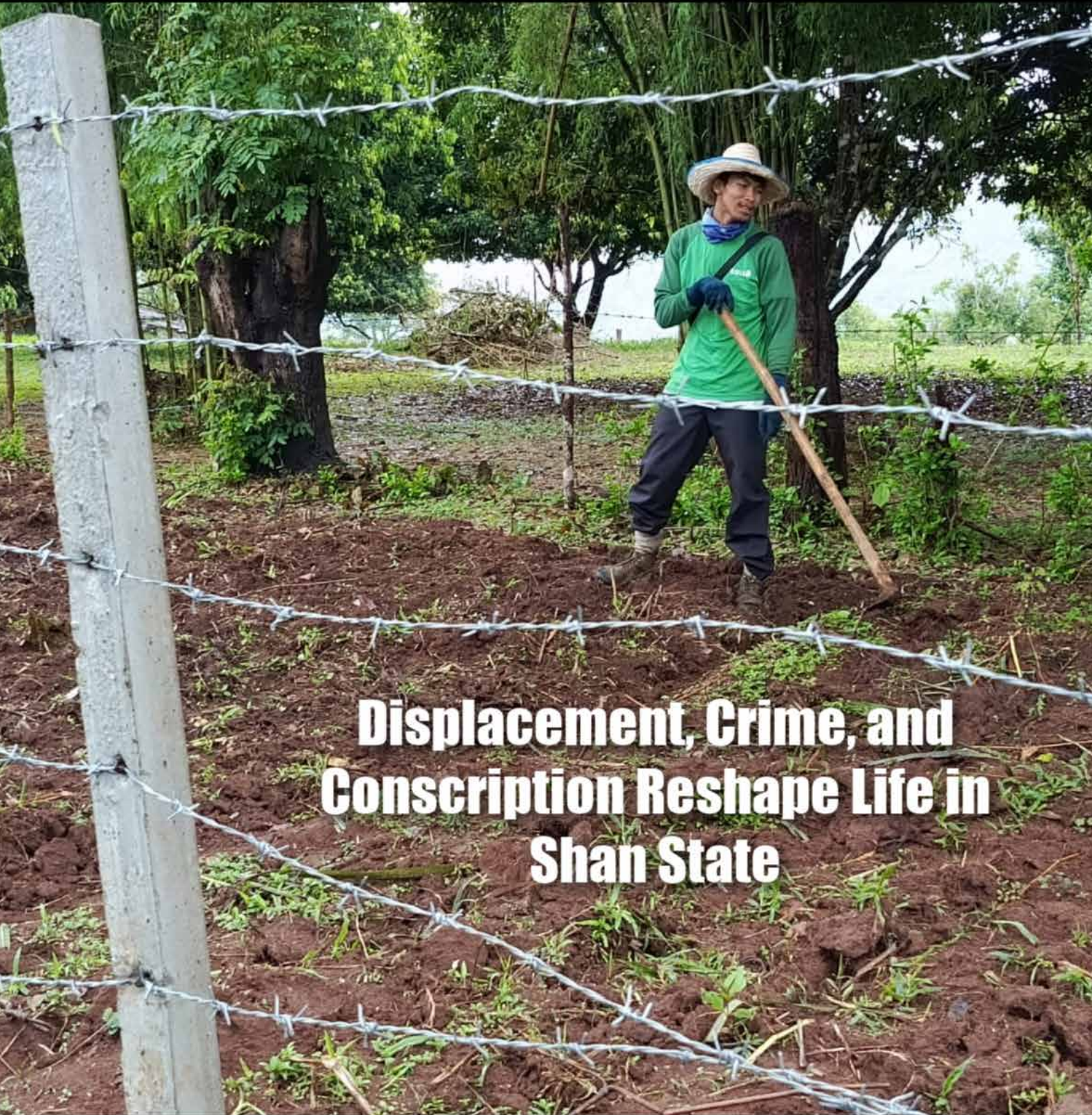


ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



**Displacement, Crime, and
Conscription Reshape Life in
Shan State**

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.

GRIM TOLL AFTER FIVE YEARS

Five years after Myanmar's military seized power, the grim milestone of more than 100,000 deaths serves as a stark reminder that the country has descended into one of the world's most devastating yet underreported conflicts.

The scale of the loss reflects not only the brutality of the war itself but also the failure of political leadership, diplomacy, and international action to halt the violence.

The roots of the high death toll lie in the military's decision to suppress widespread public opposition through force rather than dialogue. Peaceful demonstrations that followed the coup were met with lethal crackdowns, driving many citizens to abandon hopes of a negotiated settlement and instead join armed resistance groups. What began as civil disobedience rapidly evolved into a nationwide conflict involving the military, People's Defence Forces, long-established ethnic armed organizations, and numerous local militias.

Myanmar's geography has further fueled the bloodshed. Fighting now stretches across much of the country, with front lines constantly shifting between towns, villages, forests, and mountainous border regions. This has made it difficult for any side to secure decisive control while exposing millions of civilians to repeated cycles of violence, displacement, and humanitarian hardship.

A defining feature of the conflict has been the military's extensive reliance on air power, artillery, drones, and long-range strikes against areas believed to support resistance forces. Villages, schools, religious buildings, healthcare facilities, and displacement camps have repeatedly

found themselves caught in the fighting. Resistance forces have also suffered heavy casualties during offensives, while civilians continue to pay the greatest price through indiscriminate attacks, landmines, unexploded ordnance, and the collapse of essential public services.

The conflict has become increasingly fragmented as dozens of resistance groups operate alongside established ethnic armed organizations with differing objectives and local priorities. This complexity has prolonged the war, making nationwide ceasefires elusive and creating conditions for sustained violence across multiple fronts simultaneously.

The international community also bears responsibility for allowing the conflict to fester. Sanctions, diplomatic pressure, humanitarian assistance, and regional mediation have failed to produce a political breakthrough. Divisions among major powers and within regional organizations have limited coordinated action, while arms, fuel, and financial networks have continued to sustain the fighting.

Behind every statistic lies a human tragedy: families torn apart, children deprived of education, communities uprooted, and generations scarred by trauma. Unless meaningful political dialogue replaces military confrontation, accountability is pursued, humanitarian access is expanded, and external support for the war diminishes, Myanmar's death toll will continue to rise. The tragedy is no longer measured only by the number of lives already lost, but by the countless more that remain at risk if the conflict continues without a credible path to peace.

EDITORIAL

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**Cover photo of a Shan worker
by Antonio Graceffo**



Motorcycle rider takes a break in a village in Shan State.
Photo: Antonio Graceffo

DISPLACEMENT, CRIME, AND CONSCRIPTION RESHAPE LIFE IN SHAN STATE

ANTONIO GRACEFFO

Residents of eastern Shan State say the enforcement of Myanmar's military conscription law has transformed life in their communities. They describe how the policy has become a source of income for local authorities, with families paying monthly bribes to keep relatives from being drafted. They also report widespread displacement, rising drug addiction and theft.

A small Shan village in Mong Ton Township, eastern Shan State, lies opposite Thailand's Chiang Mai Province. The community consists of only 45 households, with most families relying on seasonal farming for their livelihoods.

One resident, a 50-year-old Shan woman, agreed to speak on condition of anonymity because she feared for her safety. She is the head of a four-member household consisting of herself, her elderly mother, and her two sons, aged 18 and 15.

The family depends on cultivating rice and garlic, earning an annual income of approximately 35,000 to 45,000 baht. Her eldest son studies at a Buddhist monastery, while her younger son attends a government school.

She said that after the military junta announced the enforcement of its conscription law, her eldest son's name appeared on a list of those required to perform military service. Fearing he would be forcibly recruited, she immediately arranged for him to become a novice monk.

However, even though her son had entered the monastery, he was not exempt from conscription. Instead, her family must pay 100,000 kyat (about \$48, more than half the average monthly family income in the region) to the local military unit each month to keep him from being conscripted. Families whose sons are not yet on the conscription list are expected to pay 50,000 kyat.



A displaced Shan person tidies his yard.
Photo: Antonio Graceffo

When asked why she did not simply allow her son to serve in the military, she replied:

"My son is more important than money. I believe that if he is sent to the military, he will receive three months of training before being deployed to the front line. Many families in our village sent their sons, but they never came back."

She said that villagers pool their money at the end of each month, and the village head delivers the payments to the local military base in the township.

A 62-year-old Shan man, the head of a village in Mong Ton Township, eastern Shan State, described how his community has changed since the military coup. He said many people have been displaced by the fighting and have arrived from other parts of Myanmar, including northern Shan State, Sagaing Region, Bago Region, Nyaung-U Township in Mandalay Region, and other conflict-affected areas. As a result, the village is now home to many different ethnic groups. Some of the newly arrived families live in farm huts on rubber plantations or near paddy fields, while others stay with

relatives or friends.

The village head explained that many of the displaced have no stable income, leading some to enter the drug trade as traffickers or brokers, while others have developed addictions. This has driven a rise in theft. "Many of the people accused of stealing are drug users who live in farm huts on the outskirts of the village. They steal anything they can exchange for drugs or money. If a house is left empty, even for one night, they may steal valuables. Sometimes they break doors or windows to gain access to the house."

He explained that when suspected thieves are caught by villagers, they are not handed over to the police. "Instead, we detain them in a secure place for about three months. We do this to help them stop using drugs and recover their health. During that time, we interview them and often find that many have no family or relatives to support them." The village head claimed that when the military demands new recruits from the village, these detained individuals are sent instead of other villagers.



Farmers head home after tending to their fields in Shan State. Photo: Supplied

"We do not want to send our good people to the military because we know they may never return," he said.

A 22-year-old single Burmese man, who identified himself as Maung Kyaw and is originally from Nyaung-U Township in the Bagan area of Mandalay Region, described how the conflict changed his life.

He said his village was burned down by the military during fighting between resistance forces and the junta. He and his family have been living in Tachileik for more than two years after losing everything in the fire, including their identity documents and national ID cards.

Maung Kyaw explained that people from resistance-controlled areas face severe travel restrictions because Myanmar national ID cards list a person's ethnicity, state or region of origin, and religion. He reported that military checkpoints often target people whose

documents show they are from areas associated with the resistance, while people from other regions can usually travel more freely.

"I now work as a construction laborer and earn between 250 and 300 baht a day. Whenever we see the police or pass through checkpoints, we are afraid. We often have to lie about where we are from because we fear being arrested if they discover our real hometown."

Displacement, military occupation, forced conscription, drug abuse, and a lack of economic opportunities have all contributed to the suffering of people in Shan State. Families are torn apart as young men are either taken into the military, where many are killed, or sent away by their relatives to escape conscription. Taken together, these pressures have created a perfect storm of human suffering.

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

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Arakan Army Commander-in-Chief Twan Mrat Naing, right.
Photo: AFP

ARAKAN ARMY CHIEF 'MISSING IN ACTION'?

