

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



JOSHUA VAN

**A Beacon of Hope for
Myanmar's Youth**

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DIGITAL MAGAZINE

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

MYANMAR DICTATOR MIN AUNG HLAING

REELS FROM A TIME MAGAZINE 'HIT-JOB'

It is an old and somewhat unethical journalist tactic – Request an interview with a political leader, a businessperson, or a society big-wig, and then use this “access” and “quotes” to write up a damning story on the targeted individual.

Now, no right-minded person would think Myanmar’s brutal dictator Min Aung Hlaing should be given any slack five years after grabbing power in a military coup and locking up Myanmar’s democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi.

But Time Magazine’s request for an exclusive interview with the Myanmar junta leader and the resulting 23 September story entitled: “Exclusive: Myanmar’s Dictator Wants to Rebuild Ties With the West,” has kicked up a firestorm in Naypyidaw after the “classic Q&A interview” was turned into an article with little reference to Min Aung Hlaing’s thoughts, mundane though some of them are.

Time Magazine said in their interview request that they would “publish an extensive interview” but all that appeared in the magazine last week were mere snippets from Min Aung Hlaing, and ad hoc quotes from experts and commentators – in effect a “hit-job”.

The authorities in Naypyidaw are reportedly furious. So much so that they condemned the journalist and published the full transcript of the 30-minute interview in the Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM) and in video form.

Some quotes appeared lost in translation. Take Time Magazine’s quote regarding Suu Kyi - “I have been extremely lenient toward her,” Min Aung Hlaing says with a straight face. “We made every possible effort to prevent the situation from reaching this point.” This appears to be missing from the transcript (though it might be excused in the form of mistranslation or rephrasing).

Let’s be straight – Journalists know that every interviewee is different

but there are good reasons why an interview could be edited to “zero in” on controversial issues. It’s standard practice. The only problem with the Time Magazine interview request is the interviewee – Myanmar’s junta leader – mistakenly believed the Q&A would be published in full – not the resulting hatchet-job, where the “meat” of the interview is missing.

Sure, kudos to Time Magazine for snagging the interview. Not easy. But they let the interviewee down – heinous though he is – and let the reader down in not effectively reflecting what he had to say, judging by the transcript in the GNLM. It appears that not enough was done to ask the interviewee hard questions – including his responsibility for the ongoing massacre of civilians and human rights abuse and the still unresolved Rohingya crisis. Do your job and throw those tough follow-up questions in the middle of the Q&A to at least try harder to gain a response.

The gaping hole and missed opportunity in “Myanmar’s Dictator Wants to Rebuild Ties With the West” are Min Aung Hlaing’s responses to the tough questions that we all want to ask him surrounding his “presidency” and the reasons why the world cannot treat this Myanmar usurper seriously and needs to bring him to book for his crimes.

Those tough questions were not asked - or at least not enough was done to tie them down.

Time Magazine, which the world tends to put on a pedestal, bears responsibility for its failure to reflect the thoughts of this Myanmar leader, given it was handed access. Read the transcript and watch the video to assess the performance of the reporter. It is a pity this opportunity to ask tough pointed questions was lost and the man was let off the hook.

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Cover photo of Joshua Van by AFP



Joshua Van, left, securing victory against Alexandre Pantoja, right. Photo: AFP

JOSHUA VAN

A BEACON OF HOPE FOR MYANMAR'S YOUTH

SAI WANSAI

In the crowded arena of global mixed martial arts, few stories resonate as deeply or urgently as that of Joshua Van. At just 24 years old, the first UFC champion born in the 2000s has done more than defend a title; he has become a symbol of resilience, identity, and hope for a generation of young people in Myanmar grappling with conflict, displacement, and uncertainty.

From Refugee Camp to Global Stage

Van's journey is one of extraordinary transformation. Born in Hakha, Chin State, he left Myanmar with his family at age 10 due to escalating conflict. After spending two years in a Malaysian refugee camp, his family eventually settled in Houston, Texas. There, Van forged a path from displacement to the pinnacle of combat sports, training at 4 oz. Fight Club and rising through the ranks with a striking style marked by aggression, technical precision, and unshakeable confidence.

His background adds profound weight to every victory. For many in the Chin community and the broader Burmese diaspora, Van's success is not just personal triumph—it is proof that identity, culture, and heritage can thrive even in the face of erasure and adversity.

UFC 331: Proving Legitimacy

In December 2025, Van claimed the UFC flyweight title in dramatic fashion, defeating Alexandre Pantoja when the Brazilian champion suffered an accidental elbow dislocation just 26 seconds into the fight. The result, while decisive, left critics questioning whether Van's victory was a fluke.

At UFC 331 in Los Angeles on September 19, 2026, Van silenced those doubts. In a fiercely competitive five-round rematch, he outstruck Pantoja over much of

the fight, defended against his grappling, and dropped him with a powerful overhand right in the final round. The judges awarded him a unanimous decision (49–46, 48–47, 50–45), improving his professional record to 18–2 and cementing his status as the undisputed best in the division.

"A lot of people said that was an accidental win, well, doubt me now," Van said after the fight, extending his legacy with quiet confidence.

More Than a Fighter: A Symbol of Resilience

Van's impact extends far beyond the octagon. For young people in Myanmar—many of whom have grown up under military rule, war, and displacement—Van represents something powerful: agency. His story embodies the possibility of rising above circumstances, of preserving one's identity while achieving global recognition, and of finding pride in one's roots even when those roots are far from home.

Communities across Myanmar have gathered in communal spaces to watch his fights, celebrating his victories as shared national moments of pride. In Malaysia, Van met thousands of fans at a Chin Refugee Committee event. In India's Mizoram state, he spoke with youth about empowerment and athletics. These engagements underscore his role as a unifying figure across borders and generations.

Commentators have described him as a "beacon of hope," not necessarily urging youth to become fighters, but showing that someone from a refugee background can succeed on the world stage without abandoning his identity. For those connected to the resistance, Van's visibility offers a counter-narrative to the milita-

ry's attempts to suppress ethnic identity and erase alternative images of Myanmar.

A Legacy of Respect and Pride

Van's approach to his rivalry with Pantoja also reflects the nuanced culture of combat sports. While he engaged in heated trash talk during promotions—calling Pantoja “kid” and mocking him—his post-fight demeanor was one of grace and respect. He publicly acknowledged Pantoja's contributions to the division, even addressing the Brazilian audience directly to honor the champion he once defeated.

This duality—aggressive during promotion, respectful after victory—has made Van not only a compelling fighter but a likable global personality. It shows maturity beyond his years and reinforces his image as a champion who can stand proudly for his people while honoring his opponents.

Conclusion: A Champion for a Generation

Joshua Van's rise from a refugee camp to UFC fly-weight champion is more than a sports story—it is a testament to the power of perseverance, identity, and hope. For the youth of Myanmar, especially those affected by conflict and displacement, Van's journey offers a powerful message: no matter where you come from, or what obstacles you face, you can rise, you can win, and you can carry your people with you.

As he continues to defend his title and inspire new generations, Joshua Van remains not just a champion in the octagon, but a champion in the hearts of a nation.

Courtesy of Shan Herald Agency for News

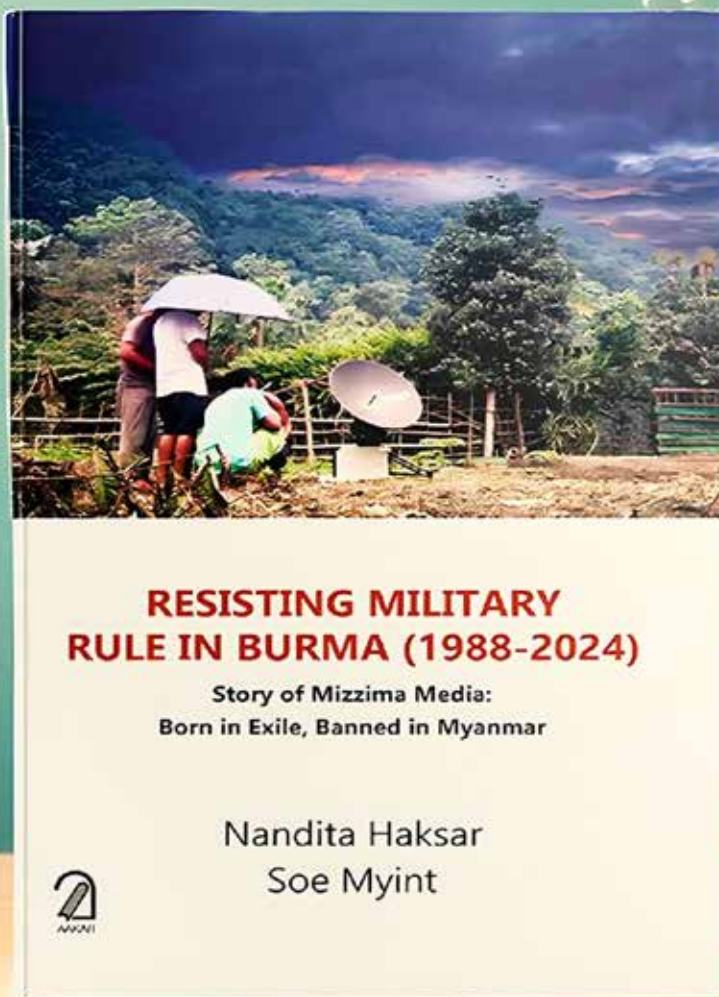


Myanmar fans went wild. Photo: AFP

RESISTING MILITARY RULE IN BURMA (1988-2024)

STORY OF MIZZIMA MEDIA: BORN IN EXILE, BANNED IN MYANMAR

by Nandita Haksar and Soe Myint



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ANALYSIS & INSIGHT



Photo: AFP

MYANMAR UPS THE ANTE IN MAGWAY AND CHIN

A large Myanmar junta military convoy that arrived at Defence Industry No. 25 (KPaSa-25) in the Laungshae-Saw area of Gangaw District appears to be part of a broader effort to re-establish military and administrative control over Saw Township and open a route into southern Chin State. The movement could also have wider strategic implications, as the military seeks to advance toward Kanpetlet and Kyindwe and potentially connect with areas further west, including Paletwa and northern Rakhine State.

More than 180 military vehicles carrying around 1,500 personnel reportedly travelled from Magway Region and arrived at the No. 25 military weapon factory on the night of September 19. Local sources and resistance groups said the convoy included missiles, howitzers, drones, jammers and other military equipment, suggesting that the deployment was intended for a major ground operation rather than routine reinforcement.

