

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



**Why There Has Been No Meaningful
Movement Against Scam Centers in Burma**

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.

CHANGING BATTLEFIELD

Pity the combatants on the 21st Century battlefield. We obtained an insight over the last couple of years into the Russia-Ukraine conflict with the stepped-up use of drones, which dramatically changed the threat to combatants. Now in the less sophisticated battle theatre in Myanmar, drones and paragliders challenge the poorly-armed revolutionary forces.

The battlefield in Myanmar is changing and the consequences for both resistance forces and civilians are becoming even more alarming. As if the constant threat of air strikes from fighter jets were not enough, the Myanmar military is increasingly deploying drones and powered paragliders or paramotors to expand its reach across contested territory. These evolving tactics demonstrate that the junta remains determined to terrorise communities while adapting its methods to counter resistance gains on the ground.

For years, People's Defence Forces (PDFs) and Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations (EROs) learned to cope with the dangers posed by military aircraft. The sound of approaching jets often provided a few precious moments to seek cover, disperse or conceal positions. While such attacks have continued to inflict devastating casualties on civilians and resistance fighters alike, combatants gradually developed survival strategies against conventional aerial bombardment.

Drones and powered paragliders represent a different and more insidious challenge. Their smaller size, lower noise and greater manoeuvrability make them significantly harder to detect. They can loiter above villages and resistance positions, gather intelligence, direct artillery fire or deliver explosive payloads with little warning. Even where resistance forces have successfully shot down individual aircraft, as recently reported

in Mon State, these isolated victories should not obscure the broader threat posed by these technologies.

The junta's growing reliance on drones and paramotors reflects a military seeking new ways to compensate for its inability to establish control on the ground. Rather than winning the support of Myanmar's people, it continues to rely on fear, surveillance and indiscriminate violence. Reports by Mizzima have documented the military's expanding use of drones and powered paragliders against resistance-held territory, while Fortify Rights has repeatedly highlighted the unlawful air attacks and widespread abuses committed against civilians throughout the conflict.

The greatest victims remain ordinary people. Villages already living under the constant fear of artillery and air strikes must now contend with silent aerial surveillance and sudden attacks from above. Schools, religious buildings and displacement camps remain vulnerable, while humanitarian access becomes increasingly dangerous.

Myanmar's resistance has repeatedly demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability, but courage alone cannot neutralise every technological advantage wielded by the military. The international community should recognise that the junta's evolving battlefield tactics are not merely military innovations - they are another means of extending a campaign of terror against a civilian population that has already endured years of relentless violence.

As these threats multiply, so too does the urgency for stronger international action to protect Myanmar's people and hold those responsible to account.

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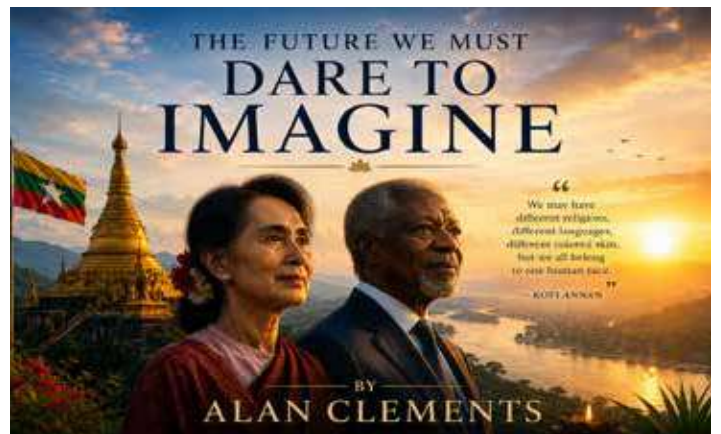
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Cover photo and graphic of anti-mining protestors in Shan State by AFP



Protestors demand a stop to mining in Shan State. Photo: AFP

CHINA MINERAL EXTRACTION MAKES LIFE WORSE IN SHAN STATE

ANTONIO GRACEFFO

Eastern Shan State is rich in mineral resources and contains numerous mining sites controlled by competing actors, including Myanmar's military junta, the United Wa State Army (UWSA), Shan armed groups, and local militias. Chinese companies have become the dominant outside force in extraction operations, working through two distinct arrangements: one directly with the UWSA, bypassing the junta entirely, and one in areas of joint UWSA-junta control requiring permission from both.

In UWSA-controlled territory, satellite imagery shows that rare-earth mining sites in the Mong Bawk area increased from three in 2015 to 26 by February 2025. Chinese companies operate there without Naypyidaw's approval, with minerals exported directly across the border into China. In Mong Jawd Village Tract, a separate Chinese project began tungsten production in February 2026, transporting ore to China in cooperation with the UWSA. The site employs approximately 100 Chinese staff, mostly managers and technicians, and around 250 Myanmar workers.

The operator behind the most significant Chinese operation in jointly controlled territory has been identified. China Investment Mining Company runs both the rare-earth mines and the main gold-mining operation along the Kok River in Mong Yawn, Mong Hsat Township. It is 90% owned by Shanghai Chijin Xiawu Metal Resources Co. Ltd., a joint venture formed in September 2022 between China's state-backed Xiamen Tungsten Corporation and Chifeng Gold, the largest non-state-owned gold producer in China. Because Mong Yawn is jointly controlled by the UWSA and the junta, the company requires authorization from both to operate.

The human costs are adding to the suffering of local people. In 2025, villagers near the Mong Jawd tungsten site suffered skin infections from contact with water in the Pak Goot stream, contaminated by mining waste, and rice fields were damaged. The SHRF documented that trafficked Burmese workers from Chinese-run scam compounds in Tachileik were moved to rare-earth mines in Mong Yawn in April 2025, the first confirmed instance of human trafficking from scam

centers to mining operations.

The negative environmental impact can be felt in Thailand as well. Thai authorities have been monitoring Kok River water quality every two weeks since April 2025, with tests repeatedly showing arsenic and lead levels exceeding safety standards. Local residents report logging along the Salween River, with timber transported to China.

The scale of the trade is substantial. In the first nine months of 2025, Myanmar exported more than 28,000 tonnes of rare earths to China, valued at USD 624 million, representing 53 percent of China's total rare-earth imports during that period. Expansion is continuing. In the Mong La region under the National Democratic Alliance Army, at least 19 new rare-earth mines were observed operating in 2025, up from only three in 2021.

Local sources say that authorities and armed groups have granted Chinese companies access to mining projects in areas such as Mong Ton Township, which borders Thailand's Chiang Mai Province. One of the best-known mining sites is located at Loi Khileik, the highest peak in eastern Shan State at 1,970 meters, and is associated with tungsten and wolfram extraction. A Chinese company began production on the mountain's southern slopes in February 2026, transporting ore by convoy through Tachileik to the Chinese border. Local residents report that these Chinese companies work in partnership with the Wa authorities.

Residents living near mining areas describe significant environmental concerns. They report that streams used for irrigation and farming have become polluted, raising fears about the safety of water supplies and the health of livestock exposed to mining-related chemicals. The SHRF confirmed that the Pak Goot stream, which runs through farmland downstream of the Loi Khileik site, was contaminated by mining waste in 2025, causing skin infections among villagers.

A 25-year-old Shan worker employed at a tungsten mine in Mong Ton Township said he earns 250 baht per day for basic labor. Machine operators reportedly

earn around 400 baht per day, while skilled mechanics receive approximately 550 baht per day. According to the worker, Chinese managers oversee many aspects of the operation, while local residents provide most of the labor.

In Pang Kaeng village, also located in Mong Ton Township and reportedly under the control of a Lahu militia group, residents say mining activities focus on minerals identified by the chemical symbols Sb (antimony) and Sn (tin). According to local sources, these minerals are exported to China, with some shipments transported through routes connected to the Mekong River.

Sai Luang, a 46-year-old resident of Mong Lein Township, described the expansion of mining activities across several townships.

"Mining operations have opened in many places, including Ta Lur, Mong Lein, Tachileik, Mong Sat, Mong Yong, and Mong Yu," he said. "Many local streams have become polluted, and some water sources can no longer be used. Mining companies do not properly manage toxic chemicals and pay little attention to the environmental impact. I own farmland in Mong Lein Township, but I can no longer use water from nearby streams for agriculture."

Another resident, Sai Bee, a 25-year-old from Mong Ton Township, said he worked as a broker trading antimony ore.

"I have been doing this work for about one year," he said. "I buy raw materials from local mining sites and sell them to Chinese buyers in Tachileik. One ton sells for about 130,000 baht. After purchasing the material, covering transportation costs, and paying fees at checkpoints, my profit is around 10,000 baht per ton. Recently, however, Chinese buyers stopped purchasing the material."

Local sources allege that logging and gold mining are taking place along the Salween River in areas controlled by Shan armed groups, with timber sold to buyers in China. Armed organizations collect taxes from companies operating within their territories, financing

their military activities through natural resource extraction and by providing security for mining and logging operations.

The UWSA is widely regarded as one of the most powerful armed groups in Myanmar and maintains significant economic influence. Chinese investment in UWSA-controlled areas extends beyond mining to include infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, markets, and commercial buildings. Major Sai Lam, 36, a UWSA officer who also owns businesses including a karaoke venue, said that wealth generated through illegal activities has over time been invested in legitimate sectors such as agriculture, hospitality, and transportation.

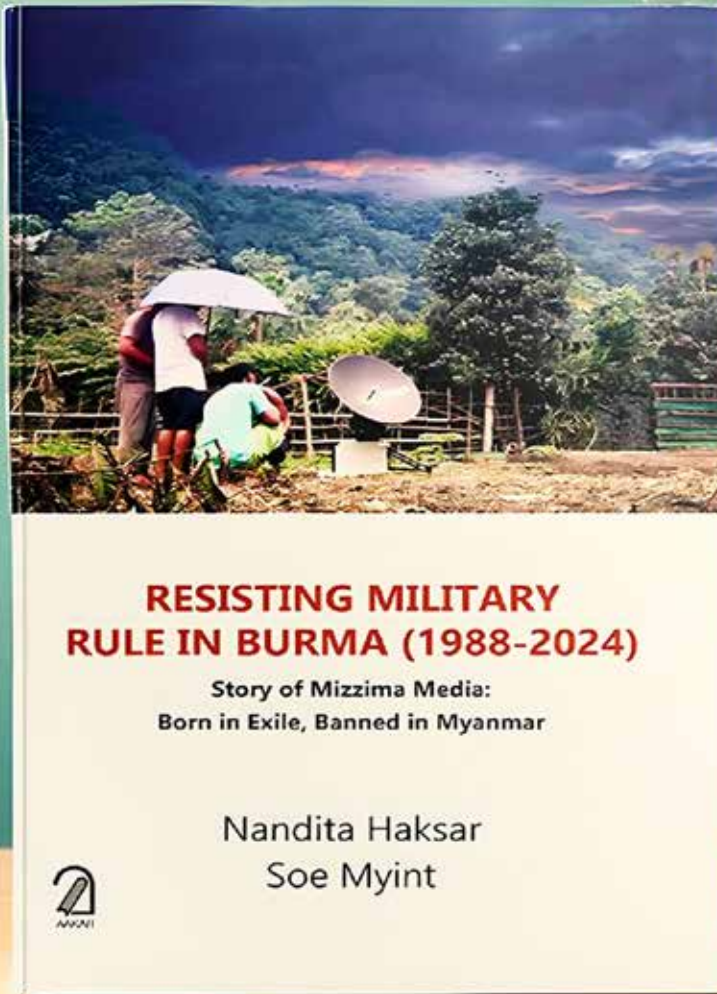
Speaking on condition of anonymity, local residents said they did not believe armed groups in Shan State were interested in bringing about democratic change, arguing that most organizations prioritize territorial control and economic interests over political reform. They also raised concerns about conscription, claiming young people are recruited with promises of protecting local communities but end up working for illicit enterprises that enrich senior commanders, Chinese businessmen, or Burmese business interests. Recruits, they said, receive limited pay while leaders and their families profit from natural resource extraction.

Meanwhile, for most of the population, economic hardship continues to worsen. As employment opportunities remain limited and environmental conditions deteriorate, some families have chosen to migrate to Thailand in search of work and stability. Consequently, this area, and Burma in general, is facing not only a brain drain, with the brightest and smartest leaving, but also the loss of young, able-bodied workers who may find the prospect of working as undocumented day laborers in Thailand more appealing than remaining in Shan State under the thumb of ethnic armed groups and their Chinese business partners.

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

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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ANALYSIS & INSIGHT



The Myanmar junta has made advances on the battlefield but has also been suffering setbacks. Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA STRUGGLES ON THE BATTLEFIELD

Intense fighting in Kachin and western Myanmar highlights the military's growing struggle to secure key supply routes while simultaneously defending strategic positions under pressure from ethnic armed organizations.

In Kachin State, junta forces have been advancing toward Shwegu Township from Ngaroe village in northern Shan State since early May. The route has become one of the conflict's most contested frontlines, with daily clashes reported as both sides attempt to control vital road junctions linking northern Shan State to Bhamo.

Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) spokesperson Colonel Naw Bu told local media that Shwegu is currently the state's most active battlefield.

"Battles in Shwegu are fierce every day. Fighting elsewhere in Kachin is not as intense."

The strategic importance of Shwegu lies in its role as the main reinforcement corridor for Bhamo, where the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and allied resistance forces continue their offensive to seize the town. For the junta, keeping the route open is essential to reinforce troops defending Bhamo. For the KIA, cutting the corridor could further isolate government forces and weaken their ability to hold the town.

Despite sustained military operations, neither side has made a decisive breakthrough. Resistance fighters told local media that clashes repeatedly erupt around the same strategic positions, while junta airstrikes continue day and night. Since 28 June, the KIA has closed both the highway and the Irrawaddy River transport route through the area, forcing junta troops to rely increasingly on air drops to sustain frontline positions.