The whereabouts of Arakan Army Commander-in-Chief Twan Mrat Naing have recently become the subject of intense speculation after he disappeared from public view. Unconfirmed online news reports claims suggest he may have crossed into Bangladesh for medical treatment, but Bangladeshi intelligence agencies have found no evidence to verify this, and there has been no comment from the Myanmar junta authorities.

A Bay of Bengal Post story entitled "No Sanctuary: The Shrinking World of the Arakan Army's Chief" published at the beginning of July claimed Twan Mrat Naing has disappeared from public view since mid-June. The report says unconfirmed online claims suggested he had crossed into Bangladesh for medical treatment but there was no evidence to support such claims. The story also discusses possible explanations for his absence, including security concerns, internal operational secrecy and military developments in Rakhine State. As recently as May 2026, the AA leader gave an interview with *The Diplomat*. He also appears to have commented on Facebook, citing a book he had received from author Alan Clements.

Meanwhile, Human Rights Watch and the AA have become embroiled in a renewed dispute over allegations of abuses against Rohingya civilians, highlighting the continuing controversy surrounding the conflict in Rakhine State and the competing narratives over responsibility for wartime atrocities.

On 18 May, Human Rights Watch published a report titled *Skeletons and Skulls Scattered Everywhere*, alleging that AA forces committed crimes against humanity during fighting in Htan Shuak Khan, Hoyya Siri in Rohingya, village in Buthidaung Township in May 2024, just over two years ago. Drawing on interviews with 41 witnesses, the organization alleged that

more than 170 Rohingya villagers, including around 90 children, were killed or remain missing during the violence. Human Rights Watch argued that the killings formed part of a broader pattern of abuses against the Rohingya population.

The allegations have added to growing international scrutiny of the AA, which has significantly expanded its territorial control across Rakhine State over the past year. As the armed group increasingly functions as the de facto governing authority in much of the state, it is also facing greater expectations regarding its treatment of civilians and its compliance with international humanitarian law.

The AA has categorically rejected the accusations. Spokesperson Khaing Thukha described the Human Rights Watch report as "groundless" and politically motivated, arguing that it lacked credible evidence and was intended to undermine stability in AA-administered areas. According to the AA, its administration has sought to govern all ethnic and religious communities fairly, and accusations of systematic abuses are intended to fuel ethnic and religious divisions.

To support its position, the AA released photographs and video footage showing the bodies and military equipment of junta troops killed during

battles in the area. It also published statements detailing the population of Htan Shuak Khan, Hoyya Siri, village before and after the fighting, arguing that casualty figures cited in the Human Rights Watch report were inaccurate. Video interviews released by local media include the village administrator denying that a massacre took place.

The AA has also cited testimony from Colonel Kaung Myat, the deputy commander of the junta's No. 15 Military Operations Command, who was captured by the AA during the fighting and is now being held as a prisoner of war. In a video released by the AA, Kaung Myat said his headquarters had withdrawn to Infantry Battalion No. 551 after coming under pressure from the AA offensive. He also claimed that junta forces had trained and armed Rohingya fighters to support military operations against the AA and that more than 100 junta personnel were killed while attempting to break through the AA's encirclement around Htan Shuak Khan. Because the testimony was given while he was in AA custody, its circumstances and veracity cannot be independently verified.

With independent access to northern Rakhine remaining severely restricted, many of the competing claims cannot be independently verified. The dispute illustrates how narratives surrounding the conflict in



Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.
Photo: AFP

Rakhine continue to be contested, with human rights organizations, armed actors and local communities presenting different accounts of the same events.

All this is against a backdrop in which over a million Rohingya live as refugees in Bangladesh, the bulk of whom fled Myanmar military attacks in 2016-17, with little or no indication there are viable plans for their return to Rakhine State.

Rohingya in Rakhine 'freer to live'?

As the Arakan Army (AA) consolidates control over much of northern Rakhine State, the daily lives of Rohingya communities appear to be changing in ways that contrast sharply with conditions in areas still controlled by Myanmar's military junta. While challenges remain, local journalists and observers report greater freedom of movement, expanded participation in local administration and improved relations between Rohingya and Rakhine communities in many AA-administered areas.

According to local reports, the AA has begun training Rohingya residents to serve in administrative and law enforcement roles in townships including Minbya, Mrauk-U, Myebon and Kyauktaw. The initiative reflects the group's broader efforts to establish civilian governance in territories under its control.

A journalist familiar with conditions in northern Rakhine told The Irrawaddy that Rohingya residents are now able to travel more freely between townships, including between Mrauk-U, Kyauktaw and Maungdaw. Such movement was heavily restricted under successive central governments, particularly after communal violence in 2012. The easing of travel restrictions has enabled families to reconnect, trade more easily and access services across different parts of northern Rakhine.

Observers also report improvements in religious freedom. The 2025 reopening of the Maungdaw Mosque, which had remained closed since the 2012 communal conflict, has been cited as a symbolic step toward normalizing religious life. Other mosques have reportedly been permitted to undergo repairs, while Islamic religious education has resumed without

the restrictions previously imposed by the central authorities.

At the community level, local media describe a gradual improvement in relations between Rohingya and Rakhine residents. Markets in AA-controlled areas have become places where both communities trade openly, while social and sporting activities, including football tournaments and community events organized by the AA, have encouraged greater interaction. Local observers also note increased participation by Rohingya residents in public administration, policing, public services and the AA's security structures, developments they say have contributed to greater local stability.

Despite these reported improvements, challenges remain. The AA continues to refer to the community primarily as "Muslim" rather than "Rohingya", an issue that remains sensitive for many Rohingya, who regard recognition of their identity as an important issue. Armed clashes between the AA and Rohingya armed groups have also continued around Maungdaw, while hostile rhetoric occasionally appears on social media. Nevertheless, analysts say these tensions are unlikely to escalate into widespread communal violence similar to the conflict that erupted in 2012.

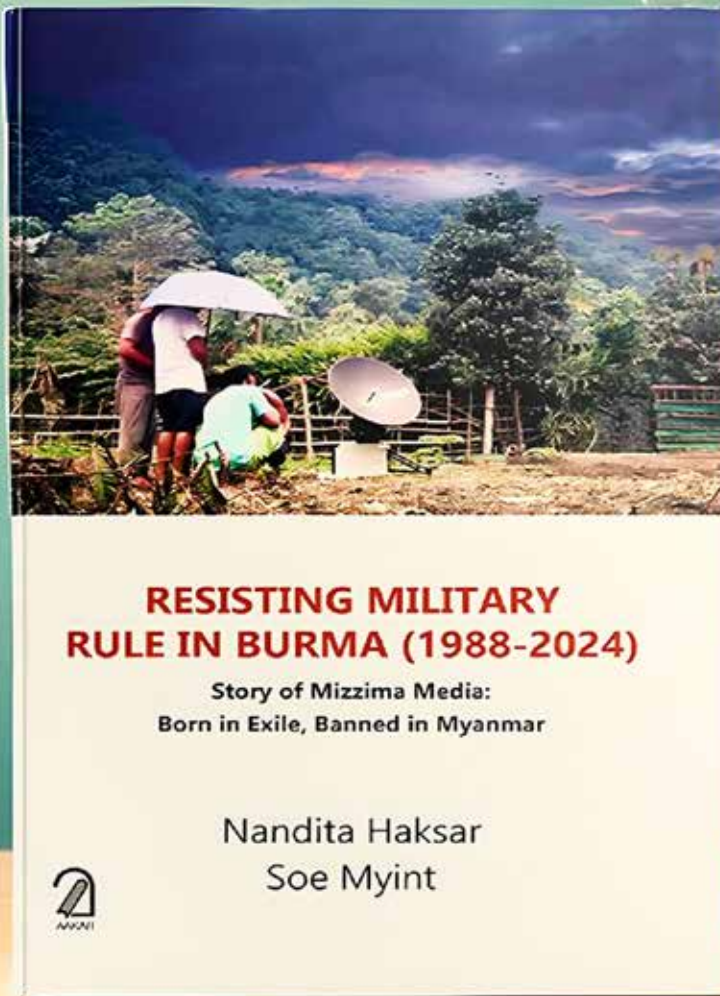
Conditions remain markedly different in areas under junta control, particularly around Sittwe. As the military reinforces security around the state capital amid the AA's advances, Rohingya residents continue to face strict movement restrictions. Checkpoints have been established along roads linking villages and displacement camps, requiring many residents to pay informal fees simply to travel. Local residents report paying between 5,000 and 10,000 kyats to pass through checkpoints, even when seeking medical treatment in Sittwe. Some also allege that those unable or unwilling to pay risk harassment, assault or arrest.

The contrasting experiences of Rohingya communities in AA- and junta-controlled areas illustrate how governance has become an increasingly important dimension of the conflict in Rakhine. While significant political and security challenges remain, daily life for many civilians is being shaped not only by the front lines but also by who controls the territory in which they live.

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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Myanmar's President Min Aung Hlaing (R) and Lao President Thongloun Sisoulith (L) in Laos. Photo: AFP

MYANMAR JUNTA CHIEF MAKES FIRST ASEAN OUTING AS 'CIVILIAN' LEADER

Myanmar coup chief turned 'president' Min Aung Hlaing landed in Laos on Friday, officials said, in his first state visit to an ASEAN country since claiming the post of civilian leader.

Min Aung Hlaing plunged Myanmar into civil war in 2021 when he commanded a military coup ousting the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, detaining her and ending a decade-long experiment with democracy.

He ruled directly as military chief for five years before becoming civilian president in April after staging elections blocked from rebel territory, excluding Suu Kyi's party and jailing dissidents.

His new administration is making a push for international legitimacy, analysts say, including in the 11-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) bloc which has largely frozen Myanmar out since the coup.

Min Aung Hlaing landed in neighbouring Laos on Friday morning accompanied by his wife Kyu Kyu Hla, according to images shared by his presidential information team.

Laos local media said the state visit will last three days.

In a statement earlier this week, Min Aung Hlaing's office said he would meet Laos' President Thongloun Sisoulith and Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone.

"The president will engage in a cordial and open exchange of views to further the consolidation of existing friendly relations," the statement said.

The trip is Min Aung Hlaing's third since taking over as civilian president. Last month he was feted with visits to India and China.

Consensus in ASEAN is fraying over how to treat Myanmar's new administration, analysts say.

Some nations are seen as open to restarting engagement, seizing on apparent concessions by the new administration -- including Min Aung Hlaing's recent personal command that 81-year-old Suu Kyi be moved from prison to house arrest.

Analysts say other nations remain focused on the fact the leader of the 2021 coup still remains in charge.

AFP



Photo: AFP

JUNTA BARS ASEAN ENVOY FROM MEETING AUNG SAN SUU KYI UNTIL SENTENCES SERVED

Myanmar's military junta has ruled out any immediate dialogue between the ASEAN Special Envoy and detained civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, stating a meeting will only be permitted once she has fully completed her prison sentences.

Junta spokesperson Dr. Khin Khin Soe confirmed the stance during a press conference in Naypyidaw on 30 June, clarifying that because the 81-year-old leader is currently serving court-ordered punishments, any external engagement remains legally prohibited until those terms are concluded.