The convoy reportedly originated from the No. 88 Light Infantry Division (LID) area in Magway, with additional troops drawn from other military bases, including units from Shan State. The deployment followed the junta's efforts to consolidate its position in eastern parts of Madaya Township from Mandalay region, allowing it to redeploy some forces toward Laungshae, close to the southern Chin State border.

Resistance forces reportedly attempted to intercept the convoy during its journey from Magway. Several vehicles were reportedly destroyed and some junta personnel were taken to hospital. After the convoy reached Laungshae, the military shut down telephone, internet and Starlink services in the town and surrounding villages, according to local sources. The communications blackout appears to have been

aimed at restricting information about the military's movements and operations.

The deployment also reportedly included vehicles belonging to civilian government staff. This suggests that the junta may be preparing not only for a military advance but also to restore its civilian administrative structures in areas where it has struggled to exercise authority. Establishing parallel military and civilian control would allow the junta to consolidate any territory regained through the operation.

The military began moving troops toward Kyindwe in Kanpetlet Township on September 25. A column of around 400 personnel reportedly entered the area but encountered resistance from revolutionary forces. Another column of more than 500 troops from No.



PDF fighters in Tanintharyi. Photo: Supplied

77 LID arrived in Laungshae on September 23 and subsequently attempted to advance toward Kyindwe with aerial support.

According to resistance sources, the second column suffered significant casualties after facing repeated interceptions along its route. The troops reportedly include personnel from No. 99, No. 88 and No. 55 LIDs under a strategic commander from No. 77 LID. Local sources also reported that military vehicles were transporting dead and wounded personnel back toward Laungshae at night, although these casualty claims could not be independently verified.

The junta has simultaneously increased air operations along the Laungshae–Kyindwe route. On September 27, airstrikes reportedly killed two women and wounded six civilians, including a 10-year-old boy. Earlier, on September 19, the military reportedly dropped two 300-pound bombs on Kanpetlet Township, damaging a school and three houses.

The military's apparent objective is therefore broader than simply taking Kyindwe. The operation could help establish a military corridor from Magway through Saw and into southern Chin State, where the Chin Brotherhood alliance currently controls Kyindwe and surrounding areas. From there, a successful advance could potentially provide the junta with greater access toward Paletwa and areas linking southern Chin State with Rakhine State.

For now, however, the advance appears to be facing substantial resistance around the Laungshae–Kyindwe area. The size of the deployment, its heavy equipment and the simultaneous use of air power indicate the importance the junta attaches to reopening this route, while the repeated interceptions suggest that controlling the corridor may prove considerably

more difficult than simply deploying a large number of troops.

How are EROs and PDFs faring in Tanintharyi?

Ethnic resistance organizations (EROs) and People's Defence Forces (PDFs) in Tanintharyi have been able to maintain significant influence over rural areas despite failing to establish sustained control over major towns. Their position, however, remains under pressure as the junta continues to use air power, artillery and conscript manpower to regain strategic locations and secure key economic projects.

The resistance previously seized Maw Taung, a border trading town with Thailand, but the junta retook the town in May after deploying additional manpower, including conscripts, along with airstrikes and artillery. The loss demonstrated the difficulty resistance forces face in holding strategically important urban and border areas against concentrated military pressure, even where they retain broader influence in surrounding rural areas.

At the same time, changes within the resistance landscape could strengthen cooperation. On September 21, a regiment from the Kawthoolay Army (KTLA) rejoined the Karen National Union (KNU). Local media reported that commander Saw El Pow and 24 other personnel returned to the KNU, while the commander of the KNU/KNLA's No. 4 Brigade said the former KTLA personnel would serve as KNU/KNLA soldiers. The development could further consolidate cooperation among resistance forces, although the KNU has not publicly released extensive details about the move.

Fighting has also intensified around the Dawei Deep Sea Port Special Economic Zone (SEZ), an

area of potential Russian investment. A junta column of around 80 troops had been operating around the SEZ since September 25 before being intercepted in Yephyu Township and attacked again on September 29. The repeated clashes indicate the importance both sides attach to the area as the junta seeks to secure the wider project zone.

The military pressure comes as Tanintharyi faces severe flooding and landslides. Since September 26, heavy rains have triggered flash floods and landslides across Dawei District, including Launglon, Thayetchaung and Dawei townships. Four villages in Launglon were particularly badly affected, with mud reportedly covering about half of each village. According to the Launglon PaKaPa, 11 people were killed in Kadetngethain village and another seven villages recorded 16 deaths.

A junta column of about 100 personnel entered Launglon Township on September 28, reportedly

for rescue operations, but instead took positions in Kyauksin Village, which was not among the areas worst affected, while Kayingyi Village was suffering from the landslide disaster.

The situation highlights another challenge for Tanintharyi's resistance forces: alongside fighting to maintain their rural foothold and prevent the junta from consolidating strategic areas, they must respond to humanitarian emergencies with limited resources. Rescue efforts have reportedly also been delayed by lengthy questioning by junta authorities, further complicating access to disaster-affected communities.

Tanintharyi therefore presents a mixed picture: resistance forces retain considerable rural influence and continue to challenge junta movements, but the military's ability to concentrate forces around strategic locations, combined with severe humanitarian pressures, continues to test their capacity.

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TRAPPED IN THE MACHINE: THE YOUTH OF MYANMAR'S WAR AGAINST CONSCRIPTION

SAI WANSAI

The military junta in Myanmar has transformed its recruitment drive into a sophisticated machine of terror, stripping the nation's youth of their futures to prop up a crumbling regime. What began as a legal mandate has devolved into a lawless racket of abduction, where ward administrators, police, and soldiers operate as localized cartels hunting down students, workers, and even political prisoners. Under the guise of national service, the regime led by Gen. Min Aung Hlaing has created a system where young men and women are dragged from their homes, lured with fake job offers, or coerced under the threat of imprisonment and torture. This is not defense; it is a calculated human trafficking operation designed to feed the frontlines with cannon fodder.

The Human Wave Strategy

The junta's reliance on forced conscription is a desperate admission of defeat. After suffering catastrophic losses on the battlefields of Rakhine and Kachin, where the Arakan Army and Kachin Independence Army have decimated military offensives, the regime has abandoned any pretense of volunteerism.

Instead, it has unleashed a relentless campaign to fill its depleted ranks with unwilling recruits. Between July 2024 and August 2026, over 135,000 individuals were forcibly inducted into the military, only to be sent directly to the frontlines as human shields. The military cares little for their lives, viewing them merely as expendable resources to protect the supremacy of a regime that has lost the support of its own people.

In cities like Yangon and Naypyidaw, the terror has become palpable. Families live in fear as soldiers conduct daytime sweeps, dragging commuters from vehicles and extorting arbitrary fees for their release. In Mon State alone, more than 5,800 youths have been forced into service, many of them underage or overage men arrested under false pretexts. The desperation to escape this nightmare has led to tragic deaths, with reports of youths dying while attempting to flee their captors at recruitment centers. The junta's methods have become so brazen that even the families of military personnel are not safe, with soldiers abducting the sole breadwinners of their own comrades under the threat of violence.

The Collapse of the War Machine

The junta's strategy is not just morally bankrupt; it is strategically disastrous. The forced conscripts are poorly trained, demoralized, and often defecting in droves. In just two years, the military has lost over 20,000 soldiers to death or injury, while another 20,000 have fled or defected. The regime's reliance on human waves has failed to halt the advance of resistance forces, who have proven increasingly capable of striking at the heart of the military's operations. The resistance has even begun to challenge the junta's aerial dominance, with drone attacks on airbases like Tada-U exposing the vulnerability of the military's most prized asset.

The recent reshuffling of top military officials further underscores the regime's internal fractures. General Ko Ko Oo's promotion to home affairs minister, effectively sidelining him from the military chain of command, suggests a power struggle within the junta. Meanwhile, battlefield setbacks in Kachin and Rakhine have resulted in the surrender of hundreds of troops and the destruction of valuable military vessels. The junta's air force, once its greatest advantage, is now under threat from homemade drones and anti-aircraft tactics, leaving its ground troops exposed and vulnerable.

A Path to Liberation: Demands for ASEAN and the UN

The National Unity Government has issued a clear call to action for the youth of Myanmar: flee to safety, join the resistance, or, if captured, defect with weapons if possible. But survival for the individual is not enough; the international community must dismantle the machinery that enables this horror. ASEAN can no longer hide behind the doctrine of non-interference while its backyard burns. The Five-Point Consensus has failed, and the time for empty statements is over.

To ASEAN: Immediately recognize that Myanmar is not safe for return under any circumstances. Halt all forced deportations of Myanmar nationals, including undocumented migrants, and strictly uphold the principle of non-refoulement to prevent delivering

refugees into the hands of the junta. Establish a regional protection framework that grants legal status, work permits, and humanitarian aid to those fleeing conscription. Demand an immediate, unconditional suspension of all trade and financial transactions with the junta, specifically targeting the sale of aviation fuel, weapons, and the oil and gas revenues that fund its war machine.

To the United Nations and the Security Council: Refer the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court and establish a special tribunal to prosecute the crime of forced conscription and human trafficking as crimes against humanity. Impose a comprehensive global arms embargo, freezing all assets of junta-linked entities and enforcing secondary sanctions on any state or corporation providing logistical support. Finally, recognize the National Unity Government as the legitimate representative of the Myanmar people and engage directly with Ethnic Resistance Organizations to build a genuine, inclusive federal democracy. The world must stop treating this as a civil war and start treating it as a crime of state.

The Future of a Free Myanmar

The youth of Myanmar are not cannon fodder; they are the architects of a democratic future. Their resilience in the face of terror and their willingness to fight for their freedom offer hope for a nation that has suffered under military rule for decades. The junta's conscription law is a testament to its desperation, but it is also a catalyst for its downfall. As the resistance continues to gain ground and the international community closes in, the machine of forced conscription is beginning to crumble. The road ahead is long and fraught with danger, but the spirit of the Myanmar people remains unbroken. They are fighting not just for their lives, but for the right to choose their own destiny.

Courtesy of Shan Herald Agency for News



Kim Aris

'FREE HER' CAMPAIGN CONTINUES AS KIM ARIS DELIVERS LETTER TO MYANMAR EMBASSY DEMANDING ACCESS TO HIS MOTHER

Kim Aris, son of detained State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, delivered a personal letter to junta leader Min Aung Hlaing at the Myanmar Embassy in London 22 September, demanding to see his mother in person, as part of the "Free Her" campaign he launched on 7 September.

