up with messages from David Eubank, head of Free Burma Rangers, who was on a mission in another part of Burma. It was a report from David Eubank saying that there had been an Easter massacre, that the junta had struck a pagoda where people were taking refuge, Buddhists, Christians, animists, everyone, all being sheltered by the pagoda.

He sent me photos, including images showing that the head monk had been killed, his body torn apart, with his torso in one place and his legs in another.

That was my first Easter in Burma. It was not just my Easter, it was the Easter of all the people in Burma. The holiest day of the year was used as an opportunity for the Burma Army to kill civilians.

In 2025, I was in Burma for Ash Wednesday receiving my ashes in an IDP camp. There had been a battle that Monday in Karenni State, and many soldiers were killed. My mission on that trip was to find a priest named Father Paul Than who had been targeted by the junta. They had been trying to kill him for some time.

My goal was to find him and try to convince him to get out of Burma. In the end, Khun Bedu of the KNDF was the hero of the story because he made Father Paul's escape possible. I was just there to convince, encourage, and report.

Once Father Paul was collected by an armed convoy on his way to safety, I went with Khun Bedu, and later with a priest, over the next several days, attending funerals for soldiers killed that week. That is how my Lent, the 40 days before Easter, began, by going to funerals for soldiers, most of whom were about 19 years old. One of them was 42, which is somewhat older, but that meant he had children who no longer have a father.

This year, 2026, I spent Ash Wednesday in Burma again. In 2026, it was impossible to access the big cathedral in Demoso because the Burma Army controlled the road that linked the two sides of the city. So, once again, we received ashes in an IDP camp.

The house we had used in 2025 was no longer inhabitable because the front line had shifted, with the bombs coming closer and closer. During that first week of Lent, we responded to an airstrike on a clinic, an airstrike on a hospital, and one that destroyed a school. Miraculously, no one was killed in any of the three strikes, but we had to evacuate a hospital, and at least one of the patients died after being returned to his camp because he was no longer receiving the expert care he had at the hospital. Once again, he was about 19 or 20 years old, which seems to be the average age

of the soldiers who are killed and those who lose their legs to landmines.

IDPs who had already been displaced multiple times were forced to move again, and the entire landscape of the war looked dramatically different and less hopeful than it had been in 2025.

IDPs were also flooding in from Pekon, with entire villages arriving in need of food, shelter, medical care, and school for their children. One of the former Pekon IDP camps was scheduled to move again because the bombs were getting too close. They had just planted their fields and would now be relocated to the forest, where they would have to begin again, clearing land and planting, and this would be their last move.

There is a severe scarcity of water. The camps generally have a few reservoir troughs, usually made of bamboo and plastic tarps, but they have to pay for a truck to come and fill them. Unfortunately, the camps generally have no money, so water is strictly rationed. After this next move, closer to the border, there will be no place left to go. If the Burma Army breaks through the resistance line or launches a major airstrike campaign, thousands of civilian IDPs could be killed.

After my mission ended in Karenni State, I went to Rome for Holy Week, the week leading up to Easter. There, I discovered there are roughly 96 Karenni religious nuns and priests studying and working in various convents and missions.

Karenni nuns hosted me for Easter Sunday lunch. They were eager to hear news of the war, as most had left before the coup. They told me how their families

were displaced, and at least one said she had not heard from her family in months because they had no access to Starlink. They prayed daily for their families and for their country in Burma.

They are serving God, operating charities including schools, orphanages, hospitals, and elder care. They all said they were grateful to be in a life of service, but at the same time, they wished they could be in their country serving. But this is part of what being a Christian is and what makes the religious vocation unique. It is not about doing what makes us happy or doing the good deeds we want to do, but about doing the specific good deeds we are called to do.

While our Easter celebration in Rome was joyous, there was an underlying feeling of guilt that the people in Burma would not be experiencing as much joy.

All of the Burma news I had to share with the sisters was depressing. But then I received a message from David Eubank, reminding us to be hopeful. "Easter reminds us of the great gift that God gave us. And in the middle of all the suffering and betrayal between people and people and between us and God, it reminds me that the work of the Free Burma Rangers, first of all, is to point people to Jesus. All the humanitarian work and advocacy is an extension of the love that God gave us."