Addressing mounting public anxiety over Aung San Suu Kyi's well-being, Dr. Khin Khin Soe claimed her

condition is "very good" and "fully recovered," adding that she undergoes regular medical check-ups and has "nothing wrong" with her health.

However, the military's reassurances directly contradict recent statements from her son, Ko Htein Lin, who told a Japanese news agency that he received reports indicating his mother was in poor health.

Aung San Suu Kyi has been held in isolation in Naypyidaw since the 2021 military coup, facing decades of imprisonment on various charges brought by the junta, while remaining strictly barred from all outside visitors.



An Aung San statue in Yangon.
Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA FORCES DESTROY TWO GENERAL AUNG SAN BRONZE STATUES IN YANGON

Myanmar junta forces destroyed two bronze statues of General Aung San in Yangon's South Okkalapa and Thaketa townships on the night of 1 July, according to local residents.

Of the two statues located in South Okkalapa, the one destroyed was situated in Thumangalar Park on the Padaytha Market side. The demolition reportedly began after 10:00 PM.

"Only one statue has been dismantled so far, leaving only the pedestal. This particular statue was initiated by U Ko Ko Gyi. Around 10:30 PM, they cut the power to the park and began the demolition using a backhoe and a jackhammer with a crowd present," a female resident of South Okkalapa said.

The statue was erected in 2017 under the civilian government, marking the 102nd anniversary of General Aung San's birth.

According to Mizzima's inquiries, another General Aung San bronze statue, erected by the local statue committee in South Okkalapa, remained undamaged as of this afternoon.

Similarly, junta forces destroyed another bronze statue of the General in Thaketa Township's Mya Kan Thar Park at around 11:00 PM on 1 July.

"The bronze statue in Thaketa's Mya Kan Thar Park near the local administration office was also destroyed. They arrived and started dismantling it around 11:00 PM (at) night. Since this morning, public access to the park has been blocked, with police and plainclothes security personnel monitoring the site," an official from the Rangoon Scout Network (RSN), which tracks military movements in Yangon, reported.

The Myanmar junta has frequently targeted General Aung San statues for destruction in recent months. In this case and previous incidents, junta forces have cut power to the area before beginning demolition at night. Residents assess that the military regime aims to erase the historical legacy associated with General Aung San.

The female resident of South Okkalapa added: "I feel deeply saddened. Our own money went into building this destroyed statue. However, I believe adhering to a great leader's teachings and deeds is far more important than physical monuments. The General lives eternally in our hearts. His physical absence does not diminish his legacy. If we love, value, and respect him, we must follow his guidance."

The RSN representative remarked: "They appear to be systematically erasing images of General Aung San. As an icon of independence, his image inspires resistance, which is why they are targeting it. Similar to the Than Shwe era, they likely want to preserve only the narrative that he founded the military. It could also be a superstitious ritual (Yadaya)."

Previously, on 27 June, junta forces destroyed a General Aung San bronze statue in Ye-U's Aung Mingalar Ward, and on 9 June, another on Kan Road in Taungoo, Bago Region.

The junta has destroyed General Aung San bronze statues in multiple locations across the country in recent years, including the statue in Pathein's Kan Thon Sint Union Ground on 1 November 2023; the three-decade-old statue at the corner of Shwemawdaw Pagoda Road and the Yangon-Mandalay Expressway in central Bago on 7 August 2023; the statue near Pubba Market in Pubbathiri Township, Naypyidaw, on 28 July 2023; and the statue in Thazi, Mandalay Region, on 9 October 2024.



MYANMAR MILITARY INTENSIFIES SOCIAL MEDIA ARRESTS, REVEALS 24-HOUR INTERNET MONITORING

Myanmar's military has intensified its monitoring of social media in recent months, moving to arrest users within days of posts it deems objectionable, according to state media reports and independent monitoring groups.

Details of two cases were published in state-run newspapers on 2 July. In one case, authorities said they had "exposed the truth" behind a Facebook-based extortion scheme in which two women, Nyein Chan Oo and his girlfriend Khine Su Yi, allegedly impersonated a doctor and threatened people with military conscription to extort money.

The arrests take place amid a broader atmosphere of fear surrounding the junta's forced military conscription, with local authorities frequently threatening to draft young people as a means to extort money from their families

In the second case, police in the central city of Bago arrested a TikTok user identified in state media as the holder of the "CHEERY NAING" account. The user is accused of spreading content supporting the opposition National Unity Government and the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, parallel political bodies that the military regime has designated as terrorist organizations.

Similar cases have accumulated throughout the year. On 25 June a 54-year-old Yangon food vendor

named U Kyi had his prison term extended to a combined 13 years over a single Facebook post, according to the Justice Network for Political Prisoners. U Kyi had been released from Insein Prison on 4 March under a military amnesty, only to be re-arrested at the police station while signing his release papers, the monitoring group said. His post had noted that the United States had arrested Venezuela's president while Myanmar's own leader deserved similar treatment.

In October 2025, the freedom of expression watchdog Athan recorded 15 people arrested for online expression in a single month, including a case in which a man was detained solely for reacting to a Facebook post with a "like."

The arrests follow the military's acknowledgement that it is now watching the internet around the clock. On 30 June, the regime confirmed it had formed a new committee to monitor online activity 24 hours a day. The committee is chaired by Deputy Home Affairs Minister Maj. Gen. Min Thu, a former military intelligence official who previously oversaw the regime's interrogation apparatus.

Twelve days earlier, Min Thu told officials that authorities had taken action against 21,369 online users between 2024 and May 2026 for "posting political attacks, inappropriate content, fake news and misinformation." Nearly 20,000 of those cases were prosecuted under counterterrorism charges.

The scale of the crackdown is documented beyond the military's own figures. Independent monitor Data for Myanmar has recorded at least 1,993 arrests specifically tied to Facebook criticism of the military since the February 2021 coup. The group compiled its count by monitoring military-affiliated newspapers rather than court records, meaning the true number is likely higher.

The Cybersecurity Law, enacted in January 2025, compels platforms with more than 100,000 users to retain user data for three years and criminalizes the unauthorized use of virtual private networks, or VPNs.

A separate Election Protection Law has been used to charge more than 300 people since July 2025 for online activity related to the military's December-January election. According to the rights group ALTSEAN-Burma, these include cases where a "like" on a critical Facebook post was treated as a criminal act.

Photo: AFP

MYANMAR JUNTA PRESSES MYITSONE DAM REVIVAL AS KACHIN OFFICIAL CLAIMS CHINA DEAL DONE

Myanmar's military government used a press conference in Naypyidaw on 30 June to defend its plans to revive the long-suspended Myitsone Dam project in Kachin State, days after the Kachin State Chief Minister said the project had received Chinese government backing during Min Aung Hlaing's state visit to Beijing earlier in the month.

The Myitsone Dam, a hydropower project at the confluence of the Mali and N'Mai rivers north of Myitkyina, was suspended in 2011 by then-President Thein Sein following nationwide opposition over its environmental impact, the displacement of more than 12,000 people from surrounding communities, and terms under which 90 percent of the electricity generated was to be exported to China. Junta officials have since said those terms were revised, but have not disclosed a new ratio.

Kachin State Chief Minister Khet Aung Nan said in remarks reported by Kachin Times on 24 June that an agreement with China to complete the project within eight and a half years had been reached, and that he had accompanied Min Aung Hlaing to Beijing on 15 June, where discussions on the project took place with Chinese officials. He said the dam would be built using the latest technology and would be capable of withstanding an earthquake of magnitude 8, and that the structure would be monitored around the clock by satellite. He also said he had previously demonstrated against the project in 2010 during his time as a member of parliament and now regarded that opposition as a mistake.

At the 30 June press conference, Myanmar President's Office spokesperson Deputy Minister Dr Khaing Khaing Soe said community consultations on the project had been held in Kachin State in January 2026 through a 24-member local committee, and that those consulted had expressed a desire for electricity access. She said the consultation findings had not yet been formally published.

The project site and surrounding areas remain the scene of active fighting between the Myanmar military and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), which controls large parts of Kachin State and has consistently opposed the dam. Forty-nine Kachin civil society organisations called in a statement earlier this year for the permanent cancellation of the project, urging China's State Power Investment Corporation Yunnan, the project's developer, to halt efforts to restart the project and end what they described as intimidation of those who opposed it, according to earlier Mizzima reporting.

The dam was originally developed as a joint venture between China Power Investment Corporation and Myanmar government entities, and was designed to generate 6,000 megawatts of electricity, making it one of the largest Chinese-backed hydropower projects overseas at the time. A 2013 independent expert review of the project's environmental impact assessment found it would flood an area roughly the size of Singapore and cause severe damage to the Irrawaddy river system and its biodiversity.



Photo: AFP

MYANMAR JUNTA PLEDGES EDUCATION REFORM AS INTERNATIONAL FUNDING FALLS FAR SHORT OF HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

International funding for education in Myanmar has covered only nine percent of what humanitarian planners say is needed for the current year, according to data published by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) on 30 June — the least-funded sector in Myanmar's 2026 humanitarian response, and the lowest coverage rate across all clusters at a time when President Min Aung Hlaing has pledged to raise education spending by up to 20 percent over his five-year term.

Of the \$123 million required for education under Myanmar's 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP), only \$11.9 million had been received as of 30 June, leaving \$111 million unmet, the data showed. The HNRP is a coordinated international framework that tracks funding pledged and delivered for humanitarian response to the crisis in Myanmar.

The shortfall follows a situation brief published by ISP-Myanmar on 23 June, which found that more than 6.3 million school-age children and young people were out of school for the 2026–2027 academic year, representing roughly half of Myanmar's estimated school-age population of 13 million. The same brief found that the number of students sitting matriculation exams had fallen from over 900,000 in 2020 to roughly 250,000 this year, and that schools run by ethnic armed organisations and the opposition National Unity

Government faced continued disruption from ongoing military operations.

Across all sectors, Myanmar's 2026 HNRP is 43 percent funded. Of the \$890 million required under the plan, \$387 million had been received, leaving a total unmet gap of \$503 million, the UNOCHA data showed. The United States was the largest single donor at \$140 million, followed by the European Commission's humanitarian arm ECHO at \$57 million and Japan at \$43 million. The data covers funding tracked by the UN Financial Tracking Service as of 30 June.

Among the other sectors, food security had received 38 percent of its required funding, health 46 percent, and protection 52 percent. The shelter, non-food items, and camp coordination and camp management cluster had received 11 percent of its requirements, and nutrition 19 percent. Multi-purpose cash assistance, which supports displaced families in meeting basic needs across sectors, had received 23 percent of its required funding.

Myanmar has been in civil war since a military coup in February 2021, which displaced millions of people and disrupted access to basic services including healthcare and education. UNOCHA said the \$890 million HNRP covers the needs of people requiring humanitarian assistance across the country.

