

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



GOING HOME?

Uncertainty as Malaysia
starts sending Myanmar
migrants home

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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.

MIGRATION A 'HOT-BUTTON' ISSUE

The circumstances surrounding the arrival of the first batch of Myanmar refugees from Malaysia on the weekend is a reminder of the controversy that surrounds the issue of migration and refugees, not only linked to the crisis in Myanmar but in countries around the world.

Nearly 1,500 Myanmar migrants sent back from Malaysia arrived in their war-torn home country on Sunday, according to the navy, returned under an opaque repatriation scheme.

Around the world, we are seeing controversy surrounding migrants and refugees – including in the USA as ICE follows government policy to crack down on illegal immigrants, in the UK with the “invasion” of illegal migrants on small boats, in the questions raised about the involvement of first, second and third generation immigrants in the violent riots in France, or the tough stance taken by Poland against illegal migrants trying to break into their country. A large percentage of illegal migrants on the road in the world today can be classed as illegal economic migrants – not refugees.

Myanmar has long had a problem with refugees escaping conflict – exacerbated since the 2021 military coup plunged the country into crisis and civil war.

As with every refugee and migrant crisis, it is vitally important to carefully assess the reasons and status of the person leaving their home country. Is the person a refugee fleeing conflict? Are they a migrant seeking work in a second country?

The refugee or migrant needs to be dealt with fairly according to their status, hopefully in line with equitable guidelines in the host country.

What has to be recognized is an increasing number of countries – and the population of countries – are losing patience with the influx of illegal foreigners. But real care needs to be taken in dealing fairly with these people unfixed status. If a person really fits into the bracket at a “refugee” then they ideally should be dealt with in a way which recognizes their desperate straits, and offers support. If they are a migrant seeking work – and the receiving country needs such labour – then they need to be looked after accordingly, using legal channels and registration.

Malaysia – in the news due to their controversial repatriation programme – have chosen to lock up illegal migrants and refugees in what appear to be rather crowded and unsanitary conditions with the numbers growing to the point where they have embraced a return programme. The problem with this return is the Myanmar illegal migrants or refugees are being returned to a country at war, and their return and “housing” will be up to the Myanmar military junta. Many experts and NGOs are crying foul – particularly concerned about the fate of the downtrodden Rohingya who may be included in these returnees.

There appears to be no possibility that these Rohingya can be returned to their home state, Rakhine. So, what will happen to them?

As Malaysia’s return programme gets underway, it is crucial that this process needs to be reassessed and questioned. Can the programme be stopped? What will happen to these returnees if the programme continues?

People need to be treated with dignity and according to their status through legal channels.

EDITORIAL

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Cover graphic design from AFP photo of buses carrying Myanmar returnees



Buses bring Myanmar refugees to the Malaysia port to be sent home. Photo: AFP

GOING HOME?

UNCERTAINTY AS MALAYSIA STARTS SENDING MYANMAR MIGRANTS HOME

Fears are being voiced over the ongoing Malaysian government scheme to return migrants or refugees to Myanmar, with non-governmental groups and rights advocates crying foul.

Malaysia began sending back around 1,500 Myanmar nationals on 29 September, the government confirmed, as it launched a scheme that rights groups say may endanger migrants by returning them to the war-torn country. Their arrival was confirmed on 3 October.

The group is the first of 5,000 Myanmar citizens that Kuala Lumpur says agreed to "voluntary" repatriation from detention centres amidst a huge uptick in anti-migrant sentiment in Malaysia.

Malaysia is caring for around 193,000 to 194,000 registered refugees and asylum-seekers from Myanmar, according to Genocide Watch. The Malaysian government has significantly ramped up immigration crackdowns, conducting dozens of daily raids. Over 10,000 Myanmar nationals are held in notoriously harsh and overcrowded immigration detention depots. Others living in crowded apartments, seeking to avoid detection.

Both the UN and advocacy organisations voiced concern on 29 September, saying the initial group sent could face dangerous homecomings in Myanmar, where a civil war has raged since the military coup in 2021.

Neither Malaysia nor Myanmar have officially clarified the number of Rohingya in the first group, and there is worry they may be returned to a country where they face persecution rights groups say amounts to genocide.

On the afternoon of 29 September, AFP reporters saw three ships belonging to the Myanmar navy departing from Malaysia's Lumut naval base around 5:00pm (0900 GMT).

This included the auxiliary support and hospital ship Than Lwin and the amphibious landing platform ship Moattama, which had been used in a previous repatriation exercise.

Malaysia's interior ministry confirmed that the repatriations were under way.

"Today, 1,476 individuals have commenced phase one of the repatriation programme, based on a list submitted by the Myanmar government via an official diplomatic note," it said in a statement. Their arrival in Myanmar was confirmed on 3 October.

It added that the repatriation was part of the government's plan to resolve the "legacy issue" of foreign asylum-seekers in Malaysia - of which it said 95 per cent were from Myanmar.

"This long-standing issue has imposed a significant financial burden on the nation, triggered serious social crises, and created tangible security threats for the Malaysian people," the statement said.

But in Geneva, UN rights chief Volker Turk urged Malaysia to stop the process immediately, saying nobody should be deported to Myanmar, given the severity of the situation on the ground.

"This is no time to return anyone forcibly to a country plagued by egregious human rights violations and

abuses, and where many cruelly face the real risk of more of the same violence again upon their return," he said in a statement.

"The conditions are far from safe and sustainable, and it is deeply questionable whether any return in these circumstances can be considered truly voluntary.

"The hundreds of thousands who have fled Myanmar in fear for their lives must be protected, and their fundamental human rights to seek asylum and protection abroad properly considered."

'Dignified return'

Earlier on 29 September, dozens of buses arrived under police escort at the Majlis Perbandaran Manjung stadium near the Lumut naval base in northwestern

Malaysia, AFP correspondents saw, where the migrants were processed.

A Myanmar security source, requesting anonymity because they were not authorised to talk to media, said the boats were due to dock at Thanlyin Navy Base just south of Yangon around the end of last week.

Rohingya, a persecuted Muslim minority, make up two-thirds of the 190,000 Myanmar refugees and asylum seekers in Malaysia, according to the United Nations.

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim announced in July that Myanmar had agreed to take back 5,000 members of the Rohingya.



Some of the returnees arrive at a reception centre in Yangon. Photo: AFP

The plan was announced after authorities detained more than 100 Rohingya who had gathered outside the UN refugee agency's office in Kuala Lumpur.

They were seeking help after being threatened with eviction from an informal settlement in northern Penang state.

They were later released after officials confirmed they held valid UN documentation.

Myanmar earlier this month pledged "safe and dignified" returns for its citizens displaced abroad, after criticism from the UN and rights groups.

'Reputation and integrity'

Last week more than 160 civil society groups in a joint statement called upon the Malaysian government to "immediately halt the deportations," pending talks with civil organisations about the situation on the ground in Myanmar.

Anwar said he would invite Myanmar's coup leader-turned-civilian president Min Aung Hlaing for an official visit to help expedite the repatriation process.

But the civil groups urged that "Malaysia's engagement with the junta must not come at the expense of its own reputation and integrity."

Malaysia, which shelters one of Southeast Asia's biggest refugee populations, is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and does not formally recognise refugee status.

Malaysia's approach, however, "remains grounded in the values of compassion and the ASEAN spirit of family, ensuring that actions are carried out in an orderly, responsible, and humane manner without compromising national security and sovereignty," the interior ministry said.

AFP fact-checkers have found that Rohingya refugees in Malaysia have been targeted by online disinformation campaigns that rights advocates say are fuelling xenophobia and intimidation.

Many of the Rohingya escaped Myanmar during a brutal military crackdown in 2017.

Fears have been expressed that Myanmar remains at war and that Rohingya, in particular, may face serious problems being introduced back into the country. Migration is a hot-button issue for Myanmar and on a world level as many governments struggle with the challenge of illegal migrants and refugees.

Sources: Mizzima, AFP

ANALYSIS & INSIGHT



JUNTA FACES DIFFICULTY WITH ITS 'YAN AUNG MYIN' OPERATION

As the junta faces growing difficulties in its "Yan Aung Myin" operation, also known as "Operation 4926," aimed at advancing into Arakan Army (AA)-controlled areas, its air force has increasingly targeted civilian areas in Rakhine State. Recent attacks have caused significant civilian casualties, including children, pregnant women, elderly people and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

One of the deadliest recent incidents occurred in Kyauktaw on September 28, when junta aircraft bombed a market locally known as the Indian Market. Local sources reported that 50 civilians were killed and another 58 seriously injured. The junta air force reportedly used two 500-pound bombs. One struck the market, killing and injuring shoppers and vendors, while the other hit a bridge over the Kaladan River, affecting people travelling across it.

The market is located in a Rohingya ward, and at least 16 Rohingya people were reportedly among those killed. The attack therefore affected not only the wider civilian population but also a community that has already faced severe displacement and insecurity.

The scale of junta air attacks across Rakhine has been significant. According to a survey by local media outlet Narinjara, junta airstrikes killed 64 civilians and wounded 96 others during September. The victims included monks, children, students, pregnant women and elderly people. Only two of the reported deaths were caused by artillery fire, while the overwhelming majority were attributed to airstrikes. The attacks occurred in Thandwe, Gwa, Ponnagyun, Taungup, Wirahtarni (Pauktaw), Kyauktaw, Izznapura (Minbya) and Rathedaung townships.

The attacks continued after Kyauktaw. On October 4, six days after the market bombing, junta aircraft struck the Byarla IDP camp in Ponnagyun, located between Sittwe and Kyauktaw. The attack reportedly killed six IDPs and injured 10 others, including seven who were seriously wounded.

The following day, junta aircraft conducted two further airstrikes on the Pannilar IDP camp in Ponnagyun at around 10:20 a.m. Two IDPs were reportedly killed

and two civilians, including a young girl, were injured. The AA subsequently released the names of eight people it said were killed and 11 wounded in attacks on two IDP camps and a village in Ponnagyun on October 4 and 5.

Junta attacks have also affected people dependent on the sea for their livelihoods. On October 2, junta Navy personnel reportedly detained and beat three fishermen from Myaybon Township while they were fishing between Kyaukphyu and Myaybon. A local resident told local media that fishermen were previously afraid of naval vessels firing at their boats, but are now also concerned about being detained and beaten.

In an earlier incident on September 17, the junta Navy reportedly fired artillery at two Rohingya fishing boats off Wirahtarni (Pauktaw), forcing eight fishermen into the sea. They were reportedly given small plastic containers to help them float before eventually being rescued by a boat from their village.



Taking a break. Rakhine. Photo: Supplied

Taken together, these incidents point to a worsening civilian protection crisis in Rakhine, where airstrikes, naval attacks and insecurity are disrupting both civilian life and livelihoods. As the military struggles to regain ground from the AA, civilians—including displaced people and fishing communities—are increasingly exposed to the consequences of the conflict.

AA ups the ante

The Arakan Army (AA) is intensifying its offensive against junta forces in Sittwe and Kyaukphyu, the junta's last major strongholds in Rakhine State. The escalation follows the junta's airstrike on Kyauktaw and comes as the military continues to struggle to regain territory through its "Operation 4926," also known as "Yan Aung Myin".

