

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight

MYANMAR'S MEDIA BATTLE

Independent media work
to tell the truth as junta
pedals falsehoods

Min Aung Hlaing gets warm welcome in China

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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.

ASEAN'S MYANMAR FAULT-LINE

The prospect of some ASEAN member states moving toward recognizing the Myanmar military junta as the legitimate government of Myanmar poses a serious challenge to the regional body's credibility, unity and long-term stability. Such recognition would not merely represent a diplomatic adjustment - it would risk undermining ASEAN's own principles and rewarding a regime that seized power through force in February 2021, overturning the results of the 2020 general election won by Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy and triggering one of South East Asia's most devastating conflicts.

Since the coup, ASEAN has struggled to formulate an effective response. The Five-Point Consensus agreed in April 2021 called for an immediate cessation of violence, dialogue among all parties, humanitarian assistance and the appointment of a special envoy. Yet the junta has ignored these commitments, while armed conflict has spread across much of the country and millions of people have been displaced - all due to the actions of a military regime that cloaks itself in civilian garb. ASEAN itself has repeatedly acknowledged the military authorities' lack of cooperation by excluding the main junta leaders from high-level meetings.

Any decision by individual ASEAN members to formally recognize the military regime would therefore expose deep divisions within the organization. It would weaken the collective position that Myanmar's political crisis requires an inclusive solution and could effectively render the Five-Point Consensus meaningless, though it has to be recognized it is already dead in the water. Such a move would also diminish ASEAN's standing as a regional body capable

of upholding agreed principles and managing crises among its members.

Recognition of the junta would carry broader implications for democratic legitimacy. It would send a signal that the seizure of power through military force can ultimately secure international acceptance, despite widespread human rights abuses and the rejection of military rule by large sections of Myanmar's population. This risks creating a dangerous precedent not only for Myanmar but also for South East Asia more generally, where democratic institutions remain fragile in several countries.

Moreover, legitimizing the junta is unlikely to bring stability. Myanmar's military has failed to establish effective control over large parts of the country, while resistance forces and ethnic armed organizations continue to challenge its authority. International recognition cannot compensate for the absence of domestic legitimacy. Rather than ending the conflict, it could harden positions, prolong the war and complicate future efforts toward national reconciliation.

ASEAN's greatest strength has long been its ability to maintain unity despite diversity. Granting legitimacy to the Myanmar junta would deepen internal fault-lines and risk transforming a regional crisis into a lasting test of ASEAN's relevance and credibility. Sustained engagement with all stakeholders - rather than premature recognition of military rule - remains essential if ASEAN is to preserve both its principles and its influence.

EDITORIAL

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3 EDITORIAL

6 MYANMAR'S MEDIA BATTLE
- Independent media work to tell the truth as junta pedals falsehoods

12 ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR
Analysis & Insight

16 CHINA-MYANMAR RELATIONS
Min Aung Hlaing receives a warm welcome in China

17 Beijing signs 18 deals with Myanmar's Min Aung Hlaing, holds back on stalled megaprojects

18 China detains prominent Myanmar political analyst Min Zin on espionage charges

19 INDIA-MYANMAR RELATIONS
NUCC calls on India for 'principled engagement' in support of the Myanmar people

21 ASEAN DEVELOPMENTS
ASEAN Special Envoy announces intent to engage with Myanmar's ethnic armed organisations

22 BMC urges AICHR to act on ASEAN corporate links to Myanmar junta airstrikes

24 EU launches youth campaign highlighting ASEAN changemakers

25 Myanmar youth advocates featured in EU-ASEAN regional campaign



26 HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

Myanmar UN envoy urges safeguards against UNFPA-UN Women merger risks

27 UN and humanitarian groups seek \$64 million for Myanmar refugees in Thailand as camps close

28 CORE DEVELOPMENTS

UK government under increasing pressure from parliament to sanction Myanmar's military

30 US state department confirms death of American diplomat in Yangon

31 Joint Statement urges international action on Kachin situation as junta pushes Myitsone project

32 Long struggle of Myanmar's Karen brought into focus in ICG eyewitness report

33 Myanmar junta claims it demolished nearly 60 cyber scam buildings in Shwe Kokko, but operations continue

34 FBI says it seized \$30 million linked to Myanmar scam compound

35 Nearly 50,000 Myanmar internally displaced persons in Kyaukphyu are in critical need of food and shelter

36 Minor 4.0-magnitude earthquake strikes Yangon, spurring regional seismic concerns

37 Myanmar junta columns loot and burn three villages in Chaung-U Township, displacing thousands

38 Fortify Rights says Bago monastery bombing by Myanmar junta may amount to war crime

39 Justice For Myanmar says sanctioned Belarus consul's Singapore firm still brokers arms for junta

40 Justice For Myanmar condemns FIFA for awarding World Cup rights to junta-Linked Mytel

41 COMMENTARY

The Arithmetic of Atrocity: Air Power and Civilian Suffering in Arakan - Aung Marm Oo

43 ASIAN & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

South Asia monsoon risks both floods and drought: experts

45 COLUMNS

INSIGHT MYANMAR – The Fire Next Door

46 JUNTA WATCH

47 SOCIAL WATCH

**Cover photo of journalist
by Alex Azerbache**



Independent media houses seek to provide the real story of Myanmar's crisis

MYANMAR'S MEDIA BATTLE

INDEPENDENT MEDIA WORK

TO TELL THE TRUTH AS

JUNTA PEDALS FALSEHOODS

Truth matters in Myanmar. As the media battle expands between independent media and the Myanmar junta's disinformation and spin, the independent media houses are arguably winning but struggling due to lack of funds.

Myanmar's media battle pits the independent media houses against a heavily-funded and well-organized "disinformation" and "propaganda" campaign by coup maker Min Aung Hlaing's "quasi-civilian" military junta aimed at further cementing the military's grip in the wake of the "sham election" in the Golden Land.

David vs Goliath

It's David versus Goliath. Over the last five-plus years since the February 2021 military coup, Myanmar's tenacious independent media houses including Myanmar Now, Mizzima, Irrawaddy and DVB, and a host of

smaller outfits, have worked to maintain their media coverage providing accurate and largely trustworthy reports relied upon by viewers at home and abroad in both Burmese and English. Their overall viewer and reader reach is in the tens of millions.

These media outlets have had their licenses revoked in-country, while dozens of journalists have been arrested, tortured and imprisoned. Reporters operating inside Myanmar face potential surveillance and possible detention, torture and long prison sentences. Hundreds of journalists have fled to Thailand, India and other countries. Operating from exile creates difficulties in maintaining sources, verifying information and covering remote conflict areas. Reporters remaining inside Myanmar must rely on covert methods and trusted local networks, increasing risks and slowing news gathering.



Myanmar's media in action before the 2021 coup. Photo: Mizzima

The junta has imposed internet shutdowns, blocked websites and restricted access to social media platforms. Journalists and audiences increasingly rely on VPNs, encrypted applications and mirror sites. These restrictions make distributing news and reaching readers more complicated and expensive.

Aid cuts strike media

Unfortunately, 2025 hit like a sledgehammer as the US government cut USAID and Sweden began to a rollback of aid that is ending in 2026, and cutbacks by European governments, amidst an overall atmosphere of uncertainty by Western governments concerning foreign aid. Given this troubled atmosphere, independent media have lost most of their donor funding.

The last 15 months have been a rollercoaster for the media houses as they attempted to balance cutbacks in staff and salaries but maintain their media output. This has proved quite a juggling act. Significant percentages of staff and part-timers have been axed, tough moves, given the loyalty displayed, while core

staff have had to double-down on their responsibilities to maintain the media output. Most if not all of these Myanmar media houses have a foot inside and outside the country, with staff, contributors and Citizen Journalists (CJ) providing largely reliable accounts of the civil war and overall crisis in the country – accounts typically trusted by the Myanmar population.

Myanmar's civil war has fragmented the country, with many areas controlled by ethnic armed organizations or resistance groups. Access to frontline areas is limited, and journalists often depend on local informants, social media posts and satellite imagery. Verifying casualty figures and military developments is time-consuming and difficult. Disinformation campaigns by various actors further complicate reporting.

Many journalists have experienced trauma, displacement and the loss of colleagues. Constant exposure to violence and insecurity has contributed to burnout and mental health challenges. Maintaining experienced staff under these conditions is increasingly difficult.



Overall, the greatest challenge for Myanmar's independent media is sustainability. They must continue reporting on a complex civil war while operating under severe repression, suffering from a lack of funding, and protecting journalists who face significant personal danger. Their ability to survive will depend on continued international support, improved digital security and the development of more durable sources of revenue.

As one analyst put it, exile media finds it difficult if not impossible to raise money in traditional ways such as through advertising, making donor funding hugely important for keeping these outlets open and the accurate information flowing. The information from independent media reporting is relied upon by diplomats and analysts to form an accurate picture of what is happening on the many political, conflict, economic and social fronts in Myanmar, especially in the face of junta propaganda and misinformation.

David has trust

David, however, has a just cause on his side and the trust of millions of readers and viewers at home and abroad. Goliath, on the other hand, has a struggle on his hands, bar the ease of playing to die-hard Myanmar military supporters.

Naypyidaw's attempt to throw big bucks at the media war challenge will only go so far. The Myanmar military junta has employed a wide range of methods to shape public opinion, undermine independent reporting and present itself as the country's legitimate authority. These efforts combine traditional state propaganda with modern digital influence operations, and crackdowns on independent media and social media outlets. The propaganda drive even includes the junta hiring controversial American lobbyist Roger Stone to "paint lipstick on a pig," as one critic put it, pushing back against the pro-resistance Burma lobby in the US halls of power. How he will fare is hard to predict.

State control of media

The junta controls official broadcasters such as MRTV and Myawaddy TV, as well as newspapers including "The Mirror" and "The Global New Light of Myanmar". These outlets portray the military as the guardian of "national unity and stability" while depicting resistance forces as "terrorists" and blaming unrest on foreign interference. Academic analysis has shown that state media consistently seek to justify the 2021 coup, reinforce the military's claim that it intervened to protect the nation, and trying to paint the regime as a legitimate civilian government.

Apart from state media, the junta and its supporters have used coordinated networks of accounts on Facebook, Telegram and other platforms to amplify pro-military narratives and attack critics. Investigations have found that the military has organized systematic online campaigns employing fake accounts and coordinated messaging to influence public opinion. Similar tactics had already been uncovered by Facebook before the coup.

Psychological warfare

In 2026 the junta established a specialized body tasked with publishing information in multiple languages and conducting counter-information campaigns against resistance groups and independent media. The organization includes officials from the military's Directorate of Public Relations and Psychological Warfare and several ministries. Its purpose is to challenge unfavourable reporting and improve the regime's international image.

As Facebook became less hospitable to military influence operations, the junta increasingly shifted propaganda dissemination to Telegram. State channels and military-aligned accounts distribute official announcements, conspiracy theories and attacks on

critics, which are then amplified by sympathetic networks.

The regime has blocked independent media websites, restricted VPN access and imposed internet shutdowns, especially during politically sensitive periods. Such measures reduce citizens' access to alternative information and strengthen the visibility of state narratives.

Military propaganda

At the end of February 2026, Myanmar military junta established a high-level 12-member task force, led by Major General Aung Myo Thant, to intensify information operations and counter-narratives against revolutionary forces and international media.

Officially titled the "Information Sheet Publication and Counter-Information Dissemination Group," the body was formed in late January 2026 and began its mandate to conduct psychological warfare against armed insurgent groups while refuting unfavourable reports from independent media outlets, the Myanmar Gazette reports.

The statement said the group's mandate is to "conduct information operations against insurgent organizations that are fighting against the state government through armed means."

The statement also said the group will publish morale-boosting news aimed at officers and their families, as well as civil servants serving in ministries under the junta.