MYANMAR'S JUNTA SECURES ANOTHER DIPLOMATIC AUDIENCE AS BIMSTEC HEAD VISITS NAYPYIDAW

BIMSTEC Secretary General Indra Mani Pandey met junta leader Min Aung Hlaing and senior regime officials in Naypyidaw from 22 to 24 June, as the regional bloc prepares to host Myanmar at a security advisers' meeting in New Delhi next month, according to Myanmar's foreign ministry and the BIMSTEC Secretariat.

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a seven-member regional bloc grouping Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. Established in 1997 and headquartered in Dhaka, it coordinates economic and security cooperation among countries bordering the Bay of Bengal, with India playing the leading role in its security sector.

During the visit, Pandey called on Min Aung Hlaing, who told the BIMSTEC chief that Myanmar remained committed to expanding regional cooperation under the bloc and pointed to its "non-political character," according to a BIMSTEC Secretariat statement. The visit comes ahead of the 5th BIMSTEC National Security Advisers' Meeting, scheduled for 16 July in New Delhi, which follows up on a similar meeting Myanmar hosted in Nay Pyi Taw in July 2024, when Min Aung Hlaing – then serving as acting president – chaired the country's military-led government.

Min Aung Hlaing seized power in the February 2021 coup and was installed as Myanmar's president in April 2026 following elections that democracy watchdogs and rights monitors have dismissed as lacking credibility, with voting unable to take place across large parts of the country still held by resistance forces, according to rights monitors.

Pandey also met Foreign Minister Tin Maung Swe, Home Minister Lt Gen Nyunt Win Swe, National Security Adviser Tin Aung San, and Agriculture Minister Min Naung during the three-day trip, according to the BIMSTEC Secretariat. The discussions covered counterterrorism, transnational crime, and maritime, food, climate, and energy security in the Bay of Bengal – areas in which Myanmar leads BIMSTEC's agriculture and food security sector.

The visit fits a broader pattern of regional re-engagement with Naypyidaw following the junta-administered elections, according to the International Crisis Group, which has cautioned foreign governments against conferring unwarranted legitimacy on the administration through high-level contact.



Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing.
Photo: AFP

FORTIFY RIGHTS URGES UK TO LEAD COALITION REFERRING MYANMAR TO ICC

Fortify Rights on 29 June called on the United Kingdom (UK) to lead a coalition of states in referring the full situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court (ICC) under Article 14 of the Rome Statute. The rights group also urged new targeted sanctions on the Myanmar military and increased aid for refugees and displaced people, following testimony to the UK House of Commons International Development Committee on 23 June by Fortify Rights Chief Executive Officer Matthew Smith.

"The U.K. can take a practical step right now to help prevent further atrocities in Myanmar by leading a coalition of ICC member states to refer the full situation in Myanmar to the ICC Prosecutor," Smith said, adding that the Myanmar military should be denied "the money, weapons, aviation fuel, and impunity it needs to continue committing atrocities."

Smith testified alongside Nathaniel Raymond, Executive Director of the Humanitarian Research Lab

at the Yale School of Public Health, and Kate Ferguson, Co-Executive Director of Protection Approaches, according to Fortify Rights. The organisation said no member of the Myanmar military has faced trial before the ICC or another prosecuting body for atrocity crimes despite extensive documentation by human rights organisations, including its own documentation of what it has described as genocide against the Rohingya and war crimes and crimes against humanity against civilians nationwide.

Fortify Rights said the U.K. should not wait for consensus at the U.N. Security Council, where Russia and China have shielded the Myanmar military from accountability, and should instead convene ICC States Parties across Europe, Latin America, Africa, and the Asia-Pacific. The organisation pointed to the response to Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, when 43 ICC States Parties referred the situation to the court within weeks, as a model the U.K. helped build and should now replicate for Myanmar.

According to Fortify Rights, Conservative MP and former Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt asked in a House of Commons debate on 10 June whether the government would consider invoking Article 14 to request an ICC investigation into Myanmar. Former U.N. Special Rapporteur on Myanmar Tom Andrews had separately recommended an Article 14 referral in a March 2024 report to the U.N. Human Rights Council and repeated the call in his final accountability report on 27 April 2026, Fortify Rights said.

Myanmar's National Unity Government lodged a declaration in July 2021 accepting the ICC's jurisdiction over crimes committed in the country since 2002, which the ICC confirmed receiving in February 2022. Fortify Rights said this declaration gives ICC member states a basis to refer Myanmar's situation to the court, and that it is the court's role, not member states', to determine the declaration's validity. The ICC has not opened a full investigation into ongoing atrocity crimes across Myanmar, though it is investigating crimes related to the forced deportation of Rohingya to Bangladesh in 2017, and the International Court of Justice is separately hearing a genocide case against Myanmar brought by The Gambia, in which the U.K. has intervened in support of The Gambia's claims.

Fortify Rights also called on the U.K. to impose new sanctions targeting military-controlled state-owned banks, suppliers of aviation fuel and arms to the Myanmar military, and military-linked businesses including telecommunications and natural-resource entities, coordinated with the European Union, United States, Canada, and Australia. It urged the U.K. to push at the Security Council for a global arms embargo and a ban on aviation fuel transfers to the military, regardless of the likelihood of a Russian or Chinese veto.

The organisation said the U.K.'s Myanmar policy should also address abuses by non-state armed groups, noting that Rohingya civilians in Rakhine State have faced restrictions on movement, denial of humanitarian access, arbitrary detention, and attacks on civilians by the Arakan Army as well as by the Myanmar military.

On humanitarian assistance, Fortify Rights said recent aid cuts have reduced food assistance, worsened malnutrition, and increased risks of trafficking and dangerous sea journeys for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, increasing pressure on them to undertake unsafe returns to Myanmar. "For Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, humanitarian aid is atrocity prevention," Smith said in his testimony. The organisation called on the U.K. to publicly oppose forced or premature returns and to increase flexible, multi-year funding for human rights defenders and documentation groups supporting accountability mechanisms, including the ICC and the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar.

Myanmar is home to the world's longest-running civil war, according to Fortify Rights, which said approximately 3.7 million people are currently internally displaced in the country, while 5.3 million people from Myanmar are displaced overall.

NGOS REBUFF CALL BY US TO WORK WITH THE BURMA JUNTA ON SCAM CENTER ERADICATION

Over two dozen NGOs have rallied together to issue a statement condemning a suggestion that the US authorities would work with the Burma junta to combat scam centers in the crisis-ridden country.

The following is the text of their joint statement issued on 1 July:

BURMA: Statement on the U.S. Government's Potential Law Enforcement Cooperation with the Burmese Military Junta

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Washington, DC: July 1, 2026

On June 25, 2026, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific Michael DeSombre testified before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, where he characterized the scam centers operating in Southeast Asia as a grave threat to the U.S. and regional allies' national security. In addition to stealing more than \$12.5 billion from Americans last year (a 25% increase from the year before), a February 2026 United Nations report found that 300,000 people were trafficked into Southeast Asia's scam centers from all over the world and subjected to severe human rights violations.

In Burma, these scam centers are also intimately connected to a broader conflict economy that fuels the illegal junta's ability to attack civilians, undermines democracy, and violates human rights with impunity.

The junta works hand-in-hand with aligned groups to protect and profit from scam centers, at the expense of both the future of the people of Burma and regional peace and stability.

It was, therefore, deeply concerning to learn that U.S. officials recently met with representatives of the Burmese military junta this past week in Tokyo to discuss potential law enforcement cooperation in combatting scam centers.

"The scam centers and the junta are in a symbiotic relationship: they need each other to thrive," stated Myra Dahgaypaw, board member for U.S. Campaign for Burma. "Cooperation with Min Aung Hlaing's regime would mean helping the very same criminal enterprise that is responsible for, and benefits from, these scam centers that steal billions of dollars and otherwise victimize people in the U.S. and around the world. It is like asking an arsonist to help put out a fire."

In Assistant Secretary DeSombre's testimony, he said that they were looking at all options to combat transnational crime and scam centers and stated, "In the last five years, the civil war has continued, and our policies have not unfortunately stopped the killings and stopped the human rights violations. We continue to evaluate, based upon changes on the ground, about the best way forward."

That path forward cannot be through any legitimization of the Burmese military junta who continues to brutally attack civilians throughout the

country. Ethnic resistance organizations (EROs) and local civil society organizations (CSOs), by contrast, have worked to eradicate scam centers, rescue trafficking victims, and document the damage these criminal activities are doing inside and outside of Burma.

In December 2025, the Karen National Union (KNU), an ERO that plays a key role in Burma's democratic forces, raided Shunda Park scam center, freeing thousands who were enslaved in the compound.

"The only way to stop this scourge is for the U.S. and other governments to work with those elements of the Burma democracy movement that are committed to dismantling the scam centers," stated Naw K'nyaw Paw, Chairperson of the Karen Women's Organization. "Burma's democratic resistance and civil society organizations stand ready to work with the U.S. and other regional governments to fight this scourge that is destroying our country and harming so many beyond our borders."

The undersigned organizations:

1. ALTSEAN-Burma
2. Arakan Rohingya National Organization
3. Australian Karen Organization
4. Burma Advocacy Group
5. Burma Campaign UK
6. Burma Human Rights Network
7. Campaign for New Myanmar
8. Chin Human Rights Organization

9. European Karen Network
10. Genocide Watch
11. Hmong Nationalities Organization
12. International Campaign for the Rohingya
13. Kachin Alliance
14. Karen Community of Canada
15. Karen Human Rights Group
16. Karen Organization of America
17. Karen Peace Support Network
18. Karen Women's Organization
19. Kawthoolei Women's Network
20. Malaysia Karen Organization
21. PAEMA
22. Progressive Voice
23. U.S. Campaign for Burma
24. Women Advocacy Coalition-Myanmar
25. Women's Peace Network

MYANMAR MOURNS AS POST-COUP CONFLICT DEATH TOLL HITS 100,000

More than 100,000 people have been killed across all sides in Myanmar since a military coup five years ago triggered civil war, a conflict monitor said on 1 July.

The military ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021, detaining the Nobel Peace Prize laureate and ending Myanmar's decade-long experiment with democracy.

Anti-putsch protests were put down by security forces but activists quit cities to form pro-democracy guerrilla groups, fighting alongside ethnic minority armies that have long resisted central rule.

There have been 100,114 conflict-related fatalities since the coup, according to the latest data from monitoring group Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED), which tallies media reports of violence.

There is no official toll and estimates vary widely, but analysts regard the half-decade civil war as Asia's deadliest active conflict.

"The pain is just endless," said 49-year-old Thein Aye Nu, whose husband was killed in an airstrike in the western state of Rakhine last month.

"I am so deeply resentful and very angry. But I don't even know who to be angry at anymore. I just have to console myself by accepting it as fate."

'So many memories'

Myanmar was ruled by diktat by military chief Min Aung Hlaing for five years after the coup.

He retired from the armed forces to take office as civilian president in April after deeply restricted elections blocked by rebels from their territory, and in which Suu Kyi's party was sidelined.