And so the sisters, the Rangers, the resistance soldiers, the IDPs, and I all prayed that next year would be better. I feel there is always hope, and God has not forgotten Burma.

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



Photo: Antonio Graceffo

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio.
Photo: AFP

U.S. SECRETARY MARCO RUBIO REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO MYANMAR IN THINGYAN MESSAGE

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio issued a press statement on 13 April, extending support to the people of Myanmar on the occasion of the Thingyan New Year festival.

The message is as follows:

On behalf of the United States of America, I extend my best wishes and support to the people of Burma as you celebrate the Thingyan festival, Burma's New Year.

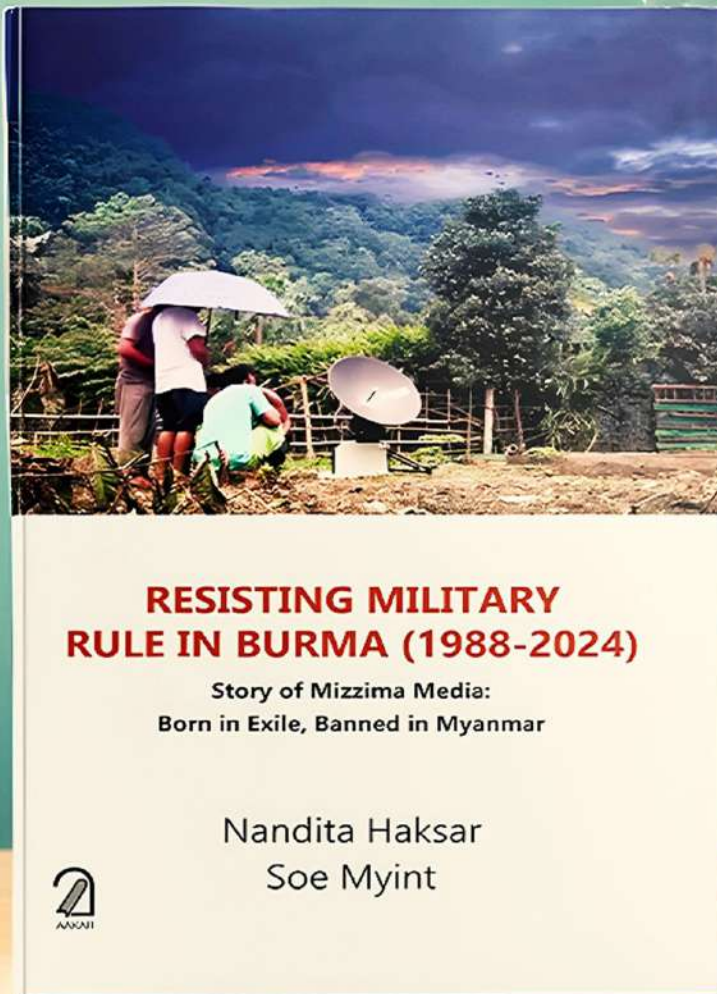
Thingyan is a time for reflection, as well as an opportunity to look ahead towards a new year. As the

conflict in Burma continues to devastate the country, the United States remains committed to supporting an end to the crisis.

The people of Burma have repeatedly demonstrated courage and resilience in the face of ongoing suffering. As the spirit of Thingyan reminds us of a better tomorrow, we wish the people of Burma strength, resilience, and renewed hope for the year.

RESISTING MILITARY RULE IN BURMA (1988-2024)
**STORY OF MIZZIMA MEDIA:
BORN IN EXILE, BANNED IN
MYANMAR**

by Nandita Haksar and Soe Myint



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Photo: AFP

US-IRAN TALKS FAIL TO FIND DEAL BUT GULF TRUCE HOLDS FOR NOW

Iran and the United States failed to strike a deal on 12 April to end the war in the Middle East, but there was no immediate return to hostilities and the region clung to hope that a fragile truce would hold.

US Vice President JD Vance left Pakistan after the talks -- the highest-level meeting between the two sides since the 1979 Islamic revolution -- and warned that Washington had made Tehran its "final and best offer" for a deal.

"We leave here with a very simple proposal," he said. "We'll see if the Iranians accept it."