The "Free Her" campaign is the next phase of the "Proof of Life" campaign, which Aris launched in April to demand independent verification that his mother was still alive, after her reported transfer from Naypyidaw Prison to house arrest was first reported by regime media on 30 April.

The "Free Her" campaign aims to secure video call access between Aung San Suu Kyi and her son, ensure she receives proper medical care and humane treatment, demand her immediate and unconditional release, and call for the freedom of all political prisoners.

"My mother is 81. She remains detained, separated from her family and cut off from the world," Aris told

a crowd gathered outside the embassy for the rally. "I am not asking for special treatment. I am asking for something basic the right to see and speak with my mother," he said in the campaign's launch statement earlier this month. "I lived with my mother's detention when I was a child. I never imagined that decades later we would be here again."

Although the junta allowed Aung San Suu Kyi to meet with a representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on 3 August, access to her lawyers and family members remains blocked.

Following the 2021 military coup, Aung San Suu Kyi was prosecuted on 19 trumped up charges and originally sentenced to a total of 33 years in prison, which currently stands at 18 years after multiple partial commutations. At the end of April this year, the junta announced that she had been transferred from Naypyidaw Prison to a "designated residence."



BRIBES OF 1 TO 1.5 MILLION KYAT DEMANDED FOR OUTSIDE HOSPITALISATION IN KALAY PRISON, PPNM SAYS

In Kalay Prison, Sagaing Region, inmates must pay bribes ranging from 1,000,000 to 1,500,000 MMK (10 to 15 lakhs) to prison staff and authorities to obtain permission for outside hospitalisation, according to a statement released 24 September by the Political Prisoners Network Myanmar (PPNM).

PPNM stated that during a medical examination conducted inside the prison by specialist physicians from the Kalay Public General Hospital, it was confirmed that 80 prisoners were in urgent need of outside hospitalisation and medical treatment.

Among them, 50 were political prisoners (both male and female). However, only nine inmates have currently been allowed outside hospitalisation, and only four of them are political prisoners, according to the PPNM's statement.

"Getting admitted to the hospital is like winning the lottery; it is a real privilege. Medical treatment is not accessible to everyone. Only those whose families can afford to follow up, make visits, and pay money are granted hospitalisation," a family member of a political prisoner told Mizzima.

The family member added that if they cannot afford to pay, they are only sent outside for medical care when they are on the verge of death. Some die on the way before reaching the hospital, while others pass away shortly after arrival at their homes.

There are also cases where inmates simply endure their illnesses inside the prison to survive, only seeking medical treatment after being released, according to the family member.

It is reported that while some inmates entered the prison with pre-existing conditions, others have developed long-term health issues due to poor living conditions and malnutrition within the correctional facility over time.

Despite the urgent need for emergency medical care, the allocated medical budget is reportedly only 1,000,000 MMK per month for 1,000 prisoners - averaging just 1,000 MMK (approx. \$0.30 USD) per prisoner.

PPNM stated that apart from basic medicines like Paracetamol and Cevit (Vitamin C), there is a severe shortage of pharmaceuticals. Furthermore, emergency oxygen and supportive medical equipment required for critically ill patients are non-existent.

PPNM pointed out that a criminal inmate aged between 25 and 30 recently died of asphyxiation upon arrival at an outside hospital due to a lack of oxygen support.

There are many inmates in Kalay Prison suffering from heart disease, hypertension, and diabetes. Their families are forced to bear the out-of-pocket costs for their medical treatment and purchasing prescription drugs.

The PPNM statement detailed that bribes ranging from 1,000,000 to 1,500,000 MMK must be paid through various levels of the prison hierarchy - starting from regular prison staff up to authorities such as the Prison Superintendent (Assistant Director), Deputy Superintendent, Prison Hospital medical superintendent, and respective ward wardens - to obtain outside hospital referral.

Additionally, PPNM noted that inmates from distant regions face even greater hardships in covering food

and medical expenses if they are admitted to outside hospitals.

PPNM also alleged that some businesspeople and criminal convicts serving sentences under Section 19(a) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law are abusing the referral procedures, which require higher authority approval. These individuals, despite having no illnesses, bribe their way into being accommodated at outside hospitals.

Meanwhile, political prisoners who cannot afford bribes are often dragged back to prison before fully recovering, and some have to wait for one to two years without receiving any medical treatment at all.

According to a friend, Salai Van Ceo Thawng (32), who was imprisoned on political charges in Kalay Prison and denied medical treatment inside, passed away from cancer on September 13, less than a year after his release.

Furthermore, PPNM stated that Soe Moe Naing (aka) Soe Naing (aka) Dein Daung (60), a political prisoner detained in Myingyan Prison, Mandalay Region, passed away on September 15 at 11:30 AM due to the denial of emergency medical treatment inside the prison.

PPNM stated that the respective prison authorities and the Correctional Department are fully responsible for acts of denying medical treatment and demanding bribes while ignoring the lives of political prisoners. PPNM added that they will continue efforts to hold perpetrators accountable for these violations.



NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT HONOURS NEARLY 1,800 FIGHTERS AS MYANMAR'S PDF MARKS FIVE YEARS

The National Unity Government conferred military gallantry titles, awards and medals on 1,792 individuals to mark the fifth anniversary of the founding of the People's Defence Force, according to a NUG statement dated 7 September.

The honours were given in recognition of sacrifice and service by those who carried out military duties in what the NUG calls the People's Revolution, the statement said. Five categories of recognition were conferred: the Honour of the People's Revolution, given to one recipient; the Legend of the People's Revolution, given to 21 recipients; the People's Medal for Noble Service, given to 1,647 recipients; the People's Medal for Loyal Service, given to 81 recipients; and the

Badge of Revolutionary Service, given to 42 recipients, according to the statement.

Nominations went through a three-stage vetting process, the statement said. Respective command levels first submitted nominations, the Ministry of Defence carried out an initial review, and the NUG's Military Gallantry Titles, Awards and Medals Vetting and Selection Committee conducted a final review before approval, according to the statement.

The NUG said the conferral programme will be carried out annually going forward. A list of individual recipients for 2026 will be released at a later date, the statement said.



MYANMAR JUNTA FORCES LAUNCH AIRSTRIKE ON NUG SPECIAL MILITARY COMMAND OFFICE, CASUALTIES REPORTED

Military sources report that the military junta carried out an airstrike using a jet fighter on the command office of the Special Military Command under the National Unity Government (NUG)'s Ministry of Defense (MOD) on the morning of 24 September.

At around 11:00 AM today, a jet fighter dropped at least six bombs on the command office, located within the territory of the Karen National Union (KNU) Brigade 1 in Kyaikto Township.

Initial reports indicate that the airstrike directly hit the Special Military Command office, resulting in at least 10 casualties among CDM (Civil Disobedience Movement) defectors and resistance fighters, as well as damage to buildings and equipment.

"The casualties are quite high," a source told Mizzima at 11:30 AM.

In addition to the airstrike, junta battalions based in Kyaikto Township and Theinzayat reportedly launched heavy artillery attacks, firing howitzers and 120mm mortars.

According to sources, junta forces are launching military columns into KNU Brigade 1 territory in Kyaikto Township to secure territorial dominance and establish active bases.

In recent months, the junta's Artillery Battalion (310), based in Theinzayat, Light Infantry Battalion (207), and Division 44, based in Kyaikto Township, along with their subordinate battalions, have been firing heavy weaponry daily, causing casualties among local civilians.

The Special Military Command was established by the People's Defense Force (PDF) General Headquarters in early 2025 to consolidate PDF tactical commands, battalions, and local People's Defense Teams (PDTs/ PaKaPha) based in Mon and Karen States.

Under this military command are five tactical operations commands, comprising 15 battalions, three PDT columns, and six drone units. Operating in cooperation with Mon and Karen ethnic armed organizations, they conduct military operations across Mon, Karen, Bago, and the Ye-Dawei regions.



Photo: Supplied

27 CIVILIANS, INCLUDING 12 WOMEN, KILLED IN BAGO REGION WITHIN 3 MONTHS DUE TO MYANMAR JUNTA

According to data compiled by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), 27 civilians, including 12 women, were killed in Bago Region between July and September due to the actions of the Myanmar military junta.

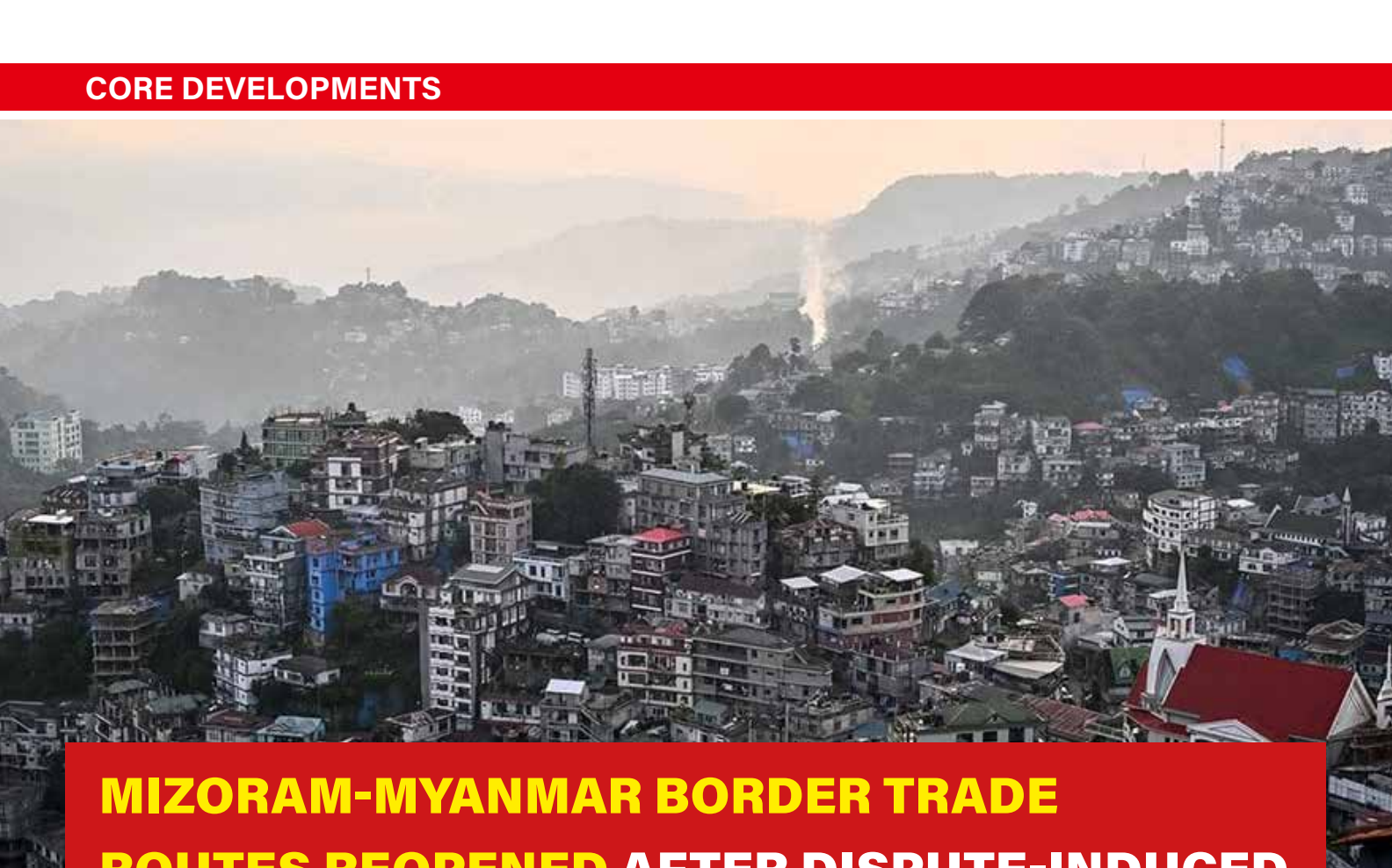
Based on AAPP's documentation, the identities of 27 victims 12 women and 15 men killed in Bago Region between 1 July and 24 September as a result of the junta's actions have been fully verified.