Meanwhile, fighting has also intensified along the Ayeyarwady-Rakhine border, where the Arakan Army (AA) says it captured three key junta outposts within five days.

The military has been attempting to advance into AA-controlled Gwa Township using columns of around 400 troops supported by artillery and airstrikes from the Ayeyarwady side of the border. However, according to AA statements, the offensive was repelled, resulting in the loss of three military positions. The group also released photographs showing captured weapons, ammunition and the bodies of fallen junta soldiers.

The simultaneous battles in Kachin and western Myanmar underscore the military's growing challenge of sustaining offensives across multiple fronts. While the junta continues to rely heavily on air power to compensate for battlefield setbacks, resistance forces are increasingly focused on severing supply routes and isolating government positions, suggesting that logistics—not territorial gains alone—are becoming a decisive factor in the conflict.

Updating the Myanmar humanitarian crisis

Myanmar's humanitarian crisis is deepening as conflict, displacement and economic collapse continue to strain access to healthcare and education, even as international aid agencies warn that funding is becoming increasingly uncertain.

In Rakhine State, internally displaced people (IDPs) are battling a worsening skin disease that has spread across camps since 2025. The outbreak now affects all age groups, with children suffering the most severe symptoms. At an IDP camp in Rathedaung Township, where more than 1,000 displaced people are sheltering, over 300 residents have contracted the disease. An Arakha volunteer health worker told Mizzima that children are particularly vulnerable.

"Although people of all ages are affected, children suffer the worst. The rashes spread across their arms, backs and chests, while some develop infections on their heads and across almost their entire bodies."

Although medicated ointments temporarily relieve the symptoms, the disease frequently returns. Similar outbreaks have also been reported in Gwa Township, highlighting growing public health concerns in displacement camps.

The deteriorating health situation comes as humanitarian agencies face mounting financial constraints. In its 29 June update, the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) warned that funding for humanitarian operations in Asia, including Myanmar, is expected to decline amid shifting global priorities following the



The number of IDPs is growing in Myanmar. Photo: AFP

conflict in the Middle East. The agency stressed that continued international support remains essential as Myanmar struggles with armed conflict, widespread human rights violations, discrimination and the humanitarian consequences of the devastating 2025 earthquake.

Health conditions are also worsening in Tanintharyi Region as the rainy season compounds the effects of conflict. According to the FE5 Tanintharyi research group, ongoing fighting and airstrikes have left many displaced families without adequate shelter. Crowded temporary camps have contributed to rising cases of seasonal influenza and malaria, with local aid workers estimating that around 10 people in an average village are infected. The group also reports shortages of medicines and malaria testing kits, while restrictions imposed by the junta continue to obstruct humanitarian assistance.

Karenni State faces similar challenges. Since April, the Interim Executive Council (IEC) Health Department has recorded around 1,500 malaria cases, most involving displaced people who frequently move between forest shelters to escape military operations. Health officials warn that malaria transmission typically peaks between June and October and emphasize

the urgent need for mosquito nets, early testing and timely treatment. However, restrictions on transporting medicines into displacement areas have left essential drugs, including Primaquine, in critically short supply.

By the end of May, nearly 3.8 million people had been internally displaced across Myanmar, placing unprecedented pressure on humanitarian resources that were already insufficient. Sagaing Region accounts for the largest displaced population, while Kachin, Chin, Rakhine, Karen and Karenni states, along with Magway and Tanintharyi regions, continue to face severe humanitarian needs.

The humanitarian crisis extends beyond healthcare. Education is also deteriorating as prolonged conflict and economic hardship force more children out of school.

According to ISP-Myanmar, only 6.7 million students enrolled for the 2026-27 academic year despite Myanmar having approximately 13 million school-age children. The number of students sitting the matriculation examination has also fallen sharply, from more than 900,000 in 2020 to about 250,000 this year.

Armed conflict, displacement, household poverty, difficulties obtaining school transfer documents and the junta's new placement test system have all contributed



The Myanmar junta is trying to put on a brave face for its economy through promotional events. Photo: Supplied

to declining enrolment. A Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) teacher told DVB that economic hardship has become the biggest barrier.

"Many secondary school students are now old enough to work. Parents simply cannot afford education expenses, so children leave school to support their families. Unless the economy improves, many will never return to the classroom."

Together, these developments illustrate a growing humanitarian emergency. As conflict continues and international assistance comes under increasing financial pressure, Myanmar's displaced communities face deteriorating health services, shrinking educational opportunities and fewer resources to cope with an increasingly protracted crisis.

Myanmar faces slowing economic growth

The Myanmar economy is expected to grow by only 2% in the 2026-27 fiscal year, according to the World Bank, a sharp downgrade from its previous 5% forecast made before the Iran conflict disrupted global markets. The revised projection underscores how the country's economic crisis is being driven not only by external shocks but also by domestic policy failures.

Myanmar's private sector is no longer focused on expanding profits but on survival. Businesses face mounting uncertainty, rising production costs, inconsistent policy implementation, administrative bottlenecks, and chronic shortages of electricity and other essential services. Although inflation eased toward the end of 2025, it accelerated again to 24.6% in April 2026, further eroding consumer purchasing power and increasing operating costs.

One of the most significant obstacles remains the junta's restrictive economic policies. In a rare sign of frustration from businesses traditionally viewed as close to the military, senior members of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) recently appealed to junta leader Min Aung Hlaing to relax import restrictions. According to sources familiar with the meeting, the request was rejected.

Business leaders reportedly proposed allowing companies to purchase foreign currency on the open market rather than relying on the Central Bank's official exchange rate of around 2,100 kyat per US dollar, which is less than half the prevailing market rate of approximately 4,400 kyat. Their primary concern was securing imported raw materials needed by factories,

particularly those in the Japanese-invested Thilawa Special Economic Zone. Industry analysts estimate that nearly 70% of factories in Thilawa have either suspended or significantly reduced operations because of shortages of imported inputs.

Min Aung Hlaing reportedly argued that easing import restrictions would weaken the kyat and threaten economic stability, urging manufacturers instead to use domestically produced raw materials. However, many industries, including garment manufacturing, depend almost entirely on imported materials and have few viable local alternatives.

As part of the self-appointed government's first 100-day programme, which spans all sectors of government, the junta has placed greater emphasis on reducing foreign currency outflows through tighter import controls, delayed import licences, and stricter regulation of border trade with Thailand and China. While intended to protect foreign exchange reserves, these measures are instead deepening supply chain disruptions and constraining industrial production.

The garment sector, one of Myanmar's largest employers and a critical source of export earnings, illustrates the consequences. Since tighter import licensing requirements took effect on 8 June, factories have struggled to obtain essential materials, while some shipments already arriving in the country remain stranded awaiting approval. Industry sources also report widespread bribery in the licensing process, adding further costs and uncertainty.

Together, these developments suggest that Myanmar's economic slowdown is increasingly the result of policy choices rather than external pressures alone. Without meaningful reforms to restore business confidence and ease trade restrictions, the country's fragile private sector is likely to face even greater challenges in the months ahead.



A captured Myanmar junta paramotor.
Photo: Fortify Rights

FEAR STALKS MYANMAR'S BATTLEFIELDS AS OFFENSIVE PARAGLIDERS AND DRONES UP THE ANTE *MIZZIMA COMMENTARY*

Myanmar's resistance fighters used to have a manageable paradigm of fear. Fighter jets have long been the frightener. While the use of jets put the resistance on the backfoot, the Spring Revolution fighters learnt how to handle their threat, the sound a warning to take cover, their lack of viable anti-aircraft weapons a stark reminder of their defensive limitations.

But the Myanmar military appears to have pulled out the stops with the introduction of paragliders, paramotors and drones into the Myanmar military's theatre of operation over the last couple of years.

In a number of cases, the thunder of jets has been replaced by a buzz or no obvious sound at all. These new classes of weapons - whether manned paragliders or armed drones - are tough for resistance fighters and civilians to deal with.

Fear has ratcheted up a notch.

During one particularly deadly attack on October 6, 2025, a military paramotor dropped several bombs on a peaceful candle-lighting gathering of some 100 people simultaneously celebrating Thadingyut - the end of the Buddhist lent - and protesting the upcoming elections, killing at least 24 civilians. The attack on Bon To village, Chaung-U Township in central Sagaing proved a shock and a reminder that the regime will stop at nothing to attack the Myanmar people.

"Gus," a 35-year-old organizer of the vigil, said the paramotors were undetectable before bombs suddenly dropped: "It happened around 7 p.m. ... [The paramotors] had no lights. ... I didn't hear any engine sounds at all. We later found out that the paramotors turned off their engines when they approached the school compound and glided over with their parachutes. ... I only heard the 'whoosh' sound of the bomb's tail fin cutting through the air followed by a massive explosion that sent me flying."

Gus told Fortify Rights that they received initial alerts of an incoming paramotor attack, but before further updates could be given, "the phone lines went dead, the walkie-talkies ... got jammed," disrupting immediate evacuation efforts. The paramotor bombing killed at least 24 people, including children, and injured 61. Hours later, at around 11 p.m., another paramotor attack happened at the same site, but did not cause any casualties because the attendees had fled the area.

"The junta thought we would be performing first aid for the injured," Ko Zue, another vigil organizer, speculated. "They came to bomb again to completely wipe us out."

The tactic of carrying out an attack, then deliberately following up with a second strike on the same location after a short time to target first responders and others gathered at the scene, is called a "double-tap strike" and may amount to a war crime.

Fortify Rights also documented multiple incidents of the Myanmar military junta using paramotors to drop bombs on schools, religious sites, and other protected objects. The NGO documented a sharp rise in the use of paramotors and gyrocopters by the military between December 2024 and January 2026. The rights organization recorded more than 300 attacks involving the aircraft, with operations concentrated in Sagaing, Magway, Mandalay, Bago and Ayeyarwady regions. The group warned that the tactic has become an increasingly important component of the junta's air campaign against communities beyond the reach of ground forces.

Fortify Rights said the aircraft are being used to drop explosive devices in an indiscriminate manner, leading to growing civilian casualties. Chit Seng, a human rights associate with Fortify Rights, said the military had found “new ways to kill civilians from the sky” by equipping paramotors and gyrocopters with explosives released by operators without guidance.

The NGO called on foreign governments to strengthen sanctions on weapons, aviation fuel and dual-use technologies, including components that can be used to assemble the aircraft. But it is hard to see what difference foreign governments will be able to make to this “cheap” way of waging war.

The Myanmar military has increasingly relied on the relatively inexpensive flying machines as it faces mounting battlefield setbacks and struggles to maintain control of lost territory.

A former member of the Myanmar Air Force told Fortify Rights that paramotors offer a cheap and efficient alternative to jet aircraft and do not require highly trained pilots. He noted that a jet fighter costs millions of dollars, whereas a paramotor costs less than a single wheel from a military aircraft.

The rights group also warned that civilians are living in constant fear because of the attacks and urged United Nations member states to tighten existing sanctions and introduce additional measures against the junta.

Reporting by Mizzima has highlighted both the growing use of paramotors and efforts by resistance groups to counter them. In May 2026, revolutionary forces in Mon State announced that they had shot down a military paramotor that had been conducting bombing raids over Win Tar Pan and Kyauk Pyar villages in Bilin Township.

According to the Special Operations Force, resistance fighters opened fire on the aircraft while it was attacking villages. The paramotor subsequently

crashed about three miles from Light Infantry Battalion 3. The incident was described as a retaliatory response to the military's aerial campaign.

The announcement came amid wider military operations involving the Karen National Liberation Army, the Karen National Defence Organisation and local defence forces. The resistance groups said they had also intercepted military supply drops and captured weapons and ammunition during operations in Mon State and neighbouring Bago Region.

In addition to paragliders, the Myanmar military has increasingly incorporated drones into its operations as the civil war has intensified, using unmanned aircraft for surveillance and attack missions against resistance forces and areas populated by civilians. Reporting by Mizzima and findings by non-governmental organizations indicate that drone warfare has become an expanding component of the junta's strategy.

Mizzima first reported in 2022 that junta troops deployed drones during fighting in Chin State, alongside artillery attacks that damaged homes and forced residents to flee. Since then, the use of drones has widened significantly. Analysts from the NGO Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica told Mizzima that the military's aerial campaign forms part of its long-standing “four-cuts” strategy aimed at cutting off food, funds, intelligence and recruits to resistance movements.

According to the Blood Money Campaign, the military carried out 98 drone strikes between June and September 2024, contributing to hundreds of civilian deaths and injuries. Schools, medical facilities, religious buildings and homes were among the structures damaged. Human Rights Watch and other rights groups have accused the military of conducting indiscriminate attacks and violating international humanitarian law.

The increasing use of paramotors reflects the Myanmar military's adaptation to the changing battlefield. Human rights groups say the tactic allows the junta to continue attacking resistance-held territory while avoiding some of the costs associated with conventional air operations.

For civilians living in conflict areas, however, the expansion of these attacks has added another layer of insecurity and fear to a war that has already displaced millions and devastated communities across the country.

Jets were tough to deal with but these new forms of aerial weaponry add to the horror.