Iran's parliamentary speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said his negotiating team "put forward constructive initiatives but ultimately the other side was unable to gain the trust of the Iranian delegation in this round of negotiations".

The failure of the talks will raise concerns that a return to fighting could drive world energy prices higher and further damage shipping and oil and gas facilities in the Gulf.

But Saudi Arabia's energy ministry said Sunday its key east-west oil pipeline was back in service after it was damaged in earlier strikes, and Qatar's transport ministry said it was lifting some restrictions on Gulf shipping.

Pakistan, which hosted the talks and whose leadership had ushered the rival sides to the table, said it would keep facilitating dialogue and urged both countries to continue respecting the temporary truce.

"It is imperative that the parties continue to uphold their commitment to ceasefire," Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said.

Uranium stockpile

US news website Axios quoted an unnamed source briefed on the negotiations as saying that disagreements included "Iran's demand to control the Strait of Hormuz and refusal to give up on its enriched uranium stockpile".

UK health minister Wes Streeting, speaking for the British government, told Sky News that the failure of the talks was disappointing but "that doesn't mean there isn't merit in continuing to try".

The United States and Israel attacked Iran on February 28, sparking retaliation from Tehran that has plunged the Middle East into conflict and shaken the global economy.

Iran and the US had entered the talks mediated by Pakistan with maximalist positions, with Washington piling pressure by saying it had sent minesweeping ships through the vital Strait of Hormuz maritime route.

Signs of strain in the negotiations appeared when Iranian media accused the United States of making "excessive demands" over the strait, through which one-fifth of the world's oil transited before its effective closure by Iran during the war.

US President Donald Trump had also insisted several hours into the talks on Saturday that the United States had already triumphed on the battlefield by killing Iranian leaders and destroying key military infrastructure.

"Whether we make a deal or not makes no difference to me. The reason is because we've won," Trump said.

Leverage

The high-stakes 21-hour meeting had unfolded in Islamabad with both sides exhibiting intense mistrust.

Iran was in the middle of negotiations in February with Trump's real-estate friend Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner when the US and Israel attacked.

Both Kushner and Witkoff were part of Vance's team in Pakistan.

The first salvos of the war killed Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei.

Iranian demands for any agreement to end the war include unfreezing sanctioned Iranian assets and ending Israel's war against Hezbollah in Lebanon. The opening of the Strait of Hormuz has also presented a friction point.

Iran throughout the war exercised global economic leverage by asserting control of the maritime route, sending oil prices soaring and piling political pressure on Trump as US fuel costs rose.

The US military said Saturday that two Navy warships transited through the strait to begin clearing it of mines and ensure it is a "safe pathway" for tankers.

The Iranian military denied that any American warships had entered the waterway and threatened to respond if they do so.

The Revolutionary Guards' Naval Command said Iranian promises of safe passage during a two-week ceasefire applied only to "civilian vessels under specific conditions".

Lebanon violence

A complicating factor has been Israel's assertion that the ceasefire does not affect Lebanon, where the Israeli military has launched strikes and a ground invasion in response to rocket fire from Hezbollah, the Iranian-backed movement.

Lebanese authorities said Israeli strikes on the country's south on Saturday killed 18 people, bringing the death toll from Israel's operations since the war broke out past 2,000.

Israel and Lebanon will hold their own talks next week in Washington. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Saturday that he wanted a peace deal with Lebanon that "will last for generations".

But Israel has ruled out a ceasefire with Hezbollah, signalling it will instead seek to pressure the historically weak central government in Beirut.

AFP



THE JUSTICE LEAGUE

“I think we can’t just be there to assist people—we also need to be there to protect them,” says Damian Lilly, a humanitarian and human rights specialist who has spent two decades confronting the world’s worst conflict zones, including time in Myanmar. His reflections reveal both the evolution of his philosophy of protection and his frustration with the international system that repeatedly fails to uphold it.

Lilly says his understanding of “protection” began during his work early on with Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders). Though the organization is known for medical aid, he explains that its mission also included bearing witness and advocacy. Working in Afghanistan, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, he documented sexual violence and helped transform patients’ stories into reports that pressure governments and the international community. He says, “We can’t just be there to assist people—we also need to be there to protect them, and then ultimately help bring about accountability.”