Among those killed, five were children under the age of 18, according to AAPP.

Regarding causes of death, airstrikes accounted for the highest toll, claiming the lives of 20 individuals.

AAPP also said it has separately recorded the names of 10 other civilians who died during this period, with efforts underway to further verify their information.

Since the military coup in February 2021 up to 24 September 2026, a total of 8,423 pro-democracy activists and civilians have been killed by the junta and its proxies during the Spring Revolution, according to AAPP.



MIZORAM-MYANMAR BORDER TRADE ROUTES REOPENED AFTER DISPUTE-INDUCED CLOSURE

Border trade routes with Myanmar near Khaikhy village in Siaha District, southern Mizoram State, India, were reopened 24 September at 4:00 PM. This comes after an eight-day closure triggered by a dispute between the Mara Youth Association (MTP) and Rakhine boat operators.

The dispute arose on September 14 regarding a rotation system for cargo-carrying boats, which subsequently led to the closure of the trade routes on September 16.

According to a statement released by the MTP, the Lado, Lomasu, and Khaikhy routes - where cargo transport had been suspended - were reopened starting from 4:00 PM on 24 September following a coordination meeting with the United League of Arakan (ULA).

The statement noted that the meeting was led by MTP Central Headquarters President S. Vabeihasa, and attended by ULA Border Relations Officer Kyaw Naing and the District Administrator.

A ULA official who attended the meeting confirmed the reopening of the route to Mizzima.

"The details in the statement are correct. The route was reopened at 4:00 PM on 24 September and traders have resumed normal travel," the official said.

A local trader also confirmed the reopening of the route but added that they have temporarily paused their own travels due to weather and road conditions.

"I heard they reopened the route after the discussions. Stranded goods have started moving again. However, I am temporarily holding off on traveling down because the roads are still in poor condition due to the weather," the trader told Mizzima.

The trader further remarked that this was not the first time the trade route had been shut down, noting that the Mizoram side typically closes the border temporarily whenever issues arise. He added that similar incidents could recur in the future if there is a lack of mutual understanding and tolerance between the people of both countries.

The disputed Khaikhy route connects to Paletwa in Chin State by land. However, during the monsoon season when water levels are high, cargo boat transport is preferred as it is more cost-effective.

The MTP stated that the meeting addressed follow-up measures regarding the Khaikhy incident, as well as steps to improve bilateral relations and mutual understanding. However, detailed specifics of the agreement were not disclosed in the official statement.

It is reported that the discussion highlighted the necessity of fostering mutual understanding, cooperation, and enhanced harmony between the Rakhine and Mara ethnic groups in the future.

During the initial dispute, some Rakhine boatmen allegedly attempted physical violence, set fire to a checkpoint gate, and stole approximately 10,000 Rupees along with an entry/exit logbook, according to the MTP's statement.

Arakan Army (AA) spokesperson Khaing Thukha stated that the boatmen who instigated the dispute have been detained by the ULA's Department of Law Enforcement and Public Security (DLEPS), and necessary disciplinary action will be taken.

With the trade routes now reopened to the public, the MTP Central Headquarters has urged its sub-branches, traders, and entrepreneurs to cooperate in compliance with the established guidelines.

Meanwhile, a meeting chaired by the Chief Minister of Mizoram on 23 September discussed the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (KMMTTP), a joint venture between India and Myanmar.

During the meeting, the Chief Minister urged representatives from the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways to promptly repair the damaged sections of the KMMTTP road within Mizoram and to swiftly resolve outstanding issues.

Southern Mizoram's Siaha and Lawngtlai districts serve as vital trade corridors for importing essential goods, including food supplies and fuel, into Rakhine State.

Photo: Mizzima

BHRN CALLS ON MYANMAR JUNTA TO END MOSQUE CLOSURES AFTER NATIONALIST MONK PROTESTS

The Burma Human Rights Network has called on Myanmar's military junta to reopen prayer spaces at the historic Mibar Bazaar Mosque in Mandalay and end discriminatory restrictions on Muslim worship, in a statement issued this week.

The rights group said junta authorities have closed prayer sites, ordered mosque renovations demolished and restricted religious gatherings since August, after nationalist Buddhist monks linked to the former Ma Ba Tha network began targeting Muslim sites in Mandalay and Yangon.

On September 13, the junta-controlled General Administration Department in Mandalay's Aungmyethazan Township invoked Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code to close two buildings inside the Mibar Bazaar compound, banning prayer, assembly, entry and repair work. The order came two days after monks led by U Thusitta of the Patriotic Monks Union entered the compound to protest renovation work, BHRN said. Researchers cited in the statement describe the union as including former Ma Ba Tha members.

Similar incidents have unfolded in Yangon. Around 30 monks from the same union entered Sein Kone Mosque in Thanlyin Township on August 15, and expansion work at Pakkar Mosque in Thingangyun Township was demolished on August 28 after nationalist monks objected, according to BHRN. In both cases, junta authorities ordered construction torn down following the monk-led protests.

BHRN executive director Kyaw Win said the military has long backed nationalist groups that target Muslims, and urged the junta to reopen the closed prayer spaces and end its discrimination against Muslims practising their faith.

A 2026 study cited by the group found Buddhist fundamentalist forces have entered a strategic alliance with the junta since the 2021 coup, and that nationalist networks once fading from public life have resurged under military rule. In January, the Patriotic Monks Union in Yangon publicly supported the junta's rejection of genocide charges at the International Court of Justice in the case brought by The Gambia.

Mandalay's Muslim community is also struggling to rebuild after the March 2025 earthquake, which struck during Ramadan Friday prayers and damaged more than 50 of the city's 65 mosques. As of June 2026, many applications to repair or reconstruct damaged mosques remained without junta approval. Reuters has reported that Myanmar authorities have for decades made it difficult for Muslims to obtain mosque construction permits, citing a 2017 US State Department finding.

BHRN said the junta's actions violate international standards on freedom of religion, including Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and urged UN member states to condemn the anti-Muslim campaigns and support international investigations into violations by military-linked nationalist networks and junta authorities.

MYANMAR JUNTA FORCES UNABLE TO ADVANCE FROM HPAR LON VILLAGE DESPITE CONTINUOUS AIRSTRIKES IN HPAPUN

Military tensions remain high in Hpapun Township, Karen State, between junta forces who have been launching prolonged offensives to regain territorial control and the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) joint forces. Despite continuous aerial support, the junta forces have been unable to make any forward progress, according to local military sources.

Sources state that the majority of the advancing junta troops are currently positioned near the upper part of Hpar Lon Gyi Village, which is located more than 20 miles from the Hpapun Tactical Command Base.

"On our side, we are completely blocking and attacking them. There is no way these guys can reach the tactical base. However, their air support comes every single day," a military source reported.

Since the fall of Hpapun earlier in 2024, the junta has been launching ground offensives by deploying troops from Myaing Gyi Ngu, Hpa-an, and Kamamaung along the Kamamaung-Kataingti-Hpapun route, while also utilizing aerial drops for logistical resupply.

The junta column currently stationed in the upper area of Hpar Lon Village is the same force that has been advancing along the Kataingti-Hpapun road via Kamamaung since early June.

This military column reportedly includes Battalion (1014) led by Bo Maung Chit and Battalion (1013) led by Bo Hla Kyaing under the Karen Border Guard Force (BGF), as well as a splinter Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) faction led by Bo Bi.

Furthermore, the junta is using jet fighters and drones daily to launch airstrikes, targeting not only active combat zones but also residential villages where local civilians reside.

In addition, heavy artillery support is being continuously fired from the Kataingti Tactical Base and Kamamaung Tactical Base, both of which are currently reoccupied by junta forces.

Meanwhile, the KNLA joint forces continue to blockade the main Hpapun Tactical Command Base (under Military Operations Command - MOC 1), which is situated adjacent to Light Infantry Battalions (LIB) 340 and 341, as well as Military Hospital No. (21). These junta units have had their ground supply routes completely cut off since they were bypassed and besieged during the KNLA-led operation to capture Hpapun in early 2024.

Hpapun Township consists of two main towns: Hpapun Town and the sub-township of Kamamaung. Hpapun Town was completely seized by KNU, KNLA, and PDF joint forces in late March 2024. However, junta troops, along with BGF and DKBA forces, still operate and remain stationed within Kamamaung Town.

During the offensive to capture Hpapun, the KNLA joint forces seized not only the town itself but also Infantry Battalion (IB) 19, Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) 434, Combat Engineer Battalion (GE) 642 all under the Southeastern Regional Military Command and at least five other military outposts along the Hpapun-Kamamaung road.