Sources: Mizzima, Fortify Rights

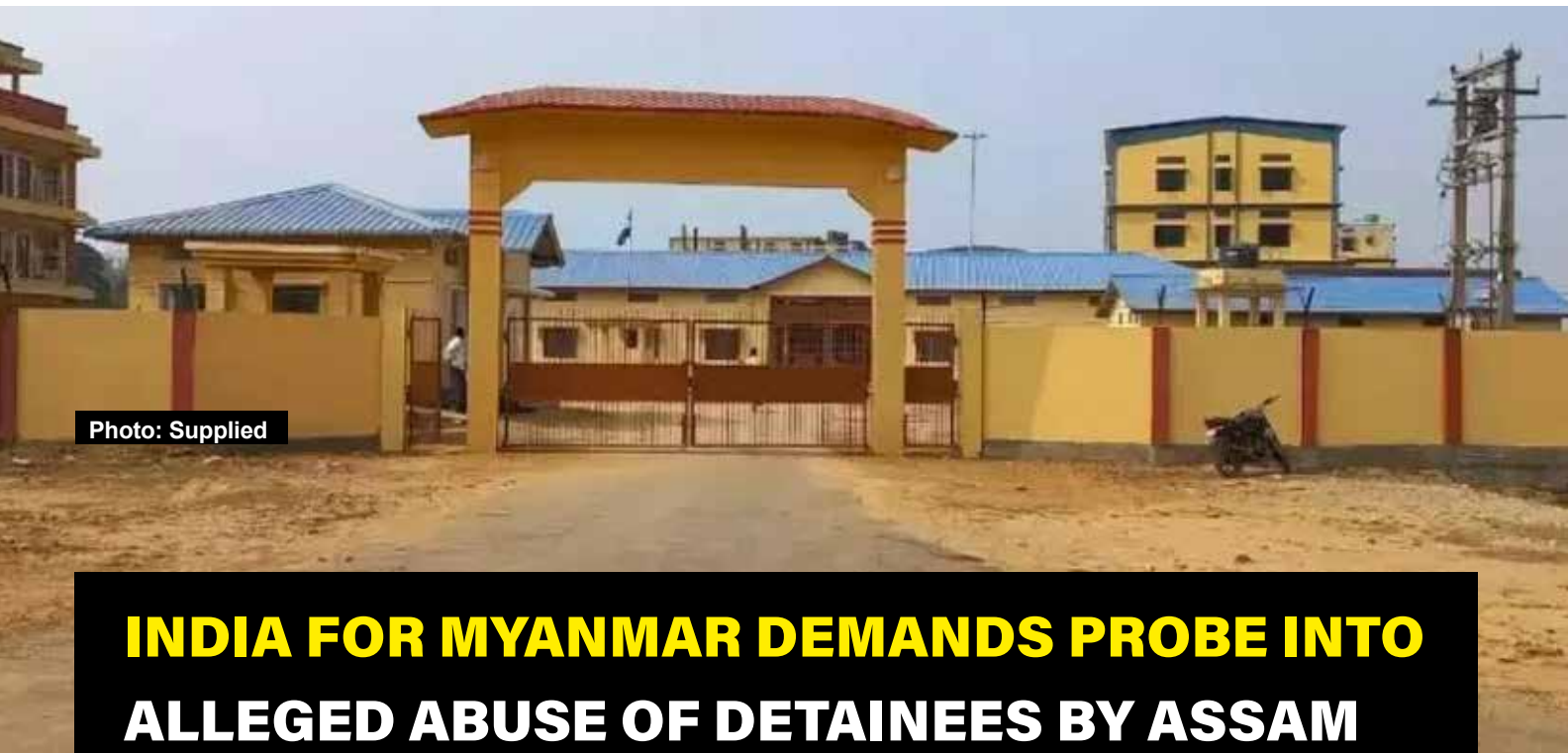


Photo: Supplied

INDIA FOR MYANMAR DEMANDS PROBE INTO ALLEGED ABUSE OF DETAINEES BY ASSAM RIFLES PERSONNEL

India for Myanmar has called for a transparent investigation into allegations that ten Myanmar women detained in a detention centre in India's Assam State were sexually assaulted.

The allegations surfaced after Assam Rifles personnel reportedly isolated and interrogated several women on 22 June, part of a group of 80 detainees held at the Matia detention centre during which the alleged sexual abuse took place.

Salai Do Khar, leader of India for Myanmar said, "While a formal complaint has not been officially logged, investigation requests have been channelled to Indian authorities. Our organization is concurrently raising international awareness, publishing public statements, and utilizing media coverage to build political pressure."

According to the victims, who shared the information through their standard communication channels, the women were subjected to inappropriate touching during body searches. These searches were reportedly conducted under the direct orders of the camp's Deputy Assistant Superintendent, Mr. Shantanu Deep.

India for Myanmar's statement on 24 June highlighted that this act violates Section 49(2) of the 2023 Bharatiya Nagarik Sanhita (BNS) law, which stipulates that searches of a female detainee must be conducted by another woman and with dignity.

The organization further asserted that the incident also breaches Section 74 of the 2023 BNS law, which outlines penalties for assault with intent to outrage a woman's modesty.

Thirty-two Myanmar nationals are currently held at the Matia detention centre. They were arrested in 2021 for lacking proper documentation while enroute to apply for asylum with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in New Delhi. These detainees have already completed their court-mandated six-month sentences.

According to India for Myanmar, even though several detainees have been approved for asylum by third countries, Indian officials have blocked the UNHCR from gathering the biometric data including fingerprints and facial scans required to process their departures.

The organization is calling for an urgent probe and the safeguarding of basic rights, maintaining that the incident violates both Indian domestic law and international human rights frameworks.

Established in October 2021 by a coalition of human rights activists and experts from both nations, India for Myanmar operates under the guiding principle, "The solidarity of the Indian people is key to Myanmar's democracy movement."



Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA LAUNCHES 30 AIRSTRIKES IN FOUR-DAY CRACKDOWN ON MON STATE GOLD MINING ZONE

According to local sources, Myanmar’s military junta has targeted villages and gold mining operations in Mon State’s Bilin Township with four straight days of airstrikes, causing multiple casualties.

The aerial assaults, running from June 22 through 25 June, struck the villages of Win Maung, Win Ka Taik, Bin Ban, Baw Paw Hta, Shwe Laung Inn, and Nyaung Twe Lel, alongside nearby mining sites, leaving residents dead and injured.

A local resident noted that the bombardments likely clear the way for an upcoming ground assault, explaining that troops advancing from Nat Kyi can move forward much easier with air cover.

The source said, “The military intends to secure the territory, document their findings, burn down local shelters for display, and that the operations are proceeding following recent parliamentary discussions regarding the gold mining area.”

Reports suggest the airstrikes, totalling at least 30 bombing runs over four days, are part of a targeted

crackdown on local gold mining operations. Fears of escalating clashes are rising as a junta ground column advance from its base in Nat Kyi village.

While injuries among gold miners have been reported, the precise casualty count remains unverified by Mizzima.

A gold mine owner revealed that operators are forced to pay bribes to both local junta officials and the Karen National Union (KNU) to work in the region.

The owner said, “The central government lacks control over the territory, official permits are not granted, forcing miners to simply go where the gold is despite a widespread desire to operate legally.

These recent airstrikes have not only brought gold mining operations to a halt but have also forced thousands of civilians to flee to safer areas.

On 11 March, the junta conducted at least 15 airstrikes in a single day on areas including Wet Khaw Pa, Win Maung, Ma Lay Kyaut, Pha Wa Htwa, and Mae Pan Wa in Bilin Township, resulting in two civilian deaths and 18 injuries, according to news sources.



Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA'S DIGITAL CRACKDOWN CUT INDEPENDENT NEWS ACCESS BY NEARLY HALF, REPORT SAYS

A new Human Rights Myanmar report says the Myanmar military has cut public access to independent news by nearly half since the 2021 coup through internet restrictions, surveillance, and rising data costs.

The report, *News Audience Suppression Under Myanmar's Digital Coup*, analysed 12 billion Facebook data points from 50 Myanmar media outlets between the pre-coup period and the 2025-26 military-organised election period.

The report says the sampled media outlets' combined audience reach fell by 48%, from 4.7 billion monthly views before the coup to 2.4 billion in 2026. At the same time, media production increased by 18%, while regional media outlets expanded output by 108%, demonstrating what the authors describe as the resilience of independent journalism under military repression.

The report attributes the collapse in audience reach to the military's internet shutdowns, the blocking of Facebook and independent news websites, restrictions on VPNs, extensive digital surveillance, higher internet costs, and changes to Facebook's algorithms.

Researchers argue these measures have transformed access to news into "a high-risk and costly

activity", encouraging widespread self-censorship.

Public engagement on Facebook reflected those concerns. Shares of media posts fell by 63%, and comments declined by 42%, which the report says suggests users increasingly avoid visible interactions that could expose them to military surveillance.

The report also found audiences increasingly rejected military propaganda. The reach of military-affiliated media declined by 76%, while independent outlets continued to dominate news production. Public engagement also shifted away from pro-military narratives, which the report says underscores that audiences still sought independent reporting despite growing barriers to access.

The study also warns that Myanmar's online information space is becoming increasingly polarised. While strongly anti-military media gained audiences, views of more impartial outlets fell by 70%, which raises concerns that shrinking shared information spaces could deepen social divisions.

Restoring access to independent information, the report finds, is essential for the survival of Myanmar's media sector, as well as protecting the public's fundamental right to information.



Magway PDF

MAGWAY PDF CLAIMS MILITARY HELICOPTER SHOT DOWN IN MYAING TOWNSHIP

The Magway People's Defence Force (PDF) announced on Tuesday that its fighters successfully shot down a Myanmar military Mi-17 helicopter in Myaing Township, located within Pakokku District, Magway Region.

A representative from the Magway PDF confirmed the incident directly to Mizzima on 23 June, noting that comprehensive details regarding casualties and operational records would be made public as soon as ground forces clarify the situation.

The resistance group echoed this on its social media platforms, adding that further information about the downing would be provided shortly.

Footage circulating widely on social media captures resistance forces firing at the aircraft, with a visible flame erupting due to a free-flight rocket impact.

However, the exact extent of the damage and any potential casualties remain unconfirmed at the time of reporting.

According to the Magway PDF, the operation was executed in collaboration with allied resistance forces.

In the wake of the incident, the group warned local residents and personnel to remain highly cautious of potential retaliatory aerial attacks.

This development follows an ongoing military junta offensive in the southern region of Myaing Township, which began on 15 June. An official from the "We Love Myaing" organization reported that a military column has deployed troops along the Twinma-Tharyatka-Kaingtawma road section, as well as around Kaingtawma, Kannet, and Kankale villages.



Photo: PLA

PLA CLAIMS WITHDRAWAL AFTER NUG FORCES RAID CAMP IN MYINGYAN, SOLDIERS' FAMILIES DETAINED AND THREATENED

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) has withdrawn its forces from a camp in Myingyan District, Mandalay Region, to avoid a direct military confrontation after forces under the National Unity Government (NUG) raided the site, PLA spokesperson Wai Yan Phyo Moe said.

"They raided one of our camps under the current circumstances. We have withdrawn to avoid conflict. However, we are concerned about potential direct clashes if they block our withdrawal routes, open fire, or conduct arrests. For now, we are doing our best to avoid direct confrontation," the PLA spokesperson said.

He added that family members of PLA soldiers active in Myingyan District, as well as civilian supporters, are facing home-invasion raids, threats, and arrests.

"Currently, they are entering the homes of our active comrades' families and supporters in Myingyan District, making arrests and issuing death threats. No civilians have been harmed yet, but arrests are ongoing. We have confirmed information that a sister of one of our comrades was detained under the threat of being shot. We are still investigating the details," he said.

The PLA issued an official statement regarding these developments on 22 June.

According to the statement, about 80 personnel from the NUG Myingyan District Command arrived in vehicles today at two villages hosting PLA bases. They searched for PLA supporters in the villages and subsequently entered a nearby village, where they detained and interrogated civilians.

The statement also noted that this morning, the NUG Myingyan District Commander sent a two-point demand to the PLA Taungtha Township force: to hand over all military informants detained by the PLA along with seized equipment, and to completely withdraw all PLA forces from Myingyan District.

On the afternoon of 21 June, approximately 500 NUG-affiliated personnel surrounded a PLA camp in Taungtha Township and attempted to arrest two PLA logistics personnel, the statement added.

The PLA Taungtha Township force clarified that they had previously handed over captured military informants to local People's Defence Teams (PDTs/PDFs) on two occasions, explaining that negotiations to hand over the current detainees were delayed only because of recent military threats.

The PLA stated that while they have consistently sought cooperation with the NUG, they cannot accept the forced raids on their camps or the demand to withdraw from Myingyan District while they are actively fighting the military dictatorship. The group emphasized that they will not fire first and prefer to resolve the issue through dialogue between revolutionary forces.

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is the armed wing of the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) and has been active in Sagaing, Magway, and Mandalay regions since the 2021 military coup.

Mizzima contacted the NUG regarding the military tensions between the revolutionary groups in Myingyan District, but received no response by the time of publication.



Photo: Supplied

SEVEN DEAD, OVER 10 INJURED IN MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKES IN KANPETLET

Junta airstrikes in Kanpetlet Township, Chin State, killed seven civilians, including a pregnant woman, and injured over 10 others within three days, according to local administrative and defense officials.

The casualties occurred during aerial bombings targeting two villages in the township on 19 June and 22 June.

The Township People's Administration announced that an airstrike targeting Kyindwe (Old Village) where displaced civilians were sheltering at 11:30 pm on 19 June killed three men and two women, while injuring over 10 others.

Additionally, another airstrike near Kyauktaung village at 11:30 pm on 22 June killed a pregnant woman and her young son.

"There were no active ground clashes; the attack was carried out by dropping bombs from drones," a Kanpetlet Township People's Defense Force (PDF) official told Mizzima.

With junta columns currently advancing toward Kanpetlet, the Township People's Administration has

urged residents to dig bomb shelters at every home and seek cover immediately upon receiving airstrike warnings.

In southern Chin State, the junta is also heavily bombing Mindat Town alongside Kanpetlet. The Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) reported that the military launched 440 airstrikes on Mindat within a 70-day period from 11 April to 22 June.