Democracy monitors dismissed the vote as a charade to rebrand Min Aung Hlaing's rule, and rebels rejected his call for fresh peace talks as an insincere ploy to launder his image abroad.

"If there was no coup, children would be studying at schools," said one man in Myit Chay town in central Magway region whose teenage son was killed recently.

He said his son died in combat after running away from home to fight for pro-democracy rebels.

"We didn't even get a chance to properly chant Buddhist funeral rites. Heavy artillery was being fired," he said.

"He left so many memories -- I am not satisfied to have done so little for him."

Whole-country conflict

More than 3.7 million people are internally displaced in Myanmar, according to the United Nations, and more than one in five face acute food insecurity as the country slides back into poverty.

In the largest city, Yangon, violence can take the form of occasional assassinations.

Other places are riven by entrenched warfare or pounded by daily airstrikes by the military's Russian- and Chinese-supplied jets.

Myanmar was the second-most conflict-hit area in the world last year, according to ACLED, behind only the Palestinian territories.

ACLED has registered more than 1,200 distinct armed groups in the civil war, calling it "the most fragmented conflict in the world".

"It's deadly, it's dangerous to civilians, the conflict has spread across the whole country," said ACLED senior analyst Su Mon.

The conflict dynamic has shifted at times in favour of both sides.

A combined offensive among some rebels starting late 2023 saw them win stunning advances, bearing down on the second largest city Mandalay -- with speculation they may even capture the ancient royal capital.

But the tide has turned back in favour of the military, analysts say, after China threw support behind it and Beijing-backed truces were signed with two of the most powerful ethnic minority armies.

'Sent to die'

In February 2024, the military activated conscription legislation, aiming to bolster its ranks by forcibly recruiting 50,000 citizens.

"These conscripts can't do anything. It's like they are just being sent to die," said one former military conscript who deserted after serving on the front lines.

"If you don't die in one place, they send you to another," the 20-year-old said on condition of anonymity for security reasons.

The war has also had far-reaching consequences abroad, filling camps in neighbouring Thailand and Bangladesh with an exodus of refugees, and creating fertile ground for transnational criminal enterprise.

Armed groups on all sides fill their war chests with profits from the booming production of drugs such as heroin and methamphetamine, monitors say.

Meanwhile Myanmar's loosely governed borderlands have become a hotbed for online scam centres often operating out of fortified compounds guarded by militants.

AFP



Photo: AFP

APRG BEGINS RECRUITING BANKERS TO LAUNCH ITS OWN BANKING SYSTEM IN RAKHINE TERRITORIES IT CONTROLS

The Arakan People's Revolutionary Government (APRG) opened applications on 30 June for 26 banking professional positions — including three township managers, three assistant township managers, and 20 marketing personnel — to launch its own banking system in the areas of Rakhine State it controls, according to a recruitment announcement.

Candidates can apply to the Arakan Public Service Commission until 11 August.

The recruitment marks the latest step in the APRG's drive to expand self-administration mechanisms across its controlled territory, with the banking system intended to serve as the foundation of a regional financial apparatus.

A source close to the APRG told Mizzima, "A financial circulation system is essential to revive the local economy and trade. Therefore, the banking mechanism is being prepared to stabilize the socio-economic life of Rakhine citizens and support regional development."

Banking operations under the military junta in Rakhine State were suspended amid clashes in late 2023 and 2024, and the APRG is now working to rebuild the financial system under its own administrative framework.

A local resident from Mrauk-U Township told Mizzima, "Previously, the closure of banks made money transfers and business operations extremely difficult. We hope the restoration of a banking system will greatly benefit locals and merchants."

However, the APRG has not yet said what services the new system will offer, how deposits will be secured, or under what legal framework it will operate.

The Arakan Army (AA), Rakhine State's dominant ethnic armed group, currently controls numerous townships in the state and is expanding administrative, judicial, taxation, and other civil governance mechanisms. The move into banking marks another step in extending that administration into the economic and financial sectors.

As of 2026, the AA and APRG administration maintain full control over 15 townships, including Paletwa Township in Chin State and 14 townships in Rakhine State.

While judicial and territorial security have been largely established, economic challenges persist — a tax system is now being applied to commodity flows, transport routes, and business owners.

Border trade along routes connecting Bangladesh and India has dropped well below normal levels due to transportation blockages, forcing reliance on informal routes.

Standard private banking services connected to the central bank are no longer operational in the region, which now relies primarily on mobile financial platforms such as KPay and Wave Money, as well as informal money transfer networks known as hundi, to manage cash flow.

Commenting on a revolutionary government establishing its own banking system, a banking expert said, "For a banking system to operate successfully in the region, in addition to technology and skilled human resources, public trust is paramount. Systematically recruiting township managers and marketing staff is a promising start. However, central bank policy, exchange rate stability, and the ability to connect and transfer funds with neighbouring countries and other regions will pose major challenges to the sustainability of this banking enterprise."

Photo: Supplied

172 MYANMAR GROUPS DEMAND JUSTICE, SIX MONTHS AFTER RAPE CASE IN PDF BATTALION 20

More than 170 civil society organizations and revolutionary forces issued a statement on 2 July demanding justice for a female People's Defense Force (PDF) soldier sexually assaulted within Battalion 20 in Yinmarbin District, Sagaing Region, more than six months ago, saying authorities have taken no effective action on the case.

According to a joint statement signed by 172 organizations, the soldier suffered sexual violence and other human rights violations on 26 December 2025.

The Ministry of Defense (MoD) of the opposition National Unity Government (NUG) announced on 11 March that suspects, including the battalion commander, had been detained for interrogation. However, the statement said there has been no update on the suspects since, nor any effective action taken.

On 13 March, the Court of Inquiry under the NUG's Military Department and PDF General Headquarters summoned the victim to appear in person within one week. The summons was not delivered to her directly, however — it was passed through an Indaw Military Region official close to her father.

The statement said the victim was beaten by the battalion commander and other soldiers during the early stages of the case, leaving her severely traumatized. Citing mental and physical health concerns as well as security risks, she requested to be questioned online via Zoom instead of appearing in person. The official

who delivered the summons rejected the request, stating they had "no responsibility to relay replies back to the court."

The Court of Inquiry made no further contact with the victim until 20 June, the statement said. Direct communication was only re-established after revolutionary comrades intervened to facilitate the connection.

The organizations also expressed profound disappointment over the NUG's failure to mention "discrimination based on race and religion" in its public statements on the case — an issue the public and various organizations had strongly urged the opposition government to address.

Of the three initial demands, only the relocation of the victim and her family to a safe area has been resolved, according to the statement, achieved solely through the efforts of women's groups and revolutionary forces rather than any NUG government action.

The organizations reiterated their remaining two demands: that all individuals involved in the rape be investigated and prosecuted, or that an independent commission of inquiry be established; and that justice be delivered swiftly for women and children victimized during the revolutionary period, alongside practical implementation of anti-violence and non-discrimination policies.



Photo: Supplied

HPA-AN DISTRICT GAD FORCIBLY DETAINING TRAVELERS ON HPA-AN-MYAWADDY HIGHWAY FOR CONSCRIPTION

The Hpa-An District General Administration Department (GAD) is leading operations to forcibly arrest travelers along the Hpa-An-Myawaddy highway for military conscription, according to local reports.

Highway bus drivers stated that GAD staff conducted such forced apprehensions of travelers over ten times during June.

An escapee from one incident reported that a Yangon-Myawaddy interstate bus was intercepted and targeted on 15 June.

"They blocked the road with military and police vehicles to make arrests near the exit of Hpa-An, just before entering the Asian Highway, rather than at an official checkpoint. Three GAD officials seized and checked our ID cards and phones. They forced eligible men to unload their baggage and took us away," said Ko Lin (name changed), an escapee.

The arrest team reportedly comprised of three junta-controlled GAD staff, eight police officers, and two soldiers, with GAD staff leading the operation.

Ko Lin and three other men from his bus, along with nearly 30 men from other vehicles, were loaded onto trucks and transported to a recruitment centre under Light Infantry Division (LID) 22 in Hpa-An.

Among those detained, individuals who have connections with military circle were released, while others secured their freedom through bribe payments.

Some were reportedly released after drivers and bus conductors intervened and negotiated on their behalf.

"Once inside the military compound, I heard them reporting to superiors. The person claiming to be the highest ranking officer of said compound asked the GAD official, 'How many should I report?' The official replied, '12.' In fact, there were about 30 of us. The rest were likely to be bargained off for money," Ko Lin added.

Ko Lin eventually escaped with the assistance of the bus drivers.

Eyewitnesses reported that inside the recruitment compound, GAD staff and junta soldiers held drinking sessions to celebrate and discuss their daily haul of conscripts.


Another escapee, Ko Ye (name changed), said: "My father is a government employee. After I gave his name and position and contacted him, they released me. Many remained inside. I cannot forget their faces begging for help. I was helpless, I was just lucky to escape."

Since invoking the National Service Law (military conscription law) in 2024, the military junta has expanded nationwide recruitment and established many boot camps.

Residents and human rights monitors report a surge in forced recruitment targeting homes, workplaces, pedestrians, and highway travellers in recent months. In one instance, even a Buddhist novice monk was forcibly conscripted.

The Hpa-An-Myawaddy Asian Highway is a primary trade and travel route connecting Myanmar and Thailand, being used daily by numerous passengers and cargo trucks.

Locals expressed growing concern over civilian security and freedom of movement due to the recurring arrests along this corridor.



Thantlang. Photo: Supplied

CLASHES CONTINUE TO RAGE IN CHIN STATE'S THANTLANG, CASUALTIES REPORTED ON BOTH SIDES

Urban combat continues to rage in Thantlang, Chin State, with casualties reported on both sides, according to Chin revolutionary sources.

A junta column of around 300 troops from Hakha set out on 4 June and entered Thantlang on 9 June after clashing with Chin revolutionary forces along the route.

The column subsequently joined local garrison forces to launch an offensive against the Chin revolutionary forces, triggering consecutive days of street fighting in the town.

"There are daily clashes in Thantlang, and active fighting is currently underway inside the town," a spokesperson for the Chin Defence Force - Thantlang (CDF-Thantlang) told Mizzima on 1 July.

The spokesperson added that both sides are suffering casualties amid junta offensives and revolutionary counter-offensives.

On 30 June, intense fighting broke out from 2:00 PM to 8:00 PM, during which CDF-Thantlang member Salai Bia Tak Lian was killed in the crossfire.

While the junta forces also suffered casualties in the clash, the exact numbers remain unconfirmed.

Earlier, on 21 June, three resistance fighters from CDF-Thantlang and the Chin National Army (CNA)

were killed during clashes in Thantlang Township.

Salai Htet Ni, a spokesperson for the CNA, told Mizzima that junta forces, suffering heavy losses in the street fighting in the town, have resorted to using chemical-laden bombs.

"They mainly use drone-dropped bombs. Our fighters experienced vomiting and red eyes, confirming the use of chemical agents in those bombs," he said.