The statement added that key policy-related reports from state-run daily newspapers will be published in Myanmar, English, Russian and Chinese and distributed to embassies and military attaché offices at home and abroad.

The statement further said the group will use vari-

ous social media platforms to disseminate information about the Myanmar junta to both domestic and international audiences, and will respond promptly to and refute reports issued by organizations and media outlets opposed to the junta.

Since mid-2025, the junta has also established a body known as the Community Development Committee, tasked with rallying public support for the military while denouncing revolutionary forces through coordinated propaganda efforts.

Military propaganda frequently emphasizes nationalism, Buddhism and the need to preserve national unity. Resistance groups and critics are portrayed as threats to sovereignty or agents of foreign powers. Researchers have identified these themes as central components of the junta's messaging since the coup.

In addition, the junta has cultivated military-friendly commentators, organizations and media figures who repeat official narratives. Access to state institutions, economic opportunities and privileged information can create incentives for cooperation and self-censorship. At the same time, critics face intimidation or imprisonment.

The advent of a "New Narrative" group that is apparently doing a lot on social media to put a positive spin on the new quasi-civilian government and its policies, is not a junta programme as such, but obviously benefits them to a significant degree, one analyst says.

Opposition pushback

Given the money and resources being funneled by the military junta into this "new-look regime", the opposition is having to pull out the stops in order to paint a more realistic picture of the dire circumstances in the country.

The National Unity Government (NUG) and the newly-formed Steering Council for the Emergence of a

Federal Democratic Union (SCEF) are trying to create a more coordinated information and communications strategy to ensure that reporting on Myanmar's crisis reaches both domestic and international audiences.

The NUG already operates a fairly extensive communications network. It regularly issues statements through its ministries, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, publishes updates on diplomatic activities, and conducts press briefings with international media and independent Myanmar outlets. The opposition government has also used social media platforms, online television channels and partnerships with exile media organizations to distribute information and counter military narratives. Its foreign ministry frequently publishes statements on ASEAN developments, humanitarian issues and human rights concerns.

Since its establishment in March 2026, SCEF has sought to provide a broader political voice by bringing together the NUG, the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and several major ethnic resistance organizations, including the Kachin Independence Organization, Karen National Union, Karenni National Progressive Party and Chin National Front. One of its objectives is to coordinate political messaging and pursue what it describes as "one policy, one strategy." According to its founding declaration, SCEF is intended to synchronize military, political and institutional matters among its members.

An important aspect of SCEF's work has been outreach to foreign governments and diplomats. In early June 2026, SCEF representatives held a diplomatic briefing in which they argued that Myanmar's crisis should be understood not merely as a humanitarian emergency or armed conflict but as a wider political transformation requiring long-term solutions. The council emphasized issues such as governance, legitimacy, political inclusion and civilian protection. The underlying bedrock is the Myanmar military or Tatmadaw has to be ousted from politics, not negotiated with. This stance and these briefings form part of a continuing

effort to shape international understanding of events inside Myanmar.

The NUG and SCEF also rely heavily on independent Myanmar media operating in exile, including outlets such as Mizzima, Burma News International and the Myanmar Peace Monitor, which provide coverage of resistance activities and political developments. These organizations help amplify statements and analyses coming from the resistance side, but also attempt to remain relatively balanced in their coverage, even pointing out weaknesses in the resistance infrastructure, and reporting "bad news" amongst the resistance ranks if and when it arises.

Nevertheless, both the NUG and SCEF face serious obstacles. Internet shutdowns, digital surveillance and restrictions imposed by the military have complicated the flow of information inside Myanmar. Reports have documented continuing online repression and communications disruptions that limit access to news and hinder outreach efforts.

In practice, the NUG and SCEF appear to be moving toward a shared communications approach in which the NUG serves as the established diplomatic and governmental voice, while SCEF provides a broader collective platform representing ethnic resistance organizations and pro-democracy forces. Their strategy is aimed at ensuring that international audiences see the conflict not only through the lens of humanitarian suffering, but also as a struggle over political legitimacy and through the hoped-for future federal democratic structure of Myanmar.

Myanmar's independent media has a fight on its hands. But it has truth on its side and the majority of readers and viewers at home and abroad who understand what is right and what is wrong. Given the stakes, this band of media brothers and sisters need all the support they can get.

Sources: Mizzima, DVB, Irrawaddy, AFP

ANALYSIS & INSIGHT



MYANMAR MILITARY'S 'FOUR CUTS' STRATEGY STARVING CIVILIAN COMMUNITIES

Evidence emerging from conflict-affected regions across Myanmar suggests that the military junta's long-standing "four cuts" strategy may be contributing to worsening humanitarian conditions for civilians and internally displaced persons (IDPs). While the authorities deny deliberately targeting civilians, aid agencies and local communities report increasing obstacles that are preventing humanitarian assistance from reaching some of the country's most vulnerable populations.

According to humanitarian assessments, millions of people remain displaced by armed conflict, while large numbers of them face severe difficulties accessing food, medicine, and other essential supplies. Aid organizations have reported that conflict, military checkpoints, administrative restrictions, and transportation barriers are significantly limiting relief operations. Large areas of Sagaing, Magway, Kachin, and Rakhine states and regions remain particularly difficult to reach, leaving many displaced communities dependent on irregular assistance.

Humanitarian access appears to have deteriorated over the past year. Relief groups report facing increasingly complex approval procedures, travel authorization requirements, and restrictions on transporting supplies. In some areas, projects have been delayed or suspended altogether. Checkpoints continue to represent one of the most significant obstacles, with aid workers frequently subjected to inspections and administrative hurdles that slow or prevent deliveries.

The consequences of these restrictions are being felt most acutely by displaced families. In Rakhine and Sagaing, where some of the country's largest displaced populations are concentrated, many communities remain beyond the reach of regular humanitarian support. Aid agencies have struggled to maintain operations in areas experiencing active conflict, aerial attacks, and insecurity.

The situation in Pakokku Township in Magway Region illustrates these challenges. Military operations launched in May reportedly displaced thousands of civilians, forcing

entire communities to flee their homes. Many have now spent weeks living in temporary shelters while facing shortages of food and medicine. The arrival of the rainy season has further complicated movement and transportation, making it difficult for both civilians and humanitarian groups to access affected areas.

Displaced residents describe growing concerns about survival. Beyond food shortages, the disruption of agricultural activities has affected livestock and livelihoods, raising fears that the humanitarian situation could worsen if displacement continues. Families that previously relied on farming now face uncertainty about their ability to sustain themselves in the months ahead.

Concerns have also emerged regarding aid distribution. Some displaced people have complained about receiving smaller quantities of food than expected, while others say they were unable to access assistance despite possessing registration documents issued through humanitarian programmes. Although such complaints do not necessarily reflect broader distribution patterns, they highlight the frustrations and vulnerabilities experienced by communities dependent on external assistance.

Taken together, these developments raise important

questions about whether restrictions on movement, humanitarian access, and civilian livelihoods are becoming integral components of the military's counterinsurgency approach. Regardless of intent, the practical effect is clear: hundreds of thousands of displaced people remain trapped between conflict and deprivation, increasingly dependent on humanitarian support that is becoming harder to deliver. As fighting continues across Myanmar, ensuring safe and sustained access to civilians may become one of the country's most urgent humanitarian challenges.

Arakan Army offensives in Rakhine intensify

The Arakan Army (AA) continues to expand pressure on Myanmar's military positions across three remaining townships under the junta's control in Rakhine State and adjacent areas, demonstrating both military momentum and strategic flexibility. Recent fighting suggests that the conflict is entering a new phase in which the junta is increasingly focused on defending key strongholds rather than reclaiming lost territory.

One of the most significant developments has occurred around the Taungmawoo naval base and Sane



The Arakan Army on parade. Photo: AA

town on Ramree Island. Sane occupies a strategically important position between Kyaukphyu and Yanbye, making control of the area critical for both military and logistical purposes. The junta reportedly launched operations to retake territory under AA control, but encountered fierce resistance and suffered setbacks.

Following those clashes, AA forces reportedly shifted from defensive operations to counteroffensives, targeting positions associated with the naval base. Several outposts were captured, leaving only a limited number of defensive positions protecting the headquarters area. In response, the military has increasingly relied on naval firepower, artillery, and air support to prevent further territorial losses.

The significance of these battles extends beyond local military calculations. The area lies near major Chinese-backed infrastructure projects, adding an economic and geopolitical dimension to the fighting. Continued instability around strategic transport and investment corridors could raise concerns among regional stakeholders with interests in Rakhine State.

Meanwhile, tensions are also rising around Sittwe, the state capital. Although the AA has not yet launched a full-scale assault on the city, clashes have intensified in surrounding areas. Fighting has largely consisted

of artillery exchanges and drone attacks rather than sustained ground offensives. Nevertheless, reports indicate that armed confrontations are gradually moving closer to important military installations on the outskirts of the city.

The AA's strategy appears to combine pressure on multiple fronts. Beyond Rakhine State itself, allied forces have conducted operations in neighboring Ayeyarwady Region, where military positions have reportedly come under attack. The seizure of outposts and pressure on artillery units suggest an effort to stretch the junta's resources across a wider geographic area.

At the same time, the military faces growing challenges along key transport corridors linking Magway Region and Rakhine State. Reports of disrupted communications, isolated units, and difficulties reinforcing frontline positions indicate the extent of operational pressure confronting military forces. The junta has attempted to establish alternative routes and launch counteroffensives, but these efforts have encountered resistance from AA and allied groups.

Taken together, recent developments suggest that the Arakan Army is pursuing a strategy aimed at gradually weakening military positions, isolating strategic strongholds, and expanding operational



Many young Burmese have been forced to flee their country. Burmese migrants in Thailand. Photo: Antonio Graceffo

influence beyond traditional battlefields. While the outcome of the campaign remains uncertain, the balance of momentum currently appears to favor the AA. For the junta, the challenge is increasingly not only how to regain lost territory, but how to prevent further erosion of its remaining positions in western Myanmar.

No country for young men

For many young people in Myanmar, the country's armed conflict is no longer a distant reality. The military's enforcement of the conscription law has transformed daily life, creating new pressures that affect education, employment, migration, and personal security. As recruitment efforts intensify, young people, particularly men, increasingly find themselves caught between military demands, economic hardship, and limited opportunities to leave the country.

The impact extends far beyond those directly recruited. Families, local administrators, migrant workers, and entire communities are now affected by policies designed to sustain the military's manpower needs. Young men of military age remain the primary targets of recruitment efforts, but the wider social consequences are being felt across society.

For many, migration has become one of the few perceived alternatives. Yet even this option carries significant risks. Thousands of Myanmar nationals continue to seek work in neighbouring countries, particularly Thailand. However, stricter immigration enforcement and deportation policies have increased uncertainty for migrants. Activists and community organizations have raised concerns that some deported individuals may face immediate recruitment upon their return to Myanmar.

Recent deportations from neighbouring countries have fueled these fears. Reports indicate that some returnees have been transferred to military-controlled facilities for screening and possible conscription. This has created anxiety among migrant communities, many of whom left Myanmar specifically to avoid conflict, economic instability, or military recruitment.

According to security analysts and monitoring groups, the military has significantly expanded recruitment since the introduction of the conscription law. Tens of thousands of recruits have reportedly entered training programmes, with conscripts now forming a substantial portion of frontline forces. Such figures, if accurate, would indicate one of the largest military mobilization efforts undertaken by the junta since the 2021 coup.

The authorities have also introduced measures aimed at preventing potential conscripts from evading recruitment. Local administrators and community leaders are reportedly under pressure to identify and monitor eligible individuals. In some townships, village and ward leaders have been instructed to ensure that recruitment quotas are met. These measures have generated additional tensions between local communities and authorities.