During this period, approximately 168 military flights were recorded, with up to 91 bombing runs conducted on 21 June alone.

CHRO stated that most airstrikes utilized Y-12 aircraft, directly targeting civilian locations and structures.

Despite Chin revolutionary forces capturing Kanpetlet and Mindat in December 2024, junta troops regained control of the urban centers in mid-May 2026 and persist in pressuring nearby villages with continuous airstrikes.



KIA fighters. Photo: AFP

KIA WARNS AGAINST COLLABORATING WITH MYANMAR'S JUNTA IN SHWEGU

The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) Battalion 12, under Brigade 11, has issued a warning directing local residents and business owners in Shwegu District, Kachin State, to completely cease all association with the military junta.

The directive, signed and issued by the commander of KIA Battalion 12 on 23 June, strictly prohibits residents and operators of gold and mineral mining businesses within Shwegu District from collaborating with the military regime.

A local resident noted that complying with the KIA's directive on the ground presents significant difficulties for business operators.

"Everyone knows it is practically impossible. Operating without the military council's permission is highly dangerous. Even those mining in territory under their control must secure permission first," the local resident said.

Furthermore, the statement strictly forbids providing information, gathering intelligence, or acting as informants for the military junta.

Those who previously maintained ties with the junta are urged to completely sever all relations starting from the issuance of this warning.

KIA Battalion 12 sternly warned that decisive action will be taken against anyone failing to comply with these prohibitions.

Although clashes between junta forces and KIA-led allied troops persisted near Shwegu throughout June, a local resident reported hearing no airstrikes today (24 June).

Another resident said, "Some have evacuated, but the majority remain despite the anxiety. We heard airstrikes almost daily, but none so far today."

In late May 2024, the KIA launched attacks on key strategic junta bases and police stations in Shwegu Township. Following the outbreak of ground clashes in early June, KIA Brigade 11, Battalion 12 issued an order on 8 June instructing Shwegu residents to evacuate the town, while closing major transport routes including the town's main entry road and the Nga Oh-Shwegu highway.



MYANMAR'S AYA BANK ACKNOWLEDGES CYBERATTACK AFTER HACKING GROUP CLAIMS DATA BREACH

One of Myanmar's largest private banks has acknowledged a cyberattack on its digital infrastructure, though it maintains that its core financial networks remain secure after an international extortion group claimed a massive data breach.

The hacking group, calling itself LAPSUS\$, claimed on June 23 to have stolen more than 120 gigabytes of data from AYA Bank. The group threatened to publish the compromised information on the dark web by July 8 unless a ransom is paid.

In a statement posted to its official Facebook page, AYA Bank admitted that an application portal had been breached, exposing some customer information. However, the bank stated the vulnerability was limited to an older portal and did not compromise its vital financial operations.

"The affected portal was not directly connected to our Core Banking System, AYA Pay, or card systems," the bank said, adding that customers could continue using internet and mobile banking services normally.

The financial institution noted it has since heightened its cybersecurity measures and apologized

to its clientele, while insisting that core financial data remains secure. As of June 25, AYA Bank had not publicly addressed the specific size of the data haul claimed by the hackers or the ransom demand.

The extortion claim was detected by independent cybersecurity tracking platforms, including Ransomware.live and RedPacket Security, which monitor dark web leak sites. According to postings cataloged by those platforms, LAPSUS\$ claims the stolen dataset includes personally identifiable customer information taken directly from the bank's main platform.

The monitoring platforms noted they had only indexed the hackers' public assertions and have not independently verified the authenticity or the exact origin of the stolen data.

LAPSUS\$ has a history of high-profile cyber-extortion, having previously claimed responsibility for disruptive digital attacks on major global technology firms, including Microsoft, Nvidia, Samsung, and Uber.

Photo: Supplied

THAI WOMAN FACES MYANMAR COURT OVER MURDER OF U.S. DIPLOMAT AND IMMIGRATION CHARGES

A Thai woman appeared in Kamayut Court on 23 June to face a trial on immigration-related charges linked to allegations that she killed her ex-husband, an American diplomat stationed in Yangon, according to foreign media reports.

The suspect has been detained by Myanmar authorities weeks ago following the suspected homicide of the U.S. diplomat, whose body was discovered in May at the Sakura Residence & Hotel in Yangon. The U.S. State Department has not yet publicly released the identity of the deceased diplomat.

While she faces a primary charge of murder for the killing, authorities are first prosecuting her for violating Myanmar's immigration code.

An official from Kamayut Township's Immigration and Population Department confirmed to the Associated Press (AP) that witnesses testified at Tuesday's hearing, though further details were withheld.

It remains unclear how long the legal proceedings will last. Under Myanmar law, foreign nationals convicted of murder face severe legal consequences spanning both the Penal Code and immigration statutes.

The baseline trial for violating the immigration code carries a distinct sentence ranging from six months to five years in prison, which is typically processed in a lower Township Court before the higher-level murder trial begins in a District Court.

The length of her potential imprisonment for the killing depends heavily on the specific subsection of the murder charge. A conviction under Section 302(2) for general murder carries a penalty ranging from a minimum of 10 years to life imprisonment. However, if the court finds evidence of premeditation, extreme cruelty, or if the act occurred alongside another severe offense, the charge falls under Section 302(1), which carries the maximum sentence of death.

If found guilty on multiple counts, the suspect will serve her prison sentence within the Myanmar correctional system. Upon completion of her term, she will face immediate deportation and a permanent ban from re-entering the country.

Representatives from the Thai Embassy in Yangon and Myanmar government officials have declined to comment publicly on the ongoing legal proceedings.



Medics at work in an ERO-controlled area of Myanmar. Photo: Supplied

EDINBURGH MEDICAL COLLEGE CONDEMNS ATTACKS ON HEALTHCARE WORKERS IN MYANMAR

The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh on 25 JUNE called for those responsible for attacks on healthcare workers, facilities, and patients in Myanmar to be held accountable through international processes, warning that such attacks may amount to war crimes.

In the statement, the medical charity, which it describes as a multinational, multifaith body representing fellows and members working to improve medical practice and patient care worldwide, said it was "particularly concerned" by reports from NGOs and media of attacks on medical facilities and personnel in Myanmar. More than five years after the military coup, the College said, attacks on communities, including airstrikes on villages and other civilian areas, continue to cause loss of life, displacement, and suffering.

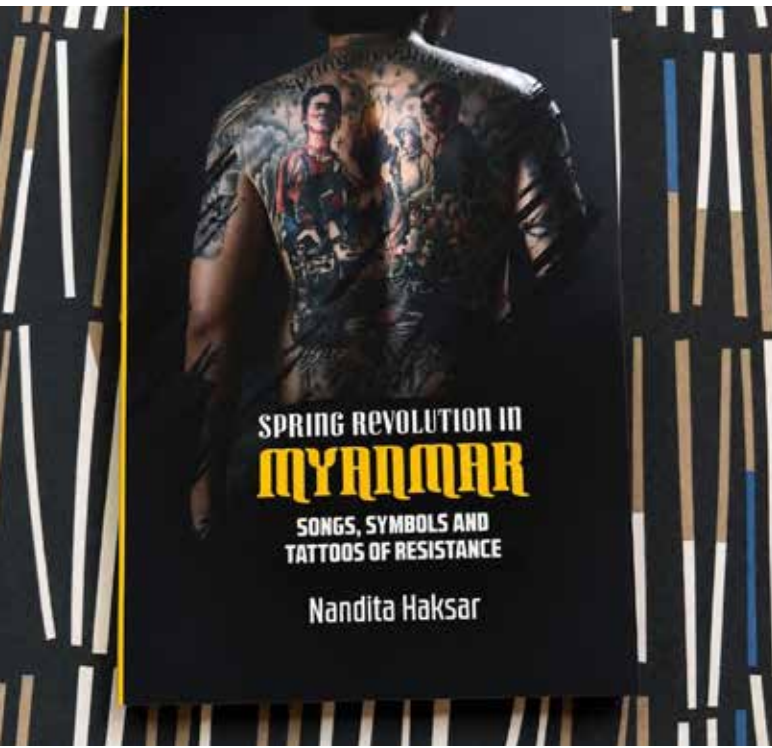
The College said the destruction of healthcare infrastructure and the intimidation of medical professionals have severely weakened Myanmar's health system, leaving many people without access to basic care. Doctors, nurses, and other healthcare workers provide care under extremely difficult circumstances and must be protected, the statement said, adding that targeting medical services endangers

healthcare staff while depriving vulnerable populations of lifesaving treatment.

The College said it shared concerns raised by international organisations that have warned attacks on civilians, healthcare facilities, and other protected sites by Myanmar's military authorities may constitute war crimes and said it had "zero tolerance" for the persecution, intimidation, or harassment of healthcare professionals.

The statement also condemned attempts by individuals to falsely claim association with any Medical Royal College to enhance their own credibility or legitimacy, saying such conduct is "wholly incompatible with the values of the medical profession."

The College called on the international community not to turn away from what it called the "abhorrent weaponisation of healthcare" in Myanmar, urging urgent action to protect civilians, safeguard healthcare services, and ensure humanitarian access. It called for those responsible for violations of international law to be held accountable through established international processes.



TATTOO ART AS RESISTANCE IN MYANMAR

RANJAN KAUL

The recently published “Spring Revolution in Myanmar: Songs, Symbols and Tattoos of Resistance” by Nandita Haksar has drawn my attention to the creative use of tattoos and other symbols as weapons of resistance in Myanmar and has prompted this article. This captivating book celebrates the spirit of defiance, resilience, and courage of the Burmese people in the face of the military regime’s brutal repression and violence. Besides the socio-political dimensions of the resistance by pro-democracy activists, it dwells on the various cultural forms – poetry, songs, posters, and tattoos – that have been used as weapons of resistance.

For those unfamiliar with Myanmar’s recent history, given below is a brief background of the military coup in 2021 and the resistance movement that followed, known as the “Spring Revolution”.

In February 2021, the military commander-in-chief Min Aung Hlaing staged a coup d’état and imposed a state of emergency, arresting the then State Counsellor, Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, and other key government officials. This galvanised the various ethnic groups of Myanmar, the youth, Buddhist

monks, and civil society to join forces to oppose the unpopular coup. The protests included marches, civil disobedience movements, a boycott of the military and its economic products, and use of various cultural forms including poetry, songs, posters, and tattoo art. Over the five years since then, from the period 2021 till the present day, the military regime has tried all means to put an end to the resistance movement. However, the people have remained undaunted: the arrest of pro-democracy leaders and execution of poets, artists, musicians, and writers has failed to dampen their spirit. They have launched armed resistance, calling for a democratic federal Myanmar and demanded the release of their leader, Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, from house arrest.

Recently, to attain a semblance of legitimacy of their authoritarian regime, the military powers held elections in December 2025 and January 2026, the first since the military coup. Expectedly, the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) secured a landslide win, given that there were systematic exclusions that made the USDP’s win possible – more than 40 opposition parties were dissolved or barred from contesting the elections, including Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy (NLD), which had swept the 2020 polls.

Myanmar has had a history of military rule, beginning in 1962 when Ne Win seized power in a coup, overthrowing the elected government; the armed forces, known as the Tatmadaw, centralized power and suppressed dissent. A major rupture occurred in 1988 with a nationwide uprising against the military regime. While the protests were brutally crushed, the uprising saw the emergence of Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD, which won the 1990 elections decisively. However, the military refused to hand over power to Suu Kyi, placing her under house arrest. A partial political opening began around 2011, when the military initiated controlled reforms. Suu Kyi was released, elections held, and the NLD came to power in 2015. However, the military retained key ministries and constitutional authority. In 2016-17 Myanmar military forces under General Min Aung Hlaing carried out a deadly military campaign in northern Rakhine State on Rohingya Muslims. There were widespread arrests and killings of Rohingya village leaders and individuals, sending hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas fleeing across the border into Bangladesh, and many finding their way to India as well. This highlighted the enduring power of the Tatmadaw even under a civilian government and drew global condemnation. In December 2019, Aung San Suu Kyi appeared before the International

Court of Justice, denied genocidal intent against the Rohingya, arguing that the military operations were a counterinsurgency response, while admitting possible excessive force.

On 1 February 2021, the military, led by Min Aung Hlaing, staged another coup, detaining NLD leaders and declaring emergency rule. This time, the resistance was far more intense: massive civil disobedience movements emerged through peaceful street protests, street art, and flash mobs. The peaceful resistance escalated into armed struggle in some pockets with militias known as the People's Defence Forces aligning themselves with ethnic armed groups. Parallel governance structures such as the National Unity Government (NUG) have been formed in exile, claiming democratic legitimacy. Today, the resistance continues, sustained by ongoing collective action. What is remarkable is that the entire movement has been crowdfunded.

The use of tattoos as protest art emerged strongly as a significant part of the resistance among pro-democracy activists. Tattooing in Myanmar (erstwhile Burma) is not new to Burmese culture – it was a widespread custom practised by various ethnic groups, including the Bamar, Shan, and Karen. Tattoos were distinguishing cultural markers and symbols of strength, courage, and intimidation. These included tattoos of dragons and snakes and symbols seen on gangsters and martial art fighters, such as the Leithwei fighters practising the traditional Burmese “art of nine limbs” (so called because they also use the head butt) too often had tattoos.

Traditional tattoos of Myanmar

In response to the 2021 military coup in Myanmar, tattoo artists sat by the roadside and made free tattoos as a sign of solidarity among citizens opposing military rule. Soon tattoos came to be widely used in street protests and on social media. The most popular is the portrait of Aung San Suu Kyi; other tattoos include the words “Spring Revolution” and “Freedom from Fear” (the famous words spoken by Suu Kyi), portraits of those who lost their lives in the resistance, and the three-finger salute as a symbol of resistance.