Before the latest AA counteroffensive, junta forces had focused on advancing toward Ponnagyun Township, north of Sittwe, in an attempt to reduce the military pressure on the Rakhine capital. At the same time, junta forces were attempting to advance toward Sane, an AA-controlled area in Kyaukphyu Township, to push back AA positions.

However, AA counterattacks have increasingly disrupted these efforts. In the Kyaukphyu area, the AA seized several outposts protecting the Taungmaw Oo naval headquarters, including positions captured on September 4. The AA is now putting greater pressure on the naval base and junta troops operating from the headquarters, while junta forces continue trying to reinforce nearby outposts.

The fighting around Taungmaw Oo has also begun affecting the families of junta personnel stationed there. As clashes intensified along the Awataung-Sane route and around the naval headquarters, junta personnel reportedly began moving family members to the Danyawaddy naval headquarters in Kyaukphyu in early October.

A military source told local media outlet Narinjara: "These days, family members are being sent from the Taungmaw Oo naval headquarters to the Danyawaddy naval headquarters. The battles are approaching the Taungmaw Oo headquarters, so they are being moved to ensure their security."

The Institute for Strategy and Policy-Myanmar (ISP-Myanmar) has reported that the junta reinforced



Myanmar national returnees being registered.
Photo: AFP

the Rakhine operation with four brigades, indicating that the conflict is gradually developing into a broader war for control of the state.

In Sittwe, the AA has also resumed and expanded its offensive following the Kyauktaw airstrike. The initial attacks focused on the northern and eastern sides of the city, including areas around the junta Navy base. On October 4, the AA reportedly opened another frontline from the western side, increasing pressure on the city from multiple directions.

The junta has consequently been forced to reinforce different fronts, including Pardaleik and Yechanpyin. Yechanpyin is particularly important because it hosts junta supply and transport, medical and artillery units, but reportedly has limited manpower. Although reliable information from the battlefield remains difficult to obtain, the junta has increasingly relied on air power as AA forces apply pressure.

The conflict is also extending beyond Rakhine itself. Junta forces have attempted to enter Rakhine through several border routes. In the Kyindwe area, revolutionary allied forces reportedly intercepted a junta column attempting to advance toward Paletwa in southern Chin State, which is controlled by the AA. The fighting at the end of September reportedly left around 30 junta personnel dead and about 20 captured.

Overall, the AA appears to be shifting from primarily defending its territorial gains to actively pressuring the junta's remaining strategic positions. The simultaneous pressure on Sittwe, Kyaukphyu and routes into Rakhine is creating a difficult military situation for the junta, which must divide its forces between defending isolated strongholds and attempting to reopen access routes into AA-controlled territory.

Concerns voiced over Malaysia refugee return

The first group of Myanmar nationals repatriated from Malaysia under a new arrangement with the junta arrived in Yangon on October 4, raising concerns over whether the return process was genuinely voluntary and what would happen to those sent back to conflict-affected areas.

According to junta-controlled newspapers, the first phase of repatriation departed Malaysia on September 29 and arrived in Yangon early on October 4 aboard three junta Navy vessels. Malaysian authorities said they had discussed repatriating around 5,000 Myanmar nationals held in detention centres, with 1,476 people included in the first group.

Malaysian authorities said the returnees had voluntarily agreed to return. However, UNHCR has questioned this, saying it did not have an opportunity to meet the returnees before their departure. Human rights activists have also expressed concern that those returned to Myanmar could face forced conscription or other military pressure.

After arriving in Yangon, the returnees were sent to their respective states and regions. However, the process has been different for around 220 Rakhine people, who were not immediately allowed to return home. They were initially held at an interrogation centre in Hlaing Tharyar Township and later transferred to a religious compound in Thanlyin for accommodation.

According to the junta's General Administration Department, the Rakhine returnees must first complete the Unique Identification (UID) registration process before they can be sent to Rakhine State.

Their treatment has raised particular concern because returnees from other parts of Myanmar were reportedly allowed to travel back to their home areas. A family member told local media that relatives had been informed that the Rakhine returnees were being held in Hlaing Tharyar but were not allowed to contact their families.

"We were informed that they are in Hlaing Tharyar. People from Ayeyarwady have been sent to their places, but the Rakhine people have not been released or allowed to contact their families. Most of the people in Hlaing Tharyar are Rakhine. We don't know the reason for keeping them detained," the family member said.



POINTING TO KYAUKTAW AIRSTRIKE, MYANMAR AMBASSADOR TO THE UN URGES CUT OFF OF ARMS SUPPLY TO MILITARY JUNTA

Myanmar's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun, has urged UN member states to cut off and halt the supply of weapons, ammunition, aviation fuel, and dual-use (military-civilian) items to the military junta, highlighting the civilian casualties caused by a recent airstrike on a market in Kyauktaw, Rakhine State.

Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun made these remarks during the high-level plenary meeting to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 29 September. More than 90 UN member states, including Myanmar, delivered statements at the meeting.

He expressed deep concern over rising global expenditures on nuclear weapons, elevated nuclear security risks, and the growing sharing and proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The Ambassador emphasized that any use of nuclear weapons, whether intentional or accidental, would result in catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences. Thus, the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against these existential threats.

Furthermore, he urged that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) must remain the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. He called for universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and urged countries that have not yet signed or ratified the treaty to do so without delay.

Kyaw Moe Tun noted that under its elected civilian government, Myanmar had ratified the CTBT and signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Although plans were underway to ratify the TPNW, the process was derailed by the military coup in 2021.

He went on to state that peace and stability in Myanmar have been shattered due to the military junta's escalating violence, which includes airstrikes, heavy artillery shelling against civilian populations, and the misuse of dual-use technologies.

According to local rescue groups and the Arakan Army (AA), an airstrike near a market in Kyauktaw, Rakhine State, on September 28 killed at least 50 civilians and injured 58 others.

Pointing to this tragic incident, Kyaw Moe Tun stressed that it is impossible to believe that a military junta, which actively destroys civilian lives and property, would use dual-use items for constructive or peaceful purposes.

Additionally, he expressed grave concern regarding the ongoing cooperation on nuclear power projects between the Myanmar military junta and a nuclear-armed state.

He asserted that international assistance and cooperation in nuclear energy for peaceful purposes should only resume in Myanmar once peace and stability are restored, democracy is revitalized, and the military is placed under strict civilian oversight.

To protect the lives and property of the people of Myanmar, Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun earnestly appealed to all UN member states to immediately cease and cut off the supply of military weapons, ammunition, aviation fuel, and dual-use items to the military junta.

Baroness Rosalie Winterton

UK UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE 'APPALLED' BY MYANMAR JUNTA STRIKE ON CIVILIANS IN KYAUKTAW

UK Under Secretary of State Baroness Rosalie Winterton has spoken out on the Myanmar junta's recent massacre of civilians in Myanmar's Rakhine State.

Families are reported to be searching around a charred market in Kyauktaw in western Myanmar after a military airstrike killed 50 people, one of the deadliest recent bombardments in the civil war.

Witnesses say the military's air force raided the riverside commercial hub in Kyauktaw town in western Rakhine state around midday on Monday.

The following is her statement issued on 30 September:

"I am appalled by the reports of a military airstrike on a market in Kyauktaw, Rakhine, which has resulted in a significant loss of life.

"Attacks on civilians are utterly unacceptable, and the UK condemns this devastating attack.

"We stand with the people of Myanmar. The UK is clear: all civilians must be protected and airstrikes must stop."

Baroness Winterton, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State



Relatives mourn. Photo: Supplied

AA SPOKESPERSON SAYS THOSE INVOLVED IN KYAUKTAW BOMBING THAT KILLED 49 CIVILIANS WILL FACE RETALIATION

The Arakan Army (AA) spokesperson, Khaing Thukha, told Mizzima that they will identify and launch retaliatory attacks against those involved in the military junta's airstrike on Kyauktaw Town, Rakhine State, in order to seek justice for the civilians killed in the attack.

On 28 September at 12:10 PM, a fighter jet from the Naypyidaw Air Base launched an airstrike on Kyauktaw, dropping two 500-pound bombs. One bomb exploded in a busy public market near the Kissapanadi Bridge, while the other hit and exploded on the Kissapanadi Bridge itself, according to Khaing Thukha.

Khaing Thukha stated that the airstrike targeted civilians and was a blatant commission of war crimes.

"To achieve justice for our innocent civilians who lost their lives in this incident, we will identify and launch retaliatory attacks against the Myanmar military and every single individual involved in this terrorist attack," Khaing Thukha said.

He added that the military junta must bear responsibility and accountability for the airstrike.

A female resident of Kyauktaw told Mizzima that the airstrike occurred in the afternoon when the market was crowded with buyers and sellers, and locals were having lunch. She noted that they did not hear the

sound of the aircraft before the sudden bombing.

"People were eating lunch when the bombs dropped. The market was also extremely crowded at the time. We didn't hear any plane; it just suddenly bombed us. We only heard the sound of the explosion," she said.

According to a statement released by the AA, 49 civilians have been confirmed dead and nearly 60 others injured so far due to the airstrike, with the death toll expected to rise.

The AA's statement also highlighted that the Kyauktaw bombing is one of the incidents with the highest number of civilian mass casualties.

Additionally, on 28 September alone, fighter jets also bombed Anjanapura (Minbya Town), Sun Ye Village, and the Ngapali area in Thandwe Township, injuring nine people, the AA stated.

The AA further stated that during the 10-day period from 17 to 27 September, the military junta launched day-and-night attacks using Y-12 aircraft, fighter jets, and heavy artillery in nine townships across Rakhine State: Ann, Anjanapura (Minbya), Gwa, Kyauktaw, Ponnagyun, Wirathani (Pauktaw), Rathedaung, Thandwe, and Mrauk-U. These attacks resulted in six civilian deaths and 21 injuries.



KHRG CONDEMNS DEADLY KYAUKTAW MARKET ATTACK

The Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) is deeply saddened and outraged by reports of a Burma Army air strike on Rakhine State that claimed the lives of at least 50 civilians, including children, according to their latest press release.

KHRG strongly condemns this devastating attack on civilians by the military junta. KHRG also sends its deepest condolences to all families who lost loved ones.

On Monday, 28 September 2026, around midday, the Burma Army carried out an air strike on a marketplace in Kyauktaw Township, Rakhine State, that reportedly killed at least 50 civilians and left at least 58 others injured, with the casualty count still expected to rise. The attack struck the busy marketplace during an active period when high numbers of civilians were carrying out activities of their daily lives and livelihoods. Many of the victims are believed to be market traders, workers, shoppers, and passersby, including women and children. This deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure demonstrates the Burma Army's blatant disregard for international humanitarian law and the sanctity of civilian life.

The Burma Army continues to systematically target civilians and civilian objects in air strikes across the country, particularly in ethnic regions, including Karen State, where KHRG has documented ongoing strikes since the 2021 military coup. These repeated attacks

across the country expose the military's disingenuous claims of pursuing peace and stability. Their actions reveal a clear intent to terrorise communities and suppress resistance through indiscriminate violence. The international community must not be deceived by the junta's attempts to gain legitimacy. It is imperative to recognise the Burma Army for what it is — a brutal military regime responsible for widespread atrocities.