BURMA'S MILITARY-CONTROLLED SUPREME COURT STRIPS THREE BAPTIST PASTORS OF MARRIAGE LICENSES

According to a 24 September press statement by the Burma Research Institute (BRI), on June 9, 2026, Burma's military-controlled Supreme Court, in Order No. 254/2026 signed by Tha Htay, revoked the licenses of three Baptist pastors to solemnize Christian marriages.

The three pastors are: Rev. Dr. Zaw Taung (also known as Khaung Lwan) of Jerusalem Baptist Christian Church, Padesa Myothit, Pyin Oo Lwin Township, Mandalay Region; Rev. Joseph (also known as U Zay Win Lin) of Multi-Ethnic Baptist Church, Kyaukme, Shan State; and Rev. Saw Myint Tun of North Okkalapa Multi-Ethnic Baptist Church, Taungthugon Ward, Insein Township, Yangon Region.

The Burma Research Institute (BRI) obtained a copy of the court order and translated them unofficially in English. Two sources in Burma have confirmed the revocations. Two of the pastors are ethnic Kachin and Karen, and one pastor's church is affiliated with the Myanmar Baptist Convention. The court order in Burmese is also available on the NAY THU NGEIN LAW FIRM's Facebook page.

"The military Supreme Court's June 9, 2026, orders are further examples of serious violations of religious freedom by the regime. The Trump Administration should immediately redesignate Burma as a "country of particular concern," or CPC, as the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) recommended in its 2026 Annual Report, for 'systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom' under the International Religious Freedom Act," said Zo Tum Hmung, President and CEO of BRI.

Under coup leader and self-appointed president Min Aung Hlaing, the military regime's Supreme Court cited violations of Sections 6 and 9 of the Christian Marriage Act. A Section 6 license authorizes the holder to solemnize marriages between Christians, or between a Christian and a person of another religion; a Section 9 license covers marriages between Christians who are citizens of Burma.

The rulings rest on two laws, the Myanmar Buddhist Women's Special Marriage Law and the Religious Conversion Law, which President Thein Sein signed on August 26, 2015, following a sustained campaign by

Ma Ba Tha, a nationalist Buddhist monks' organization that pushed for legislation to "protect race and religion."

The Myanmar Buddhist Women's Special Marriage Law requires that a marriage between a Buddhist woman and a non-Buddhist man be solemnized only by a Township General Administration Department administrator acting as Registrar, and only after the application has been publicly posted for fourteen days without objection (Sections 11 and 13). The Religious Conversion Law requires anyone over 18 who wishes to change religion to apply to a township Registration Board, which interviews them to confirm sincere belief and free choice, sets a study period of up to 90 days (extendable to 180), and then issues a certificate that makes the conversion legally valid. The law penalizes forced, obstructed, or abusive conversions with up to two years' imprisonment.

Both laws conflict with Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees each person's freedom to change their religion or belief. They also contradict the religious freedom standards of the U.S. International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, under which Burma has repeatedly been designated as a CPC for severe religious freedom violations from 1999 to 2023. Despite the military regime's escalating war against Christians, the Administration did not redesignate Burma as a CPC for 2024 or 2025 and has yet to do so for 2026. BRI continues to urge the Administration to redesignate Burma as a CPC at the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom Hearing on FoRB Violations Against Christians Abroad in January 2026.

The court's order against Rev. Dr. Zaw Taung cited two marriages. The court asserted that he solemnized a marriage between a Myanmar Buddhist man and a Myanmar Buddhist woman based solely on a pastor's certification that both were Christian believers. He also solemnized the marriage of a Buddhist woman who had not converted to Christianity under the Law Relating to Religious Conversion, relying instead on her own declaration that she had converted to and professed Christianity. In both cases, the court dismissed the women's declarations of faith.

In Rev. Joseph's (also known as U Zay Win Lin) case, the court stated that he had solemnized marriages between Buddhist women and non-Buddhist men. The court ruled that such marriages fall under the Myanmar Buddhist Women's Special Marriage Law, which permits only designated Marriage Registration Officers to solemnize them.

In the order against Rev. Saw Myint Tun, the court stated that he had issued a marriage certificate to a Christian man and a Buddhist woman based on her declaration that she had converted to Christianity. The court ruled her conversion invalid because it had not followed the Religious Conversion Law.

A Burmese lawyer, speaking anonymously for safety reasons, told BRI that the rulings are legally correct under the 2015 laws, which give no legal effect to a personal declaration or a pastor's certification of faith, and that pastors should take note. However, the lawyer noted that the laws protect only Buddhist women, not women of other faiths. A former township judge agreed, warning that the laws effectively bar Buddhist women from converting and favors Buddhism over other religions.

As documented in the 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Burma, Christian marriages fall under an 1872 law and are legally recognized only if officiated by a Christian cleric registered with the Supreme Court, and only a handful of ministers and priests hold that registration. The officiating church must also submit the marriage record to the Supreme Court within three months of the ceremony, and only the Supreme Court can recognize the marriage. As a result, legal recognition of Christian marriages is nearly impossible. Moreover, the 2015 laws made it even more difficult.

Besides its recommendation to redesignate Burma as a CPC, USCIRF also recommends that the United States engage with the National Unity Government, ethnic organizations, and prodemocracy groups, as outlined in the BURMA Act of 2022, to ensure that freedom of religion or belief is part of transitional governance and post-coup nation-building.



Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA FORCES CONTINUE AIRSTRIKES AFTER RETREATING FROM KAN KYAW OFFENSIVE

Ground sources report that the Myanmar military junta has continued to launch airstrikes until this morning 23 September after their forces were forced to retreat during a clash with the Arakan Army (AA).

The junta had launched a large-scale offensive near Kan Kyaw village and Point (948) hill in Mindon Township, located on the border of Rakhine State and Magway Region.

The AA announced on September 22 that junta columns suffered heavy casualties during clashes near Kan Kyaw village and Point (948) hill in Mindon Township on September 20 and 21. Weapons, ammunition, military equipment, and several bodies of junta soldiers were reportedly seized.

Following the retreat of their columns on September 21, junta forces have been conducting continuous airstrikes with fighter jets targeting the clash sites, a ground source told Mizzima.

"They are bombing at least seven to eight times a day. They are targeting the areas where the clashes occurred and are launching round-the-clock attacks day and night," the source said.

While ground clashes are temporarily quiet, residents report that due to the high number of casualties and injuries on the junta's side, wounded soldiers are being transported to hospitals in Mindon and Thayet townships for treatment.

A ground source stated that Point (948) hill,

currently controlled by the AA, is a key strategic location in the Kan Kyaw offensive and is vital for gaining access to the Arakan Mountain Range (Rakhine Yoma).

"They, the junta forces, must capture Kan Kyaw and Point (948) to ascend the mountain range. That ridge is the highest point after the main range. Now that their ground column has been repelled, they are resorting solely to continuous aerial bombings," the source told Mizzima.

Point (948) is located adjacent to Kan Kyaw village and is known to be one of the highest hills among the ridges bordering the Rakhine Yoma. The source noted that capturing this position would facilitate the junta forces' efforts to expand their operations further into the Arakan Mountains.

For this offensive, the junta forces reportedly established staging bases sequentially, starting from No. 12 Defence Industry Factory (Ka-Pa-Sa 12) in Thayet Township to Tha Hpan Yaung and Pyaung villages in Mindon Township. These villages are located in the flatlands at the foothills of the Rakhine Yoma and have easy communication links with Mindon town. Utilizing these locations as bases, the junta deployed columns to launch the offensive toward Kan Kyaw village, according to the source.

Although ground clashes near Kan Kyaw village have temporarily ceased, local residents are fleeing to safer areas due to the threat of airstrikes, and both sides are closely monitoring the military situation on the ground.



MYANMAR RECORDS WORST DECLINE IN GLOBAL PEACE FOUNDATIONS SINCE 2020, NEW INDEX SHOWS

Myanmar suffered the steepest deterioration in the conditions that sustain peace of any country in the world between 2020 and 2024, according to the Institute for Economics and Peace's Positive Peace Report released in September 2026.

The country's score on the Positive Peace Index, which measures governance, information, human capital and other structural foundations of peace across 163 countries, worsened by 10.5 per cent over the four-year period, the report found. Myanmar fell 25 places to rank 152nd, ahead of only 11 countries including Somalia, South Sudan and Afghanistan.

The decline accelerated after the military seized power in February 2021, triggering armed conflict between junta forces and resistance groups that has displaced an estimated 3.5 million people and contracted the national economy, the report noted.

All eight pillars measured by the index deteriorated. The sharpest collapse was in the quality of public information, which worsened by 90.4 per cent the single largest indicator decline recorded for any country in

the index during the period. Press freedom deteriorated by 46.5 per cent, while government openness and transparency and equality of opportunity each worsened by 25 per cent.

Over the full decade from 2015 to 2024, Myanmar's score deteriorated by 4.8 per cent, making it the only country in the Asia-Pacific region to record a decline. The region's 17 other measured countries all improved, with Thailand posting the strongest gain at 7.5 per cent.

The Positive Peace framework identifies the attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies. Countries ranking lower on the index tend to experience weaker economies, poorer health outcomes and greater vulnerability to shocks, the report found.

The report also found that globally, press freedom deteriorated in 141 of 163 countries over the past decade, with the sharpest declines occurring after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Myanmar's press freedom collapse was among the most severe worldwide.



NEARLY 50 HOMES IN MYANMAR REFUGEE CAMP VISITED BY UFC FIGHTER JOSHUA VAN IN MIZORAM TO BE RELOCATED

Refugees are facing severe difficulties after Indian authorities ordered the relocation of 46 homes within seven days at a Myanmar refugee camp in Mizoram State, India, a camp previously visited by UFC Flyweight Champion Joshua Van.

Local authorities issued the directive to relocate Sihhmui Refugee Camp No. (2), which Joshua Van visited in late May 2026 at the invitation of the Mizoram State Government.

"The land we were living on was previously unused. Now, the government is constructing a highway that runs right through our settlement, so our homes are in the way. Over half of the houses in the camp must be relocated. We are facing immense difficulties with relocation costs, as well as securing timber, bamboo, and tarpaulins," Pu Ram Ngaih, chairman of Sihhmui Camp No. (2), told Mizzima.

He said local council members, police, and other authorities arrived at the camp on 19 September and issued an order requiring the 46 houses obstructing

the road project to be completely cleared within seven days.

To address the situation, the camp chairman said they plan to move some of the 46 affected homes further down the hill to clear the road path, while others are attempting to secure permission to rent and relocate to private land within the village.