Health workers were among the first to use the three-finger salute as a symbol of resistance. The three-finger salute first appeared in Thailand during the 2014 coup and reappeared prominently in the 2020 youth-led protests against military rule and monarchy-linked authoritarianism, symbolizing liberty, equality, and fraternity. Protesters in Hong Kong also adopted it during the 2019-20 pro-democracy demonstrations as a gesture of solidarity and defiance against Beijing's

tightening control. The salute used in the protests was appropriated from The Hunger Games novel series by Suzanne Collins (and its later film adaptations). In the series, citizens of a particular district raise three fingers as a silent gesture of respect, gratitude, and rebellion against the authoritarian Capitol. The simple and silent gesture, being difficult to suppress, makes it a potent visual emblem of collective dissent.

A “Freedom Tattoo Campaign” was launched to commemorate the death of the celebrated Myanmar kickboxer (a Leithwei fighter) Htoo Htoo Aung, popularly known as Too Too, who likely died under torture in prison in 2021 after being detained by the military authorities following the coup. About two years ago, Kim Aris, Suu Kyi's son living in exile, shared a video as part of a campaign for humanitarian aid for the displaced millions after the 2021 coup. In the video he refers to Too Too (who wore tattoos) and talks about taking forward the tattoo campaign and shows his arms tattooed with the image of the mythical naga snake.

Aung Nay Myo, a photojournalist and pro-democracy activist, was among the many who decided to get his back tattooed. Haksar's book includes a detailed description of the tattoos in Nay Myo's own words (in English translation), done by the famous

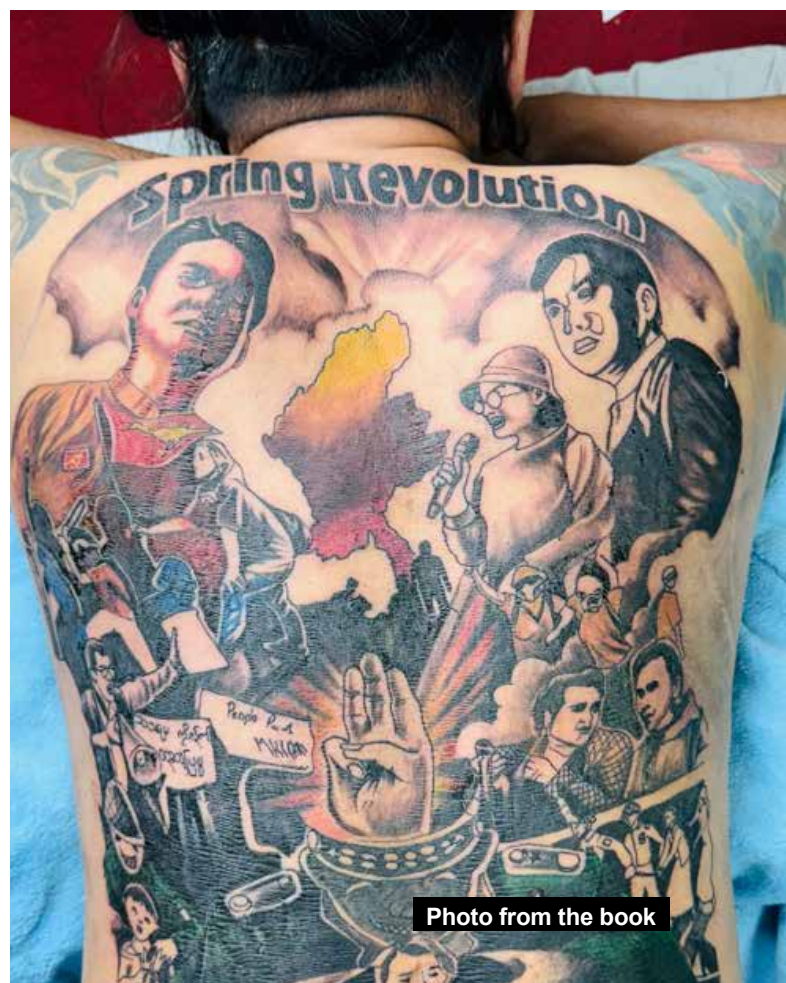


Photo from the book

tattoo artist Chin Ley, a graduate of the Mandalay Fine Art Academy and an active member of the Spring Revolution.

Spreading across Nay Myo's shoulders are tattooed the words SPRING REVOLUTION, with stars below to represent the fallen martyrs. The tattoo on the left shoulder is the portrait of the popular musician and songwriter Phyo Zeya Thaw, a founding member of Generation Wave, a youth movement, who sang songs about the hardships of the Burmese people. He was arrested along with other pro-democracy activists.

Below the figure of Zeya Thaw is a smaller figure of a young woman, Kyal Sin, known as Angel, who was shot in the head by a sniper. Minutes before she was shot, she kicked open a water pipe so that protesters could wash tear gas from their eyes. Opposite Angel is the figure of Dr Tayzar San, who led the first anti-military junta protests in Mandalay.

Facing Zeya Thaw is Thinzar Hein, a nursing student, giving a speech into a microphone. She was shot and killed while attending to the injured protesters. Between these two women is the map of Myanmar, and below that is Aung San Suu Kyi, with the three-finger salute. There is also a tattoo of Nay Myo facing his close friend Wai Moe, a Muslim.

On Myo's right shoulder we see the tattoo of Ko Kyaw Min Yu, better known as Ko Jimmy, who spent many years in jail, writing books. The tattoo on his lower back reads, "Fuck Military Rule 1/2/2021". There are other smaller tattoos, including that of a child, of people holding placards, and activists being arrested. Each of these tattoos, Myo explains, represents a milestone in the movement and his own permanent commitment to the cause. He says he plans to tattoo his entire body to represent future milestones.

Since 1962, Myanmar's story has been not one of passive subjugation but of continuous resistance. From students and monks to digital activists and armed civilian groups, each generation has adopted varied methods of protest. The military's grip has remained powerful, but so too has the population's enduring refusal to accept permanent authoritarian rule. While the resistance movement has made considerable progress, it has a long way to go before democracy can be restored in this strife-torn land. Aung San Suu Kyi is now 81 years old and the country is in dire straits, which was compounded by a devastating earthquake in March 2025, and is in desperate need for humanitarian aid. There is need for reconciliation among all ethnic groups and religious minorities, and resolution of

other pressing issues before the people can see a true democracy in Myanmar.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The description of the tattoo on the back of Aung Nay Myo's back is drawn from Haksar's book, *Spring Revolution in Myanmar*, where it is given in his own words. I strongly recommend readers who would like more information on the Spring Revolution to read the book.

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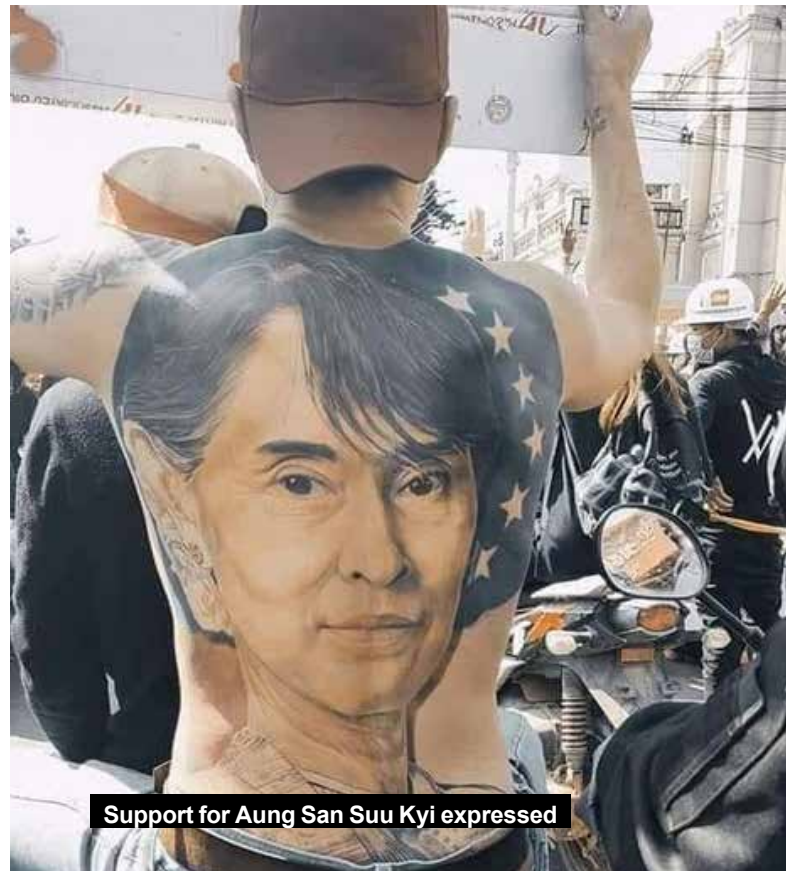


Photo: Supplied



FOREIGN INDIFFERENCE COMPOUNDS SUFFERING OF CIVILIANS IN MYANMAR - UN REPORT

As the situation in Myanmar worsens after five years of conflict-related violence since the military coup, a decline in international assistance is further compounding the suffering of millions of people, a report entitled "Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar" published on 22 June by the UN Human Rights Office finds.

At the same time, foreign actors continue to transfer arms, their parts and components, ammunition and munitions, as well as jet fuel and other dual-use items to the Myanmar military, which risks facilitating violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, the report states.

SEEKING TO SAVE LIVES

It highlights how civil society organisations and local governance structures have had to take civilian protection into their own hands to save lives and ensure a minimum level of access and availability of essential services, despite continuous attacks by the military on the civilian population. Reductions and suspensions in international assistance are now threatening the sustainability of these locally-driven protection mechanisms when support is most needed.

The report covers the period from August 2025 to the end of January 2026 - from the military's announcement of elections through to the conclusion of the voting period - detailing serious human rights violations amid ongoing conflict-related violence, lack of respect for the rule of law, denial of humanitarian assistance, and the impact of the military-controlled elections.

FUNDING 'ESSENTIAL'

Reduced international assistance has increased civilian exposure to harm, the report says, adding: "Predictable funding is essential to strengthen civilian protection initiatives."

Decline in support has forced deep programme cuts, closures and layoffs within civil society organisations, and ethnic media and women's organisations impacted disproportionately. Humanitarian and community-based programmes, including assistance to displaced people, education initiatives, and psychosocial support, have been curtailed or halted, thereby increasing community vulnerability.

Due to military blockades and these cuts, emergency healthcare provision has deteriorated, with organisations reporting difficulties maintaining medicine supply chains and health facilities. Safe houses for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence have closed or operate at a reduced capacity, while boarding facilities, education, and women-focused programmes have been scaled down or sustained only through reallocating limited emergency resources. Education programmes for displaced children and psychosocial support initiatives have also been curtailed.

CONFLICT-RELATED CRISES

Serious human rights violations and abuses, amid generalized insecurity and instability, characterized the period preceding the military-controlled elections. OHCHR verified incidents that evinced trends and patterns of violations and abuses that significantly undermined the essential fundamental rights and freedoms necessary for credible elections.

Credible sources reported to have verified a minimum of 702 civilian deaths across the country during the reporting period. Of these, 224 were women and 153 children, which, combined, accounted for over 53 per cent of the total civilian fatalities. Air strikes remained the single largest cause of destruction and suffering. At least 505 civilians, including 175 women and 112 children or 57 per cent of the total, were killed in attacks carried out with jet fighters, drones, paramotors and gyrocopters.

For comparison, analysis of open sources over the same period indicated that at least 1,015 civilians died in over 1,400 air strikes. Rohingya men, women, boys and girls have also remained exposed to forced recruitment by the Arakan Army, as well as to killings, arbitrary arrests and sexual violence.

Exemplifying the life-threatening risks and protection needs of the civilian population, on 6 October 2025 at around 8 p.m., 23 civilians, including two women and four children, were killed, and over 60 others wounded, after two large-calibre munitions were successively dropped by paramotors, striking civilians gathered in front of a school in Bon To village, Chaung-U township, Sagaing. At the time of the attack, participants were holding a candlelit event to celebrate

the end of Buddhist Lent, and to call for the release of political prisoners, oppose military conscription and reject military elections.

After rescuers arrived, another munition landed, without resulting in casualties but heightening fears. Artillery shelling directed towards a nearby clinic further disrupted efforts to transport the wounded. A public statement in military-affiliated media claimed that the attacks were part of a “counter-terrorism operation” in which armed groups used civilians as shields, without providing corroborating information.

SPIKES OF CIVILIAN DEATHS

Data analysis corroborated spikes of civilian deaths in two periods: August and September 2025, and December 2025 and January 2026. Credible sources reported that in August and September 2025, they verified at least 265 civilians killed, of whom 161 in air strikes. In December 2025 and January 2026, 228 civilians were reportedly verified as killed, 183 in air strikes. These periods coincided with the announcement of the elections and advancements by the military on the battlefield as it attempted to secure its territorial reach.

Further exemplifying this situation, on Human Rights Day, on 10 December 2025, at around 9 p.m., the military destroyed a 300-bed hospital in Mrauk-U, Rakhine, killing 33 civilians, including 17 women and a three-month-old baby, and injuring dozens other civilians. Interviewees reported that aircraft had dropped two munitions, one of which struck a patient ward, while the other landed next to the hospital's security booth, killing four volunteers and destroying the facilities. Victims were mostly patients and those visiting family members, including a pregnant woman, several ethnic-Rakhine civilians, and a Muslim man and child. This was the deadliest incident against a health facility since the coup, out of a total of 1,873 reported incidents as at 31 January 2026.