At the same time, overseas workers face growing restrictions. Many Myanmar nationals who returned home temporarily have reported difficulties leaving the country again. Employment agencies and labour advocates say increasing documentation requirements have complicated overseas travel, effectively limiting mobility for some workers. Requirements related to income transfers, employer verification, and multiple recommendation letters have created additional barriers for those seeking to return to jobs abroad.

The conscription system has also raised concerns about its impact on vulnerable groups. One widely reported case involved an LGBTQ+ woman from Yangon who was reportedly detained and sent to military training despite family appeals for exemption. Human rights advocates argue that such cases highlight broader concerns regarding transparency, due process, and the treatment of marginalized communities.

For Myanmar's youth, the issue is ultimately larger than conscription alone. It reflects the shrinking space for personal choice in a country where conflict increasingly shapes life decisions. Whether pursuing education, seeking employment abroad, supporting family members, or simply planning for the future, many young people now find their options constrained by security concerns and state policies.

As the conflict continues, the long-term consequences may extend beyond military recruitment figures. A generation growing up under conditions of uncertainty, displacement, and restricted mobility could face lasting social and economic challenges. For many young Myanmar citizens, the question is no longer whether the conflict will affect their lives, but how profoundly it will shape their future.



MIN AUNG HLAING RECEIVES A WARM WELCOME IN CHINA

Myanmar's military coup-maker turned civilian 'president' Min Aung Hlaing touched down in China on Monday for talks with Xi Jinping, his first visit since taking over as civilian leader after Beijing-backed elections rejected by democracy monitors.

Min Aung Hlaing is hoping to expand trade and security ties with China, a rare enduring partner for Myanmar after his 2021 coup ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi and diplomatically isolated the country on the world stage.

Relations have frayed in recent years over mushrooming internet scam centres along the countries' shared border areas which both enlist and target Chinese citizens in lucrative cryptocurrency fraud, analysts say.

China has emerged as a key power-broker in the civil war sparked by the coup -- variously backing the military, rebels and truces between them according to its security and economic interests, analysts say.

The one-party state also vocally backed recent polls excluding Suu Kyi's party, punishing dissent with prison time and returning a walk-over win for pro-military MPs -- who elected Min Aung Hlaing as president.

Democracy watchdogs described the transition as a charade to launder the reputation of the leadership, campaigning to recover from the pariah status many nations branded it with since the putsch.

Min Aung Hlaing landed in China to a red carpet welcome, according to images shared by his office, and spent the first hours of his five-day trip touring Beijing Aerospace City -- the centre of China's space programme.

Supply and demand

During his half-decade ruling Myanmar as military chief, Min Aung Hlaing made trips to China only for regional summits -- meeting Beijing officials on the sidelines.

China hopes his first visit as civilian president will deepen "comprehensive strategic cooperation", foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian told reporters on Friday.

In addition to Xi, Min Aung Hlaing is also set to meet Chinese Premier Li Qiang and top legislator Zhao Leji.

Beijing is a key provider of materiel to the Myanmar military and has also brokered a pair of landmark truces with two of the most powerful rebel factions that once challenged it in the borderlands with China.

While Myanmar has been massively impoverished by the civil war, it has also emerged as a major global supplier of mined rare earth minerals -- vital for China's production of renewable energy technology.

The first bill announced by Myanmar's new crop of lawmakers proposes the death penalty for those who detain or violently coerce victims into working in scam centres, signalling the country's intention to crack down.

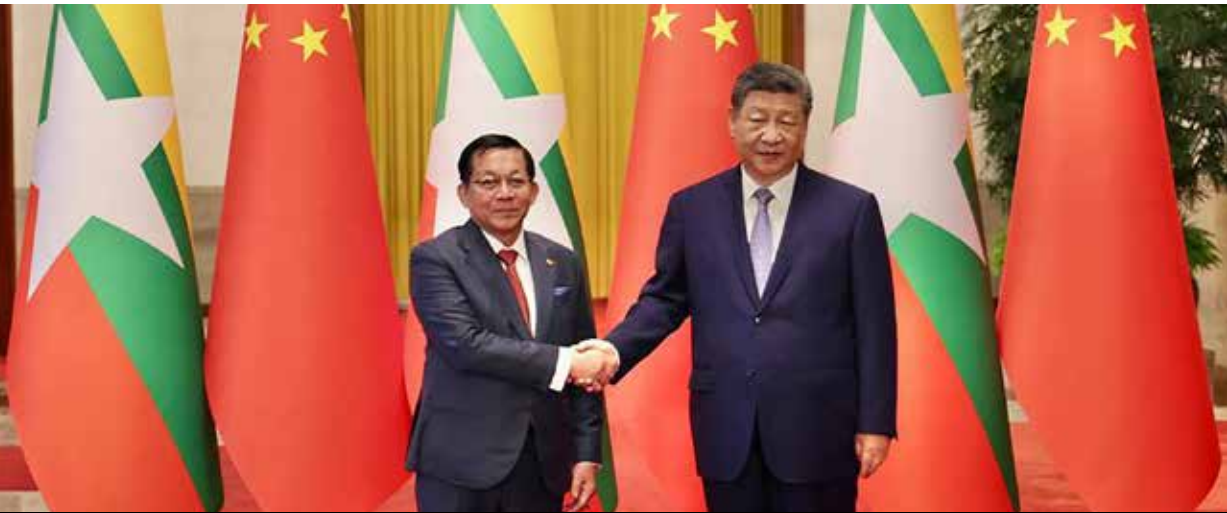
Attention has also been drawn to the bilateral relationship between Myanmar and China by Beijing's detention of a US scholar who studies Myanmar and stands accused of spying.

Min Zin, founder of the Institute for Strategy and Policy Myanmar (ISP-M), "has been subjected to criminal compulsory measures", foreign ministry spokesman Lin told reporters on Friday.

Authorities are holding him "on suspicion of engaging in espionage activities that endanger China's national security", Lin said.

Min Zin was detained in the capital of China's border province of Yunnan, a person with professional ties to the ISP-M told AFP anonymously because of the case's sensitivity.

AFP



BEIJING SIGNS 18 DEALS WITH MYANMAR'S MIN AUNG HLAING, HOLDS BACK ON STALLED MEGAPROJECTS

Myanmar junta chief Min Aung Hlaing met Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing on 16 June, signing 18 cooperation documents on transportation, health, and media — but reaching no agreements on the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor's two flagship projects, the Kyaukphyu deep-sea port and the Muse-Mandalay railway, both stalled since the 2021 coup triggered a civil war.

Instead, Min Aung Hlaing pledged that Myanmar would "make every effort" to ensure the safety of Chinese enterprises and personnel in the country, according to Xinhua.

Xi received the junta chief with a 21-gun salute on Tiananmen Square and a guard of honour inspection at the Great Hall of the People, according to CCTV. The honours placed him in the same protocol tier as US President Donald Trump, who visited Beijing last month, and the King of Thailand, who received identical treatment in November 2025.

The United States, European Union, and United Kingdom have each refused to recognise Min Aung Hlaing as a legitimate head of state, describing the November 2025 elections that led to his April inauguration as neither free nor fair.

The 18 documents covered cross-border transportation in the Greater Mekong Subregion, free trade, disaster relief, health, and media cooperation. Xi called on both sides to advance key corridor projects "with ensured security" — framing infrastructure progress as contingent on stability guarantees from

Naypyidaw. He also said China "firmly supports Myanmar in safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity" and pledged increased support for post-earthquake reconstruction. Min Aung Hlaing reaffirmed Myanmar's adherence to the one-China principle and expressed support for Xi's four major global initiatives, Xinhua reported.

The visit continued a pattern in Beijing's calibration of Min Aung Hlaing's title across successive trips. At his first visit to China since the coup, in Kunming in November 2024, state media called him "Myanmar leader." At the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in Tianjin in August 2025, Beijing used "acting president." On Tuesday, he was received as "president" with full head-of-state honours.

The closed-door talks lasted less than an hour, according to Reuters. Min Aung Hlaing remains in China until Friday and is expected to meet Premier Li Qiang and National People's Congress Chairman Zhao Leji, according to Beijing's foreign ministry.

The visit came against the backdrop of the detention of Min Zin, a dual US-Myanmar citizen and Executive Director of the Institute for Strategy and Policy-Myanmar (ISP-Myanmar), a think tank whose work has included analysis of Chinese influence along the Myanmar border. Min Zin was arrested at Kunming airport on 3 June. China's foreign ministry confirmed the detention on 12 June, citing allegations of espionage — three days before Min Aung Hlaing arrived in Beijing.



Min Zin

CHINA DETAINS PROMINENT MYANMAR POLITICAL ANALYST MIN ZIN ON ESPIONAGE CHARGES

Min Zin, a prominent Myanmar political analyst and founder of the think tank ISP Myanmar, has reportedly been detained by Chinese authorities on suspicion of spying and endangering national security.

During a regular press briefing on Friday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson confirmed the arrest. He stated that Min Zin has been placed under criminal detention. China has officially notified the U.S. Consulate General in Guangzhou regarding the case, as U Min Zin is a naturalized U.S. citizen, according to the international media reports.

Unnamed sources stated that Min Zin was arrested on 3 June at the airport in Kunming, a southwestern Chinese city bordering Myanmar, where he had traveled to attend a meeting.

Min Zin is a widely respected political scientist, former journalist, and student activist from Myanmar's

1988 pro-democracy movement. He later studied political science at the University of California, Berkeley, and co-founded the Institute for Strategy and Policy (ISP) - Myanmar. The research organization, known for tracking Myanmar's political transitions, military conflict, and Chinese influence in the region, moved its operations overseas to Thailand following the 2021 military coup.

The detention of a U.S. citizen on national security charges is a rare event in China. It comes at a sensitive time as Washington and Beijing have been working to stabilize bilateral relations, shortly after the U.S. President Donald Trump visited China to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

U.S. diplomatic officials are reportedly aware of the situation and are monitoring the case.



NUCC CALLS ON INDIA FOR 'PRINCIPLED ENGAGEMENT' IN SUPPORT OF THE MYANMAR PEOPLE

The National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) has called for in a letter on the Indian government for “principled engagement in support of the people of Myanmar.

In a letter addressed to Dr. S. Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs, and Mr. Abhay Thakur, Ambassador of India to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, and dated 9 June, the NUCC has the following to say:

Subject: Appeal to India for Principled Engagement in Support of the People of Myanmar

Excellency, Myanmar and India are long-standing and mutually respectful neighbours, bound by ancient civilizational ties, shared religious and cultural heritage, and a common border of more than 1,600 kilometres.

At this critical moment, as the people of Myanmar continue their determined struggle for democracy and human rights, the position taken by India, the world’s largest democracy, will be remembered as an important historical marker shaping the future of people-to-people relations between the two countries.

At a time when the international community, including ASEAN and the United Nations, has consistently refused to confer international legitimacy on Min Aung Hlaing and other military leaders responsible for the continuing atrocities against the people of Myanmar, the NUCC respectfully urges India to avoid any high-level engagement that could be perceived as recognising or legitimising the military regime. Such a principled approach would further demonstrate India’s respect for international norms, democratic values, and the will of the people of Myanmar.

The National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) respectfully urges the Government of India and its policymakers to seriously reflect on any forms of engagement, assistance, or transfer of materials that may directly or indirectly strengthen the military junta's capacity to target innocent civilians in Myanmar. Should there be any such channels exist, including those involving military-related equipment, technology, raw materials, or dual-use items, the NUCC respectfully encourages India to review them carefully and take appropriate steps to ensure that no support from India that could contribute, directly or indirectly, to actions resulting in further harm against civilians. Such a review would be consistent with India's democratic values, humanitarian principles, and longstanding friendship with the people of Myanmar.