In contrast, international humanitarian law (IHL) requires all parties to follow principles of distinction, proportionality, and precautions in attack. A distinction must be made between civilians and combatants, as well as between civilian objects and military objectives. Burma Army attacks on civilians and civilian objects, such as residential areas and civilian buildings, are therefore a serious violation of the law of armed conflict. Moreover, intentionally attacking civilians and protected objects may amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Further, international criminal law (ICL) imposes criminal liability on superiors who order the commission of crimes or fail to prevent or punish the criminal activities of their subordinates. Burma Army leaders and local commanders who are responsible through the chain of command for ordering, failing to prevent, or failing to punish attacks, such as the one on the market in Kyauktaw Township, should be held accountable for these heinous crimes to the fullest extent possible.

In light of this horrific attack, KHRG urges the international community to take immediate and decisive action to prevent further suffering. This includes imposing stronger targeted sanctions on military leaders and entities, cutting financial flows that sustain the military's operations, and halting all forms of collaboration that could lend legitimacy to their rule. We call for increased humanitarian assistance to affected communities and support for local efforts documenting and responding to these violations.

The people of Burma continue to suffer under relentless military aggression. Silence and inaction only embolden perpetrators. We call upon all governments, international organisations, and civil society actors to stand firmly with the victims and demand accountability for these crimes.



Photo: Supplied

FOUR KILLED, INCLUDING 2.5-YEAR-OLD CHILD, IN KANBALU AIRSTRIKE; TOLL FROM KYAUKTAW MARKET BOMBING RISES TO 50

An airstrike conducted by the Myanmar military junta on 28 September on Inlelgyi village in Kanbalu Township, Sagaing Region, killed four people including two children (one of them two and a half years old) and two women and injured nine others, according to local revolutionary forces.

The deceased were identified as Daw Zin Mar Hlaing, 36, Daw Win Tin, Maung Nga Thant, 10, and Maung Oke Soe Tun, two and a half.

A member of the revolutionary forces told Mizzima on the afternoon of 29 September that the junta used a single aircraft to bomb Inlelgyi village three times the previous day. The first bomb scored a direct hit on a home, killing a mother and her child.

"The very first bomb landed directly on a house and exploded. The mother and child inside died instantly. The subsequent bombs didn't seem to detonate; we didn't hear any explosion. But then they fired rockets, which claimed the lives of another child and another woman. Nine civilians were also injured," he said.

Nine local residents aged between five and 45 were injured in the attack, with several sustaining critical injuries. Among the injured were three children aged five, 13, and 14.

"There was no active fighting here. They just came and bombed civilians," the source said.

On 28 September alone, the junta conducted airstrikes not only in Kanbalu Township, Sagaing Region, but also in Demoso Township, Karenni State, and Kyauktaw town, Rakhine State.

In Demoso Township, five local residents, including a child, were injured in an airstrike, according to the local news agency Karenni People's Voice.

In Kyauktaw, the death toll from Monday's airstrike on the India Market and Kissapanadi Bridge has risen to 50, with 58 injured, according to the Arakan Army (AA) and local aid workers, making it one of the deadliest single airstrikes of the conflict since the December 2025 bombing of Mrauk-U General Hospital.

Those killed were "innocent passersby, market vendors, shoppers and cargo loaders," AA said, warning the toll could rise further as some bodies were lost in fires following the bombing. AA spokesperson Khine Thu Kha said the military "deliberately targeted densely populated markets, schools, civilians, and residential buildings" and vowed to retaliate. The junta has not responded to requests for comment.



Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR'S MILITARY HAS STRUCK LOCAL MARKETS 41 TIMES SINCE 2022, KILLING AT LEAST 145 CIVILIANS, ACLED SAYS

Myanmar's military has carried out 41 airstrikes on local markets since January 2022, killing at least 145 civilians, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) said on 1 October, three days after a strike on a crowded market in Rakhine state killed at least 50 people.

According to an expert comment by Jesua Lynn, ACLED's Myanmar analyst, the 28 September airstrikes hit the "India Market" and the Kissapanadi Bridge in Kyauktaw township, killing at least 50 people and injuring 57 others, among them shoppers, passersby and cargo labourers. The death toll was continuing to rise, the monitoring group said.

Lynn said airstrikes on civilians and infrastructure have followed a systematic pattern since 2021, routinely escalating when the junta suffers battlefield losses.

Markets are increasingly being hit alongside schools and hospitals, ACLED said. The group dates the pattern to a January 2022 strike on the market at Moe Dar Gyi village in Katha township, and records Rakhine state as the worst affected region for casualties from market strikes, with at least 11 such attacks and 49 deaths before the Kyauktaw bombing.

The strikes fall within Operation 4926, which the military launched on 4 September to retake territory from the Rakhine-based Arakan Army (AA) through combined air, artillery and ground offensives, according to ACLED. By widening strikes into the towns of Mrauk-U, Rathedaung and Kyauktaw, the regime is seeking to disrupt the administration the AA has built across the state, the group said.

Despite the intensity of the operation, the military has taken battlefield losses without regaining significant territory to date, ACLED said. The spread of attacks into areas away from active fighting points to a broader approach of pressuring the AA by disrupting the civilian environment and the administrative systems through which it governs.

With the AA vowing retaliation and post-monsoon conditions favouring the junta's air and drone operations, ACLED assessed further confrontation as highly likely in the coming months, raising the risk to civilians without producing decisive shifts on the ground.

CLOSE TO SIX YEARS AFTER THE MYANMAR COUP: REPERCUSSIONS SHAKE YANGON'S CONDO PROJECTS

DHATU

Nearly six years after the military coup, disputes between construction developers and buyers in major Yangon condominium projects - specifically The Central, Emerald Bay Tower 3, and The Park - have spilled over into the public eye.

As these disputes come to light, they have raised pressing questions about whether Myanmar's condominium market is on the verge of a total collapse.

In reality, several major condominium and hotel projects in Yangon have ground to a halt, unable to resume operations.

Buyers of high-end condo projects have already paid significant sums, yet they face repeated delays in handover dates and stalled construction progress. Although project developers have issued announcements on social media, the lack of specific details regarding handovers or construction schedules leaves pre-sale buyers in deep anxiety.

Buyers are concerned.

"Right now, they aren't explaining anything at all. They are staying completely silent without giving any reasonable explanations. Frankly, if there is a problem, shouldn't they try to negotiate? But now, they are just dodging us and offering no solutions. They are

completely shirking responsibility," said a buyer who paid in advance but has yet to receive their unit.

For instance, in the Tower 3 project of Emerald Bay Condominium, located at the confluence of three rivers in Thaketa Township, units were advertised and sold before the developer had even obtained a construction permit or conducted soil tests.

While buyers who purchased these condos under the pre-sale system continue to receive payment reminders for their instalments, no progress has been made at the construction site. Consequently, frustrated buyers are alleging that the scheme resembles online financial scams (popularly known as "Zha Pian" or pig-butcherer scams).

Similarly, buyers of The Central project on Kabar Aye Pagoda Road stated they had paid the majority of their condo fees dues as early as 2019. However, because the project has not even laid its foundation to this day, buyers have filed complaints with the police. Having paid between 70% and 90% of the total cost, buyers are caught in a devastating dilemma: if they stop paying, they risk losing their investment, but if they continue, they still have no guarantee of receiving their condos.

A video clip showing a heated confrontation between pre-sale buyers and sales staff at the project's showroom has gone viral on social media, drawing widespread criticism from netizens.

Under the video, some commenters revealed that they were still receiving telemarketing sales calls for the condominium units until just a few days ago.

Meanwhile, 'The Park' condominium project in Ahlone Township has failed to hand over units, running nearly six years behind its original schedule.

In addition to these projects, the landmark 'Yoma Central' project in downtown Yangon, which commenced in 2017 and was originally slated for completion by mid-2021, has seen its operations suspended for nearly four to five years following the 2021 political transition.

International news outlet, Nikkei Asia previously reported that project officials hoped to resume work by late 2023. However, construction has yet to restart, and a definitive completion timeline remains unknown.

Spanning approximately four hectares, the development comprises four buildings, with Yoma Group holding around a 60% stake. Japan's Mitsubishi Corp and Mitsubishi Estate are also key investment partners in the joint venture.

Adjacent to this site, the construction of 'The Peninsula Yangon' hotel - a joint venture between Yoma Group and Hong Kong and Shanghai Hotels - likewise remains suspended.

Furthermore, the '68 Residence' luxury condo project on Sayar San Road, valued at an estimated USD 185 million and owned by the family of Thet Thet Khine, former chairperson of the People's Pioneer Party (PPP) had already faced significant delays prior to the coup due to high-rise construction policies and restrictions imposed by the Yangon Region Government during the civilian National League for Democracy (NLD) administration.

Following subsequent political shifts and crises, construction on this luxury condominium has remained stalled for a prolonged period, leaving this massive urban investment project suspended and unrealized in the heart of the city.

Economists analyse that the current crisis, stagnation, and delays plaguing Myanmar's construction industry and real estate condo market are primarily driven by political instability, economic crises, policy uncertainties, and governmental implementation barriers.

Following the political upheaval of the 2021 military coup, rising security, administrative, and economic instability triggered a mass exodus of foreign investors. This directly caused massive international joint-venture projects, such as 'Yoma Central', to grind to a halt.

Moreover, luxury condo developments like '68 Residence' had already suffered severe delays due to the previous NLD government's high-rise policies and restrictions in Yangon. When combined with the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the construction sector was dealt a destabilizing blow.

According to construction developers, skyrocketing prices for essential materials like cement and steel rebar, highly volatile foreign exchange rates for imported materials, and rising labour costs have shattered original break even analysis. Consequently, developers now face severe financial crises, making it incredibly difficult to proceed with projects.

On the other hand, the practice of selling units under pre-sale systems without solid official approvals, combined with the lack of robust financial protection mechanisms like escrow accounts to safeguard buyers' funds, has shattered public trust. This regulatory vacuum has led the public to view projects like 'Emerald Bay Tower 3' as outright financial scams.

As projects drag on for various reasons, developers' evasion of transparency, lack of accountability, and failure to provide clear explanations to buyers have exacerbated disputes, pushing some cases to the point of legal action.

Pre-sale buyers are desperate for an administrative body to step in and resolve these issues with unaccountable developers. However, they report that departments under the current military regime and Members of Parliament concerned continue to turn a blind eye to their plight.



Photo: Supplied

MOGE EMPLOYEES ALLEGEDLY EMBEZZLE FUEL FROM MYANMAR STATE-OWNED OIL WELLS

Some employees of the Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) are reportedly embezzling and stealing fuel produced from state-owned oil wells in Myanmar, reselling it to local fuel entrepreneurs, according to sources close to the matter.

Crude oil produced from state-owned wells, including the Minbu oilfield and Mann Thanbayar oilfield in Magway Region, is reportedly intercepted and stolen along transport routes to the Thanlyin Oil Refinery in Yangon, via barges and flatboats.

Businessmen connected to the thieves reportedly purchase this crude oil and transport it by barge to their

respective distribution areas, where they sell it illegally.

A source said this practice of theft and resale has been ongoing since the coup, lasting more than five years. A source close to those involved in the illicit trade confirmed the theft and selling of crude oil began immediately after the coup and continues to this day.

"They refine the crude oil using substandard, crude methods and blend it with petrol and diesel before reselling it. The scale of the theft is so massive that every single transport barge is fully loaded," an eyewitness said.

Local fuel business owners reported seeing these low-grade fuels widely resold in Mawlamyinegyun Township, Ayeyarwady Region.