The situation in South Sudan, in particular, crystallized this understanding. When a civil war broke out there in

2013, he returned to the country as Senior Advisor on the Protection of Civilians for the UN peacekeeping mission. Within hours, civilians flooded UN bases seeking safety. At first, he believed that protection would be temporary, but as the number of displaced grew from 30,000 to more than 250,000, he realized that the camps would last for years. Initially, colleagues congratulated him because so many potential victims were being protected, but Lilly had a different sentiment, seeing it instead as a symptom of failure. The camps, he explains, became semi-permanent, exposing the limits of a system that shelters but cannot solve problems. For him, protection without accountability “really loses sight of what we’re trying to do.” He concludes that immediate safety must lead to long-term justice, or it only postpones the next atrocity. That conviction continues to guide his approach today.

Lilly elaborates on “protection” as both a legal and moral imperative. Rooted in the Geneva Conventions and humanitarian law, it originally referred to measures reinforcing respect for rights. Over time, he notes, the concept evolved to encompass dignity, safety, and social well-being, and is now understood to include violence prevention, responding to victims of violence, and pursuing justice for crimes committed. Lilly argues that these dimensions must function simultaneously. In Myanmar, he says, all three are desperately needed but remain fragmented.

CATCH THE PODCAST

Read more and listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast here:

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2026/3/26/episode-508-the-justice-league>



MYANMAR JUNTA PUSHES RAIL UPGRADES TO BOLSTER TRANSPORT AND ECONOMY

Myanmar's quasi-civilian military junta has stepped up efforts to expand and modernise the country's rail network, with senior officials conducting inspections and calling for improvements in passenger and freight services, according to state media reports.

Inspections by junta authorities, reported in the past week in the state-run *Global New Light of Myanmar*, focused on upgrading rail infrastructure, improving service efficiency, and strengthening rail transport's role in supporting the national economy.

Officials reportedly emphasised the need to improve operational capacity. This includes better scheduling, maintenance, and safety standards. They also aim to expand freight transport to facilitate the movement of goods across the country.

Railways were described as a key sector for economic development, particularly in linking major cities and regional markets.

The inspections form part of a broader military junta push to prioritise domestic transport systems amid ongoing economic pressures. Although state media framed the efforts as routine, the focus on rail

has gained renewed importance amid rising fuel costs and road transport constraints.

Media reports indicate authorities have encouraged increased use of rail services as a more efficient and cost-effective alternative, particularly for bulk goods and long-distance travel. Improvements to rail infrastructure are also intended to support internal trade and reduce logistical bottlenecks in Myanmar's strained economy.

Much of Myanmar's railway system dates back decades and has long suffered from underinvestment and limited capacity. Efforts to revitalise the sector reflect both economic necessity and the government's reliance on state-managed systems to maintain basic services.

While no major new projects or timelines were announced, the inspections highlight a renewed emphasis on rail as a central component of the government's economic management strategy, even as broader instability continues to affect infrastructure across parts of the country.



MYANMAR SOCIAL MEDIA USERS REACT WITH SCORN AS MIN AUNG HLAING SWORN IN AS PRESIDENT

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing was sworn in as the country's president on 10 April, but the ceremony has drawn widespread mockery and condemnation across social media platforms including Facebook, Telegram and TikTok.

In his first address to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, Min Aung Hlaing said the government would consider granting appropriate amnesties in the interest of national development — a statement that did little to soften public reaction online.

Commenters were swift and cutting. "Taking an oath to hand the country over to China," one Facebook user wrote. Others called him "a fake president appointed by China" and "the military's president — not the people's president." Several pointed out that

he holds the distinction of being the first authoritarian leader in Myanmar's history to assume the presidency without contesting a single parliamentary seat or winning a public vote.

"There is no one in Myanmar like Min Aung Hlaing — becoming president without even running as an MP," one widely shared comment read.

Adding to the sense of international isolation surrounding the appointment, the Philippines — as the current ASEAN chair — reiterated this week that Min Aung Hlaing would not be permitted to attend ASEAN summits, despite his new presidential title.

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Analysis & Insight



DIGITAL MAGAZINE

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