The military junta is no longer capable of exercising effective control over large parts of Myanmar, including areas along the India-Myanmar border. It is rapidly losing ground militarily, economically, politically, and in terms of legitimacy.

The NUCC fully understands India's legitimate concerns regarding border security, the prevention of transnational crimes, regional stability, and the protection of its strategic interests. In this regard, the NUCC respectfully expresses, in the spirit of friendship and mutual respect, that the time has come for India to broaden its engagement with the National Unity

Government (NUG), ethnic revolutionary forces, and other democratic forces that enjoy the recognition and support of the people of Myanmar and exercise effective influence on the ground.

Such engagement is important not only for the democratic aspirations of the people of Myanmar but also for India's own long-term strategic interests, including border security, the prevention of transnational crimes, regional stability, and the sustainability of strategic investments such as the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project.

The NUCC, therefore, respectfully encourages India to stand with the people of Myanmar in their pursuit of democracy, federalism, human rights, and lasting peace, in keeping with India's democratic traditions and its historic friendship with the people of Myanmar. The NUCC stands ready to engage with the Government of India and its policy makers and would welcome the opportunity to further exchange views and dialogue on issues of mutual concern and interest.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC)



Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary
Ma. Theresa Lazaro. Photo: AFP

ASEAN SPECIAL ENVOY ANNOUNCES INTENT TO ENGAGE WITH MYANMAR'S ETHNIC ARMED ORGANISATIONS

An announcement by the ASEAN Special Envoy to engage with political and ethnic resistance organisations (EROs) in Myanmar was welcomed by the ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) in a statement released on June.

ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) welcomes the ASEAN Special Envoy and Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Ma. Theresa Lazaro's stated intention to meet with Myanmar's political and ethnic resistance organizations (EROs), as a potentially meaningful step toward inclusive dialogue under the Five-Point Consensus (5PC).

"The Special Envoy's planned meetings with Myanmar's EROs would mark a departure from the narrow, junta-centric engagement that has long undermined ASEAN's credibility on Myanmar. For years, resistance forces and civil society have called on ASEAN to widen its engagement beyond the

military, and this initiative signals a willingness to heed that call," said Mercy Chriesty Barends, Member of Indonesian House of Representatives, and Chairperson of APHR.

APHR urges that the engagement be guided by clear principles: transparent, rights-based, and anchored in the lived realities and democratic aspirations of the Myanmar people. Any consultations must be conducted in good faith, without preconditions that would exclude legitimate stakeholders including representatives of the National Unity Government, civil society, and affected civilian communities.

ASEAN must ensure that such dialogue is substantive, leads to concrete de-escalation measures, and is not used to legitimize or normalize the junta's parallel "civilian" transition process. Any political roadmap that emerges must be people-centered and responsive to the aspirations of all those impacted by years of military brutality.

APHR calls on the ASEAN Special Envoy to maintain momentum, ensure full transparency with ASEAN member states and civil society, and resist pressure from member states seeking premature normalization with the military regime.



Myanmar fighter jet. Photo: AFP

BMC URGES AICHR TO ACT ON ASEAN CORPORATE LINKS TO MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKES

The Blood Money Campaign (BMC) on 11 June, submitted a formal letter to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) urging the body to recommend action against ASEAN-based corporate actors it alleges have facilitated the Myanmar military junta's aerial campaign against civilians.

The statement is as follows.

The Myanmar military junta led by Min Aung Hlaing has killed nearly 93,000 civilians in Myanmar. From 2021 to April 2026, over 5 years, the junta carried out at least 7,201 airstrike incidents, resulting in 7,809 casualties and 4,496 fatalities, including pregnant women and infants. Myanmar junta violence has forcibly displaced 5.3 million people within Myanmar as of the end of March 2026. At least 1,077 children and 2,193 women had been killed by the Myanmar junta forces since the 2021 military coup attempt.

The intensity of aerial attacks escalated sharply from 85 incidents in 2021 to over 2,504 in 2024. This escalation also highlights the broader link between war crimes in Myanmar and ASEAN's failure to effectively pressure the Myanmar military junta, which has allowed the violence to continue.

In this advocacy letter to AICHR, we present evidence regarding the actions of companies in certain ASEAN Member States, notably Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia and their governments, which have facilitated human rights violations and war crimes in Myanmar. Evidence suggests that these actors have directly or indirectly facilitated access to foreign revenue, arms, equipment, aviation fuel supply chain, and technology that have fueled atrocities against civilians. These resources have been used to carry out airstrikes. Foreign revenue from the oil and gas sector is implicated in atrocity crimes in Myanmar, providing the military with millions of dollars

and sustaining its terror operations and continued commission of international crimes.

According to the mandates in the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) Five-Year Work Plans 2021-2025 (Priority Areas PA 2.5) and 2026-2030 (Mandate 4.11: which includes regional dialogues on responsible business and human rights as a Priority Programme), we urge AICHR to follow these recommendations.

We call on AICHR to urge ASEAN Member States to:

1) Conduct open investigations into companies, banks, and individuals supplying arms, dual-use goods, and aviation fuel to the junta, and take appropriate regulatory and sanctions measures.

2) Call on the Thai government to cut off the Myanmar junta's access to international financial services and gas revenues, which are used to purchase arms, aviation fuel, and aircraft to kill civilians.

3) Call on PTT, PTTEP, and GPM to stop bankrolling the junta through monthly gas payments and instead place those funds in an escrow account that the junta cannot access, preserving them for a future democratic government of Myanmar.

4) Call on the Vietnamese government to stop facilitating the supply chain of aviation fuel from international companies.

5) Call on the Singapore government to increase efforts to stop the support, facilitation, and sale of arms, equipment, and aviation fuel supply chain.

6) Call on the Malaysian government to end human rights violations linked to oilfield service companies operating in Myanmar's oil and gas sector, and urge Indonesia to regulate its companies' involvement in oil and gas projects linked to MOGE.

We recommend that AICHR make recommendations and urge ASEAN Member States to:

1) Coordinate implementation of targeted sanctions imposed by the U.S., UK, Canada, and the EU, and ensure that ASEAN Member States do not engage in business with the Myanmar military, sanctioned banks, the oil and gas sector, or aviation fuel suppliers.

2) Uphold the "right to peace," support a Myanmar people-led and people-centered solution to the crisis in Myanmar, and respect the human rights obligations owed to the people of Myanmar, as enshrined in the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration.

3) Take meaningful action, both collectively and through individual Member States, to stop the Myanmar junta's war crimes, crimes against humanity, and acts of genocide.



EU LAUNCHES YOUTH CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTING ASEAN CHANGEMAKERS

The European Union (EU) has launched a regional campaign showcasing young innovators, community leaders and digital creators from across Southeast Asia as part of efforts to promote cooperation between the EU and ASEAN.

The campaign, titled "Hands that Move", was launched in June and highlights 11 youth leaders and 11 digital content creators, one from each ASEAN country, who are working in fields including education, research, transport, infrastructure, climate, energy, health and digital technology.

According to the EU, the initiative aims to demonstrate how projects supported through the EU-ASEAN partnership and the EU's Global Gateway strategy are creating opportunities for young people across the region.

EU Ambassador to ASEAN Sujiro Seam said the campaign celebrates "everyday heroes of Southeast Asia whose hands move the world forward."

"Across the region, students, workers, entrepreneurs and communities are turning opportunity into action and ideas into real change," he said.

The campaign features participants connected to EU-supported programmes, including Erasmus+ educational exchanges and the Youth Sounding Board for the EU in ASEAN, a consultative body that provides youth input on EU policies and programmes in the region.

The EU said the initiative seeks to showcase practical solutions and innovation driven by young people while highlighting investment in education, digital connectivity, infrastructure, climate action and healthcare through the Global Gateway programme.

The campaign is being rolled out across ASEAN member states through digital media and online storytelling platforms.



MYANMAR YOUTH ADVOCATES FEATURED IN EU-ASEAN REGIONAL CAMPAIGN

Two young Myanmar representatives have been selected to participate in a new European Union (EU) campaign highlighting youth leadership and innovation across Southeast Asia.

The campaign, titled "Hands that Move", was launched by the European Union's mission to ASEAN and features youth leaders and digital creators from each ASEAN member state.

Representing Myanmar are Min Khant Thway, founder of the youth initiative "For The Future-Myanmar", and digital content creator Shar Thae Hoy. According to the EU, both participants share a commitment to promoting education and digital development.

Min Khant Thway said volunteer work had enabled him to contribute to Myanmar's future while creating opportunities for young people to engage internationally.

"Being a volunteer is how I contribute today while helping build a stronger future," he said. "These opportunities have allowed us to bring the voices of our youth to a wider, international stage."

Shar Thae Hoy praised the work of Min and the For The Future-Myanmar initiative, saying it demonstrates that positive change can be driven by young people themselves.

The broader regional campaign showcases youth leaders connected to EU-funded projects and exchange programmes, with participants working in areas including education, digital innovation, climate action, infrastructure and health.

The EU says the campaign aims to inspire young people across ASEAN by highlighting examples of community leadership, innovation and social impact.



MYANMAR UN ENVOY URGES SAFEGUARDS AGAINST UNFPA-UN WOMEN MERGER RISKS

Myanmar's UN Ambassador, Kyaw Moe Tun, urged the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board on 8 June to protect the unique roles of UNFPA and UN-Women, cautioning that merging them could jeopardize vital services for the population.

The ambassador's statement continues below.

The operational efficacy of UNFPA and UN-Women is literally a matter of survival for our country and the people, especially those living in the challenging humanitarian settings.

Since February 2021, the destruction of public infrastructure has been weaponized by the illegal military junta. The healthcare sector has collapsed, and the civilian population has been deliberately targeted throughout these years.

The scale of these manufactured horrors is staggering as of mid-2026.

The junta's relentless violence and deliberate obstruction of aid have pushed the number of internally displaced persons to over 3.7 million. Today, an unprecedented 16.2 million people, nearly one-third of our entire population, including 5 million children, require life-saving humanitarian assistance, with more than 12 million facing acute food insecurity.

The military junta has shown absolutely no change in attitude. They continue to bomb on civilian areas perpetrating war crimes and crimes against humanity until now.

Moreover, we have seen daily how women and girls bear the heaviest brunt of this man-made crisis. Gender-based violence (GBV) has escalated exponentially in conflict zones, while access to life-saving sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services

has been severely curtailed. In this dire landscape, the targeted humanitarian assistance and protection programs provided by both UNFPA and UN-Women are indispensable lifelines.

On this realization, the people of Myanmar are actively shaping an inclusive and democratic future despite these overwhelming challenges.

We recognize that sustainable peace cannot exist without structural gender equality. To this end, the National Unity Government (NUG) and major Ethnic Resistance Organizations established the Steering Council for the Emergence of a Federal Democratic Union (SCEF) on 30 March 2026, paying priorities among others to ensuring gender perspectives, transitional justice for survivors of violence, and women's leadership.

Accordingly, we support the Secretary-General's overarching vision to reduce institutional fragmentation and maximize efficiency. However, we all need to make sure not diluting their highly specialized, distinct mandates.

We are concerned that under a single entity, the specialized focus on SRHR championed by UNFPA and the normative gender equality standards led by UN-Women could be compromised, particularly at a time when global funding for women's rights faces severe pressure.

Therefore, to ensure any restructuring enhances field-level impact, we call on the Board to guarantee four safeguards in the ongoing assessment:

1. **Preserve Mandate Integrity:** Protect the distinct pillars of the ICPD and Beijing Platforms so that SRHR services are never deprioritized.
2. **Optimize Field-Level Delivery:** Establish agile, cross-border mechanisms that partner directly with local women-led civil society and parallel administrative structures.
3. **Ring-Fence Core Funding:** Ensure this restructuring protects, rather than reduces, core budgets dedicated to women and girls.
4. **Institutionalize Inclusive Consultations:** Transparently include grassroots networks from conflict-affected recipient countries in the assessment process.