These black-market fuels are reportedly stored illegally in several villages near Mawlamyinegyun town, including Nat Min Gyi, Aung Hlaing, Kyaung Dauk, and Kanyinkhe villages.

To carry out these illegal operations, monthly payoffs are reportedly made to the Township General Administration Department (GAD), Military Security Affairs (Sa Ra Pha), Special Branch (SB), the police, and the fire department, according to a local resident.

The administrator of Ward No. 7 in Mawlamyinegyun Township is reportedly acting as a broker, collecting these monthly bribes and mediating transactions for the stolen fuel.

Some leaders of a local charity group in Mawlamyinegyun Township are also involved in this black-market fuel trade, a local fuel businessman said.

While most experienced motorists refuse to buy this fuel because it is distilled through substandard methods and blended, uninformed farmers and ordinary citizens are forced to buy it at high prices, paying up to 7,000 kyats (approx. US\$ 2.26) per one-liter purified water bottle.

"Since they are farmers, they don't know whether the fuel is pure or where it comes from. Because of this, they are constantly facing damage and financial losses

as their agricultural machinery and equipment break down frequently," the businessman said.

A farmer who has purchased and used this fuel told Mizzima that although machinery frequently malfunctions after using it, they have no choice but to continue using it due to the severe fuel shortage.

Since the coup, Myanmar has faced frequent fuel shortages and skyrocketing prices, as the junta has been unable to import sufficient fuel, which must be purchased with foreign currency.

Due to these shortages, the junta has imposed purchase limits using an odd/even QR code system and issued directives to enforce fixed prices. Despite these measures, illegal black-market trading remains rampant nationwide.

Junta leader Min Aung Hlaing reportedly instructed that fuel imports be reduced by 30 percent starting this September, to be substituted with fuel produced by the Thanlyin No. (1) Oil Refinery, with an ultimate goal of cutting foreign fuel imports by up to 75 percent within five years.



TIKTOK GOES DARK WITHOUT A VPN IN MYANMAR, HITTING SELLERS AND CREATORS

TikTok became unreachable without a VPN across Myanmar from the afternoon of 28 September, cutting off a platform many users had relied on as one of the last easily accessible social media apps since the junta blocked Facebook in the aftermath of its 2021 coup, residents and TikTok users in Myanmar said.

"Since yesterday morning, TikTok has stopped opening," said Ma Nilar. "My husband saw people discussing it on Facebook. They mentioned that you need a VPN to access it now. I don't have a VPN, and besides, I believe the military will block that soon as well. If they catch people using VPNs, they get arrested, so I don't dare to try."

Users said videos and other functions on the app stopped loading that afternoon and have only been reachable with a VPN since. The Myanmar junta has not issued any explanation for the disruption, and it remains unclear whether the block is deliberate or how long it will last.

The blockage has fallen hardest on content creators and online sellers who depend on TikTok for income. Anyone selling goods through TikTok, Facebook, Instagram or other platforms in Myanmar is already required to register under Order No. 51/2023, a Ministry of Commerce rule that continues to draw scrutiny from authorities.

TikTok's accessibility without a VPN had made it a refuge for ordinary users, content creators, resistance groups and independent media pages after the junta cut off Facebook, Twitter and Instagram following the coup, driving a large migration onto the platform. That same migration now appears to have drawn the junta's attention, echoing the pattern seen with other platforms since 2021.

The disruption adds to a long-running squeeze on internet access under military rule, with authorities maintaining mobile data and internet shutdowns for extended periods in townships across Sagaing, Magway, Chin, Kachin, Karen and Rakhine, among the areas hardest hit by the civil war.



BOMBING OF NUG'S SPECIAL REGION COMMAND'S COMMUNICATION POST DUE TO TIP-OFFS FROM DESERTERS AND DEFECTORS

The Special Region Command of the People's Defense Force (PDF), operating under the National Unity Government (NUG), released a statement 30 September saying the recent airstrike on its communication post resulted from intelligence and confessions provided by deserters and defectors.

On 24 September, at approximately 11:00 AM, two MiG-29 jet fighters from the junta's Naypyidaw Air Base attacked the Special Region Command's communication post, dropping four bombs. Two of the bombs directly hit the target.

The attack claimed the lives of five people, according to the Special Region Command, including CDM Sergeant Nay Win Aung, a former Myanmar Air Force sergeant who joined the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) from the Patheingyi Air Base Radar Department in 2021 and had been serving as an air defense instructor for revolutionary forces, and had become a widely cited military analyst. Two security personnel and two communication personnel from the

division command also died, while three others were injured.

According to the Special Region Command, the precise targeting of the location was enabled by confessions extracted from captured deserters and resigned soldiers, combined with intelligence provided by those who had defected to the junta's side.

The statement said that following the incident, the junta has been distributing fabricated audio clips and propaganda to sow discord and undermine trust between revolutionary forces and their allies, and that this statement was released to inform the public of the true events.

Rumours had circulated suggesting that Comrade Aung San Shar, commander of the Special Region, and CDM Major Tin Lin Aung were injured in the bombing; today's statement made no mention of these reports.



Parliament House in Canberra.
Photo: Supplied

SCEF DELEGATION MEETS WITH AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE IN CANBERRA

A delegation from the Steering Council for the Emergence of a Federal Democratic Union (SCEF) met with Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong at Parliament House in Canberra, Australia, on 28 September, according to a statement released by SCEF 1 October.

The SCEF delegation was led by Zin Mar Aung, a member of the SCEF Secretariat and Union Minister of Foreign Affairs of the National Unity Government (NUG). The delegation also included SCEF Foreign Affairs Committee members: Ne Neh Plo, First Secretary of the Karenni National Progressive Party

(KNPP); Saw Nimrod, Secretary of the Karen National Union (KNU) Foreign Affairs Department; and Tin Tun Naing, a member of the SCEF Financial Working Group and NUG Union Minister of Planning, Finance, and Investment.

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views on the current situation in Myanmar and the region, as well as recent developments, which SCEF described as a constructive discussion.



INDIA'S ASSAM RIFLES ATTACKED, NAGA RESIDENT WARNS OF POTENTIAL CROSS-BORDER STRIKES

Following an attack on a patrol team of India's 21st Assam Rifles near Nampong Nallah in Changlang district, Arunachal Pradesh state, along the India-Myanmar border, which left one soldier dead and four others injured, a Naga local resident has warned border communities to remain highly vigilant, as retaliatory cross-border military operations into Myanmar could occur.

The attack took place at around 6:30 AM on 29 September while 21st Assam Rifles personnel were patrolling an area where a border fence is currently under construction near Nampong Nallah. Indian media, citing official sources, reported that Havildar Jankhokai Kuki, 42, was killed and four other soldiers were injured in the incident.

According to sources, the injured personnel were evacuated to a hospital for treatment, and security forces have since intensified search and sweep operations in the area.

"Whenever there is a clash or an attack on Indian troops along the border, they tend to launch retaliatory strikes using heavy artillery and drones. That is why we are warning residents living along the border to stay alert," a Naga local told Mizzima. He added that those living near the border should closely monitor the security situation and avoid unnecessary travel.

The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN/ GPRN) issued a statement dated 29 September claiming it carried out the attack in a joint operation with the

Revolutionary People's Front (RPF). The statement said one soldier was neutralized and an AK assault rifle was seized during the clash.

However, initial reports in Indian media suggested the potential involvement of the NSCN-K-YA (Khaplang-Yung Aung) faction. Indian authorities have not yet officially confirmed the identity of the group responsible for the attack.

According to Indian media, Changlang District Police Chief Kirli Padu said he had received reports of the incident and instructed officials at Changlang police station to gather detailed information. Reports also noted that an official statement from the Assam Rifles was still awaited.

India and Myanmar share a 1,643-kilometer border, passing through the Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, and Mizoram. The Indian government has decided to construct a fence along the entire border to enhance surveillance and security.

The border fencing project has faced strong opposition from some border residents, including the Naga people, who argue that the physical barrier will disrupt cross-border social interactions, cultural ties, and familial relations between communities living on both sides of the border.

Naga groups have previously released statements alleging that the Indian military has conducted cross-border operations into Myanmar territory in the past.

MYANMAR'S RIGHTS COMMISSION REJECTS THE REGIONAL REVIEW THAT COULD STRIP ITS LAST MEMBERSHIP

The Southeast Asia National Human Rights Institutions Forum (SEANF) has opened a formal review of whether the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) still qualifies for membership, a process the commission announced on 26 September it would refuse to take part in.

SEANF said on 25 September that its Governing Board began the review after a special meeting on 14 August, convened under Article 11(6) of the forum's rules of procedure, to assess whether the MNHRC still meets the standards of independence, effectiveness and institutional integrity set out in the Paris Principles.

SEANF is the last regional network in which the commission retains a seat. The Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions' accreditation sub-committee withdrew the MNHRC's accreditation in December 2024, and the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions expelled it in May 2025.

In its response, the commission said it rejected the review outright and would dissociate itself from the process, according to the Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI), the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) and the CSO Working Group on Independent National Human Rights Institutions (Burma/Myanmar), which issued a joint statement from Bangkok on 29 September welcoming the review.

The three groups said the refusal to engage, despite being offered a chance to answer the concerns, underlined the commission's unwillingness to confront questions about its independence and its conduct during the military's rights violations. Since the military seized power in February 2021, they said, the commission has failed to act as an independent body capable of protecting victims or holding the military to account, and its inaction has allowed the regime to present the appearance of human rights oversight while leaving victims without protection or access to justice.

Khin Ohmar, chairperson of Progressive Voice and a member of the Working Group, said the junta's commission "has no place in a regional human rights institution," and called for SEANF to follow the decisions already taken by the global alliance and the Asia Pacific forum.

The groups commended the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM), which chairs SEANF in 2026, for advancing the process, and urged the Governing Board which also includes the chairpersons of Indonesia's Komnas HAM, the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines, the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand and Timor-Leste's Provedor de Direitos Humanos e Justiça to carry the review to a conclusion and remove the commission from the network.



KIA fighters. Photo: Supplied

JOINT MYANMAR MILITARY COLUMN ATTACKED IN KACHIN'S INDAWGYI, CAPTAIN REPORTED KILLED

A captain from the Myanmar military junta forces was killed when the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) launched an artillery attack on a joint column consisting of junta troops, the Shanni Nationalities Army (SNA), and local militia members in the Indawgyi region of Kachin State on 28 September, a KIA source told Mizzima.

The joint column, numbering around 250 personnel, was advancing from Nam Mun toward He Par on the morning of 28 September, according to the KIA source.

"I think they are testing our strength with their newly recruited militia members," the KIA source said.

Following the KIA's heavy weapons attack, the joint military column retreated, carrying away the bodies of those killed, the source added.

The source also said the column included militia members who had recently completed military training at the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) church

compound in Nam Mun, and that some of these militia members were also among the casualties.

Mizzima has not been able to independently verify these reports.

Photos and video footage have recently emerged showing the Shanni Nationalities Army (SNA) holding a military training graduation ceremony inside the KBC church compound in Nam Mun. KIA spokesperson Colonel Naw Bu has publicly condemned the ceremony, saying the use of a church compound for military training was inappropriate and could inflame religious tensions.

Locals reported that the church compound is being used as a military training site while residents are displaced due to the conflict.

In early February, joint KIA forces captured several junta and SNA outposts near He Par and Lonton villages.