The junta has vowed to reclaim and restore Thantlang, following its recent re-establishment of control in Falam and Tonzang, which were previously captured by Chin revolutionary forces.

However, CDF-Thantlang countered that this is unachievable, stating that junta troops are not only facing intense urban resistance but are also completely surrounded and blocked from advancing outside the town limits.

Furthermore, junta forces occupy only about half of Thantlang's city area, while Chin revolutionary forces maintain control over the surrounding hills along the Hakha-Thantlang highway and other territories in the township.



IDPs in Karenni State. Photo: Supplied

SEVERE SHORTAGES OF SHELTER AND FOOD FOR KARENNI IDPS DURING MONSOON SEASON

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Myanmar's Karenni State face severe shortages of shelter and food during the monsoon season, according to the Karenni Humanitarian Assistance Initiative (KHAI).

"Regarding shelter, the intense heat of summer is followed by the monsoon season, which causes rapid deterioration of makeshift tents. This weather cycle drives up the tarpaulin demand, and we receive constant requests for assistance," a KHAI official told Mizzima on 1 July.

The official added that daily requests for food supplies arrive from IDP camps, highlighting the critical nature of the shortages.

Additionally, with the onset of the monsoon, vector-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue fever are endemic in Karenni State.

Children and the elderly are suffering most from the mosquito bites. To prevent disease outbreaks, mosquito nets, repellents, and mosquito coils are badly needed, according to a statement released by the Karenni "Guest" Clinic on 23 June.

Current monsoon road conditions in Karenni State are poor, severely disrupting cargo transport. Conveyance is particularly difficult on routes connecting Hpasawng, Mese, and Demoso.

"Goods entering from Mese cannot easily reach Demoso, and vice versa for cargo from Demoso to Mese and Hpasawng. Vehicles can be stranded on the road for up to three weeks, facing a high risk of breakdown. Consequently, transport has drastically reduced due to the severely damaged roads," the KHAI official said.

Since the 2021 military coup, armed clashes, junta airstrikes, and violence have displaced over 200,000 people in Karenni State, according to data from the Karenni Human Rights Group (KnHRG).

KnHRG previously warned in May that the region faces potential famine due to targeted attacks on food supplies and livelihoods, lack of income for both local residents and IDPs, and skyrocketing commodity prices, which have compounded the ongoing humanitarian crisis.



Photo: Supplied

FIVE BODIES RECOVERED AFTER DEADLY LANDSLIDE IN HPAKANT JADE MINING REGION

The bodies of five individuals killed in a landslide in Hpakant, Kachin State, were recovered after a disused mine dump collapsed in the early hours of 28 June in Namaw village, located within the Seikmu village tract of Hpakant township.

Local residents and the Thinkka social welfare association confirmed the discovery of the victims, noting that four of the bodies were cremated later that same day.

According to reports from Uru Daily News, the deceased have been identified as Ko Soe Aung Thein, 29; Ko Win San, 32; Ko Zaw Naing Lin, 35; Ko Maung Maung San, 47; and Ko Myo Lin Htay, 24. All five victims were residents of Namaw village.

The tragedy highlights the perilous conditions faced by labourers in the area, particularly during inclement weather.

One local gemstone seeker emphasized the severe dangers of the region, said, "The working in Hpakant

is incredibly difficult during the rainy season because the soft, saturated soil frequently triggers sudden and devastating landslides."

Discrepancies remain regarding the full scale of the incident. While some local media reports indicate that seven people were trapped in the collapse, other local sources suggest the number of trapped individuals could be as high as 20. These differing figures have not yet been independently verified.

Landslides involving abandoned mining dumps are a recurring hazard in Hpakant, a globally renowned jade mining hub, frequently resulting in fatalities among independent prospectors.

These individuals, locally known as "river wash jade seekers," routinely risk their lives to scavenge for jade pieces in the unstable waste piles and old concessions left behind by large mining corporations.

MILITARY AIRSTRIKES KILL THREE CHILDREN IN HEAVY BOMBARDMENT OF MINDAT TOWNSHIP

A devastating wave of military junta airstrikes killed three girls under the age of 10 in Mindat Township, according to local residents and aid workers, as the military unleashed 37 bombs across the region in a single day.

A junta jet fighter targeted Shaim village at approximately 5:30 am on 29 June while residents were still asleep. Three bombs directly struck residential homes, killing the young girls instantly and leaving several other villagers injured.

Local aid workers assisting displaced persons confirmed that the deadly strike took place far from any active combat zone, catching the civilians entirely off guard. The wounded are currently receiving emergency medical treatment, while grief-stricken residents took to social media to mourn the sudden, tragic loss of the children.

Later that day, at around 5:15 pm, the junta's jet fighters reportedly bombed areas near Mindat town twice, dropping four bombs, according to HKL, which monitors news from Mindat.

Additionally, between 6:35 pm and 7:20 pm, a Y12 aircraft conducted 11 bombing runs over eastern Mindat, dropping three bombs each time. The extent of the damage or casualties from these later attacks is not yet known.

Since 29 May, battles have been ongoing between junta forces, advancing from Kyaukhtu in Magway Region, and local Chin revolutionary forces and their allies, as the junta attempts to regain control of Mindat.

The Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) stated that despite a strong ground offensive, the junta has not been able to secure the township and is resorting to excessive aerial bombardment.

According to CHRO records, from 11 April to 22 June, military aircraft conducted 168 flights over Mindat, carrying out 440 bombing attacks. Forty-five percent of these attacks occurred within a four-day period, with the highest single-day count at 91 air strikes.




Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR ARMED FACTIONS TURN TO 'NARCO-CURRENCY' AS BANGLADESH DRUG SEIZURES SURGE 90%

A collapsing security landscape along the Myanmar-Bangladesh border has fuelled a massive 90.58 percent year-on-year surge in methamphetamine and stimulant pill seizures in Bangladesh, driven by armed groups increasingly using illicit narcotics as a liquid currency.

Data compiled by the Bangladesh Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) reveals a drastic escalation in westbound drug trafficking originating from Myanmar's volatile Rakhine and Chin States, which directly share borders with Bangladesh. According to DNC Director General Md. Hasan Maruf, Myanmar's armed factions are aggressively utilizing methamphetamine tablets as "narco-currency" to sustain operations, presenting an evolving national security threat.

The DNC head emphasized that Bangladeshi authorities are intensifying counter-narcotics efforts despite the challenges of securing a chaotic frontier. He stated that the agency consistently executes raids and targeted searches the moment actionable intelligence regarding drug smuggling rings is received.

The security vacuum enabling this surge stems from intense territorial fighting on the Myanmar side of the border.

Salai Tin Mi, a spokesperson for the Chin Brotherhood one of the active resistance coalitions acknowledged that the ongoing conflict has broken down traditional law enforcement. He explained that neither the central military junta nor regional resistance forces maintain absolute territorial control over the borderlands. This lack of authority creates weak, overlapping pockets where drug trafficking networks easily thrive.

While asserting that the Chin Brotherhood has conducted independent arrests and seized illicit shipments in an effort to enforce the rule of law in its sectors, the spokesperson conceded that deep-seated regional instability continues to act as a powerful catalyst for underground drug networks.

In response to the growing sophistication of the trafficking rings, Bangladesh is preparing to heavily upgrade its frontline defence. The DNC Director General announced that personnel will soon be equipped with modern weaponry and advanced tactical training specifically designed to match and neutralize tech-savvy, heavily armed drug traffickers.

UK TO EXPAND REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP SCHEMES

The UK interior ministry has announced it will create new legal routes for asylum seekers, including allowing community organisations to sponsor refugees based on a similar system in Canada.

The system will come into place later this year, Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood said 27 June, with organisations and some "trusted" universities able to sponsor refugees and first arrivals expected in autumn 2027.

A route for employers to sponsor refugees is also expected to open next year, the Home Office said in a press release.

Immigration and asylum are thorny issues in the UK, where the hard-right Reform UK party has rapidly grown in popularity, riding a wave of anti-immigrant sentiment.

Keir Starmer, who stepped down as prime minister this week but will remain in power until his successor is chosen, has tried to appear tough on immigration since coming into power two years ago.

His government will next week introduce legislation in parliament tightening asylum rules, including making it easier to deport failed asylum seekers and restricting family reunion for refugees to immediate family members.

The immigration policies of his likely successor Andy Burnham -- who could replace Starmer as early

as July -- remain unclear, though he has acknowledged migration concerns in his recent campaign to become an MP.

It is also uncertain whether Mahmood, the straight-talking face of Starmer's immigration crackdown, will remain in her post under the next prime minister.

"I will open new legal routes for genuine refugees, while closing loopholes that have been too often abused," Mahmood said in a statement.

The new sponsorship scheme will "operate at a much higher capacity" than the UK Resettlement Scheme, which brought around 800 people in the year ending September 2025.

The Home Office did not detail how many refugees could benefit from the scheme, but said it would be "capped".

Previous sponsorship schemes have been targeted at countries including resettlement for refugees from Syria or Afghanistan.

Earlier this year, Mahmood faced criticism from charities and within her own party over tough regulations, including making refugee status temporary and banning education visas for some countries including Afghanistan, Myanmar and Sudan.

AFP



Photo: Mizzima

NORWEGIAN TELECOM GIANT TELENOR FACES SCRUTINY OVER ALLEGED MYANMAR JUNTA DATA HANDOVERS

Did Telenor's zest for tapping Myanmar's lucrative telecom market eventually lead to phone users being imprisoned or even worse?

This is the question left hanging as the Norwegian telecom giant Telenor faces renewed legal and political scrutiny over allegations that its former Myanmar subsidiary shared sensitive customer data with the military junta after the February 2021 coup, including call records linked to prominent democracy activist and former lawmaker Phyo Zeya Thaw before his arrest and eventual execution.

The information supplied by the telecom giant allegedly included names, physical addresses, Facebook and bank accounts, location data and call logs.

The serious allegations are at the centre of a class-action lawsuit filed in Norway on behalf of more than 1,200 Myanmar customers whose data was allegedly passed to military authorities after the coup.

The case was filed by the Justice and Accountability Initiative, with support from the Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations, known as SOMO, and the Open Society Justice Initiative.

TELENOR COMPLIES

According to reporting by The Guardian and The Observer, based on documents obtained by Norwegian broadcaster NRK, Telenor complied with most post-coup data requests from Myanmar authorities. The reports said Telenor's own transparency material showed the company complied with 96 per cent of 153 data requests it received from the authorities.

The lawsuit alleges that Telenor Myanmar shared call logs, location-related information and other customer metadata with the junta, exposing anti-coup activists and dissidents to arrest, imprisonment, torture and, in some cases, execution.

Telenor has denied legal responsibility, saying it operated under extreme pressure from the military authorities and had to protect the lives of its local employees.