The women of Myanmar are at the vanguard of a historic transition. We expect the United Nations to stand firmly with them, ensuring that any reform to this institution strengthens, rather than diminishes, their protection and empowerment.



Photo: Supplied

UN AND HUMANITARIAN GROUPS SEEK \$64 MILLION FOR MYANMAR REFUGEES IN THAILAND AS CAMPS CLOSE

United Nations agencies and humanitarian organisations have launched a USD 64 million appeal to support more than 80,000 refugees from Myanmar in Thailand as the country moves to wind down camps that have sheltered them for over four decades, according to a joint appeal document published in June 2026 by UNHCR, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and partner agencies with the support of the Royal Thai Government.

The appeal, covering June 2026 to December 2030, was launched with the support of the Royal Thai Government to fund a transition away from camp-based humanitarian assistance. Of total needs of USD 101 million, USD 37 million has been funded, leaving a gap of USD 64 million as of June 2026. A joint government-UNHCR verification exercise recorded 80,155 refugees across nine temporary shelters along the Thai-Myanmar border, the largest being Mae La with 29,134 people.

The joint appeal continues below.

Since 2025, Thailand has begun shifting from short-term humanitarian support towards longer-term, development-oriented programming that promotes self-reliance and access to national services, including under a right to work policy. After more than forty years, the government has indicated its intention to close or progressively adapt the shelters, with an

indicative scenario in which two sites may be closed or transitioned by 2027 and the remaining sites phased out or adapted by 2029.

The transition is unfolding alongside steep funding cuts. Severe reductions have significantly reduced food assistance, and most households no longer receive support, with minimal resources directed to the most vulnerable groups, who now receive only partial rations, according to the appeal.

Other services are being absorbed into Thai national systems amid similar pressures. Healthcare in seven shelters is now delivered through Ministry of Public Health district hospitals, though those hospitals are taking on higher patient loads without corresponding budget increases. In education, services are increasingly strained by teacher attrition driven by funding shortfalls and by gaps between teacher stipends and outside earnings under the right to work policy.

On protection, a significant number of unaccompanied and separated children remain unregistered, while the roll-out of the right to work has in some cases contributed to family separation and rising child labour linked to economic pressures.

The appeal calls for predictable, flexible and multi-year donor financing to safeguard gains made so far and support a gradual, protection-sensitive transition.



UK GOVERNMENT UNDER INCREASING PRESSURE FROM PARLIAMENT TO SANCTION MYANMAR'S MILITARY

The Burma Campaign UK released a statement on 11 June regarding the debate held in the UK Parliament concerning British government support for human rights in Myanmar. The debate was held on 10 June

The text of the Burma Campaign UK statement is as follows.

During the debate, MPs from across political parties united in calling for stronger action by the British government, including new sanctions against the Burmese military, action on justice and accountability, and ensuring aid is not cut.

Former Foreign Secretary Sir Jeremy Hunt MP, of the Conservative Party, secured the debate, and called for a return of British leadership on the international response to the crisis in Burma, stating:

"Britain does not have to stand on the sidelines, Britain must not stand on the sidelines, and I hope that when we hear from the Minister, he will tell us that Britain will not stand on the sidelines."

Sir Jeremy Hunt called for more sanctions on the Burmese military, including on state-owned banks under the control of the Burmese military. He also called for action on Arakha Army human rights violations, British leadership at the United Nations, and more creative ways to refer the entire situation in Burma to the International Criminal Court.

Labour MP Luke Akehurst drew attention to the British government stopping imposing new sanctions, the increase of airstrikes by the Burmese military, and called for new sanctions, stating:

"Does he agree that we need a new round of sanctions, including potentially targeting the military-owned Mytel mobile phone network, as well as vessels and companies identified by Amnesty and Reuters as delivering jet fuel and materials for making explosives, some of it originating in Iran?"

Labour MP Afzal Khan also called for new sanctions, stating:

"The genocide against the Rohingya Muslims, which has been ongoing for almost a decade, is one

of the most horrifying examples of Islamophobia. Does the right hon. Member agree that the UK should join the EU and the USA in imposing sanctions on the military-controlled Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise, which is a major source of revenue for the military?"

Democratic Unionist MP Jim Shannon highlighted the persecution of Christians, stating:

"Since the illegal military coup, the junta has executed a brutal, calculated campaign targeting predominantly Christian ethnic regions in Chin, Kayah and Kachin states as well as Sagaing and Yangon. Reports from Open Doors confirmed that historical Christian communities face unprecedented violence, with churches being bombed via indiscriminate military airstrikes. Villages have been razed to the ground and Christian pastors are being unlawfully detained, disappeared or killed."

Rushanara Ali MP, co-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Burma, highlighted the lack of any new sanctions since 2024, and the key role the UK can play in mobilising international action, stating:

"Given the escalating human rights violations, the British Government should be doing everything they can to identify and sanction sources of revenue and arms and to encourage our allies to do the same.

"I call on the Minister to make sure that we work with our partners. We have not joined Canada in sanctioning the jet fuel sector, despite the humanitarian and economic impacts of airstrikes, let alone the lives lost. We have not joined the European Union and the United States of America in sanctioning Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise - the military-controlled body responsible for oil and gas extraction and a major source of revenue to the Myanmar military. We have not joined the United States of America in sanctioning international telecommunications company, Myanmar Mytel, which is not only a military joint-venture company that provides revenue to the military, but is also used to track and arrest human rights activists.

"There are a number of other sanctions that other countries have been party to that we have not. I call on

the Minister to look at those areas and to work with our partners on that."

Rushanara Ali also expressed gratitude for the work of Burma Campaign UK.

Labour MP Catherine West asked about UK aid to Burma, and called for greater British government focus on the crisis in Burma, stating:

"Does my hon. Friend agree that, relative to the other crises in the world, in Sudan, Gaza and other places, the long-running and tragic dispute between the regime and the many people who live in Myanmar/Burma deserves much more attention - not just in this House, which is what we are providing as Back Benchers, but from the Government?"

British Foreign Office Minister Hamish Falconer MP responded to the questions from MPs, but failed to make any new commitment to act. In describing the British government response to the crisis in Burma, he was largely forced to highlight action taken by the British Foreign Office years ago, as very little proactive action has been taken in the past two years.

The Minister, whose government is currently standing on the sidelines, and has been for some time, said the government would not stand on the sidelines, while failing to announce any new action or approach to get off the sidelines. He concluded by saying:

"The human rights situation in Myanmar remains grave, but withdrawal or silence is not an option, and we will certainly not sit on the sidelines. Sustained pressure, co-ordinated engagement and targeted support can reduce harm, advance accountability and help lay the foundations for a future that respects the rights of all. The resilience and courage shown by communities across Myanmar, even in the face of extraordinary hardship, demands nothing less. We are committed to upholding international human rights standards and working with partners across the House to support the aspirations of the people of Myanmar for an inclusive and peaceful future."



US STATE DEPARTMENT CONFIRMS DEATH OF AMERICAN DIPLOMAT IN YANGON

The US Department of State has confirmed the death of an American government employee stationed at the US Embassy in Yangon, Myanmar, sparking an ongoing investigation by local authorities as well.

According to international news media and anonymous sources within the diplomatic community in Myanmar, the deceased man was found dead approximately two weeks ago at the Sakura Residence & Hotel in Yangon.

International media reports indicate that the victim was murdered, with diplomatic sources suggesting the motive may stem from personal matters involving the victim's former partner though it remains unconfirmed whether the individual was an ex-wife or an ex-girlfriend.

Mizzima could not independently verify the report.

In connection with the case, police are treating the American citizen's death as a suspected homicide. Sources within the diplomatic community further stated that authorities have detained a Thai woman as part of their ongoing investigation.

When approached for details, US officials in Thailand and the US Embassy in Myanmar referred all inquiries regarding the case directly to the US Department of State. While the Department of State confirmed the death, it declined to release further details.

International media reported that the department is withholding additional information at this time out of respect for the privacy of the deceased's family and loved ones.

Further updates on the investigation will be provided as more information becomes available.



JOINT STATEMENT URGES INTERNATIONAL ACTION ON KACHIN SITUATION AS JUNTA PUSHES MYITSONE PROJECT

Civil society and advocacy groups marked the 15th anniversary of the resumption of armed conflict in Kachin State on 9 June, issuing a joint statement condemning the military junta's ongoing atrocities and calling on the international community to increase humanitarian funding and pressure for civilian protection.

The statement is as follows.

The military junta's indiscriminate attacks, atrocities, and forced conscription drive continuous displacement, forcing many to flee Myanmar. Its financial weaponization, internet shutdowns, and transport blockades—including the closure of Myitkyina airport—isolate communities in Kachin and cause critical shortages in food, healthcare, and education, with devastating impacts on children, women, and people with disabilities. Recent international funding cuts further exacerbate these urgent needs.

Amidst the humanitarian crisis, the junta is aggressively reviving the Myitsone Dam project—a project previously suspended due to massive public opposition. Furthermore, the dam project raises grave safety concerns for all of Myanmar. The Irrawaddy River is the nation's lifeblood, supporting communities from the conflict-ridden northern Kachin highlands through the earthquake-stricken central zone to the fertile southern delta.

We affirm our unwavering solidarity with every community in Kachin and across Myanmar enduring

the devastation of the ongoing war. We call on the international community to prioritize Myanmar's humanitarian needs by increasing funding for displaced populations, supporting local actors, and ensuring aid reaches resistance-controlled areas.

Prioritize civilian protection by employing all necessary diplomatic measures to immediately halt atrocities and indiscriminate attacks, particularly airstrikes. We urge support for the rights and dignity of all civilians, especially children, women, and persons with disabilities, and protection for those seeking refuge in the international community. Furthermore, we must hold perpetrators accountable to bring justice for victims, prevent future atrocities and end impunity.

Reviving the Myitsone dam project is ill-timed, as it further divides stakeholders and risks escalating the armed conflict. This project must be stopped permanently to prevent devastating and catastrophic national disasters in the future.

The Kachin conflict has spanned over six decades. Despite these challenges, the community remains resilient and hopeful for a peaceful future. Myanmar's history demonstrates that enduring stability and genuine solutions cannot be achieved under a dictatorship. We ask for continued global solidarity in seeking durable solutions based on the hard-won lessons of the past.



Photo: Yan Naing Aung

LONG STRUGGLE OF MYANMAR'S KAREN BROUGHT INTO FOCUS IN ICG EYEWITNESS REPORT

A new 'Our Journeys' report from International Crisis Group (ICG) Myanmar and Bangladesh senior consultant Thomas Kean, provides a first-hand account of a recent trip inside Karen State with the Karen National Union (KNU). The on-the-ground report provides an insightful view of the situation within the Karen revolutionary area of southeast Myanmar and paints a picture of a struggle that has been ongoing since 1949 and with no clear end in sight.

The introduction to the ICG eyewitness account is as follows.

On my first day in Karen State, in south-eastern Myanmar, I woke to the rumbling of a fighter jet overhead. Residents are so used to this sound that they can easily distinguish between commercial and military planes; some even recognise the different jet models in the air force. Shortly afterward, an official from the Karen National Union (KNU) – the country's oldest ethnic armed group – showed me a photo of a crater: the aircraft had tried to strike a high school about 20km away. Students were on holiday, and the four 500-pound bombs all missed their target, landing in nearby fields. But when we visited a few days later, some of the teachers were still visibly shaken, questioning whether it would be safe to reopen in June. Even far behind the front lines in Karen State, the war never feels far away.