Photo: Supplied

KAWKAREIK ARTILLERY BATTALION (312) ATTACKED, KILLING WARRANT OFFICER; HEAVY ARTILLERY SHELLING KILLS ONE LOCAL

Artillery Battalion (312), under Military Operations Command No. 12 (MOC-12) based in Kawkareik, Karen State, was attacked with rockets and drones on 26 September by the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and the Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO), both operating under the Karen National Union (KNU). A military warrant officer was killed in the attack, according to ground sources.

On 27 September, junta forces fired heavy artillery shells into nearby villages, killing an elderly woman in Naung Ta Lar village and injuring another resident.

"The artillery battalion has been shelling the villages for nearly a month. They fire indiscriminately every day toward the Brigade 6 and Brigade 7 areas. Just yesterday, they fired 28 heavy artillery shells toward Taung Kyar Inn and Myauk Kyar Inn villages," a ground source told Mizzima.

The same source said Artillery Battalion (312) under MOC-12 has been firing heavy weapons daily for nearly a month toward Taung Kyar Inn, Myauk Kyar Inn, Wizzarkone, and Naung Ta Lar villages.

"The junta troops feel insecure. Fearing attacks, they shell the villages almost every day. In front of the military battalions in Kawkareik, they have installed CCTV cameras to monitor the surroundings," a local resident of Kawkareik said.

The junta has also constructed bunkers along the Myawaddy-Asia Road and the Kawkareik-Kyondo Asia Highway to step up security measures, it is reported.

Local residents also said the junta is actively recruiting for military service in Myawaddy, Kawkareik, and Kyondo, and is forcibly conscripting travelers passing along the Asia Highway.



Photo: AFP

MYANMAR: WHY TRUSTED JOURNALISM MATTERS

As the world marks World News Day on 28 September, it is the time to reflect on the state of journalism in the crisis-plagued country of Myanmar where the bitter battle for truth is played out day by day.

The Myanmar junta that grabbed power in a coup in February 2021 is using misinformation, disinformation and the tools of the internet to paint a picture of regime legitimacy while attacking the militant and political resistance, and continuing to incarcerate the country's democratically elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Trusted journalism matters – hence the work of independent Myanmar news outlets is crucial in the effort to paint a balanced picture of developments in the country. Independents like Mizzima, Irawaddy and Myanmar Now continue to publish news on a daily basis despite the difficulties and dangers, including funding

to maintain operations. Over the past five years, the Myanmar junta has detained over 220 journalists from over 100 media outlets, charging 178 with a crime under 10 separate laws, mainly incitement, “false news”, and weaponized counter-terrorism provisions. Roughly two dozen remain in jail. Reporting in the country remains a dangerous occupation.

Despite this, Myanmar's journalists and media outlets remain staunchly committed to building a robust information ecosystem for a public desperately seeking to know the truth about military oppression and daily attacks, and to combat the regime's misinformation and propaganda.

Trusted journalism matters in Myanmar because, amid war, repression and an aggressive campaign of propaganda and disinformation, reliable information has become almost as important as food, medicine and

security. Reporting by Mizzima repeatedly highlights that the battle for Myanmar is not being fought only with guns and bombs, but also through competing versions of reality.

Since the February 2021 coup, the Myanmar military has sought to control the information environment by revoking media licences, arresting journalists, restricting websites and imposing internet shutdowns.

This makes independent journalism particularly important because citizens need information that is not controlled by the authorities. Mizzima has described the situation as a media battle between independent news organisations attempting to report what is happening and a heavily organised military propaganda and disinformation campaign. The junta and its supporters have used social-media networks, including Telegram, to promote military narratives, attack critics and challenge unfavourable reporting.

Trusted journalism provides an essential means of checking those claims. In a country where access to information can vary dramatically according to geography, internet availability and military control, journalists and citizen journalists can provide information from areas that are otherwise difficult or impossible to reach. Mizzima has highlighted the role of citizen journalists who collect information from conflict areas and communities, often at considerable personal risk, before passing it to independent media organisations for verification and publication.

Trust, however, cannot simply be claimed; it has to be earned. Mizzima's own code of ethics stresses verification, accuracy, independence, fairness and avoiding rumours or exaggeration. It specifically

requires journalists to verify information and to identify information from anonymous sources as unverified when it cannot be independently confirmed. This is particularly important in a conflict where misinformation can cause panic, endanger civilians or damage the reputation of political and resistance groups.

Trusted journalism also matters beyond Myanmar's borders. International governments, humanitarian organisations, diplomats, researchers and international media depend on credible information to understand what is happening inside the country. Without independent reporting, the outside world risks seeing Myanmar through the carefully managed lens of the military authorities. Mizzima's stated mission is therefore not simply to publish news, but to contribute to freedom of expression and the free flow of information in the public interest.

Perhaps most importantly, trusted journalism preserves a historical record. In a conflict in which allegations of atrocities, displacement, arrests and abuses are frequently contested, credible reporting creates evidence of what communities have experienced. It gives victims and witnesses a voice and prevents events from simply disappearing into silence.

Mizzima's reporting makes clear that Myanmar's independent journalists are themselves operating under extraordinary pressure. Many have been forced into exile, while those working inside the country face surveillance, arrest and imprisonment. Yet their continued work demonstrates why trusted journalism matters: when governments attempt to control the narrative, independent journalists provide society with something fundamental—the ability to know, question and remember what is happening.



THE INTEGRITY DIVIDEND: THE VALUE OF KNOWING

BY DAVID WALMSLEY, MARIYA GABRIEL, AND LIZ CORBIN

We are not short of information. We have never had more of it. Yet across the world, people struggle to answer the simplest questions: What actually happened? Who decided what? Is it true?

This is the paradox of our age. The most connected societies in history are also among the most vulnerable to confusion, manipulation and distrust. Information moves faster than accountability. Algorithms reward outrage before accuracy. Artificial intelligence generates plausible falsehoods at scale. In such an environment, the right to know is not just a matter of transparency; it is the heartbeat of freedom.

Without an accurate understanding of what is going on and what is being done in your name, the fog of deceit thickens, and bad actors can mislead with impunity.

Society is most vulnerable when access to

information is denied. Access Now and the #KeepItOn coalition documented 313 internet shutdowns in 52 countries in 2025, the highest number ever recorded. Shutdowns block journalism, silence communities and deny people potentially life-saving information.

Access to information laws are an anchor of information integrity, and UNESCO's latest monitoring shows progress. Its 2025 survey showed that 141 countries have legal guarantees for access to information. But adoption is not implementation, and many countries still face practical gaps in oversight, appeals, enforcement, record-keeping and data management. Of the countries surveyed, 51 could not provide record-keeping data despite reporting to have systems or procedures in place.

Information commissioners and other overseers turn legal provisions into enforceable rights. Yet many of them are hampered by weak mandates, delayed

appointments, budget cuts, political interference, limits on their powers and attacks on their independence. For access to information to work, these bodies must be protected by law, given adequate powers and resources, and shielded from undue influence.

The gap was further confirmed by a 2025 test of access to information laws, jointly conducted by UNESCO and the Centre for Law and Democracy. Across 146 identical requests in 76 countries, 38% received no substantive response, only 42% resulted in full disclosure, and the average response time was 22 days. A similar exercise will be repeated this year to measure any change.

Access to information has to evolve, but examples of the shortcomings are everywhere, even in countries with well-intentioned legislation.

And in an information vacuum, brave and independent journalism is indispensable. Journalism distils information into public understanding. It investigates, interrogates, corroborates and contextualises, but it also counters disinformation. It asks questions that some parties would rather avoid. And it gives citizens the means to participate meaningfully in public life.

The damage caused by disinformation is real. UNESCO estimates that individual disinformation cases can incur economic and social costs of US\$350 billion to US\$510 billion - annually, through weakened public health responses, distorted elections, delayed climate action, financial losses, reputational harm and the erosion of trust in institutions. Disinformation is therefore not just a communications problem. It is a governance risk, an economic liability and a direct threat to people's ability to make informed decisions.

Public service broadcasters and independent news media organisations are a key counterweight to this problem. Their mandate is not to chase engagement at any cost, but to inform and serve all audiences. But they face the simultaneous pressures of fragmented

audiences, declining trust, political interference, financial constraints, platform dependency and rampant false, synthetic and manipulated content. Their struggle to keep producing quality journalism is not a sectoral concern, it's a democratic one.

The response must include renewed investment in public-interest journalism, editorial independence, fact-checking, open-source verification, media and information literacy, and collaboration across borders. Just as falsehoods travel globally, so purveyors of trusted journalism must cooperate transnationally. The information ecosystem would be poorer and much more fragile without public service media – but they cannot defend it alone.

On World News Day and the International Day for Universal Access to Information, the challenge is practical, and we call on all actors in the information space to do better:

- Governments must enforce access to information laws and protect independent oversight.
- Platforms and technology companies must take full responsibility for the information spaces they create, in total alignment with international human rights law.
- And media organisations of all stripes should always choose rigour over reach.

Free-flowing, reliable information is a shared benefit. But it depends on authorities that protect access to information, journalists who pursue truth above all else, and citizens' right to the facts. The integrity dividend is real, but it is only paid when all of us play our part.

By David Walmsley, President, World Editors Forum, Editor in Chief, Globe and Mail | Mariya Gabriel, Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information at UNESCO | Liz Corbin, Director of News, European Broadcasting Union.



Photo: AFP

PEOPLE'S GOAL WRITES 'WIND OF CHANGE' REPORT ON DEFECTION AND DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE MYANMAR MILITARY

The "Wind of Change" report provides a valuable and unusually detailed assessment of Myanmar's military through the eyes of people who have served inside the institution and subsequently defected.

Produced by People's Goal, the research is based on 60 in-depth interviews conducted between 2023 and 2026 with former soldiers, officers and military families. Its principal contribution is therefore not simply another account of Myanmar's conflict, but an attempt to understand what is happening inside the military: why personnel leave, why many remain, how morale has changed, why mass defections have not occurred and what a future security sector might look like.

One of the report's strongest findings is that dissatisfaction inside the military should not automatically be equated with defection. According to respondents, many personnel have lost confidence in the institution, particularly at lower and middle ranks, but remain trapped by surveillance, fear, economic dependency and concern for their families. Military

housing, healthcare, education, pensions and salaries create powerful structural ties, while the threat of retaliation against relatives makes individual resistance extraordinarily dangerous.

The report consequently challenges the assumption that declining morale will inevitably produce a rapid military collapse. Instead, it portrays an institution that is internally weakened but still capable of using coercion to maintain discipline.

The distinction between formal CDM participation and battlefield defection is particularly important. The research suggests that formal defections peaked in 2021 and subsequently declined, while battlefield desertions and surrenders may be increasing in areas where troops face intense combat pressure. This distinction gives the report considerable analytical value. A decline in registered CDM participation should not necessarily be interpreted as renewed loyalty to the military. Instead, the means and circumstances of departure may have changed.

Another significant conclusion concerns the military's resilience. The report argues that the junta's survival rests less on popular legitimacy than on coercion, economic dependency, conscription, information control and external assistance. Respondents describe remaining public compliance as frequently driven by fear, economic necessity or isolation from independent information rather than genuine political support.

At the same time, the military continues to receive critical external assistance, particularly material support, aviation fuel, weapons and aircraft from China and Russia. The report therefore presents resilience as a combination of internal coercive structures and external support rather than evidence of broad public acceptance.