Since 20 March 2023, Sihhmui Camp No. (2) has accommodated 98 households, housing a population of 453 people. All are refugees who fled the armed conflict in Matupi Township, Chin State.

Although they requested a month-long extension to harvest and purchase timber and bamboo from the forest arguing that seven days was far too short, they had to begin dismantling their homes immediately because the directive came from higher authorities, according to Pu Ram Ngaih.

"Since it is mandatory, we have to start moving as best as we can. Most of our people survive on daily-wage labor. Because they cannot work right now and need to buy building materials, many are facing extreme financial hardship. We would be deeply grateful to anyone who can provide aid," he said.

The refugees have reportedly reached out to refugee assistance organizations to submit their grievances and request aid.

The community hall used for worship services, meetings, and the site of Joshua Van's gathering with the community is also among the structures slated for demolition. Rebuilding the hall is estimated to cost around 70,000 rupees (approx. USD 796), and there is currently no designated space to reconstruct it.

Although Matupi Township has been liberated from junta control, local residents are still unable to return home due to ongoing disagreements and tensions among local resistance organizations, as well as frequent junta airstrikes. As a result, they continue to seek refuge in Mizoram State and New Delhi.



LOCALS URGENTLY FLEEING DUE TO ONGOING MYANMAR AIRSTRIKES ACROSS MAGWAY'S MYIT CHAY

The Myanmar military junta has been conducting airstrikes across Myit Chay town in Pakokku Township, Magway Region, forcing local residents to flee in emergency and face severe hardship, according to Anya Taw Ein, a local aid group assisting internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Although there are no active clashes in Myit Chay at present, the junta has been carrying out airstrikes using gyrocopters and helicopters since 13 September, an official from the Anya Taw Ein group told Mizzima 23 September.

About four residential houses in Myit Chay town were destroyed by fire during yesterday's airstrikes, it is reported.

"There is no active fighting. We believe they are doing this simply because committing inhumane acts has become their norm. The other night, it was around 1:30 AM a time when the public was asleep, they dropped bombs right into the residential neighbourhoods of this town," the Anya Taw Ein official said.

From 13 September until today, around 4,000 local residents across the Myit Chay area have been

forced to flee due to the airstrikes. Anya Taw Ein also released a statement indicating that four local residents were killed and another was seriously injured during airstrikes on 17 and 18 September.

The junta is deliberately targeting civilian areas in Myit Chay, including public residences and urban wards, according to Anya Taw Ein.

"Yesterday evening, they attacked those residential wards around 6:00 PM. Because of the sudden attack, people had to flee immediately. Even by 8:00 or 9:00 PM, the streets were completely crowded with fleeing citizens," the official said.

Meanwhile, junta forces are launching military offensives in the oil field areas of Pakokku Township, leading to clashes with local revolutionary resistance forces. As a result, between 2,500 and 3,000 residents from about five villages have also fled their homes, according to the Pakokku Township Humanitarian and Disaster Management Department.

Aid workers reported that displaced residents are currently in urgent need of food rations and basic supplies.



UN RIGHTS OFFICE REPEATS CALL FOR STATES TO END ARMS TRANSFERS TO MYANMAR'S MILITARY AT GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The UN human rights office called on states not to legitimize Myanmar's military authorities and to end arms transfers to them, repeating the message at the UN General Assembly in New York on 21 September.

According to a statement published by the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR), Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Claudia Fuentes Julio, briefing the General Assembly on compliance with international humanitarian law in conflicts worldwide, said the High Commissioner "has called on countries to use their leverage to bolster compliance, including by ceasing arms flows, not legitimizing the military authorities, and promoting dialogue towards a resumption of civilian rule."

The Myanmar reference was one line in a speech focused mainly on Sudan, Ukraine and Gaza, for which Fuentes Julio cited specific casualty figures. No comparable Myanmar-specific figures were included in the 21 September statement.

High Commissioner Volker Türk made the same points at greater length on 7 September, opening the Human Rights Council's 63rd session in Geneva. He urged member states to refer the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court through the UN Security Council and to end transfers to Myanmar of arms, ammunition, jet fuel and dual-use items where there is a clear risk they could facilitate violations of international law.

"ဖက်ဒရယ်ဒီမိုကရေစီပြည်ထောင်စုပေါ်ထွန်းရေးဦးဆောင်ကောင်စီ(SCEF) ၏
အစည်းအဝေး (၁/၂၀၂၆) ကျင်းပပြုလုပ်"



MYANMAR POLITICAL PRISONERS URGE EROS TO COOPERATE WITH THE SCEF

Political prisoners from an unnamed prison, kept anonymous for security reasons, have urged anti-military dictatorship Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) to collaborate with the Steering Council for the Emergence of a Federal Democratic Union (SCEF).

Mizzima has received a handwritten statement containing their stance and six key recommendations regarding the SCEF.

"We suggest that ethnic armed revolutionary organizations implement their policies in cooperation with the SCEF, based on the Panglong Spirit, which is the principle of peaceful coexistence," the statement said.

The political prisoners also expressed their support and respect for the ethnic armed revolutionary groups that have been fighting through successive eras for national equality, self-determination, and democracy.

"For the time being, it is not convenient to mention the name of the prison for security reasons. However, they said they will take responsibility and reveal it in the future that they released these statements," a source close to the prison who delivered the letter told Mizzima.

The source added that the political prisoners decided not to disclose the name of the prison because they fear not only torture by the authorities if discovered, but even more so, the complete cut off of external news and information they are currently receiving.

The political prisoners stated that they believe the SCEF is the best solution to end the military dictatorship, achieve national unity, and establish a

federal democratic union. They expressed full support for the efforts of the SCEF, which is struggling with all its physical and mental capacity to achieve the ultimate victory of Myanmar's Spring Revolution.

They also urged local armed groups (local PDFs) resisting the military dictatorship to cooperate with the SCEF to achieve the ultimate goal of the entire Myanmar population.

Furthermore, they recommended prioritizing the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) to strengthen and consolidate democratic culture in areas controlled by revolutionary forces.

They also urged revolutionary organizations to formulate and implement effective protective policies against forced conscription, which they described as the defensive lifeblood of the military dictatorship.

Believing that the final outcome of the revolution depends on the public, the political prisoners in jail urged the citizens - who have consistently opposed the military coup - to continue supporting the revolutionary struggle led by the SCEF, especially as the current revolutionary landscape shows they are drawing closer to their goal.

The SCEF was formed on 30 March 2026, by a coalition of revolutionary forces and ethnic armed organizations, including the National Unity Government (NUG), the Karen National Union (KNU), the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO), and the Chin National Front (CNF) etc., to coordinate and lead the transition process and the building of a new federal democratic union in Myanmar.

SIX MYANMAR NATIONALS AND ONE THAI NATIONAL ARRESTED IN MAE SARIANG

Local authorities in Mae Sariang District, Mae Hong Son Province, Thailand, arrested six Myanmar nationals allegedly residing illegally and one Thai national accused of assisting them on 21 September.

The joint operation was carried out in Ban Pha Molo village, Ban Kat sub-district, by the Mae Sariang District Administration, Mae Sariang Police Station, Immigration Police, Border Patrol Police Unit 337, and local administrative groups.

Authorities said the operation was conducted in line with Thai government security policy to prevent illegal entry, suppress transnational crime, and investigate Thai nationals acting as "nominees" (proxy owners) on behalf of foreigners.

Following tips received by authorities, investigations were conducted into foreigners residing in the village and whether local Thai citizens were renting houses to them or assisting them. During the inspection, some foreigners were found living in the area without proper legal permission. Investigations are also ongoing regarding the unauthorized possession or use of state-owned land.

Among those arrested are six Myanmar nationals three men and three women who have been charged

with entering the Kingdom of Thailand without permission.

A 23-year-old Thai man was also arrested and is being prosecuted for assisting, harboring, or aiding foreign nationals who entered the country illegally.

According to the authorities' investigation, some of the arrested Myanmar nationals crossed the border directly from Myanmar, while others had left the Mae La Ma Luang and Mae La Oon temporary shelters (refugee camps) in Sob Moei District, Mae Hong Son Province.

All detainees have been handed over to inquiry officers for further legal proceedings.

The Mae Sariang District Administration said that, in addition to preventing illegal entry, it will continue to monitor and crack down on human trafficking, transnational crime, and the illegal exploitation of foreign workers. It added that if any illegal sales, transfers, or proxy ownership of state-owned land are discovered, it will work with relevant departments to pursue legal action.



DRIVERS FEAR OPERATING ON BAGAN-NYAUNG-U ROAD DUE TO FORCED MILITARY CONSCRIPTION OF TRAVELERS

Driver are afraid to operate their vehicles on the Bagan-Nyaung-U highway in Mandalay Region due to the Myanmar military junta forcibly abducting and conscripting travelers from express passenger buses, according to local residents.

Although arrests had occurred on this road section until July, the junta has increased the frequency of these crackdowns in September, actively pulling passengers off vehicles to arrest them, according to a local resident living near the Bagan-Nyaung-U highway.

"Just the other day (17 September), about 10 people were taken in a single day. They used to make arrests before, but now they are seizing so many people every day that drivers don't dare to use this road anymore. Large buses stopped running starting yesterday. Previously, when we went to Yangon, we took the highway from Meiktila. Because the stretch between Taungtha and Meiktila was dangerous, drivers avoided it and took detours. Now that things have worsened, it has become difficult to travel even on this route," the resident said.

Passenger buses and cargo trucks traveling from Myingyan toward Meiktila and Yangon have been avoiding their usual route through Taungtha and Mahlaing, choosing instead to bypass through the Bagan-Nyaung-U highway via Popa and Kyaukpadaung.

Regarding the Bagan-Nyaung-U road section, the junta arrested around 200 people, including travelers, for military recruitment over a one-year period from 2025 to mid-2026, according to information given to

Mizzima in July by the information officer of Myingyan District Battalion (3) and a member of the Myingyan People's Movement Committee, based on their records.

In recruiting soldiers, the junta mainly targets individuals aged 18 to their early 20s, but middle-aged men around 45 are not spared. Recruits are transported in civilian cars and military trailers to various bases, including Ba Htoo military camp in Shan State, as well as Light Infantry Battalions LIB (113) and LIB (315) based in Meiktila.

Because some locals are evading conscription and others are renting and using others' citizenship cards, arrests are being made at bus terminals using not only the Person Scrutinization and Monitoring System (PSMS) but also iris scanners, according to local sources.