The KNU has been fighting the Burman-dominated central government for a self-governed region since the late 1940s. It has long controlled its own territory

in south-eastern Myanmar, where it administers communities, collects taxes and delivers public services, including the school the military targeted during our visit. In the decade before the military's 2021 coup, the KNU opted to silence its guns and pursue peace talks with the central government, signing a bilateral ceasefire in 2012 and then the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement three years later, together with several other ethnic armed groups.

Clashes resumed almost immediately after the coup. Fighting alongside resistance forces that it has trained and armed since the putsch, the KNU's military wing – the Karen National Liberation Army, or KNLA – has wrested large chunks of territory from the military, including stretches of the Thai border. From the KNU's perspective, these advances are less expansion than restoration: many of these territories were lost to brutal military offensives in the 1990s – including Manerplaw, the KNU's former headquarters. The group is now in its strongest position in decades, but its gains have brought new dilemmas. The KNU must govern a larger territory while facing frequent air attacks, managing relations with resistance partners, dealing with rival Karen armed groups enriched by cyberscam centres, and deciding how to respond to a regime that is conspiring to divide its opponents and entrench its rule.

Please find full story here. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/ojs/asia-pacific/myanmar/bracing-long-war-myanmars-karen-state>



MYANMAR JUNTA CLAIMS IT DEMOLISHED NEARLY 60 CYBER SCAM BUILDINGS IN SHWE KOKKO, BUT OPERATIONS CONTINUE

The military junta announced on 11 June that it has demolished 56 high-rise buildings hosting online scam operations in Shwe Kokko New City, Myawaddy District, along the Thai-Myanmar border.

"They demolished empty riverbank buildings that were abandoned long ago," a Shwe Kokko local resident said. "All valuables had already been stripped, leaving only empty shells. They avoided active sites and targeted abandoned ones for show, and demolition is not a daily occurrence."

The junta claimed 77 buildings in Shwe Kokko are slated for demolition 57 by heavy machinery and 20 by explosives. With 56 buildings currently demolished, the remaining 21 will follow, according to the junta statement.

Meanwhile, cyber scam operations persist within residential houses, high-rises, hotels, and guesthouses across Shwe Kokko and nearby areas. New buildings

are under construction, and new scam workers enter the restricted Shwe Kokko territory daily.

"They do check checkpoints, but only target ordinary people," the local said. "Those inspected vehicles carry nothing. Vehicles transporting scam workers and equipment bypass inspections entirely because of mutual arrangements."

Another local source reported that while the Karen National Army (KNA) formerly the Karen Border Guard Force (BGF) no longer provides direct security for these scam hubs, they do not intercept or arrest those involved.

Sources confirm that online scam operations remain fully operational across the Thai-Myanmar border in Myawaddy District, including Shwe Kokko, Thit Ka Te, Phalu, Kyauk Khat, Son See Myaing, and Myawaddy town.

FBI SAYS IT SEIZED \$30 MILLION LINKED TO MYANMAR SCAM COMPOUND

The United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) says it has seized approximately US\$30 million in cryptocurrency linked to a scam compound operating in Myanmar as part of a broader international effort to dismantle transnational cyber fraud networks.

Speaking during a virtual press briefing on 10 June, FBI Co-Deputy Director Andrew Bailey said the agency had been working through the Scam Center Strike Force, established in late 2025, to target industrial-scale scam operations across Southeast Asia.

Bailey said the FBI recently seized a website allegedly used by the Tai Chang scam compound in Myanmar to defraud victims and confiscated around US\$30 million in cryptocurrency connected to the operation. He described scam compounds as highly organised criminal enterprises that steal billions of dollars, exploit cryptocurrencies and engage in human trafficking.

"The mafia of the 20th century would envy the money, the resources, and the technology and infrastructure that these groups command today," Bailey said.

According to the FBI official, many scam operations in Southeast Asia are controlled by sophisticated criminal organisations with links to China and operate across Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. He said the bureau is focusing on identifying the broader criminal networks behind the compounds rather than only targeting individual sites.

Bailey said the FBI works closely with Thai authorities through its Bangkok office and described Thailand as a key regional partner in efforts to combat cyber scams. He noted that Thai authorities recently arrested several suspects and launched new investigations linked to scam operations.

The FBI official said transnational scam compounds and synthetic drug trafficking remain the two most significant organised crime threats facing Asia, requiring greater cooperation among regional law enforcement agencies.

He added that while the FBI had found clear links between Chinese criminal enterprises and scam compounds across Southeast Asia, it had uncovered no evidence that the operations were directed by the Chinese government.

Photo: AFP



NEARLY 50,000 MYANMAR INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN KYAUKPHYU ARE IN CRITICAL NEED OF FOOD AND SHELTER

The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) fleeing military junta airstrikes and heavy artillery shelling in Kyaukphyu Township, Rakhine State, has risen to nearly 50,000 as of early May this year, according to records from the Zin Chaung Youth Philanthropic Association.

The daily influx of IDPs has led to critical shortages of food, shelter, drinking water, and emergency medicine, creating an urgent need for humanitarian assistance.

During the first week of June, intense fighting erupted near the Taung Maw Oo naval base. In response, the military junta targeted civilians through airstrikes, kamikaze drone attacks, and heavy artillery fire from naval vessels, forcing thousands of local residents to flee their homes.

"We had to evacuate the villagers under heavy bombardment to save lives. To prevent casualties, we prioritized their safety and moved them to secure areas," a male aid worker on the ground told Mizzima.

The Arakan Responders for Emergency (ARE) released a statement on 2 June, stating that amid intense fighting in May, the Zin Chaung Youth Philanthropic Association and ARE jointly evacuated approximately 3,000 residents from 13 villages located near the conflict zones in Kyaukphyu Township.

Although the Zin Chaung Youth Philanthropic Association, ARE, and private donors are collaborating to provide subsistence, healthcare, and basic shelter, the disproportionately high number of IDPs has created significant operational challenges for aid groups.

"The number of people arriving at the IDP camps is increasing almost daily. The temporary longhouses are now overcrowded. Therefore, we earnestly appeal to donors to urgently provide temporary shelters and daily food rations to sustain the displaced populations," the aid worker said.

Similarly, Triple-T, an organization providing nationwide IDP assistance, announced on 8 June that it had delivered emergency aid to approximately 800 IDPs in Kyaukphyu Township. The group called on donors to contribute what they can to ensure continued support for those in distress.

Previous clashes near the military junta's Police Battalion 32 and the Dhanyawadi Naval Base had already displaced residents from numerous surrounding villages.

Currently, military tensions remain high as the Arakan Army (AA) launches offensives against strategic junta naval bases in Kyaukphyu Township. In response to military setbacks, the junta continues to retaliate against civilian populations and villages using airstrikes and naval artillery.

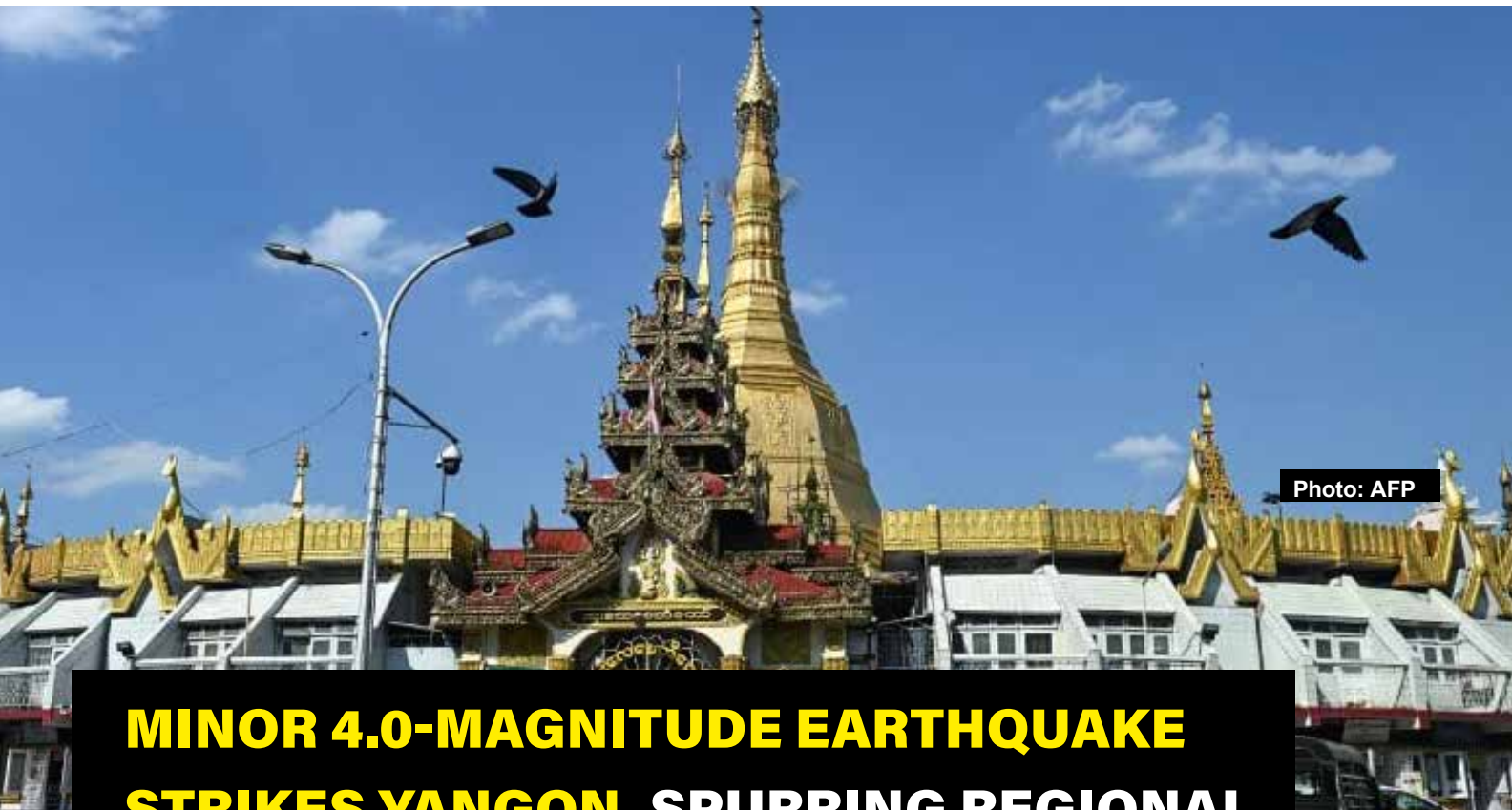


Photo: AFP

MINOR 4.0-MAGNITUDE EARTHQUAKE STRIKES YANGON, SPURRING REGIONAL SEISMIC CONCERNS

Yangon residents reported feeling a brief but distinct earthquake on 11 June at approximately 12:18 pm.

Social media accounts from locals indicated that the tremors were clearly felt across multiple townships, including Sanchaung, Hlaing, Kamayut, Latha, Dawbon, Thaketa, South Okkalapa, North Okkalapa, and Kyimyindaing.

According to data from earthquake monitoring applications, the 4.0-magnitude quake originated near the mouth of the sea adjacent to the Yangon Region. The Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour and Human Rights (MoSLHA) of the National Unity Government (NUG) later confirmed the event, announcing that the minor 4.0-magnitude earthquake was centred near Twante Township at a shallow depth of approximately 10 kilometres.

The mid-day tremor adds to a growing list of recent seismic events that have triggered anxiety among local populations.

Throughout May, Yangon experienced frequent activity, including a 4.2-magnitude earthquake near Kungyangon Township along the Myanmar coast on 22 May. This followed a stronger 5.2-magnitude earthquake on the morning of 18 May, which struck at a depth of 10 kilometres near Kyauktan Township and shook the entire commercial capital.