HIP-HOP DEMOCRACY ACTIVIST

One of the most serious allegations concerns Phyo Zeya Thaw, a former National League for Democracy (NLD) lawmaker, hip-hop artist and democracy activist. According to the Open Society Justice Initiative, the military requested logs for a phone number owned by Zeya Thaw on 31 October 2021. He was arrested in Yangon on 18 November 2021, sentenced to death in a closed trial in January 2022 and executed by hanging in July 2022 with three other pro-democracy activists.

Myanmar independent media outlet People's Spring, citing The Observer, reported that the request came from the junta-controlled communications ministry under the justification of "national security". The article said the requested numbers included one used by Phyo Zeya Thaw, who had been moving between safe houses and changing SIM cards to avoid being tracked after the coup. The uploaded report prepared for Mizzima also notes that the case has renewed debate over telecom companies' human rights responsibilities, customer data protection and corporate ethics in authoritarian environments.

JUNTA ARREST

People's Spring also described the day of Zeya Thaw's arrest, saying he was staying at a safe house in Dagon Seikkan Township in Yangon when soldiers surrounded the building. His wife, Tha Zin, later questioned how the military had located them. Plaintiffs and rights groups now allege that telecom data handed over by Telenor may have helped the junta track him down.

The Irrawaddy reported that plaintiffs claimed Telenor Myanmar handed over Zeya Thaw's phone data on 31 October 2021 with the knowledge of its parent

company. It also quoted his wife Tha Zin as saying the loss was not only personal but also a loss to Myanmar's democracy movement.

The case also involves civil society activist Aung Thu. The Guardian reported that NRK documents showed Aung Thu's number was included in a military request in September 2021, when he was already in detention. He was later re-arrested and charged under counter-terrorism laws. Aung Thu was eventually released from prison after serving two-thirds of his sentence.

PROMISING TELECOM SECTOR

Telenor entered Myanmar during the country's political opening and became one of the largest mobile operators in the country, helping revolutionizing people's communications. It launched services in 2014 and later had around 18 million customers before exiting Myanmar in 2022, in the wake of the coup. Rights groups argue that many Myanmar users trusted Telenor as an international company partly owned by the Norwegian state and expected stronger protection of their personal information.

The People's Spring article notes that Telenor's Myanmar revenue exceeded US\$800 million in 2020 and that the company had more than 16 million users nationwide at that time. Its blue three-petal logo had become associated by many users with Myanmar's opening and greater connectivity before the coup.

After the military takeover in February 2021, Telenor came under increasing pressure from the junta. The company complied with orders to block social media platforms, block websites and shut down parts of the network, according to its own disclosures cited in media reports. Digital rights advocates say such measures helped create a more repressive digital environment for activists, journalists and opposition networks.

TELENOR COMPLIES

Telenor has said it complied with orders to share historical metadata, not the content of calls or messages. It has also argued that refusal to comply with military orders could have exposed its local employees to imprisonment, torture or death.

In response to questions from The Observer, Telenor said what happened in Myanmar was tragic but that responsibility for how people were treated in Myanmar lay with the military authorities.

Rights groups argue that Telenor knew the risks. The Mizzima report, citing The Observer, says Telenor's internal sustainability team repeatedly warned that releasing the requested data could lead to the arrest of users, but approval was ultimately given. Telenor has said non-compliance could have placed employees in danger.

TELENOR EXITS

Telenor exited Myanmar in 2022 by selling its business. Civil society groups had warned at the time that the sale risked transferring customer data and telecom infrastructure to entities linked to the military. SOMO has described the exit as "irresponsible disengagement", saying it left millions of customers exposed to severe human rights risks. The full fallout remains unclear.

The Norwegian National Contact Point for the OECD Guidelines later found that Telenor failed to carry out adequate human rights due diligence in relation to its Myanmar operations and exit. SOMO said the NCP concluded that Telenor had failed to conduct due diligence proportionate to the severity and likelihood of the risks in Myanmar.

Telenor disagreed with several of the NCP's conclusions. In a December 2025 statement, the company said the NCP had correctly placed primary responsibility for grave human rights violations in

Myanmar on the military junta and had acknowledged the difficult dilemmas Telenor faced after the coup. Telenor said its decisions were made under significant pressure from the military regime and international sanctions.

BREAKING SANCTIONS?

Separately, Justice For Myanmar and ICJ Norway filed a police complaint in Norway accusing Telenor and former management of its Myanmar operations of violating Norwegian sanctions from 2018 to 2022. The complaint concerns alleged installation and maintenance of surveillance infrastructure, transfer of such equipment during the 2022 sale, and transfer of sensitive customer data to the junta.

The controversy has also raised questions in Norway because the Norwegian state is Telenor's majority shareholder. Rights groups and Myanmar activists say the case is not only about whether Telenor was forced to leave Myanmar, but whether it left in a way that protected millions of users from a military regime known for surveillance, arrests, torture and executions.

The Norwegian court has yet to determine whether Telenor is legally liable and the full potential extent of the alleged damage, if any. But the case has already become a warning for companies about how call logs, location data and customer records can become powerful tools of repression when telecom companies operate under authoritarian or military control, and how individuals can get caught up in a dragnet.

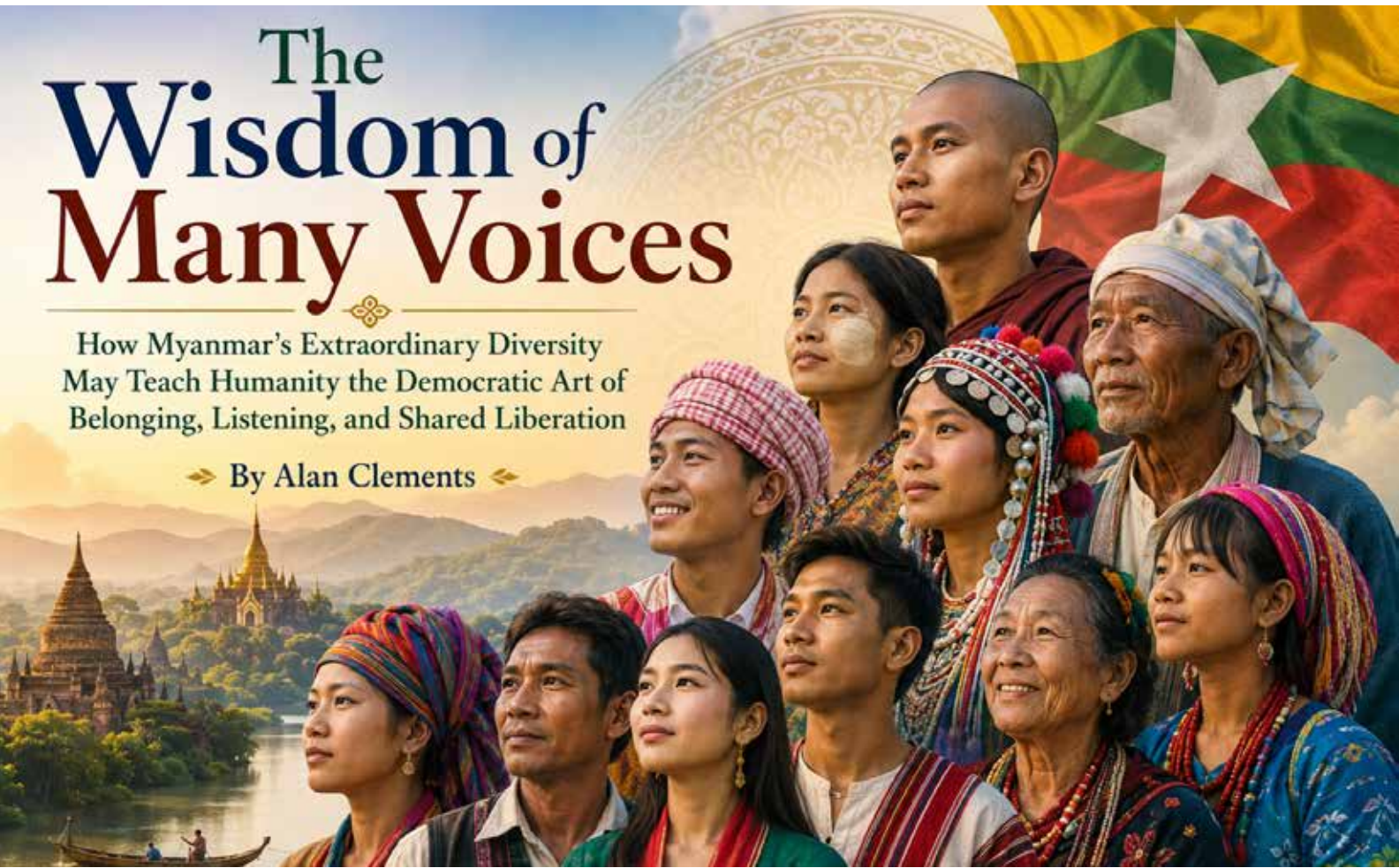
Zeya Thaw's bereaved wife Tha Zin is waiting for an answer.

Sources: Mizzima, Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations, Open Society Justice Initiative, The Observer, The Guardian, The Irrawaddy

The Wisdom of Many Voices

How Myanmar's Extraordinary Diversity May Teach Humanity the Democratic Art of Belonging, Listening, and Shared Liberation

» By Alan Clements «



For much of the world, Myanmar remains a synonym for catastrophe: villages erased by airstrikes, prisons swollen with the disappeared, families fleeing into forests and across borders. Since the coup of February 2021, violence has become ordinary and survival an act of daily courage. Yet if the country is remembered only as tragedy, a quieter and perhaps more consequential revolution will be lost.

Beneath the ruins, a different struggle is being waged—not merely for new rulers or revised constitutions, but for a revolution of democratic imagination. Across more than one hundred and thirty ethnic nationalities, languages, and ancient civilizations of memory, people long divided by war and manipulation are attempting what history has seldom permitted: to build a Federal Democratic Union in which no community must surrender its identity for the nation to exist. At a time when much of the world retreats into narrower certainties, Myanmar asks whether diversity

can become the very foundation of belonging rather than its perpetual threat.

History offers few precedents. Empires and dictatorships have usually purchased unity through conquest or fear, while even democracies have often treated difference as a liability to be softened or erased. Myanmar proposes the opposite: that a nation grows stronger not by diminishing its distinctions but by creating the conditions in which those distinctions may endure without fear or domination. This vision refuses both romanticism and despair. It acknowledges that every history carries its wounds and every language preserves universes of meaning others cannot fully enter. Yet it insists these realities need not condemn a people to endless fracture. They can instead become the raw material of a deeper civic life—one in which relationship proves stronger than resentment and shared purpose stronger than inherited suspicion.

This understanding was not born in seminars. It has been forged under bombardment, in refugee camps, underground schools, and makeshift gatherings where students, doctors, monks, pastors, imams, artists, and ethnic leaders have reached the same austere conclusion: no single group can secure the future alone. Freedom, they have discovered, cannot belong securely to one people unless it belongs equally to all.