The report is also significant because it looks beyond the immediate conflict toward security-sector reform. Its respondents overwhelmingly reject preservation of the military in its current form and instead favour rebuilding the security institution under civilian control.

The proposed Federal Democratic Army is envisaged as a fundamentally new institution, incorporating personnel from different communities and armed organisations while subordinating the military to elected civilian authorities. Importantly, the report does not pretend that such integration would be easy. It identifies mistrust between former enemies, accountability for abuses, questions of command, recruitment and training, and the difficult relationship with Ethnic Armed Organisations as major obstacles.

Its treatment of accountability is another strength. The report does not advocate automatically absorbing every former military member into a future army. It proposes vetting, retraining and merit-based reintegration for suitable lower-ranking personnel, while arguing that senior officers implicated in serious crimes should face appropriate legal processes. Defectors, meanwhile, are viewed as an important reservoir of military expertise, although even they should be subject to transparent standards. This creates a potentially useful bridge between accountability and the practical need for experienced personnel in a future security institution.

The report's principal limitation is also clear: its evidence comes exclusively from defectors and their families. It does not interview those who remain inside the military despite dissatisfaction, nor does it directly examine the views of EAOs on the proposed Federal Democratic Army.

The authors themselves acknowledge that the research does not yet incorporate the perspectives of Myanmar's diaspora and that further study is needed on the legal framework governing defections, including the Defence Services Act. This means some conclusions - particularly estimates of military morale, public support and the prospects for mass defections - should be treated as informed assessments rather than independently verified measurements.

Overall, Wind of Change is most valuable as an insider-informed study of a military that appears increasingly dependent on coercion while suffering serious erosion of morale and institutional cohesion. Its central warning is that weakness does not necessarily mean imminent collapse. The military may remain dangerous and resilient precisely because personnel who have lost faith in it still lack safe alternatives. The report's strongest policy message follows directly from this: supporting defectors is not simply humanitarian assistance. Providing legal status, livelihoods, family protection, vocational opportunities and credible reintegration pathways could influence the decisions of those still inside the military.

In that sense, the report is both an assessment of the present crisis and a blueprint for thinking about Myanmar's post-military future. Its greatest contribution is to demonstrate that any transition will have to address not only political power, but also the people, institutions, incentives and security structures that have sustained military rule.

In the Hague

A NEW REPORT ON NAVIGATING THE FORTHCOMING ICJ JUDGMENT IN THE GAMBIA V. MYANMAR

The forthcoming International Court of Justice (ICJ) judgment in the Gambia v. Myanmar case could be one of the most significant international legal decisions on genocide in recent history, according to the Special Advisory Council for Myanmar (SAC-M) in a press release 25 September.

It is a landmark opportunity to advance the Rohingya people's fight for justice.

Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) and SAC-M's new joint position paper entitled - "Navigating the Forthcoming ICJ Judgment in The Gambia v. Myanmar: A Roadmap for Member States"- explores a range of plausible judicial outcomes and their respective legal, diplomatic and operational implications for Myanmar's military junta and for states around the world.

The ICJ has never found a state directly responsible for genocide - such a finding against Myanmar would carry unprecedented consequences for the junta.

The paper therefore calls on Myanmar's pro-democracy revolutionary movement, states, international organisations, civil society, donors, and foremost Rohingya communities to prepare now - not after the judgment is delivered - for every plausible outcome.

With a judgment imminent, now is the moment for states to move from solidarity to preparation, and from preparation to action.

The following is an outline of the report.

The forthcoming judgment of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Gambia v. Myanmar represents a potentially decisive moment for the Rohingya and for international efforts to hold Myanmar

accountable for the atrocities committed against the Rohingya population. The case was brought by The Gambia in 2019 under the 1948 Genocide Convention. The ICJ imposed provisional measures in January 2020 and rejected Myanmar's preliminary objections in 2022. Following merits hearings in January 2026, the Court is now deliberating. The report argues that governments should prepare for several possible outcomes rather than simply wait for the judgment.

At the heart of the case is whether genocidal acts were committed against the Rohingya with the specific intent to destroy the group, in whole or in part, and whether those acts can legally be attributed to the State of Myanmar. The Gambia has sought not only a declaration that Myanmar committed genocide but also measures involving prevention, punishment, restitution, compensation and guarantees against repetition. These include safe and dignified return of Rohingya refugees, restoration of property and communal sites, family reunification, rehabilitation, protection against discrimination, freedom of movement, livelihoods and full and equal citizenship.

The report identifies five broad scenarios. The strongest is full attribution, in which the Court finds Myanmar directly responsible for genocide. This would provide the clearest legal foundation for reparations, return, property restoration and potentially structural reforms concerning citizenship. However, the report warns that the Court has historically been cautious about prescribing detailed domestic reforms or large compensation awards. Compensation could therefore be left for a later phase.

A second possibility is partial attribution. The Court could find that Myanmar failed to prevent or punish genocide, failed to legislate adequately, or was responsible for forms of incitement, complicity, conspiracy or attempt without finding that the state itself committed genocide. This would resemble aspects of the 2007 *Bosnia v. Serbia* judgment. It would nevertheless be legally important and could trigger consequences for a serious breach, although the scope for reparations would probably be narrower. Citizenship and return could remain relevant as guarantees of non-repetition.

A third outcome would be a finding that Myanmar breached the ICJ's 2020 provisional measures, even if the Court does not conclude that genocide was established to the required legal standard. This would still be significant because it would reinforce the binding character of ICJ orders and provide a potential basis for further action under Article 94 of the UN Charter. Restitution or compensation might be possible, although the Court could adopt a restrained approach.

A fourth possibility is a mixed or divided judgment, with the Court reaching different conclusions on genocidal intent, attribution and Myanmar's various obligations. Such an outcome could produce ambiguity and limit the scope of formal remedies. However, strong separate or dissenting opinions could become important reference points for governments, UN bodies and national courts. The report argues that advocacy should therefore pay attention not only to the operative paragraphs but also to the reasoning and separate opinions.

The fifth and most disappointing possibility is dismissal on the merits because the Court is not fully convinced that genocide or related breaches have been proven to the required standard. The report stresses that such an outcome must not be interpreted as vindication of Myanmar. It would not erase the underlying crimes or remove existing grounds for sanctions, arms restrictions, universal-jurisdiction proceedings, support for the International Criminal Court (ICC), cooperation with the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM), civil claims or continued political pressure.

The consequences of a positive judgment could extend well beyond Myanmar. A serious finding would strengthen the legal basis for third states to avoid recognising unlawful situations, refrain from providing assistance that helps maintain them, and cooperate to bring violations to an end. This could affect arms transfers, jet-fuel supplies, surveillance technology, financial links and economic relationships with military-controlled entities.

The judgment could also strengthen universal-jurisdiction cases against individual Myanmar officials. An ICJ finding would not automatically establish an individual's criminal guilt, but could become highly persuasive evidence concerning the broader crime base and encourage national prosecutors to pursue investigations and arrest warrants. The longer-term effect could therefore be to make international travel increasingly difficult for officials and commanders implicated in atrocities.

For ASEAN, the report envisages greater pressure against premature Rohingya repatriation, expanded regional protection and safe pathways, tighter scrutiny of diplomatic and economic engagement with the junta, and stronger incentives for compliance. Supportive states could pursue new UN resolutions, sanctions, a victims' trust fund, a Register of Damages and renewed efforts for an ICC referral or other accountability mechanism.

The most important conclusion is that the ICJ judgment will not itself deliver justice. Its impact will depend on what governments, ASEAN, Bangladesh, the UN, civil society and the Rohingya community do afterwards. Even a strong judgment could fail to produce meaningful change if states do not enforce its implications. Conversely, a disappointing judgment need not end accountability efforts. The report therefore recommends preparing for every scenario, ensuring that the international response is immediate and coordinated rather than allowing the judgment to become simply another statement of concern.

In practical terms, the most plausible outcome described by the report is a cautious or partially positive judgment rather than the most expansive possible ruling. The paper specifically says that declarations combined with general punishment-related obligations are the likely path, reflecting the ICJ's traditionally restrained approach to remedies.

The important point is that even a partial victory could have substantial consequences: greater diplomatic isolation for Myanmar, stronger pressure on ASEAN, increased scrutiny of military-linked finance and trade, stronger evidence for universal-jurisdiction cases, and renewed pressure for Rohingya protection and eventual voluntary, safe and dignified return. A negative judgment, meanwhile, would be damaging politically but would not end the wider accountability process.

Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) and SAC-M call for preparation now – rather than waiting to respond after the verdict.



SIX CIVILIANS KILLED AND 16 INJURED IN 11 DAYS OF MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKES IN RAKHINE

Six civilians were killed and 16 others injured within 11 days, from September 17 to 27, due to airstrikes conducted by the military junta forces in the Arakan or Rakhine region, the Arakan Army (AA) announced in a statement dated 27 September.

The AA alleged that the military junta forces, facing military defeats on the battlefronts across the Rakhine, have been conducting daily aerial bombings targeting non-military sites. These targets include schools, religious buildings, hospitals, clinics, displacement camps, and civilian residential areas.

According to the AA's statement, airstrikes were carried out during this period in Ann, Gwa, Kyauktaw, Ponnagyun, Pauktaw, Rathedaung, Thandwe, and Mrauk-U townships.

On the morning of 27 September, a Y-12 transport aircraft and a fighter jet bombed an area near Lay Eain Su village in Ann Township. While there were no human casualties, one cow was injured, the AA reported.

On 25 September, a fighter jet attacked Kyeintali

town and Yay Kyaw village in Gwa Township. The attack injured three local civilians and damaged 13 houses in Kyeintali town. In Yay Kyaw village, monastery buildings and 11 houses were destroyed, and two cows were killed, the statement detailed.

On 24 September, a Y-12 aircraft bombed Kyauktaw town and its surrounding areas, injuring seven civilians, including two children under the age of 10, the AA said.

On the night of 23 September, an attack involving one Y-12 plane and two fighter jets struck Phet Kya village in Ponnagyun Township, killing two civilians, destroying 25 homes, and killing a pig and a cow, according to the AA.

On 21 September, a fighter jet bombed Sat Thwar village in Gwa Township, injuring two civilians, destroying two shops and a house, and killing two goats. On the morning of that day, two fighter jets also struck near a school in Taung Hpu village, Pauktaw Township, damaging school buildings, the AA said.

On 20 September, fighter jets launched five attacks near Taung Hpu village and the historic Taung Hpu Pagoda in Pauktaw Township. A woman was killed and another person was injured, while an ordination hall and a monastery were destroyed, the statement described.

On the same day, heavy artillery shelling on Zee Kaing village in Rathedaung Township killed two civilians. Additionally, three fighter jet strikes on Kalar Chaung village in Ponnagyun Township killed one civilian and destroyed six houses, according to the AA.

On 18 September, three fighter jets attacked areas near Thit Ngok To and Ohn Myay villages in Thandwe Township, injuring one civilian.

On 17 September, four fighter jets bombed former military junta bases in Mrauk-U, the AA stated.

Additionally, just past midnight on 26 September, a Y-12 plane attacked Ein Za Na Pu Ra town in Minbya Township, injuring one civilian, the AA reported.