The military claimed that four armed groups had been using the hospital as a base, although this claim cannot be independently verified. Civilians in the central regions and in Rakhine suffered the greatest impact of the military violence. Credible sources reportedly verified 573 of 702 civilian deaths as occurring in

these areas during the reporting period. Of these, 476 deaths were due to air strikes with 111, including 43 women and 10 children, in the run-up to the voting in December 2025.

SITUATION DIRE IN SAGAING

Sagaing remained the most dangerous region for civilians as the military pressed to gain ground, with 191 deaths, including of 60 women and 30 children, with air strikes responsible for over 70 per cent of the total. On the evening of 5 December 2025, during the election period, a military aeroplane bombed a tea shop in Tabayin township, as people had gathered to watch a football match. Credible sources reported to have verified at least 19 civilian deaths, including four women and one child, with reports of 20 others wounded. Deploying low-cost, lightweight aerial vehicles, such as paramotors and gyrocopters, the military widened the scope of its aerial attacks striking civilians and critical infrastructure.

According to analysis of open sources, in the reporting period, the military carried out over 300 aerial attacks using paramotors (209 attacks) and gyrocopters (102 attacks), killing a total of 134 civilians, including 22 women and 13 children. Numerous air attacks reportedly damaged or destroyed schools, health facilities, markets, monasteries and displacement sites, heightening protection risks and furthering insecurity among the civilian population.

ANTI-MILITARY ARMED GROUP ACTIONS

Anti-military armed groups also carried out operations in opposition to the military-controlled elections. According to the military, anti-military armed groups disrupted the electoral process through the distribution of false propaganda, intimidation and threats to voters, party officials and electoral personnel, attacks on polling stations and security personnel, and the use of explosives and firearms, with a total of 54 acts of sabotage.

Credible open sources indicated that anti-military armed groups carried out attacks that affected civilians, including a minimum of 95 election-related incidents,

with Bago and Yangon respectively experiencing 39 and 18 attacks. Over 80 per cent of the violent incidents reportedly occurred during the prime election period, from November 2025 through January 2026, with an average of 26 per month. Anti-military armed groups claimed responsibility for the use of mortars and rocket-propelled weapons, drone-delivered explosives and improvised explosive devices, the bombing of and shooting at polling stations, the killing, arrest and abduction of electoral personnel, and ambushes on convoys transporting ballot boxes. One such instance included a reported drone attack during voting on 11 January 2026 against the General Administration Department office in Htantabin township, Bago, in which one public official was killed and another wounded, also resulting in the closure of the polling station.

Another incident, on 25 January 2026, the third-round voting day, in Taungtha town, Mandalay, involved anti-military armed groups firing heavy weapons around the time of the opening of polling stations. No civilian casualties were reported. This climate of widespread insecurity amid acts of violence by all parties further affected the election environment and continued to drive overall humanitarian and protection needs. Violence repeatedly forced civilians to flee their homes to seek safety, both within Myanmar and abroad, exacerbating the regional impact of the military-created crisis. While the United Nations reported about 3.7 million people displaced since the coup, the actual number is believed to be significantly higher, as many did not seek assistance through formal mechanisms. In addition, the earthquake in March 2025 and seasonal floods compounded an already dire situation, leaving over a million without shelter or access to basic services.

Consistent with conflict patterns, 35 per cent of the total displaced persons were from Sagaing, and nearly 50 per cent when combined with those from Rakhine.

ARSON ATTACKS

Reports of over 300 incidents of arson, with responsibility attributed to the military, were received, although they could not be independently verified. As previously reported, arson attacks drove humanitarian needs and heightened concerns for civilians deprived

of food, shelter, personal and property documentation, and even professional tools for people to work and sustain their families. Some 9.2 million people face acute food insecurity, while over a third of the population requires humanitarian assistance.

Food insecurity was particularly pronounced in northern Rakhine, with projections estimating a deterioration to critical phase in Maungdaw and catastrophe phase in Buthidaung by May 2026. Concerns remain profound for Rohingya, as military-imposed blockades of goods reaching Rakhine are severely aggravating their situation.

ECONOMIC FALLOUT

The economic fallout from the crisis continues to worsen, compounded by an estimated \$11 billion in economic losses following the 2025 earthquake. 16 The resulting decline in economic activity and loss of livelihoods have had far-reaching implications for the enjoyment of economic and social rights, including the rights to work, housing rights, education and health. While lower volatility in staple food prices and targeted relief measures in 2025 helped moderate food costs, the pressures remained significant.

Despite inflation deceleration in 2025, inflation on non-food items increased to 26.3 per cent, from 25.6 per cent in 2024. Displacement raised demand for housing and frequent power outages kept energy costs high, pushing inflation in housing and energy to about 30 per cent.

Conflict-affected areas, including Bago, Kachin, Magway, Shan and Sagaing, recorded the highest inflation rates, between 18 and 26 per cent, while being affected by access constraints, restrictions on commodity flows, checkpoint delays and funding shortfalls.

HUMAN RIGHTS CHIEF COMMENTS

“As if the people of Myanmar have not suffered enough at the hands of the military, they have now seemingly been forgotten by those outside the country. Funding for localised protection efforts was in many

areas the only solace from the suffering caused by constant targeting and indiscriminate attacks by the military. This pullback just compounds that injury,” said UN Human Rights Chief Volker Türk.

“The international community should hold up a mirror to themselves, and ask: after a decade of grievous suffering, are we going to fail the people of Myanmar yet again? The answer must be no.”

Community-based groups, civil society organisations, and local governance systems have shouldered the responsibility of creating and managing their own local protection mechanisms across Myanmar, providing a measure of modest relief far short of needs.

LOCALLY-DRIVEN SYSTEMS

Early warning, emergency healthcare, and coordination of humanitarian assistance, are currently often provided through locally driven systems that made strengths out of local knowledge, adaptability, and creativity to begin to overcome the serious limitations upon them, the report finds.

“These mechanisms, though fragile and constrained, demonstrated that degrees of protection are possible even under extreme conditions, when grounded in legitimacy, trust, and collective organisation,” it says, emphasising the need for international support for local protection efforts.

The High Commissioner repeated his call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and facilitation of humanitarian access to all civilians in urgent need of food, clean water, medicines, and basic services.

CALL FOR ACTION

In the light of the report’s findings, the High Commissioner calls upon the Myanmar military:

(a) To cease immediately all violations of international humanitarian law and all violations and abuses of international human rights law, including attacks directed against civilians and civilian objects,

including schools, hospitals, religious sites and camps for displaced persons, in compliance with Security Council resolution 2669 (2022);

(b) To allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief to civilians in need, which is impartial in character and conducted without any adverse distinction, and to lift restrictions on the delivery of food, medicine, essential supplies and telecommunications;

(c) To cease all practices of arbitrary conscription, including of children and Rohingya, that are incompatible with international human rights law, and immediately effectuate the release of those affected;

(d) To release all arbitrarily detained prisoners without further delay, and to ensure effective remedies for all cases of deprivation of liberty, including on grounds of alleged evasion or refusal of conscription.

The High Commissioner recommends that the National Unity Government, ethnic armed organizations and anti-military armed groups:

(a) Cease immediately all violations of international humanitarian law and all violations and abuses of international human rights law;

(b) Take specific steps to respect and ensure the protection of civilians, including by making efforts to ensure the accountability of perpetrators of violations and abuses and adopting gender- and age-sensitive measures in consultation with affected communities, in a manner consistent with international humanitarian law and international human rights standards;

(c) Cease all practices of forced recruitment, particularly with regard to children and Rohingya, and immediately effectuate the release of those affected.

The High Commissioner recommends that States, including members of ASEAN:

(a) Refer, through the Security Council, the situation of human rights in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court;

(b) Cease and prevent the transfer to Myanmar of arms, their parts and components, ammunition and munitions, as well jet fuel and dual-use items, where there is a risk that they could facilitate violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of international human rights law;

(c) Politically and financially support the demands by the people of Myanmar for democracy, justice and respect for human rights and the rule of law, including by systematically engaging with the National Unity Government and other relevant democratic actors, including representatives of local governance structures;

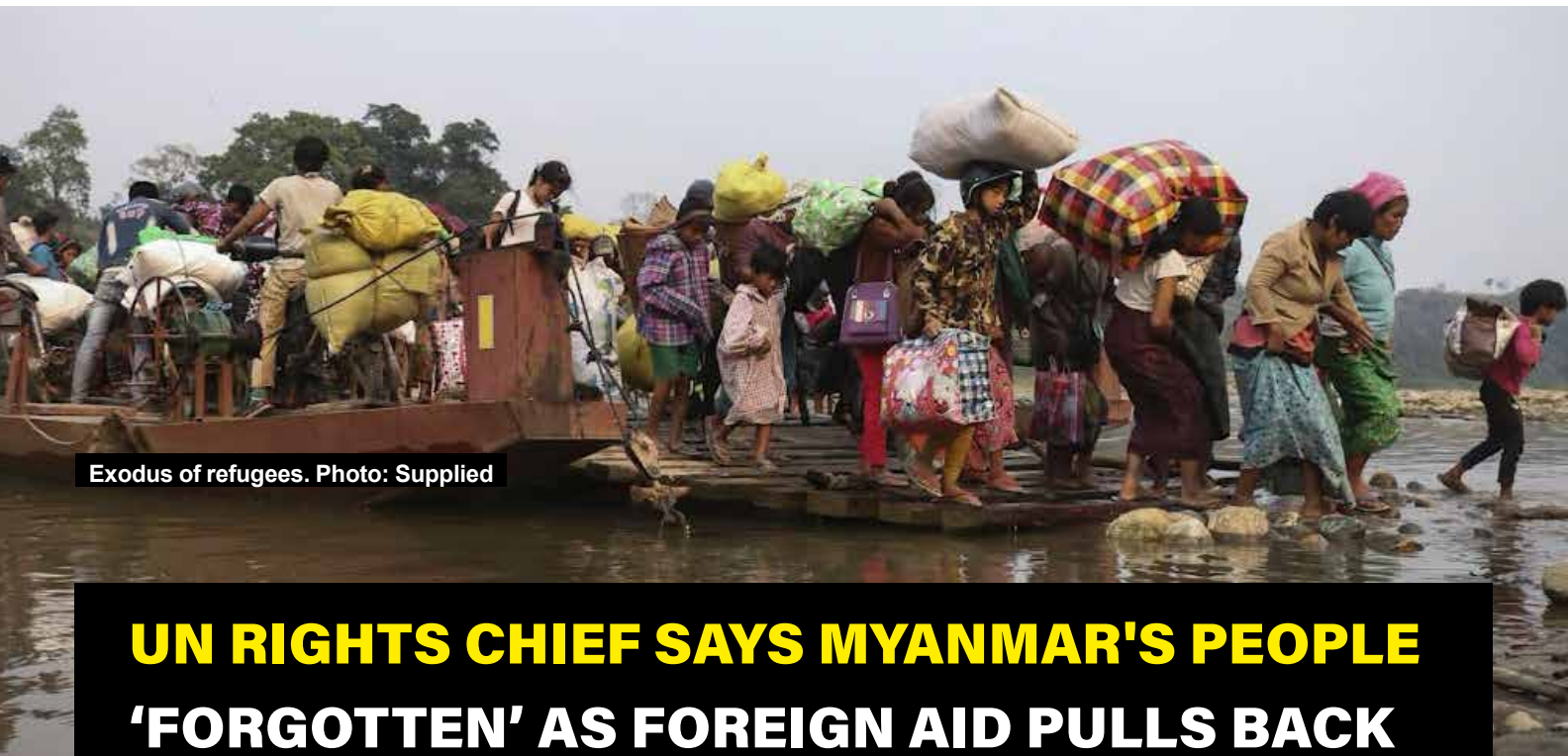
(d) Refrain from lending legitimacy to the military's purported exercise of civilian authority, particularly by refraining from resuming programme delivery or the provision of technical cooperation activities with institutions under its control;

(e) Promote confidence-building measures and political dialogue based on verified and meaningful progress in adhering to international law, including with regard to the de-escalation of violence, the protection of civilians, humanitarian access and the release of political prisoners;

(f) Support ASEAN regional efforts to achieve the cessation of hostilities, ensure unhindered humanitarian access and free all political prisoners;

(g) Ensure the protection of civilians, including Rohingya, fleeing violence abroad by granting international protection consistent with international law, providing solutions for long-term legal status and providing access to basic services, including education, health and employment opportunities, amid growing concerns related to forced recruitment and conflict-related violence if they are returned;

(h) Consult with civil society organizations on the technical, financial, humanitarian and protection needs of the civilian population and ensure predictable, direct and timely provision of funds to civil society to implement effective life-saving programmes.



Exodus of refugees. Photo: Supplied

UN RIGHTS CHIEF SAYS MYANMAR'S PEOPLE 'FORGOTTEN' AS FOREIGN AID PULLS BACK AMID ONGOING ATTACKS

A decline in international assistance is compounding the suffering of millions of people in Myanmar as the conflict situation worsens after five years of conflict-related violence, according to a report published by the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) on 22 June.

The report covers the period from August 2025 to the end of January 2026 – from the military's announcement of elections through to the conclusion of the voting period. Credible sources verified a minimum of 702 civilian deaths during the six-month reporting period, mostly in the central regions and Rakhine, the report found. Of these, 476 deaths were due to airstrikes, with 111 deaths, including 43 women and 10 children, occurring before the start of voting in December.

The report detailed serious human rights violations amid ongoing conflict-related violence, lack of respect for the rule of law, denial of humanitarian assistance, and the impact of the military-controlled elections.