Few have given this insight more enduring expression than Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Across decades of imprisonment and public life she returned again and again to a single conviction: the deepest purpose of politics is not to decide who governs, but to cultivate the conditions in which people who have learned to fear one another may once more choose to live together. She understood reconciliation neither as sentimental forgetting nor as the erasure of injustice, but as the patient, often painful labor of restoring confidence where violence had broken it. Dialogue, for her, was never merely tactical. It was an ethical discipline—the daily practice of encountering the other as fully human before any persuasion could begin. She taught that courage rooted in conscience carries greater legitimacy than power imposed by terror, and that societies broken by fear cannot be healed by victory alone; they must also recover the capacity to listen across difference without surrendering memory or truth.

That lesson has grown sharper since the coup. While military rule governs through intimidation and terror, the democratic movement has embraced a conception of nationhood rooted not in uniformity but in shared belonging. The Federal Democratic Union is therefore more than a map of powers between center and states. It is an invitation to reimagine the country itself—as a constitutional home spacious enough to honor every language, faith, and nationality without

requiring any of them to diminish themselves. It asks citizens shaped by different histories to recognize that another community's freedom does not subtract from their own; it enlarges it.

Myanmar inherited a legacy of division: colonial manipulation, civil war, competing national myths, and long military rule. Every community carries stories of suffering and betrayal; every generation inherits losses that resist easy resolution. The task is not amnesia but transformation—refusing to let history alone dictate what comes next. Constitutions can establish the frame of a nation; they cannot create its soul. Laws may protect liberty, yet only the slow, often uncomfortable practice of living honestly across difference can cultivate the generosity, trust, and wisdom no statute can compel.

In this lies Myanmar's least acknowledged wealth. Its greatest resource is not oil, jade, or timber but the astonishing plurality of its people—more than one hundred and thirty ethnic nationalities, each preserving distinct languages, spiritual traditions, and forms of knowledge. Such diversity is not a political inconvenience to be managed. It is the nation's greatest democratic inheritance. Every language enlarges reality in its own register. Every culture preserves dimensions of human experience that others overlook. Diversity, rightly understood, is the multiplication of perception itself. A living democracy does not demand that these voices become identical; it requires that they become indispensable to one another.

Dialogue, therefore, is not simply a technique for managing disagreement. It is the civic practice through which a people continually enlarges its own understanding. When citizens meet one another with curiosity rather than contempt, the boundaries of what is politically imaginable expand. Ideas once unthinkable

become possible. Futures once exclusive become shared works of creation.

No one can guarantee success. The path to a Federal Democratic Union will demand wisdom equal to courage and patience equal to sacrifice. Democracy remains humanity's most fragile achievement precisely because each generation must renew it. Yet history is shaped not only by outcomes but by the moral horizons people dare to pursue while those horizons are still distant. Long before institutions become permanent, the values that sustain them must first become imaginable—whenever fear yields, however slightly, to shared responsibility, and whenever people separated by language, memory, and grievance discover they have more to lose through permanent division than through the difficult labor of belonging together.

This may be Myanmar's most enduring gift to the world: not merely resistance to dictatorship, but the refusal, amid one of the darkest chapters of its history, to abandon the possibility of a more generous political future. Its people have insisted that democracy's deepest purpose is not to determine who rules, but to create a society in which every human being can belong without first becoming someone else.

At a moment when democracies everywhere confront polarization, ideological absolutism, and the erosion of civic trust, Myanmar poses a question that now belongs to all of us: Can profoundly different peoples freely choose one another without requiring anyone to surrender the history, language, faith, or identity that makes them who they are? Few nations have attempted to answer that question under circumstances as severe. Fewer still have done so with such sustained courage.

If Myanmar succeeds, it will have done more than achieve a democratic transition. It will have expanded humanity's understanding of what democracy can be. It will have shown that the deepest strength of a free society lies not in concentrated power or eloquent constitutions, indispensable as these are, but in something quieter and more enduring: the capacity of ordinary people to recognize their own freedom in the freedom of another, their own dignity in the dignity of another, and their own future in a future large enough to include everyone.

That is the wisdom of many voices—choosing, against every expectation of history, to build one nation spacious enough for many peoples, many faiths, many languages, and many histories to flourish together in freedom.

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.

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



US President Donald Trump giving his speech on July 4. Photo: AFP

TRUMP HAILS US, BLASTS 'COMMUNISTS' IN 250TH ANNIVERSARY SPEECH

US President Donald Trump hailed America on its 250th birthday last Saturday 4 July as the "crowning achievement" of human history, even as he used the event to renew his attack on domestic opponents he branded communists.

In a speech delayed by several hours when storms forced the temporary evacuation of crowds in Washington, Trump claimed that under his presidency the United States was "prouder than ever before."

While Trump had promised a huge political rally to stamp his brand on the national celebrations, the 80-year-old Republican largely stuck to a more traditionally patriotic script.

"For two and a half centuries, our American republic has stood as the crowning achievement of human history," Trump told tens of thousands of people on the National Mall.

On stage, he hailed also veterans from World War II and the Korean and Vietnam wars.

But he then hailed the latter two as examples of the battle against "communists" -- reprising his message from his speech on Friday night at the iconic Mount Rushmore monument.

"Our warriors did not fight communism on battlefields across the world, only to have that menace rear its ugly head right back here in America. We're not going to let it happen," he said.

'Proud to be American'

Trump has repeatedly hammered home the theme recently ahead of November's US midterm elections, after the anti-establishment left of the Democratic Party won a string of US primary victories.

"It's like a cancer, you've got to cut it out," he added.

The US leader also used the speech to boast of the recent military campaigns against Iran and Venezuela, saying Washington had "wiped out" Tehran's military.

But the speech was short by Trump's standards, at around 45 minutes long.

"We love Trump, we loved his speech," said Richard Sullivan, 70, who came from Virginia with his wife Nancy and was wearing a Freedom 250 T-shirt.

"He went through our great history and had a word for the veterans that were here. He makes us proud to be American."

A huge fireworks display began after the speech. Trump has said it will set a record as the world's largest.

Americans braved a scorching heatwave in cities across the east of the country to celebrate the anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence from Britain in 1776.

Temperatures soared to a record 103F (39.4C) in the capital -- an all-time high for July 4 -- with 160 million Americans under extreme weather warnings, according to the National Weather Service.

Inclement weather meanwhile forced fireworks in New York to be pushed earlier, and resulted in evacuations at a concert in Philadelphia and a celebration on the Charles River in Boston.

'Awesome country'

The elements also threatened to wreak havoc with Trump's speech as tens of thousands were ordered to clear the National Mall several hours before his address due to approaching thunderstorms.

While many streamed toward exits, chaos broke out as other attendees refused to leave or tried to surge back in, where AFP reporters witnessed shouts of "charge!" and "Trump! Trump!"

Trump however insisted he was pushing ahead with the speech, telling Fox News that if D-Day veterans in World War II could brave bad weather then so could he.

"Experiencing a little heat is a lot less than what a lot of people sacrifice to give us this freedom in this awesome country," said Randy Cole, 62, a retired civil servant attending festivities in Washington.

Yet Trump's determination to put himself and his political brand front and center of the 250th anniversary celebration had highlighted the deep divisions caused by his second term in office.

Those divisions were on full display Saturday near Washington's Capitol Hill, where masked men -- some of them carrying Confederate flags and others sporting logos of the white supremacist Patriot Front -- gathered to shout, "Reclaim America!"

For Americans, the 250th anniversary offers a moment for reflection as well as celebration.

A Quinnipiac University Poll showed 61 percent of Americans thought the US was not living up to the ideals stated in the Declaration of Independence.

AFP



THE ARCHITECTURE OF EXCLUSION

Mohammed Siraj, a Rohingya researcher, political analyst, educator, and aspiring legal scholar, is a refugee living in Bangladesh whose work focuses on citizenship, constitutional reform, education, and human rights. He has taught in refugee settings, led projects at the Rohingya Academic Research Institute, and studied the oppressive legal and political structures that, in his view, produced the Rohingya crisis. From the beginning, his central claim is clear: the Rohingya crisis is not simply a humanitarian emergency but a political and institutional crisis rooted in discriminatory law, especially Myanmar's citizenship framework and constitutional order.

His own life illustrates the plight of his people. Siraj once wanted to become a doctor, but that ambition changed after military violence drove his family from Myanmar to Bangladesh during the mass displacement of Rohingya communities. In the camps, he continued studying through limited educational opportunities, and later pursued research training. He also faced the legal barriers of statelessness: even when he received university offers, he could not use them because he lacked a passport or other travel documents. He turned to law instead of medicine because, in his view, law has systematically shaped the structures that have excluded Rohingya from citizenship, political participation, and protection.

Siraj returns repeatedly to the issue of statelessness. He describes it as one of the greatest obstacles in his life because it restricts movement, blocks access to universities, and narrows the future long before a student can begin to choose among real options. He attended the University of the People, an online university, but he presents that route as a partial solution rather than a real answer to the broader problem. For Rohingya students more generally, he says, the deeper barrier remains legal status: without citizenship, passports, or recognized school certificates, higher education remains difficult to reach.

His research work is rooted in the same conditions. At the Rohingya Academic Research Institute, a community-led educational and research organization in the camps, he studies and supervises projects meant to help Rohingya document their own history and rights in their own voices. He describes the institute as volunteer-driven, under-resourced, and intellectually ambitious. Its purpose is both educational and political, enabling a marginalized community to generate its own narrative instead of depending entirely on outsiders to interpret its experience. Siraj emphasizes that this kind of research must follow clear ethical standards, such as protecting participants' safety and identity, especially when documenting experiences of violence, displacement, and discrimination.

CATCH THE PODCAST

Read more and listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast here:

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2026/6/2/episode-549-the-architecture-of-exclusion>



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.



COOKING OIL DOMINATES MYANMAR SOCIAL MEDIA THIS WEEK

The story dominating Myanmar social media last week was cooking oil, with users in Yangon saying households now receive less than one viss, about 1.6 kilograms of subsidised palm oil, a month after the latest ration cuts.

The reductions follow the junta's move to restrict the US dollars traders need to import palm oil, a bid to save dwindling foreign reserves. Myanmar produces only about a third of the cooking oil it consumes and imports the rest — roughly 700,000 tonnes a year, worth close to US\$600 million. Shortages and rationing have deepened steadily since the military seized power in the February 2021 coup, which triggered a nationwide civil war.

On Facebook, users say the rationed oil rarely reaches ordinary households. "The cooking oil never really reaches ordinary people; it gets shared out among

those in charge," one user writes, echoing complaints that officials and well-connected businesses take the largest share. Others compare the country's direction to North Korea, while some say the regime keeps essentials scarce to weaken resistance.

According to oil distributors, the regime sets palm oil at 7,255 kyat (about US\$1.45) per viss, yet it sells for at least 12,000 kyat (about US\$2.40) on the open market, when it can be found.

The rationing comes as the same military continues its air war. The United Nations has recorded more than 6,700 civilian deaths since the coup, nearly half caused by airstrikes, while the opposition National Unity Government (NUG) counts 4,750 junta airstrikes — 289 in December 2025 alone.

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.