Seismologists and experts have continuously warned that Yangon remains highly vulnerable to seismic hazards. The city's risk is primarily driven by the Dedaye Fault, alongside active subduction zones and localized fault lines situated near the mouth of the Yangon River.

The 11 June tremor marks a continuation of heightened activity across the country. At least five earthquakes have been officially recorded so far this month, with tremors felt across various regions including Yangon, Naypyitaw, Mandalay, and Tamu.



Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA COLUMNS LOOT AND BURN THREE VILLAGES IN CHAUNG-U TOWNSHIP, DISPLACING THOUSANDS

Junta forces have launched intense military operations and carried out coordinated arson attacks across three villages, Sin Myay, Nga Lone Tin, and Ma Hti Thar in Sagaing Region's Chaung-U Township, forcing an estimated thousands of local residents to flee for safety.

A local resident told Mizzima that a junta column entered the targeted villages on 9 May and began burning down residential areas over the following weeks.

"They started the fires on 10 and 11 June. Many houses are affected. Currently, it's three villages. We don't know the exact number of destroyed houses yet as they are still burning them. Smoke has been rising continuously," the resident stated on the morning of 11 June.

Beyond the destruction of property, the ongoing military operation has completely displaced inhabitants from at least six villages across Chaung-U Township. Civil society organizations note that these displaced populations are now in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, particularly food and temporary shelter.

Witnesses also reported widespread plundering of civilian property by the regime forces.

"The column hasn't left yet. They were spotted looting and transporting villagers' properties using

6-wheel and 12-wheel trucks. They are moving the goods to the town, to the Northwestern Regional Military Command and into Chaung-U," the resident said.

The escalation follows a series of intense ground engagements in the area. According to the Chaung-U Township People's Defence Team (PDT), junta forces originally launched their multi-pronged offensive into the township on 31 May. This deployment triggered fierce clashes with local revolutionary forces on 1, 3, 6, and 9 June, resulting in heavy casualties for the junta troops.

In anticipation of retaliatory measures, the Chaung-U PDT issued a public advisory on 10 June urging residents to remain highly vigilant and systematically dig or reinforce bomb shelters.

The warning was prompted by the continuous presence of junta reconnaissance drones hovering over the northwestern sector of the township, signalling the high potential for imminent airstrikes.

Mizzima attempted to contact the Chaung-U PDT to obtain further operational details, but communication has not yet been established.



Photo: AFP

FORTIFY RIGHTS SAYS BAGO MONASTERY BOMBING BY MYANMAR JUNTA MAY AMOUNT TO WAR CRIME

Myanmar junta forces killed 28 civilians, including women and children, in an airstrike on a Buddhist monastery and a ground assault in Bago Region's Yae Twin Kone village tract on 5 March, according to a new investigation released by Fortify Rights on 9 June.

The rights group said junta columns from Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) 20, Infantry Battalion (IB) 264, and LIB 439, operating under Light Infantry Division (LID) 77, entered the village tract in the early morning, opened fire on residents, bombed the monastery where civilians had sought shelter, and deployed at least one drone attack.

Fortify Rights said its findings were based on in-person interviews with 13 people conducted in Bago Region in March and April, including survivors, witnesses, resistance fighters and medical workers. The National Unity Government provided casualty records naming 26 people killed in the airstrike and two others killed in the village tract, though the group said it could not independently verify all the names.

One survivor, 43, told Fortify Rights that junta soldiers detained him alongside dozens of villagers and accused them of being members of the People's Defence Force (PDF). He said he later heard a soldier report over the radio, "We shot one kid," and realised the soldier was referring to his 14-year-old son, who was killed as he tried to flee. The man said he found the bodies of his wife and son after soldiers released him, and that he had overheard orders relayed by walkie-

talkie to strike the monastery.

Another resident from Kyaung Kone village, who entered the monastery after the airstrike to help the wounded, said the building was destroyed, with its roof gone and its first floor collapsed. He described finding the body of a pregnant woman among the dead.

Survivors said the military allowed them to bury 26 people killed in the airstrike and two killed in shootings in two mass graves on 6 March.

Two days after the attack, on 7 March, PDF units under the National Unity Government (NUG) Ministry of Defence, together with the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), the armed wing of the Karen National Union (KNU), carried out an operation to free civilians still held by junta forces, according to the NUG.

Fortify Rights said the detention of civilians and the bombing of the monastery may amount to war crimes. Director John Quinley said the bombing of the monastery "was not a justified military target," and that the attack reflected the junta's strategy of terrorising civilians in areas seen as supporting the resistance.

Bago Region, located between Yangon and the military capital Naypyidaw, has become a strategically significant battleground, with resistance forces establishing strongholds in parts of the region, the group said. Fortify Rights called on UN member states to increase support for international accountability and to provide political, economic and material support to Myanmar's democratic movement, including the NUG.



Photo: AFP

JUSTICE FOR MYANMAR SAYS SANCTIONED BELARUS CONSUL'S SINGAPORE FIRM STILL BROKERS ARMS FOR JUNTA

Justice for Myanmar stated on 9 June that Singapore-registered companies continue to broker arms, military equipment, and aviation fuel for the Myanmar junta. This includes networks whose principals are sanctioned by the United States, United Kingdom, European Union, and Canada.

Among them is Dynasty Excellency Pte. Ltd., a Singapore subsidiary of Dynasty Group whose sole shareholder, Aung Moe Myint, also serves as Belarus's Honorary Consul to Myanmar. Justice For Myanmar said Dynasty companies have brokered arms purchases for the military from Belarus and facilitated junta payments for arms transactions. Aung Moe Myint and Dynasty Group are sanctioned by the US, UK, EU and Canada.

Two other networks the group identified as still active in Singapore are Myanmar Chemical & Machinery Group, whose subsidiary MCM Pacific has supplied helicopter parts, armoured personnel carriers and naval ship components to the military; and the KT and Ky-Tha group, whose subsidiary Ky-Tha Trading procured coastal surveillance radars and aircraft for the air force.

Justice For Myanmar also said PEIA Pte. Ltd., a subsidiary of Shoon Group, remains registered in Singapore and operates a joint venture with the state-owned Myanma Petrochemical Enterprise for aviation fuel import and distribution to the junta. PEIA has been

sanctioned by the United States. A related company, Shoon Energy Pte. Ltd., was recently gazetted to be struck off.

The findings come from a review of Singapore's national business registry showing that 20 of the 33 companies the group exposed in 2022 as arms suppliers have been struck off, leaving 13 still active. Companies removed from the registry included suppliers of Israeli fast attack boats and drones, German military communications systems, and equipment brokered for the navy's frigate construction project, Justice For Myanmar said.

Citing UN figures, the group said junta airstrikes killed at least 982 civilians in 2025. The military carried out 199 strikes on civilian targets between December 2025 and January 2026 during its sham election period, according to the UN Special Rapporteur.

Justice For Myanmar called on Singapore to act against all remaining companies and individuals identified in its 2022 report and in UN Special Rapporteur findings and urged Singapore banks to deny services to firms procuring arms and fuel for the junta. Singapore is set to chair ASEAN in 2027.

"Singapore must do more to cut off the arms, equipment, and aviation fuel that the junta needs," Justice For Myanmar spokesperson Yadanar Maung said.



Photo: Supplied

JUSTICE FOR MYANMAR CONDEMNS FIFA FOR AWARDING WORLD CUP RIGHTS TO JUNTA-LINKED MYTEL

On 12 June, Justice For Myanmar condemned FIFA's decision to award World Cup media rights to Mytel, a telecommunications operator partially owned by the sanctioned Myanmar military conglomerate Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC), calling the move a disregard for human rights and due diligence.

The telecoms operator Mytel is a lucrative source of revenue for the brutal and illegal military junta. It is partially owned and effectively controlled by the sanctioned Myanmar military conglomerate Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC).

FIFA, the international governing body for football that is responsible for organising the World Cup, is once again demonstrating an unacceptable lack of due diligence and a total disregard for human rights, while whitewashing a brand that is tainted by blood and corruption.

Mytel's profit projections, analysed by Justice For Myanmar, suggest that the Myanmar military's shareholding could yield it US\$270 million in Mytel's fifth to ninth years of operation and a further US\$450 million in the five years after that, a major windfall for the military and top generals.

By financing the Myanmar military and facilitating its digital surveillance, Mytel is aiding and abetting the military's continuing war crimes and crimes against

humanity.

Mytel has been targeted for export restrictions by the US Department of Commerce for its surveillance and financial support for the junta, while its parent company MEC is sanctioned by the USA, UK, EU, Canada and Australia.

FIFA's business with Mytel follows its absurd and deplorable decision to appoint the military crony and Max Myanmar owner Zaw Zaw as head of its social responsibility committee.

For providing the military with financial support for genocide against the Rohingya, the UN Fact Finding Mission on Myanmar concluded in 2019 that "officials from [...] Max Myanmar should be criminally investigated and, if appropriate, prosecuted for making a substantial and direct contribution to the commission of the crime against humanity of "other inhumane acts" and persecution as outlined above in the applicable legal framework on business officials and criminal liability."

FIFA must stop aligning with the military junta and its cronies, and actually live up to its stated human rights commitments and international responsibilities.



Distressed villagers with the bodies of those killed. Photo: AFP

THE ARITHMETIC OF ATROCITY: AIR POWER AND CIVILIAN SUFFERING IN ARAKAN

AUNG MARM OO

On International Human Rights Day, December 10, 2025, a Myanmar military airstrike struck Mrauk-U Public Hospital in Arakan State, reportedly killing more than 30 people, including patients, caregivers, and civilians seeking medical treatment. The symbolism was stark: on a day dedicated to human dignity and fundamental rights, one of Arakan's most important civilian sanctuaries came under attack.

Yet the strike on Mrauk-U Hospital was not an isolated tragedy. It was part of a broader pattern that has emerged since the escalation of conflict in late 2023, a pattern of repeated airstrikes hitting villages, schools, hospitals, detention facilities, monasteries, and displacement sites across Arakan.

To understand the scale of the crisis, one must look beyond individual incidents and examine what can be called the arithmetic of atrocity: the cumulative human, social, and political consequences of a war increasingly fought from the sky.

According to data compiled by Development Media Group (DMG), Arakan has witnessed at least 15 mass-casualty incidents since November 2023 in which 10 or more civilians were killed or injured in a single attack. These incidents have not been confined to conventional battlefields.

In March 2024, an airstrike on Thardar (Muslim) Village in Minbya Township reportedly killed 22 civilians and injured 29 others. In September of the same year, a former Border Guard Police battalion in Maungdaw housing prisoners of war was struck from the air, killing around 50 detainees.

The violence intensified throughout 2025. In January, an airstrike on Kyauk Ni Maw Village in Ramree Township reportedly killed 26 civilians. In September, a private school in Thayet Tapin Village, Kyauktaw Township, was bombed, killing students and teachers. Three months later came the attack on Mrauk-U Public Hospital.

The pattern has continued into 2026. In January, bombs hit the Chaung Tu detention center in Kyauktaw Township, killing prisoners of war and family members. In February, Yoe Ngu Village in Ponnagyun Township suffered another deadly air raid. Numerous additional strikes have been reported across northern and central Arakan.

These incidents reflect a significant transformation in the conflict. As the Myanmar military has steadily lost territorial control across much of Arakan, large-scale ground operations have become increasingly difficult. Unable to regain substantial territory, the military has relied more heavily on aircraft, drones, and long-range artillery.

What began as a territorial war has increasingly evolved into an air war.

At the same time, a new political reality has emerged. Across most of Arakan, the United League of Arakan/Arakan Army (ULA/AA) now administers local governance, taxation, dispute resolution, policing, and public services. The military, meanwhile, retains a limited presence in a handful of strategic locations, including Sittwe, Kyaukphyu, Manaung, and several military installations, while continuing to project power through airstrikes.