The Bagan-Nyaung-U road is one of the main transport arteries in the Bagan region, and it is widely considered dangerous due to the security situation, clashes, and arrests during inspections. In addition to strict inspections and the risk of arrest by the junta, travelers also frequently face robbery of cash and valuables, as well as kidnappings by unidentified armed groups, according to those who have traveled the road.

The mandatory military service law enforced by the coup regime has now reached its 28th batch, and forced conscription sweeps are occurring daily across rural villages, small towns, and major cities including Yangon and Mandalay.



Photo: Supplied

ARMED CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE PREVENT A SAFE RETURN TO RAKHINE STATE, SAYS IIMM

The Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM) has collected and analysed extensive evidence that establishes that many serious international crimes continue to be committed across Myanmar.

In Rakhine State, the situation remains extremely volatile and dangerous for all communities. Amid the ongoing conflict, civilians are frequently the victims of aerial bombings, artillery shelling, drone attacks, arbitrary detention, sexual and gender-based crimes, torture and killings. In many locations, civilians lack basic necessities and humanitarian assistance has been obstructed.

The Mechanism takes note of recent statements by governments in the region concerning the possible return of people, including the Rohingya, who

previously fled the violence in Myanmar. Conditions in Rakhine State are not yet conducive to their safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return. Before such returns can take place, the crimes and violence causing immense suffering to communities across Myanmar must end.

The Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM or Mechanism) was created by the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2018 to collect and analyse evidence of the most serious international crimes and other violations of international law committed in Myanmar since 2011. It aims to facilitate justice and accountability by preserving and organizing this evidence and preparing analysis that can be used by authorities to prosecute individuals in national, regional and international courts.



Campaigning for
Human Rights
and Democracy

MALAYSIA: DON'T HAND OVER ROHINGYA REFUGEES TO BURMESE MILITARY: NGO

Burma Campaign UK on 22 September called on the government of Malaysia to halt its planned handover of Rohingya refugees to the Burmese military, stating that playing refugee ping pong is not a solution to the crisis.

Malaysia has announced that it plans to hand 5,000 Rohingya refugees to the same military which is committing ongoing genocide against them. It is still not completely clear if the Burmese military has agreed.

Burma Campaign UK has launched a campaign calling on supporters and members of the public to email the government of Malaysia demanding they stop the handovers. The action is available on the Burma Campaign UK website here: <https://action.burmacampaign.org.uk/halt-handover-of-rohingya-refugees>

Malaysia is fully aware that it is not safe to hand over Rohingya refugees to the Burmese military. They continue to commit numerous human rights violations against the Rohingya including torture, executions, sexual violence, beheadings, forced labour and forced conscription, denial of citizenship, and no freedom of movement. Malaysia is sending the refugees back to a country where they will have no rights, no citizenship and face some of the most severe repression in the world.

The planned handover of Rohingya refugees to the Burmese military comes after rising anti-Rohingya hate-speech and prejudice against Rohingya refugees in Malaysia, fuelled in part by social media giants such

as Facebook once again allowing their platform to be used to fuel hatred and violence against Rohingya.

"Instead of countering hate speech, the Malaysian government is pandering to it," said Mark Farmaner, Director of Burma Campaign UK. "Playing refugee ping pong, handing Rohingya refugees to the Myanmar military at the same time as the Myanmar military pursues genocidal policies designed to force Rohingya to flee, is not a solution to this crisis."

The Burmese military and Arakan Army are imposing genocidal policies against the Rohingya which are designed to make life so unbearable that it forces Rohingya to flee. This, combined with the policy of the government of Bangladesh to deliberately create harsh and unliveable conditions in Rohingya refugee camps, and large cuts in international aid to the refugees in Bangladesh, means more refugees seeking sanctuary in Malaysia is inevitable.

Burma Campaign UK is calling on the Malaysian government to halt the handovers, counter hate speech, and give sanctuary and protection to Rohingya refugees. Malaysia also needs to recognise that the Burmese military are the root cause of the crisis, and not part of the solution.

In a major diplomatic miscalculation, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim has also invited the head of the Burmese military regime, General (Rtd) Min Aung Hlaing, to visit Malaysia. The invitation is a clear diplomatic bribe giving the military the perceived legitimacy they crave in return for agreeing to accept the refugees.

In August the Burmese military denied claims made by the government of Malaysia that they would accept the refugees, describing it as fake news, using racist language such as Bengalis to describe Rohingya, and accusing Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim of giving out false information as part of an election campaign.

"The Malaysian government is putting the lives of thousands of Rohingya in danger for the sake of a few days of positive headlines, whilst at the same time preparing to roll out the red carpet for the head of the military which created this crisis in the first place," said Mark Farmaner. "The Myanmar military will interpret the Malaysian government's approach as weakness, and do everything it can to exploit that weakness."



UN'S NEW PRESIDENT RAISES THE ROHINGYA CRISIS

The new president of the UN General Assembly Mr Khalilur Rahman says the Rohingya crisis is not over.

"At a high-level side event on the Rohingya crisis, I joined discussions highlighting the urgency of achieving durable solutions to protracted displacement, including through conditions for safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return," he writes on social media on 24 September.

"After years of displacement, the international community must not allow attention to fade. We must sustain political attention, support refugees and host communities, pursue accountability and ensure that the Rohingya themselves have a meaningful voice in

shaping the conditions for their safe return home," he says.

Mr Rahman is a citizen of Bangladesh, a country which has had to shoulder much of the burden of the Rohingya refugee crisis, providing land and support for over a million exiles, and having to police the Bangladesh-Myanmar border.

The Rohingya crisis is a prolonged humanitarian and human rights emergency stemming from decades of systemic persecution, discrimination, and targeted violence against the Muslim Rohingya minority in Myanmar. The crisis exploded in 2017 with the Myanmar military crackdown in Rakhine State that led to the flight of over 700,000 Rohingya into Bangladesh.



RIGHTS GROUPS WARN MALAYSIA AGAINST DEPORTING ROHINGYA TO JUNTA-RULED MYANMAR

More than 160 civil society organizations from Malaysia and across the region issued a joint statement on 23 September urging Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim to abandon plans to work with Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing on the return of some 200,000 Rohingya refugees sheltering in Malaysia, warning that any such deportation would make Malaysia complicit in an ongoing genocide.

The statement, signed by 166 organizations and more than 140 individuals, was released after Anwar announced last week that he would invite the junta chief to Malaysia to discuss Rohingya repatriation, according to Malaysian and regional media reports cited in the statement.

The signatories, which include ALTSEAN-Burma, Progressive Voice, Beyond Borders, the Free Rohingya Coalition and the Arakan Rohingya Union, described Min Aung Hlaing as "the architect of the ongoing genocide against Rohingya" and reminded Anwar that the International Criminal Court is deliberating an arrest warrant for the junta leader, according to the statement.

Universal jurisdiction cases over the Rohingya genocide have already been filed in two other ASEAN member states, Indonesia and Timor-Leste, the statement said. Refoulement by Malaysia or any ASEAN government would make them complicit in the ongoing genocide, the signatories said.

Rohingya returned to Myanmar face forced conscription by the junta, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army and the Arakan Army, the statement said. The junta has forcibly recruited more than 3,000 Rohingya from villages and displacement camps since 2024, according to the statement. On 29 July, the junta issued an order requiring Rohingya households in Sittwe Township to provide one person each for military service, the statement said, citing Myanmar Now.

Between 1 January and 30 August 2026, junta forces carried out 516 armed clashes and attacks, including 176 air or drone strikes, killing 293 civilians across 17 townships in Arakan State, according to data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project cited in the statement. Rohingya continue to face sexual assault, massacres, forced labour, arbitrary detention, human trafficking and the destruction of villages at the hands of the Arakan Army, the junta and its allies, the signatories said.

Arakan State hosts 498,000 internally displaced people, the second-highest displaced population in Myanmar and 12.4 percent of the country's four million IDPs, the statement said, citing UNHCR figures. The UN Development Programme has warned of an acute famine as the junta blocks humanitarian aid to the state, according to the statement.

The signatories rejected Anwar's characterisation of Rohingya as a burden on Malaysia's security and economy. Rohingya refugees account for around 0.58 percent of Malaysia's 34.4 million population but only 0.02 percent of crimes committed between 2024

and mid-2026, the statement said, citing figures from Malaysia's police reported by the New Straits Times.

Any repatriation must comply with the principle of non-refoulement under customary international law, which prohibits returning people to territory where they face persecution, torture or serious human rights violations, the signatories said. A return cannot be considered voluntary or lawful simply because the junta agrees to receive people, they added.

The organizations called for an immediate halt to the planned deportations pending consultations with civil society groups working on the ground and a comprehensive assessment of conditions inside Myanmar. Malaysia's engagement with the junta must not come at the expense of its own reputation and integrity, the statement said, adding that the planned refoulement was inconsistent with Malaysia's stand against the genocide of Palestinians.

The signatories urged Malaysia and other regional governments to allow refugees access to civilian protection and legal work, and to take concrete steps to halt atrocity crimes in Myanmar

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
- Training and Mizzima Media Training Institute
- AI and Mizzima EAE for research, content regeneration and production
- Content repackaging across TV, Facebook, YouTube and digital platforms
- Mizzima Weekly, Mizzima English and policy products
- HH Channel and diaspora community services
- Production services, events, partnerships and sponsorships
- Agriculture, tea and coffee, restaurants, shops and marketplace initiatives

Thank you for standing with Mizzima.

Mizzima | Truth. Voice. Future.

- 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.

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:

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.

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#PressFreedom #MizzimaEAE #MediaResilience
#MediaSustainability



CHINA'S RELUCTANCE ON MEKONG COOPERATION: A RIVER OF STRATEGIC CONTROL

SUN LEE

China's behaviour toward upstream nations such as Kazakhstan and Mongolia stands in sharp contrast to its approach on the Mekong. With these northern neighbours, Beijing has signed binding water-sharing agreements and established joint commissions to manage rivers like the Irtys and the Ili. The difference lies in strategic necessity: Kazakhstan and Mongolia are upstream or midstream states themselves, and their water disputes directly affect China's own border provinces, industrial hubs, and domestic stability. Cooperation here is not framed as goodwill but as a matter of self-interest, China needs predictable flows to sustain Xinjiang's border security, agriculture and industry, and it cannot afford prolonged disputes with countries that share sensitive borders. Thus, treaties and technical coordination become instruments of stability, ensuring China's own water security while projecting an image of responsible regional leadership.