MYANMAR JUNTA CANCELS MORE THAN 470,000 MANDALAY SIM CARDS SINCE AUGUST BUT ARRESTS JUST 42 IN 2026 ONLINE SCAM CASES

Myanmar's military regime has permanently deactivated more than 470,000 SIM cards in Mandalay Region since August, even as arrests for online scams across the region in 2026 stand at just 42 suspects.

The scale of the deactivations was disclosed by Colonel Nay Lin Soe, the region's Security and Border Affairs Minister, at the fourth regular session of the Mandalay Region Hluttaw on 24 September. He said the cards had been connected to cyber scams and illegal slot-gambling schemes operated through Viber, SMS and Telegram, and linked to online financial fraud and human trafficking.

The junta cited two legal instruments as the basis for the deactivations: Sections 33(d) and 38 of the Electronic Transactions Law, and the Online Fraud Law enacted on 31 July 2026. Actual arrests recorded over three years were far smaller than the deactivation figure. Colonel Nay Lin Soe reported seven cases involving 116 suspects in 2024, two cases involving five suspects in 2025, and four cases involving 42 suspects so far in 2026. Chinese nationals were among those detained each year.

Since seizing power in the February 2021 coup, the military has steadily extended state control over Myanmar's telecommunications sector. A mandatory biometric SIM-card registration system introduced from 2022 required every user to link their phone number

to their identity. Earlier this year the regime added mandatory International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) registration of handsets, and in July it imposed compulsory mobile phone registration on international travellers entering the country.

Rights groups have warned since 2022 that Myanmar's biometric SIM and device registration systems are open to surveillance uses far broader than the anti-fraud framing offered by the regime. Privacy International has described the wider registration scheme as "dangerous," and the Myanmar Internet Project earlier this year said the IMEI system would deepen the junta's ability to track users. The regime has not published data on how the 470,000 users identified for deactivation were selected, whether any appeal mechanism exists, or how many of the cancelled numbers belonged to individuals not connected to any prosecution.

The expansion of the anti-scam legal framework has come as the regime faces sustained pressure from Beijing over Chinese-run scam compounds operating along Myanmar's border regions, where thousands of trafficked workers have been held. The Mandalay case tally recorded by Colonel Nay Lin Soe does not include any of the operations at those border compounds, and the regime has not identified where the operations run out of the cancelled Mandalay numbers were based.



MONDE SELECTION REVOKES QUALITY AWARDS TO MILITARY-OWNED MYANMAR BEER AND DAGON

Info Birmanie and Justice For Myanmar welcome the decision of Monde Selection, a Belgian company which assesses the quality of consumer goods, to revoke awards given to Myanmar military-owned beer, spirit and soft drink brands and to remove them from its website, according to a press release 28 September.

The decision comes after Dagon Beverages Company Limited was awarded several prizes at Monde Selection's 2026 award ceremony held at the Quai d'Orsay, the headquarters of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs in Paris.

In August 2026, Info Birmanie and Justice For Myanmar wrote to Monde Selection calling for the awards to be revoked on sanctions and human rights grounds.

A representative of Monde Selection confirmed that the military-owned Dagon Beverages and Myanmar Brewery have been removed from its client list and all references to the companies have been removed from the website, revoking previously granted recognition of the award.

Dagon Beverages, whose brands include Dagon Lager Beer, Dagon Extra Strong, Dagon Royal Rum, Dagon Malta Fresh and Dagon Fresh Lemon Sparkling, is a fully owned subsidiary of the military conglomerate Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC).

Myanmar Brewery, whose brands include Myanmar Beer, Black Shield and Andaman Gold, last received awards from Monde Selection in 2023. It is a fully owned subsidiary of the military conglomerate Myanma Economic Holdings Limited (MEHL).

MEC and MEHL are sanctioned by the EU, UK, US, Canada and Australia.

Monde Selection has written to MEC, MEHL, Dagon Beverages and Myanmar Brewery to inform them that they no longer have the rights to use the Monde Selection Quality Award logo.

Products from these breweries have been a target of a massive boycott campaign to cut off funds to the military. The boycott campaign has been a powerful tool of resistance against an illegal military junta that commits mass arbitrary arrests, killings and torture.

Funds raised through the two military conglomerates are a direct source of income for the military and its generals, providing revenue to continue to commit international crimes with total impunity. The importance of these conglomerates in the military's ability to commit atrocities has been widely reported, including in a report by the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission in 2019 that named Dagon Beverages and Myanmar Brewery.

While Monde Selection states it was not aware of the companies' links to the military and took swift action, its longstanding relationship with Dagon Beverages and Myanmar Brewery could be a violation of the EU's restrictive measures, and it demonstrates a lack of due diligence and corporate responsibility.

To enter the competition, Dagon Beverages and Myanmar Brewery paid fees to Monde Selection, and in return received services in the form of awards for use in marketing.

Monde Selection's awards to subsidiaries of the two EU-sanctioned military conglomerates raise questions over the enforcement of sanctions by France and Belgium and the exposure of EU banks to payments from sanctioned Myanmar military companies.

It is deeply concerning that representatives from Dagon Beverages may have obtained Schengen visas to travel to France and pursue business interests that benefit MEC in 2026. Close scrutiny should be given to the source of the funds used by the Myanmar 'brewers' at Dagon Beverages to finance possible travel to France, as well as to the procedures for verifying and obtaining any visas and access to French Foreign affairs official buildings.

Info Birmanie and Justice For Myanmar call on Belgian and French authorities to investigate potential breaches of EU sanctions in relation to payments from MEC and MEHL companies to Monde Selection, including through EU banks, the provision of services to MEC and MEHL companies, any visas issued to representatives of these companies, the source of funds for any travel, and the use of the French foreign affairs building for the award.

Info Birmanie and Justice For Myanmar call on the EU and its member states to rigorously enforce its

sanctions on Myanmar and widen them to cover all of the junta's sources of funds, arms and aviation fuel.

Johanna Chardonnières, coordinator of Info Birmanie

"This case should be a reminder to every company of how interconnected the actual economic world is – in times of peace and war. A proper due diligence process to avoid supporting human rights violations in Myanmar and other countries is now a necessity.

"It is good to have a company that recognises and responds quickly to issues relating to sanctions and human rights, but the real question is: how can a company owned by a conglomerate under EU sanctions make payments in Europe without raising any red flags?

"Despite the terror, millions of Myanmar people have decided to resist and are collectively targeting the military's resources through a boycott. From the comfort of Brussels, European leaders should act in accordance with their principles and continue to impose targeted sanctions on the junta."

Yadanar Maung, spokesperson of Justice For Myanmar

"Dagon and Myanmar Beer fund a brutal and murderous military junta to torture and slaughter Myanmar people.

"It is deeply concerning that representatives of conglomerates that fund terror in Myanmar have been able to make payments and promote their dirty business in the EU.

"France and Belgium must now take action to ensure accountability for all violations of EU sanctions, and to prevent the heavily sanctioned Myanmar junta and its conglomerates from doing any further business in the EU and with EU companies.

"The people of Myanmar have courageously resisted the illegal junta for well over five years. It's time for the EU to take action to stand with the Myanmar people and widen and fully enforce its sanctions to block the junta's ability to continue its campaign of terror."



Thai refugee camp. Photo: Supplied

6,800 REFUGEES LEAVE THAI BORDER CAMPS TO WORK IN POLICY'S FIRST YEAR

More than 6,800 refugees have left Thailand's nine border camps to work legally in the year since the Royal Thai Government opened that pathway, the Karenni Refugee Committee, the Karen Refugee Committee and The Border Consortium said in a joint statement on 1 October.

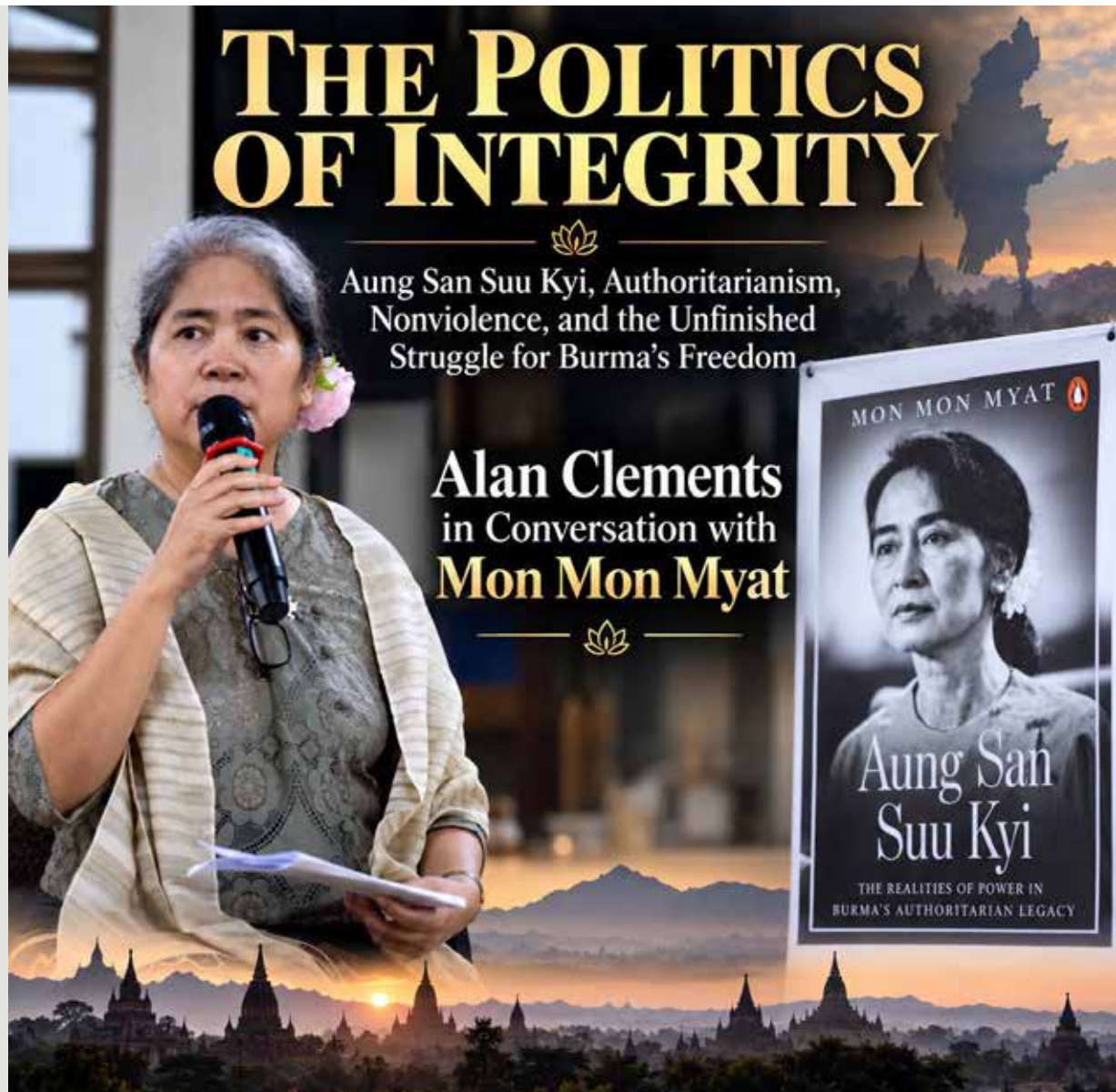
Refugees living in the nine camps along the Thailand-Myanmar border became able to leave camp for legal employment on 1 October 2025, according to the statement. More are leaving to take up work every day, sending money back to their families and helping them meet their own needs, the three organisations said, describing the transition as fully supported by refugee committees who regard it as the route to self-reliance.