At the same time, foreign actors continue to transfer arms, their parts and components, ammunition and munitions, as well as jet fuel and other dual-use items to the Myanmar military, the report said, adding that this risks facilitating violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk called for an immediate cessation of hostilities

and for humanitarian access to be urgently provided. "As if the people of Myanmar have not suffered enough at the hands of the military, they have now seemingly been forgotten by those outside the country," Türk said. "Funding for localised protection efforts was in many areas the only solace from the suffering caused by constant targeting and indiscriminate attacks by the military. This pullback just compounds that injury."

"The international community should hold up a mirror to themselves, and ask: after a decade of grievous suffering, are we going to fail the people of Myanmar yet again? The answer must be no," Türk said.

Community-based groups, civil society organisations, and local governance systems have had to take on the responsibility of creating and managing their own civilian protection mechanisms across Myanmar, the report said, providing a measure of relief that falls far short of needs.

The decline in international assistance has also led to major cuts, closures, and layoffs across civil society organisations, with ethnic media and women's organisations disproportionately affected, according to the report. Reductions or suspensions of humanitarian and community-based programmes – a including assistance for displaced people, education programmes, and psychosocial support – have increased the population's vulnerability, the report said.



Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA PROMISES EDUCATION REFORM, BUT 6.3 MILLION CHILDREN REMAIN OUT OF SCHOOL

More than 6.3 million children and young people in Myanmar are out of school for the 2026-2027 academic year, driven from the classroom by five years of civil war, displacement and economic hardship following the 2021 military coup.

The crisis figures, released June 23 in a situation brief by the Institute for Strategy and Policy-Myanmar, reveal that nearly half of the country's estimated 13 million school-age population is currently excluded from formal education.

The country's schooling infrastructure has struggled to recover since February 2021, when a nationwide Civil Disobedience Movement saw thousands of teachers and students boycott public institutions. Subsequent armed conflict has displaced millions, forcing families to choose between fleeing violence or continuing education.

While basic education enrolment hit 6.7 million this year – a modest increase of 600,000 from last year – broader metrics show a steep decline. The number of students taking high school matriculation exams plummeted from over 900,000 in 2020 to roughly 250,000 this year, the brief noted.

New policies have added further complications. Public schools recently introduced re-entry placement tests, but capped them at age 15, effectively blocking older, high-school-age students from a formal return.

For younger displaced children, a lack of official school records, missing transfer certificates and skyrocketing costs for basic school supplies create persistent barriers.

Budget allocations also reflect the decline. Education accounted for 6.02% of the national budget in the 2024-2025 fiscal year and is projected to reach 6.92% for 2026-2027. Both figures remain well below the pre-coup rate of 8.07% in 2020-2021.

Despite the deficit, junta leader Gen. Min Aung Hlaing defended his administration's policy during a June 9 cabinet meeting, stating that quality education relies on reliable infrastructure and effective teaching. He pledged to raise education spending by up to 20% over his five-year term.

Alternative education systems run by the opposition National Unity Government (NUG) and ethnic armed organizations have attempted to fill the void, though they lack the scale to close the massive gap.

The NUG reported 727,860 students enrolled in its programs for the 2023-2024 academic year. Meanwhile, in northern Shan State, the Ta'ang Land Education Council reported that its enrolment fell from nearly 70,000 last year to roughly 50,000 this term. The drop-off followed a military counteroffensive and intensified airstrikes that forced the closure of around 200 schools under its administration.



Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing.
Photo: AFP

EU RANKS MYANMAR AMONG TOP 9 GLOBAL CRISES AS UN WARNS OF AID SHORTAGES

The European Union (EU) has designated Myanmar as one of nine global crises where the bloc is leading humanitarian efforts, as newly released U.N. data warns that a severe drop in international funding is worsening the country's crisis.

The EU included Myanmar on its latest list of critical emergencies alongside Sudan, Gaza, Lebanon, Venezuela, Afghanistan, Cuba, Haiti and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

According to a U.N. Human Rights Office report published Monday, cuts and suspensions in foreign assistance have forced major closures, layoffs and reductions across Myanmar's civil society organizations. The report noted that ethnic media and women's groups have been disproportionately affected, while localized programs providing aid, education and psychosocial support to displaced people face deep cuts.

U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk said the population has "seemingly been forgotten by those outside the country," adding that local funding was often the only protection against indiscriminate military attacks.

The U.N. agency verified at least 702 civilian deaths in Myanmar during a six-month period from August

2025 through January 2026, primarily in the country's central regions and Rakhine state. Airstrikes accounted for 476 of those fatalities.

The EU's latest designation came ahead of World Refugee Day, with the bloc identifying itself as the world's leading humanitarian donor. The EU noted that more than 117 million people are currently displaced globally, including more than 4.8 million people fleeing the war in Ukraine who received temporary European protection.

While the EU's recent policy statements – including a May 27 "Joint Communication on Humanitarian Action" aimed at global funding shortages – did not specify new financial targets for Myanmar, the European Commission disclosed country-specific allocations earlier this year.

On Jan. 30, the Commission allocated 63 million euros (about \$68.3 million) to address the Myanmar crisis and its regional impact. The funding included 38.6 million euros for emergency food, nutrition and shelter inside Myanmar, and 23.4 million euros to support Rohingya refugees in neighbouring Bangladesh.



A scam center facility hidden behind walls.
Photo: Supplied

WHY THERE HAS BEEN NO MEANINGFUL MOVEMENT AGAINST SCAM CENTERS IN BURMA

ANTONIO GRACEFFO

The war in Burma, coupled with the junta's draconian policies and widespread military corruption, has contributed to the effective collapse of the economy and the country's currency. At the same time, the scam centers, which are known throughout the world, have become synonymous with the country's lack of rule of law and moral restraint. International media and NGOs have reported that, apart from stealing billions from unsuspecting victims, the scam centers have also become centers for a range of other crimes, including human trafficking and modern-day slavery.

On November 15, 2025, junta chief Min Aung Hlaing visited Hpa-an, the capital of Karen State, and vowed to completely eliminate online scam operations along the Myanmar-Thailand border, calling it "a national duty." Three days later, on November 18, the junta and its allied Karen Border Guard Force (BGF) launched a joint operation at Shwe Kokko, a compound the BGF had until then operated and protected. Over eleven days, joint teams of BGF troops, Myanmar military, and police detained 2,042 foreign nationals, seized 2,893 computers, 21,750 mobile phones, and 101 Starlink receivers, and sealed 101 buildings across 135 structures they described as illegal.

Beginning in early December, the regime razed a 13-story building in Shwe Kokko under pressure from Beijing and Washington. Despite having its hand forced by the United States, the junta claimed victory. Junta spokesman Major General Zaw Min Tun declared in December that the scam centers had been uprooted. By February 2026, the scam centers had resumed operations. However, by May 2026, more than five months after the pledge, only two additional buildings had been demolished.

Syndicates relocated into hotels, guesthouses, and residential homes, dispersing workers into smaller groups. Recruitment posts that paused in January returned to social media in March. A Myawaddy resident told the Irrawaddy, "Scam operations never really stopped here. Some sites paused briefly, but by December they were back in business. Now new sites have opened in different locations and are operating."

Jason Tower of the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime told the Irrawaddy that the regime has "no political will" to crack down, as individuals within and above the BGF "continue to benefit from all of this." He added that any serious crackdown would risk triggering a mutiny within the BGF.

Beyond Shwe Kokko, scam operations extend to Tachileik in Shan State, opposite Mae Sai in Thailand's Chiang Rai Province. In February 2025, Thailand cut power to five Myanmar border locations in an attempt to disrupt scam operations, including two in Tachileik. Local authorities restored electricity through alternative supply lines from Laos shortly afterward, and residents reported operations resumed.

A 41-year-old Shan resident of Tachileik Township, who requested anonymity for security reasons, described what he alleged is a recurring pattern in the military junta's operations against online scam compounds.

"You know, the scam centers in Tachileik never really disappear because the junta's crackdowns are part of a cycle," he said. "When a scam compound becomes too well known, the authorities announce an operation. Before the raid, the major bosses are allegedly warned in advance and have time to escape. Then the authorities raid the buildings, arrest ordinary workers, and announce the operation to the public as a success."

He further alleged that some detained scam workers are required to pay money and, after a few days, are transferred to other areas controlled by armed groups, where they resume scam operations. According to the resident, computers, mobile phones, vehicles, and other equipment seized during these raids are confiscated by the authorities and later sold at low prices to local brokers.

"Once the scammers establish a new base, they need equipment again," he said. "The same computers and phones are allegedly sold back through local dealers at much higher prices. The authorities benefit from the sales, while the brokers also profit from reselling the equipment."

The resident claimed that this cycle has created a profitable system for officials and businesses involved in the second-hand electronics trade.

Another Shan man, a 48-year-old former member of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) living in Mong Ton Township, explained that online scam operations have changed their tactics in recent years.

"Most scam centers are now based deep in the jungle rather than in large compounds," he said. "They operate in small groups, usually with no more than 50 people in each location."

According to him, scam operators work closely with armed groups, with each side playing a different role. "The scammers generate the money, while the armed groups provide security for the operations," he said. He also alleged that some of these groups are involved not only in online scams but also in natural resource extraction, including mining.

The former SNLD member claimed that scam groups typically remain at one location for about three months before relocating to a new site. He alleged that the military junta facilitates these relocations by providing transportation in exchange for substantial payments from the scam operators.

"Because of this arrangement, the scam bases are constantly moving every three months," he said. "In my view, this system was designed by the military junta. As a result, both the junta and armed groups allied with it receive significant financial benefits from these operations."

These interviews, and many others, reveal that even ordinary people on the street, lacking any nonpublic information, are aware of how the scam centers operate and why the government refuses to shut them down.

Logic suggests that in a police state where the junta controls a massive army and secret police force equipped with modern Chinese surveillance technology, no large-scale criminal activity could take place without government support.

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

THE FUTURE WE MUST DARE TO IMAGINE

“
We may have
different religions,
different languages,
different colored skin,
but we all belong
to one human race.
”
— KOFI ANNAN

BY
ALAN CLEMENTS

In recent months, I have spent time once again along the Thailand–Myanmar border, meeting internally displaced families, former political prisoners, democracy activists, ethnic leaders, humanitarian workers, and young people whose lives have been shaped by a conflict they did not choose. Many have lost homes, livelihoods, communities, and loved ones. Entire futures have been interrupted by war, military rule, and displacement. Yet what remains with me most is not the magnitude of their suffering. It is the remarkable persistence of their humanity.

Again and again, I encountered people who refused to allow fear, violence, or loss to become the defining fact of their lives. Former political prisoners spoke less about what had been done to them than about the country they still hoped to help build. Young activists spoke not only of resistance but of responsibility. Community leaders discussed not merely injustice but the difficult work of reconciliation that must eventually follow conflict. Standing along the border, listening to these stories, I found myself returning to a question that has accompanied me for nearly half a century: What kind of society allows every human being to live with dignity, security, freedom, and a genuine sense of

belonging?

My relationship with Myanmar began long before the current crisis. In 1979, I entered Burma as a young Buddhist monk and spiritual seeker. Like many who first encounter the country, I was struck by the extraordinary generosity of its people. I encountered a culture deeply shaped by traditions of compassion, humility, and moral courage. At the same time, I found a society living beneath the shadow of authoritarian rule, where fear often existed alongside kindness and silence frequently accompanied wisdom.

What began as a spiritual journey gradually became something else. Over the decades, Myanmar became one of my greatest teachers. I watched students challenge military power at enormous personal risk. I witnessed monks walk peacefully into danger in defense of conscience and truth. I met journalists willing to endure imprisonment rather than abandon their commitment to honest reporting. I came to know democracy leaders, former political prisoners, ethnic representatives, and countless ordinary citizens whose courage often exceeded anything I had encountered elsewhere in the world.

Those experiences taught me that political freedom cannot be understood merely as the absence of oppression. A nation is not ultimately defined by what it rejects. It is defined by what it aspires to become. The removal of tyranny, however necessary, does not by itself create a democratic society. Democracy requires a deeper foundation. It requires a culture capable of recognizing the equal worth of every human being.

This principle lies at the heart of one of the most important documents of the modern era. The authors of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, writing in the aftermath of catastrophic violence, affirmed that recognition of the inherent dignity and equal rights of all members of the human family forms the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace. Their insight remains profoundly relevant today. In a century increasingly marked by authoritarian resurgence, political polarization, mass displacement, and competing forms of exclusion, the question of human dignity remains central to the future of democratic life.

Myanmar's modern history illustrates both the urgency and difficulty of this challenge. The country's extraordinary diversity has always been one of its greatest strengths. Yet that same diversity has too often been manipulated, politicized, or weaponized. Ethnic, religious, and political differences have repeatedly become sources of division rather than opportunities for mutual enrichment. The result has been generations of conflict that continue to shape the country's present reality.

This is why I continue to reflect upon an important moment in Myanmar's recent history. On August 23, 2016, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi—the democratically elected State Counsellor of Myanmar, Nobel Peace Laureate, and today one of the world's most prominent imprisoned political leaders—invited former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan to chair the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. Whatever conclusions one may draw regarding subsequent events, the deeper significance of that initiative deserves careful consideration.

The Commission sought to address one of Myanmar's most difficult and emotionally charged

challenges. At its core was an acknowledgment that no stable democratic future can emerge if significant populations remain excluded from the promise of belonging. Lasting peace cannot be sustained through permanent marginalization. Democracy cannot flourish where entire communities feel unseen, unheard, or unwanted.

Kofi Annan expressed this truth with characteristic simplicity when he observed that despite our different religions, languages, and appearances, we belong to one human race. His words speak not only to Myanmar but to a broader human dilemma. Across the world, societies are struggling with the question of whether diversity will be experienced as a threat or embraced as a source of strength. Increasingly, the health of democratic culture depends upon how that question is answered.