By contrast, the Mekong presents a different calculus. As the upstream power, China holds the commanding position and faces no existential threat from downstream nations. Laos, Cambodia, Thailand,

and Vietnam depend heavily on the river, but their bargaining power is limited compared to Kazakhstan or Mongolia. Beijing sees little incentive to bind itself to restrictive agreements when unilateral dam operations provide both hydropower benefits and geopolitical leverage. Cooperation is kept voluntary, symbolic, and selective, allowing China to retain maximum control while using water flows as a tool of influence in Southeast Asia. In short, China cooperates where its own security is at stake, as with Kazakhstan and Mongolia but resists binding commitments where it can dominate, as on the Mekong.

The Mekong River, flowing nearly 4,900 Kms from the Tibetan Plateau through China's Yunnan province and into Southeast Asia, is more than a geographical feature. It is a lifeline for over 60 million people across Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, and Myanmar. Yet, despite its shared importance, China's reluctance to fully cooperate with its downstream neighbours has turned the Mekong into a contested arena of geopolitics rather than a symbol of regional solidarity. The issue is not whether China can cooperate it is why it chooses not to.

The Mekong sustains agriculture, fisheries, and transport across Southeast Asia. Vietnam's Mekong Delta alone produces half of the country's rice, while Cambodia's Tonle Sap Lake is one of the world's richest inland fisheries. But this delicate balance depends on predictable water flows and sediment deposits. China, controlling the river's headwaters, has built 11 major dams on the Lancang (its name for the Mekong) and dozens more are planned. These dams give Beijing disproportionate control over water flows, sediment, and seasonal rhythms that downstream communities rely upon for survival.

Officially, China insists it is a responsible upstream power. Through the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) mechanism, launched in 2016, Beijing highlights projects such as hydrological data-sharing platforms, flood warning systems, and water supply initiatives like the "Sweet Spring Project." In 2025, China reported that agricultural trade with Mekong countries reached \$34.56 billion, presenting this as evidence of mutual prosperity. It also points to 65 water-related projects under the LMC's 2023–2027 plan, ranging from irrigation systems to joint tourism corridors.

Yet beneath this narrative lies a selective approach. China shares some hydrological data, but often with delays or omissions. Real-time reservoir levels and dam operation schedules critical for downstream flood management remain withheld. Cooperation is framed as voluntary goodwill rather than binding obligation, allowing Beijing to retain full sovereignty over its upstream dams.

Downstream nations argue that China's cooperation is more symbolic than substantive. Sudden dam releases have caused flash floods in Laos and Thailand, while prolonged water retention has triggered droughts in Cambodia and Vietnam. Fish stocks in Tonle Sap have plummeted, threatening food security for millions. Vietnam's delta faces increasing saltwater intrusion as sediment flows decline, undermining its rice production. The core issue is control. By keeping data opaque and flows unpredictable, China maintains leverage over its neighbours. Cambodia and Laos, heavily dependent on Chinese investment, are less likely to challenge Beijing's water policies. Thailand and Vietnam, though more vocal, lack the bargaining power to compel China into binding agreements.

Recent years have underscored the imbalance. In 2025, China expanded hydrological data centres in Yunnan, but downstream governments complained of delays in flood warnings. Agricultural trade surged,

yet ecological losses in fisheries and rice yields offset economic gains. The Mekong River Commission (MRC), which includes downstream states, continues to push for transparency, but China remains only an "observer," avoiding legal commitments. Climate change compounds the crisis. Erratic monsoons and prolonged droughts make predictable water flows more critical than ever. Yet China's dam operations prioritize hydropower and industrial use in Yunnan and Tibet, often at the expense of downstream livelihoods.

China's reluctance is rooted in strategic calculation. Sovereignty concerns drive Beijing to reject external oversight, insisting on absolute control over its upstream dams. Water becomes a bargaining chip, strengthening China's influence over ASEAN states. Hydropower generation and industrial water use outweigh downstream agricultural needs. By staying outside binding treaties, China shields itself from accountability. This approach reflects a broader pattern in China's regional diplomacy promoting frameworks that showcase cooperation but avoiding mechanisms that constrain its freedom of action.

The consequences of China's selective cooperation are profound. Vietnam's rice bowl and Cambodia's fisheries face collapse if flows remain unpredictable. Reduced sediment threatens biodiversity and accelerates erosion. Distrust in China's intentions could destabilize ASEAN-China relations, undermining broader regional integration. With droughts and floods intensifying, unilateral dam operations will exacerbate vulnerabilities. The Mekong is no longer just a river; it is a geopolitical fault line where livelihoods, food security, and regional trust are at stake.

China's reluctance to cooperate fully on the Mekong is not a matter of capacity but of choice. By controlling the river's headwaters, Beijing wields a powerful tool of influence over Southeast Asia. While the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation framework projects an image of shared prosperity, its selective transparency and voluntary commitments reveal a deeper motive: to retain leverage over a region increasingly dependent on the river's lifeblood. Unless China agrees to binding, transparent, and equitable water-sharing mechanisms, the Mekong will remain a river of contention rather than cooperation. For downstream nations, the challenge is not only ecological but existential whether they can safeguard their livelihoods against the currents of geopolitics flowing from upstream.

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



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FROM SECTION A TO 505 A

"I could not stay under a military rule that's been killing thousands of people," Maple tells the Insight Myanmar Podcast, recalling the moment she chose open resistance over safety. "I cannot just sit and watch."

Maple was studying Business Management and Entrepreneurship in South Korea when her country's military seized power in February 2021. A scholarship student who had left an IT university in Myanmar years earlier, she had imagined building a financially sustainable venture abroad and one day channeling those resources into reforming the education system she had grown up under. That system, she says, was shaped by military logic long before the coup—hierarchical, punitive, and built on division.

In primary school, she watched classmates sorted into ranked sections. "The top students were in section A," she explains, describing a system in which only certain groups were allowed access to facilities like the computer room. Competition was institutionalized. In fifth grade, only the top ten students each month were awarded a "talent" badge; those who fell behind were required to remove it publicly. "It's not about learning," she says. "It's all about memorizing everything and just taking the

exams in the best way possible." Even as a child, she felt something was wrong.

That early awareness was sharpened by politics, as Maple was just eight years old during the 2007 monk-led protests in Yangon. She marched in the street with her parents, and later watched footage of beatings and killings at home. "I saw the bodies and everything," she recalls. The vocabulary of martial law entered her childhood alongside fear of night raids, and by the time she left for South Korea in 2019, she was already thinking about education not simply as schooling, but as a mechanism of power.

When the coup trapped her in Myanmar during a visit home during the pandemic, her plans unraveled. Yet she was optimistic, and maybe a touch naïve, as she initially believed international pressure might reverse the seizure of power. This is because she was following United Nations statements closely and parsing their language, and appreciated what she read. "I was really focusing on the vocabularies," she says. "I was like, 'Okay, this is a very strong statement!'" As she would find out later, none of those words translated into any meaningful protection from an armed and increasingly violent military.

CATCH THE PODCAST

Read more and listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast here: <https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2026/9/15/episode-607-from-section-a-to-505-a>



CONTINUED SECRECY IN MYANMAR JUNTA'S POST-ELECTION GOVERNMENT

NGO Human Rights Myanmar said Myanmar's post-election government continues the military's culture of secrecy, blocking public access to information on state finances, company ownership, court records, deaths in conflict and displacement, in a statement issued for International Right to Know Day on 28 September 2026.

The contested 2025-26 elections that installed a nominally civilian administration have brought no improvement in transparency since the February 2021 coup, the statement said. It listed five categories of basic public information that citizens in most countries can access, but which remain effectively closed off in Myanmar.

On public finances, the statement said citizens have no visibility into government revenues, their sources, or how they are spent. The UN Convention against Corruption requires states to run transparent budgeting, revenue and expenditure reporting, and procurement systems.

The Myanmar Companies Online (MyCO) registry the state-run database of companies registered under the Myanmar Companies Law has been progressively restricted since the coup, the statement said. It said international standards increasingly demand that governments publish accurate information on the natural persons who ultimately own or control legal entities, particularly where companies hold significant assets or have relationships with public authorities.

Court records and judicial decisions are similarly inaccessible, meaning the public cannot see who has been prosecuted, on what legal basis, or what the courts decided, according to the statement. It said the UN Human Rights Committee has previously found that essential findings, evidence and legal reasoning of judgments should generally be public even where a hearing is closed.

On killings since the 2021 coup, the statement said there is no official record of who has died, where and when they were killed, how, or by whom, a gap that persists even as independent groups continue to document deaths. International humanitarian law requires parties to armed conflict to keep records of the dead, including identifying details and cause of death.

Information on displacement is likewise unavailable, with no accessible data on how many people have been displaced since the coup, where they are, or what assistance reaches them, the statement said. The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement place primary responsibility for protecting internally displaced people on national authorities.

The statement concluded that "a civilian government is not defined simply by the uniforms worn by those in power," or by an election alone. It said the culture of secrecy remains intact as long as basic facts about how power is exercised are hidden from the public.



TIME MAGAZINE BAN SPARKS ONLINE DEBATE OVER MYANMAR'S WESTERN OUTREACH

Myanmar social media this week fixated on a contradiction, regime leader Min Aung Hlaing gave his first Western media interview since the 2021 coup and his government banned that same publication days after it appeared.

Time Magazine published the exclusive interview on 23 September under the headline "Myanmar's Dictator Wants to Rebuild Ties With the West." In the article, Min Aung Hlaing called on Washington to review sanctions and claimed he had been "extremely lenient" toward detained State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi. Within hours, the regime's Information Team condemned the piece as "unethical," blacklisted its editor, and pulled the magazine from Myanmar-operated flights.

Reactions across platforms remain sharp. Facebook users highlight the paradox a leader courting Western engagement banning a Western outlet over a headline

that called him a dictator. On Telegram channels, commenters argue the regime expected coverage that mirrors state-run media, where questions rarely challenge the leader. TikTok creators lean into mockery, clipping the "lenient" line over images of Aung San Suu Kyi with satirical captions.

On the same day the interview appeared, Aung San Suu Kyi's son Kim Aris delivered a letter to the Myanmar embassy in London demanding in-person family visits, undercutting the leniency claim within hours.

Since taking the civilian presidency in April, Min Aung Hlaing has pushed to end Myanmar's international isolation through visits to Thailand, India, and China. For online audiences this week, the Time episode has marked the clearest limit yet on that diplomatic makeover.

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.