This has created a unique paradox.

On the ground, the ULA/AA increasingly governs. In the air, the military continues to punish.

For civilians, this means daily life may be administered by one authority while remaining vulnerable to violence from another. Villages may function, markets may reopen, and local governance may operate, yet no community can feel entirely safe beneath contested skies.

The consequences extend far beyond casualty figures.

Agricultural production has been disrupted by displacement, insecurity, and contamination from landmines and unexploded ordnance. Many farmers remain unable to safely return to their fields. Fishing communities face growing difficulties, while transportation and trade have become more expensive and uncertain.

Healthcare systems have also come under severe strain. Hospitals and clinics face shortages of medicine, equipment, and personnel. The destruction of medical facilities has further reduced access to essential services for thousands of civilians.

Education has suffered as well. Schools have been damaged, closed, or relocated, while teachers and students continue to live under the threat of airstrikes. For many children in Arakan, the sound of aircraft has become associated with fear rather than normal life.

Even where active fighting has diminished, danger remains. Landmines and explosive remnants of war continue to kill and injure civilians attempting to return home, cultivate farmland, or travel between villages. The end of combat does not necessarily mean the return of safety.

The consequences of the conflict also extend beyond Myanmar's borders.

Bangladesh continues to host more than one million Muslim/Rohingya refugees, while ongoing insecurity in Arakan undermines prospects for voluntary and safe repatriation. Meanwhile, India faces increasing challenges in advancing major initiatives such as the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, much of whose corridor now passes through areas under substantial ULA/AA influence.

As regional powers pursue trade, connectivity, and security objectives, they are increasingly confronted with a practical reality: effective authority in much of western Myanmar no longer corresponds neatly with internationally recognized state structures.

This reality has important implications for humanitarian access, border security, regional trade, and future political settlements.

The international response remains inadequate to the scale of civilian suffering. Greater efforts are needed to restrict the military's ability to conduct aerial attacks against civilian-populated areas, expand humanitarian access, support local documentation efforts, and strengthen protections for schools, hospitals, religious institutions, and displacement sites.

Ultimately, the arithmetic of atrocity is measured not only in deaths and injuries. It is measured in destroyed schools, damaged hospitals, abandoned farms, displaced families, shrinking economic opportunities, and children growing up under the constant threat of air attack.

Arakan today presents a stark new reality: a territory where one authority increasingly governs on the ground while another continues to project violence from the sky.

The central question is no longer simply who claims sovereignty over the territory. The more urgent question is who can protect civilians, sustain essential services, and create conditions for recovery after years of conflict.

Until meaningful measures are taken to reduce civilian suffering and address the underlying drivers of war, the numbers that define Arakan's arithmetic of atrocity will continue to grow not only in lives lost, but also in opportunities destroyed and futures diminished.

Aung Marm Oo is the editor-in-chief and executive director of Development Media Group (DMG), a news agency based in Rakhine. He faces charges under Myanmar's Unlawful Associations Act and has been in hiding since May 2019.



SOUTH ASIA MONSOON RISKS BOTH FLOODS AND DROUGHT: EXPERTS

South Asian communities face "serious hazards" from intense rains this season, even though the approaching monsoon is expected to bring lower than normal rains overall, risking drought, experts warned on Thursday.

The Hindu Kush-Himalayan range, which stretches from Afghanistan to Myanmar, holds the largest reserves of ice and snow outside the Arctic and Antarctica and feeds at least 10 major Asian river systems that underpin water, food and energy security across the continent.

"The outlook points to a drier monsoon overall, but that does not mean lower risk," said Manish Shrestha, a hydrologist at the Kathmandu based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD).

"Short, intense rainfall events can still trigger serious hazards."

Long, dry spells followed by extreme rainfall events, ICIMOD warned, raised the risk of floods and landslides.

Deadly weather-related disasters are common during the monsoon season from June to September but experts say climate change, coupled with urbanisation, is increasing their frequency and severity.

The summer monsoon, which brings South Asia 70-80 percent of its annual rainfall, is vital for agriculture

and therefore the livelihoods of millions of farmers and food security in a region home to around two billion people.

Lower levels of snow in the mountains -- or "snow persistence", the time that snow remains on the ground -- meant the region was starting with a "weaker seasonal water buffer", said Sher Muhammad from ICIMOD.

"Warmer temperatures, combined with reduced rainfall, could limit the recharge of rivers, springs and other water systems," he said.

Experts said stronger early warning systems were needed.

"Drought and flood risks can no longer be managed separately," said Arun Bhakta Shrestha, a senior adviser at ICIMOD said in a statement.

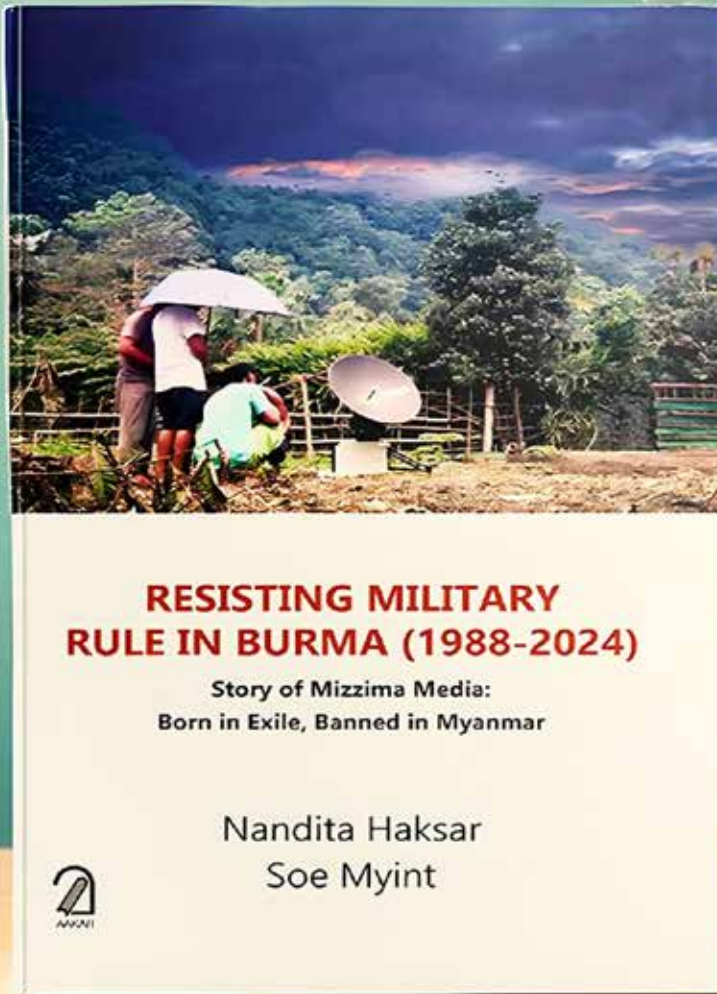
"Early warning systems, short-term forecasts, and locally driven preparedness need to work together to address increasingly complex hazards."

Melting glaciers can also add to the volume of water, while unregulated construction in flood-prone areas exacerbates the damage.

AFP

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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THE FIRE NEXT DOOR

“I never feel that war is this close to me,” Bencharat Chua, a Thai human rights professor and activist explains to the Insight Myanmar Podcast as she reflects on how years of engagement with Myanmar have reshaped her understanding of conflict, democracy, and responsibility across borders. Her core argument is that without democracy and a lived culture of human rights in Myanmar and the region, Thailand will continue to be affected by instability, displacement, and violence from across the border. She emphasizes throughout the discussion that while human rights language matters, it must become political practice and public will.

Her involvement with Myanmar began in 1999, when she worked for a small, nongovernmental organization called Friends Without Borders, created to raise awareness among the Thai people about displaced communities from Myanmar. For two years, she visited refugee camps and spoke with Burmese communities and ethnic groups along the border, learning about conflict, repression, and displacement directly from those who had fled the violence. She then joined the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies at Mahidol University in Bangkok, working with displaced students and long-time activists, including members of the 1988 generation who had been living in Thailand for decades.

During Myanmar’s political transition in the 2010s, she became more directly engaged with universities inside the country. In 2018, she and her colleagues worked with partners in Myanmar to train and mentor law lecturers after a national policy made international human rights law compulsory in law faculties across the country. She describes this transition period as an opening that fundamentally changed what she thought was possible in society that had known repression and censorship for so long. Bencharat would never have imagined she could travel to so many different universities across Myanmar to support human rights education.

Initially, many lecturers struggled with the coursework, relying heavily on reading and translating texts rather than engaging critically with the material. Over time, however, she watched their confidence and fluency grow. Even after the 2021 coup disrupted the formal education system, she continued to see evidence that this earlier work mattered, because lecturers retained the conceptual language and political awareness they had developed during the transition period.

CATCH THE PODCAST

Read more and listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast here:

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2026/5/14/episode-536-the-fire-next-door>



Photo: AFP

INDIAN EXPERTS ASSIST MYANMAR'S LONG-DELAYED STEEL MILL PROJECT

Myanmar's junta is advancing efforts to revive the delayed No. 1 Steel Mill in Myingyan, Mandalay Region, meeting Indian experts this week to boost domestic steel production and cut reliance on imports.

State media reported that Union Minister Dr Charlie Than met Indian specialists on 7 June at the Directorate of Industrial Supervision and Inspection in Mandalay Region to discuss repairs, technology transfer, and future operations.

The ministry said Foundry No. 1 at the Myingyan complex resumed in March 2023 and has produced over 28,000 tonnes of steel billets. Officials added that Foundry No. 2, after machinery repairs by Indian and Myanmar experts in early 2024, has resumed production of steel slabs.

At another meeting, the minister stressed steel's role in national development and urged continued technology transfer, workforce training, and preparation

for higher output. Officials aim to produce 200 tonnes of billets.

The Myingyan steel project, long a government priority, was launched in the mid-2000s to produce up to 400,000 tonnes of steel and products a year. Repeated delays and mounting debt led to its suspension in 2017.

Since the February 2021 military takeover, junta chief Min Aung Hlaing has pushed to revive heavy-industry projects, arguing that domestic steel production is needed to support infrastructure and reduce reliance on imports. Critics question whether these costly projects can be economically viable amid Myanmar's ongoing economic troubles and conflict.

The engagement with Indian experts underscores the government's ongoing efforts to secure foreign technical assistance and bring the Myingyan facility closer to full production.



Photo: Mizzima

MYANMAR FACEBOOK USERS CALL FOR WORLD CUP BOYCOTT OVER MYTEL BROADCAST RIGHTS

Myanmar social media users are calling on football fans to boycott Mytel's TV360 platform after FIFA awarded the military-linked telecom exclusive broadcasting rights for the 2026 World Cup, which kicked off on 11 June.

FIFA selected TV360 — Mytel's digital streaming platform — as Myanmar's official broadcaster on 25 May, following an open bidding process that began in September 2025. Mytel showcased its broadcast plans at a launch event in Yangon shortly after.

On Facebook, posts urging a boycott have spread widely. "There are plenty of other ways to watch — avoid Mytel, because the money goes to the military," one user writes. Others share free international stream

links and VPN guides as alternatives, while some say they will not watch at all. Rights group Justice for Myanmar condemned the FIFA deal, calling Mytel a major revenue source for the junta.

Not all voices oppose watching, however. Some users argue fans can follow the tournament through other platforms without contributing to Mytel.

Mytel is a joint venture between Myanmar's military conglomerate Myanmar Economic Corporation and Viettel, controlled by Vietnam's Ministry of National Defence, which holds a 49 percent stake. Mytel has faced a sustained public boycott since the 2021 coup, with activists long urging consumers to avoid the operator to cut off revenue flowing to the military.

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



DIGITAL MAGAZINE

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