For Myanmar, the challenge extends far beyond the removal of military rule. The deeper task is the creation of a political and moral culture in which every citizen can participate fully in national life without fear of exclusion because of ethnicity, religion, language, geography, or political conviction. A democratic society worthy of the name cannot merely tolerate difference. It must create conditions in which difference can coexist within a shared framework of citizenship and mutual respect.

This is one reason why conversations about federal democracy remain so important. Federalism is often discussed primarily as a constitutional arrangement or political structure. Yet at its deepest level, it represents something more profound: a recognition that unity and diversity need not be opposing forces. A healthy federal democracy allows multiple identities to coexist within a larger civic framework. It permits people to remain fully Karen, Kachin, Shan, Chin, Mon, Rakhine, Rohingya, Bamar, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, or secular while also belonging to a common national community.

Such a vision demands more than political negotiation. It requires trust, imagination, patience, and a willingness to move beyond inherited fears. It requires institutions capable of serving all citizens fairly. It requires accountability without vengeance,

justice without dehumanization, and memory without perpetual grievance. Most importantly, it requires a collective commitment to the idea that no community's dignity can be secured through the exclusion of another.

My years in Myanmar, first as a monk and later as a writer and advocate for democracy and human rights, have convinced me that political transformation and moral transformation are inseparable. Societies do not achieve lasting peace solely through legislation, elections, or constitutional reform. They achieve peace when citizens begin to see one another differently. The teachings of the Buddha frequently emphasize the dangers of ignorance, fear, and separation. Those insights are not confined to personal spiritual practice. They also offer valuable guidance for societies attempting to heal from division and conflict.

The future of Myanmar will undoubtedly be difficult. The wounds of history are deep. Distrust remains widespread. Millions continue to live with uncertainty, displacement, and trauma. No serious observer should underestimate the scale of the challenges ahead. Yet neither should we underestimate the resilience of the Burmese people.

History is often written through the actions of governments, armies, and political leaders. Yet during my recent travels along the border, I was reminded that history is also shaped by ordinary people who refuse to surrender their humanity under extraordinary circumstances. The individuals I met carried grief, uncertainty, and loss. They also carried determination, humor, generosity, and hope. They continued to educate children, care for neighbors, support families, and imagine futures larger than their present hardships.

As I left the border, I found myself thinking less about military strategies, political negotiations, and constitutional frameworks than about the faces of those I had met. Former prisoners. Displaced families. Young activists who have never known a day of genuine democratic freedom. Their circumstances differed, but they shared a common conviction that Myanmar could become more than the sum of its wounds.

After nearly five decades of walking in and out of Myanmar's story—first as a monk, later as a journalist and author, and now as an aging witness to another generation's struggle—I have come to believe that the country's future will not ultimately be determined by the ambitions of generals or the calculations of politicians. It will be determined by whether the people of Myanmar can build a society in which every citizen feels that they belong.

That remains the unfinished task of democracy. It is also the unfinished task of our common humanity.

Along the border, amid uncertainty and displacement, I met people who still dare to imagine such a future. Their courage may prove to be Myanmar's greatest resource. In a world increasingly divided by fear, exclusion, and distrust, their example offers a reminder that dignity, freedom, and belonging are not merely political aspirations. They are the foundations upon which every humane society must ultimately stand.

About the Author

Alan Clements is an author, former Buddhist monk ordained in Burma, and longtime human-rights advocate whose life's work has centered on conscience, nonviolence, and the struggle against authoritarian rule. He is the author of seventeen books, including *Conversation with a Dictator*, *Unsilenced: Aung San Suu Kyi—Conversations from a Myanmar Prison*, and *Politics of the Heart: Nonviolence in an Age of Atrocity*. For more than three decades he has worked closely with Burmese democracy leaders, former political prisoners, monks, and civil-society voices. His essays and interviews have appeared in international media across Asia, Europe, and the United States.



Children in an IDP camp in Myanmar.
Photo: Supplied

100 MILLION CHILDREN OUT OF SCHOOL FROM CONFLICT, CLIMATE: UN

The number of children and adolescents whose education is disrupted by conflict and climate-related shocks has soared past 250 million, including nearly 100 million out of school altogether, according to a UN report released 23 June.

"The number of children affected by crises has increased by 21 million in just 18 months, reaching an estimated 258 million worldwide," according to the study by Education Cannot Wait, the United Nations fund for education in crisis zones.

The report focused on school-age children and adolescents whose education had been disrupted by conflict, displacement, climate shocks and protracted socio-economic crises.

It found that 93 million children were completely out of school, and that nearly 60 percent of the 258

million affected overall lived in just nine countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sudan and Yemen.

Conflict and violence are the leading drivers of children dropping out of school, the report found.

"The evidence is clear: conflict and climate change are rolling back hard-won gains in education," said Maysa Jalbout, director of Education Cannot Wait.

"These findings show us where needs are greatest and where investments can have the greatest impact," she added. "Now is the time to invest in the futures of crisis-affected children."

AFP



Myanmar policeman in front of a consignment of illegal drugs. Photo: AFP

'UNPRECEDENTED SPIKE' IN NEW SYNTHETIC DRUGS: UN WATCHDOG

Drug use around the world is rising, including a worrying increase of new potent and dangerous synthetic drugs, a UN watchdog warned on Friday.

An estimated 331 million people used a drug in 2024, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said in its 2026 World Drug Report.

This is 6.2 percent of the global population aged 15-64, an increase from 5.2 percent in 2014.

Cannabis remained the most popular drug globally in 2024, followed by opioids, amphetamines, cocaine and ecstasy, the UNODC said.

But novel synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, nitazenes and orphines, sought as a heroin substitute, have become increasingly available.

"We have seen an unprecedented spike in new types of drugs on the market, and worryingly, some are more potent or dangerous than before," UNODC head Monica Juma said in a statement.

Drug producers kept coming up with new synthetic drugs "in attempts to skirt regulations and avoid detection," the agency said.

Drug seizures in 2024 revealed "five times more drug types" than before 2000, it added.

"The number of new psychoactive substances (NPS) reported to have been circulating in drug

markets... reached 755 in 2024, with 118 of these substances reported for the first time," the UNODC said.

The global opium and heroin market was still heavily affected by the ban on poppy cultivation introduced by the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2022, the report said.

This has made drug dealers look for synthetic alternatives like fentanyl.

"A turn away from plant-based opiates toward synthetics could cause a permanent shift in the global opioid market, with ramifications on how these drugs are used and the harms therein," the UNODC said.

The watchdog also observed the emergence of new markets for methamphetamine, produced largely by Myanmar, but also in North America, west and southern Africa and southwest Asia.

Cannabis use keeps growing too, also because of legalisation and decriminalisation -- user numbers grew by 40 percent between 2014 and 2024 as almost five percent of the global population aged 15-64 used cannabis in 2024.

Cocaine output grew more than fourfold over the monitored decade, and traffickers increased supplies targeting both established markets in Europe, America and Oceania, but also new ones in Africa and Asia, the UNODC said.

AFP

An Update to Mizzima Readers

Mizzima continues independent journalism for Myanmar despite repression, censorship, security risks and financial pressure.



1. FUNDING REALITY

Donor funding is now almost none, although we continue to seek support.

2. HOW MIZZIMA IS SUSTAINING ITSELF



YouTube and digital monetization



Mizzima Weekly, Mizzima English and policy products



Training and Mizzima Media Training Institute



HH Channel and diaspora community services



AI and Mizzima EAE for research, content regeneration and production



Production services, events, partnerships and sponsorships



Content repackaging across TV, Facebook, YouTube and digital platforms



Agriculture, tea and coffee, restaurants, shops and marketplace initiatives



Thank you for standing with Mizzima.

Mizzima

Truth. Voice. Future.

AN UPDATE TO MIZZIMA READERS AND FRIENDS

Since the 2021 coup, Mizzima has continued independent journalism under very difficult conditions — revoked licenses, office raids, frozen bank accounts, arrests, surveillance, censorship, security risks and financial pressure.

But we continue because Myanmar still needs independent, reliable and verified information.

Today, one difficult reality is that donor funding is now almost none, although we continue to seek support wherever possible.

At the same time, Mizzima is working hard to sustain itself through self-generated revenue and new initiatives, including:

- YouTube and digital monetization
- Training and Mizzima Media Training Institute
- AI Technology through Mizzima EAE for research, content regeneration and production
- Repackaging content across TV, Facebook, YouTube and digital platforms
- Mizzima Weekly, Mizzima English and policy products
- Home Away From Home - HH Channel and diaspora community services
- Production services, events, partnerships and sponsorships
- Non-media business initiatives.

AI does not replace our journalists. It helps us work faster and smarter, while human editors remain responsible for accuracy, verification, ethics and editorial judgment.

Mizzima is not only trying to survive. We are adapting, modernizing and building for the future — through media, technology, community services and practical business initiatives that can support our public-interest journalism.

Thank you to our readers, viewers, partners, friends and supporters for standing with Mizzima.

Truth. Voice. Future.

#Mizzima #Myanmar #IndependentMedia
#PressFreedom #MizzimaEAE #MediaResilience
#MediaSustainability



ACTS OF TRANSLATION

May Shine works at the intersection of lived experience and policy, moving between diaspora communities, border research sites, and Washington policy spaces with a clear but difficult aim: to make Myanmar legible where it is often overlooked. A recent graduate of the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University, she focuses on U.S. foreign policy toward Southeast Asia while carrying the perspective of someone shaped by displacement, migration, and minority identity within Myanmar's Chin community. The tension that runs through her work is persistent and unresolved—how to translate lived realities into policy systems that are structurally distant from them, and often unresponsive.

She traces that motivation back to a childhood marked by limited opportunity in Chin State, followed by migration first to Malaysia and then resettlement in the United States. That movement did not resolve the instability she grew up with; it reframed it. "As a young kid, we have no future if we stay in Chin State," she recalls, describing a decision made out of constraint rather than choice. The experience becomes less a personal origin story than a lens through which she approaches international affairs: not as abstraction, but as a question of access, visibility, and representation.

Her academic focus emerges from that position. Myanmar, she argues, was underrepresented in international discourse even before the 2021 coup, and the crisis that followed has not corrected that imbalance. "I believe that international organizations have not shown enough what is really happening in Burma," she says, pointing to a gap between external narratives and conditions on the ground. That gap becomes the central problem her work attempts to address.

The effort to close it takes her beyond the classroom. Along the Thailand–Myanmar border, in areas like Mae Sot, she conducts research not only on displacement and education but on the unintended realities that surface when policy categories meet lived conditions. What she encounters shifts her understanding. "I was planning to [study] displacement education," she says, "however I also came across child labor," she explains. Children missing school not out of disinterest but because of unstable parental work, lack of legal status, and the absence of protective systems. The issue is not peripheral; it emerges directly from the same structural pressures that policy frameworks often fail to capture.

CATCH THE PODCAST

Please read more or listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast here: <https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2026/5/25/episode-544-acts-of-translation>



MYANMAR CENTRAL BANK EXPANDS FOREIGN CURRENCY SALES TO SUPPORT ESSENTIAL IMPORTS

Myanmar's Central Bank has injected millions of US dollars into the domestic market to support imports of essential commodities, state media said, as authorities seek to stabilize prices and ease pressure on foreign exchange supplies.

The Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) sold more than US\$3.6 million to edible oil importers during the week, while also allocating foreign currency to fuel and other priority goods importers. These regular currency sales aim to ensure supplies of key commodities and reduce volatility in domestic markets, the Global New Light of Myanmar reported.

State media said the CBM has prioritized foreign currency allocations for edible oil imports, which remain heavily dependent on overseas supplies, as well as support for businesses operating under the cut-make-pack (CMP) garment system and other sectors that generate export earnings.

The latest actions continue a broader policy of direct market intervention that the central bank has pursued in recent months as Myanmar grapples with

inflation, currency depreciation, and rising import costs. Officials say the policy is intended to stabilize exchange rates, improve the availability of essential goods, and support economic activity.

The central bank has repeatedly stated that it will continue supplying foreign currency to sectors considered strategically important while working with enforcement agencies to combat illegal foreign exchange trading and market speculation.

Economists have noted that regular foreign exchange interventions may help moderate short-term price fluctuations for imported goods but are unlikely to resolve the structural challenges facing Myanmar's economy, including weak export earnings, declining investment, and continuing pressure on the kyat.

According to the state press, the latest currency injections are intended to maintain market stability, ensure access to imported commodities, and support domestic economic activity.

facebook

MYANMAR FACEBOOK USERS ALARMED AFTER VENDOR JAILED FOR POLITICAL POST

Myanmar's military government is monitoring social media around the clock, officials confirmed this week, as news spreads online that a former political prisoner has been jailed again over a Facebook post.

U Kyi, 60, a curry-and-rice delivery vendor in Yangon's Hlaing Township, was rearrested in January after posting criticism of military leaders online, rights group Justice Network for Political Prisoners (JNPP) says. He was first detained in 2021 and released in 2023. JNPP says he has now received lengthy prison terms under incitement and counter-terrorism laws.

On Facebook, users are sharing his case widely, with many questioning why ordinary citizens face harsh punishment for online speech while powerful leaders evade consequences. Some commenters call the

sentence excessive for a street vendor; others express fear about posting their own opinions. On Telegram, channels tracking political prisoners are circulating his case alongside broader warnings about surveillance. TikTok users are reposting clips urging caution online, with some sharing tips on digital security.

The case comes days after a deputy minister told parliament that authorities monitor social media "24 hours a day" for posts deemed politically hostile. A separate digital rights report this year found expanding surveillance linking online activity to SIM cards, phone numbers, and bank accounts.

Since the 2021 coup, thousands have been detained for online expression, part of a long-running crackdown on dissent that predates this case by years.

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.