Much of the machinery behind that movement has been built by refugees themselves. Committee members are visiting farms, companies and worksites to identify openings and meet employers directly, coordinating with Thai authorities, village heads and employers to arrange safe travel and settle disputes, and tracking those who leave, according to the statement. Every camp now operates a complaint and response mechanism, and committees organise pre-departure training and recruit the trainers for it. They are also drafting contracts and rules to protect refugees working outside, and pressing employers to open opportunities to women.

This has taken place alongside what the statement calls massive funding reductions. Refugee committees have absorbed a large share of work previously carried out on their behalf, including waste management, sanitation and healthcare, while continuing day-to-day community and protection work such as awareness raising on gender-based violence, child safety and substance use, the statement said. Refugee governance is a genuine asset to the wider community around the camps as well as inside them, the three organisations said.

Barriers remain. Eligibility for the right to work does not extend to all refugees, and older people and refugees with disabilities have fewer opportunities open to them, according to the statement. Refugees are still largely treated as a source of low-cost labour although their skills run to management, health and education, the three organisations said, adding that they are working with relevant Royal Thai Government departments to make refugee employment safe, fair and sustainable. As humanitarian funding becomes less certain, the limited money that remains must be coordinated closely with refugee committees so that it matches refugees' skills and needs, the statement said.

The three organisations said camp committees have shown they can absorb an expanding range of responsibilities, and called for investment that matches that capacity, particularly stipends for camp management.



THE POLITICS OF INTEGRITY

Aung San Suu Kyi, Authoritarianism, Nonviolence, and the Unfinished Struggle for Burma's Freedom

Alan Clements
in Conversation with
Mon Mon Myat

INTRODUCTION

Few political lives of the past half-century have been subjected to as dramatic an international reversal of narrative as that of Aung San Suu Kyi. For decades she embodied, for millions of Burmese and admirers around the world, the moral courage of nonviolent resistance to military dictatorship. The daughter of independence hero General Aung San, she emerged during Burma's 1988 uprising, endured years of house arrest, received the Nobel Peace Prize, led the National League for Democracy to overwhelming electoral victories, entered government under a constitution preserving extraordinary military power, faced international condemnation during the Rohingya crisis, represented Myanmar before the International Court of Justice, and, following the military coup of February 1, 2021, disappeared once again into detention.

But history is not merely what happens. History is also the struggle over how what happened will be remembered.

In the years following the catastrophe in Rakhine State, much of the international narrative surrounding Aung San Suu Kyi changed with extraordinary speed. The democracy icon was recast in headlines, commentary, and political discourse as something approaching her opposite. For those of us who actually knew Aung San Suu Kyi, spoke with her, worked alongside her, studied her thought, witnessed the conditions under which she operated, and understood something of the military system she was attempting to transform, the distance between the woman we encountered and the woman constructed in much international commentary could be profound.

This does not mean that proximity makes us infallible, that friendship eliminates the obligation to question, or that the terrible suffering of Rohingya civilians should ever be diminished. It means something simpler and more demanding: historical judgment must be grounded in evidence, context, actions, words, constitutional realities, and the testimony of those closest to events—not merely in the repetition of an international narrative until repetition itself begins to masquerade as fact.

The danger in recounting Aung San Suu Kyi's political trajectory is therefore not only that a human being can disappear inside mythology. A human being can also disappear inside propaganda, geopolitical fashion, selective reporting, accumulated assumptions, and the psychological comfort of a simplified moral verdict. Saint, traitor, democracy icon, nationalist, political prisoner, failed liberal hero: each label may reveal something about the people applying it, but none is sufficient to explain the woman, the political philosophy she developed, or the authoritarian system within which she attempted to operate. Aung San Suu Kyi deserves neither canonization nor caricature. She deserves the far more difficult discipline of being understood.

Dr. Mon Mon Myat's new book, *Aung San Suu Kyi: The Realities of Power in Burma's Authoritarian Legacy*, published by Penguin Random House Southeast Asia in 2026, attempts precisely this more difficult inquiry. Rather than beginning with the rise and fall of an international icon, she examines the philosophical architecture of Aung San Suu Kyi's political life: her understanding of power, fear, moral courage, nonviolence, responsibility, democracy, Buddhist ethics, and what she called a "spiritual revolution." Penguin describes the book as a philosophical exploration drawing on personal interviews and close observation of Suu Kyi's political journey.

Mon Mon Myat brings unusual proximity to the subject. A Myanmar-born academic, journalist, filmmaker, and media consultant, she holds a Ph.D. in

Peacebuilding from Payap University in Thailand, where her doctoral research examined the philosophical foundations of Aung San Suu Kyi's political thought. She has held senior positions with the Democratic Voice of Burma and currently serves on the faculty at Payap University. She also produced *A Long Way Panglong*, documenting Suu Kyi's political journey from 2012 to 2016. Her book emerges not from distant commentary but from scholarship, personal interviews, journalism, filmmaking, and close observation of the turbulent transition from dissident politics to governmental responsibility.

I had the privilege of writing the foreword to Mon Mon Myat's book. My own relationship with Burma extends back nearly half a century, first through Buddhist monastic life and later through journalism, human rights, political prisoners, ethnic communities, and Burma's democracy movement. In 1995, during Aung San Suu Kyi's release from house arrest, she and I began the conversations that became *The Voice of Hope*. We also shared the same Dhamma teacher, the late Venerable Sayadaw U Pandita.

Mon Mon Myat and I therefore approach Aung San Suu Kyi from different but intersecting histories. Neither of us believes that respect should require the suspension of critical thought. But neither should critical thought require the suspension of context, firsthand knowledge, historical memory, or the willingness to question a dominant international narrative.

The Rohingya catastrophe, the limitations and compromises of Suu Kyi's years in government, the military's constitutional power, the post-2021 armed resistance, and the immense suffering of Myanmar's peoples cannot responsibly be reduced to a single moral narrative. Nor can this conversation be separated from the people whose lives exist beyond political theory: prisoners in cells, families divided by war, displaced communities, soldiers, resistance fighters, refugees, and young people inheriting consequences they did not create.

The question animating this conversation is consequently larger than one woman: Can political integrity survive inside an authoritarian system? What happens when nonviolence confronts organized violence? Can justice be pursued without vengeance? And after generations of dictatorship, how does a society dismantle not merely the dictator, but the psychology and institutions that continually reproduce authoritarian power?

ALAN CLEMENTS: Mon Mon Myat, I've now read your book three times. You trace an extraordinary arc: Aung San Suu Kyi as dissident, political prisoner, Nobel laureate, elected leader, stateswoman, internationally condemned figure, and prisoner once again. You traveled with her, recorded her talks, studied her political philosophy, and observed her transition from opposition to government. After all that research and proximity, who is Aung San Suu Kyi?

MON MON MYAT: The word "politician" is not something I imposed upon her. When she was once asked directly, "Who are you?" she answered, "I'm a politician." I became interested in why she chose that word.

Using Max Weber as one lens, I began to see three political lives. From 1988 until roughly 2012, she was what I call a voluntary politician. She helped establish the National League for Democracy because she wanted to use political rather than armed means to transform Myanmar. Nobody paid her. She invested her life voluntarily, knowing that she could lose her family, freedom, and perhaps her life.

After entering parliament in 2012, she became a professional politician. Following the 2015 election, she became something else again: a stateswoman. Her responsibility was no longer simply to the NLD. She was responsible for the nation and for an extraordinarily difficult attempt at systemic change.

She also possessed three forms of authority Weber describes: traditional authority associated with being General Aung San's daughter; charismatic authority

arising from her relationship with the people; and legitimate authority conferred through elections. Yet many people outside Myanmar knew her principally through international headlines. They imagined her according to what they wanted her to represent rather than examining the compromises and constraints of trying to transform an authoritarian system from within.

ALAN CLEMENTS: What illuminated my own understanding of Daw Suu during the hours I spent in dialogue with her was that she rarely separated politics from everyday ethics. Politics encompassed freedom of speech and assembly, human rights, religion, psychology, responsibility, conscience, and human dignity.

But respect for her requires making the question harder. The qualities that create an extraordinary dissident do not necessarily make governing simple. Once moral authority becomes governmental responsibility, you inherit institutions, compromises, competing populations, constitutional constraints, and consequences you cannot entirely control.

And there is something else I think we need to say plainly. Those of us who knew her personally should not have to apologize for knowing her. Proximity can create attachment, certainly, but it can also reveal what distance cannot. I heard her thinking when there were no cameras present. I witnessed something of her relationship with Sayadaw U Pandita, her understanding of Dhamma, her discipline around fear and hatred, and the moral vocabulary through which she understood political responsibility. That experience does not make my interpretation definitive, but neither should firsthand knowledge be treated as less meaningful than the judgments of people who never met her.

What did you learn about that collision between Aung San Suu Kyi and the authoritarian system she was attempting to change?

MON MON MYAT: Myanmar's authoritarianism is deeply connected to militarism and to the belief that

might is right. Security becomes the securing of power rather than the securing of people.

Aung San Suu Kyi challenged that assumption without possessing an army. Before fully entering party politics, she sought communication and dialogue with those in power. Eventually she helped establish the NLD and built another form of authority based upon people voluntarily giving her their trust.

International attention, particularly after the Nobel Peace Prize, increased her moral authority but also created expectations she had never entirely constructed herself. She carried two burdens. Inside Myanmar she represented an enormous popular challenge to military authority. Internationally she became the bearer of expectations created by Western ideas about democracy and human rights. Both increased the military's fear of her, yet she still possessed no coercive power.

ALAN CLEMENTS: There is an important distinction between power and force. A gun can make someone kneel, but it cannot make someone believe. It can produce obedience but not legitimacy. Yet the reverse question is equally difficult: Can legitimacy survive indefinitely without sufficient institutional power to protect it?

Aung San Suu Kyi consistently chose nonviolence. But imagine a nineteen-year-old Burmese resistance fighter today saying, "We tried peaceful protest. They shot us. They imprisoned and tortured our friends. They bombed our communities. Are you asking me to remain nonviolent until I'm dead?"

I cannot ask that question abstractly. Somewhere behind the word "resistance" is a young person with a mother, a lover, a childhood, perhaps a dream of becoming a doctor, musician, teacher, or simply living an ordinary life. Somewhere behind the word "military" is another human being who has also been conditioned by a system. None of this erases responsibility. It makes responsibility more painfully human.

What does nonviolence mean when the person refusing violence is confronted by someone who does not refuse it? And the inverse question troubles me equally: If armed resistance succeeds but teaches another generation that political legitimacy ultimately comes from the gun, what exactly has been liberated?

MON MON MYAT: I asked Aung San Suu Kyi something similar in my first interview with her in December 2010. I asked how she would answer people who doubted whether nonviolence could actually bring political change.

Her answer stayed with me. She said, in essence, that nonviolence takes time, but if the goal is eventually reached through nonviolent means, the wounds may be fewer and easier to heal. Armed struggle may sometimes appear to reach a goal more quickly, but bloodshed, trauma, hatred, and revenge become extraordinarily difficult to heal.

After the 2021 coup, I understood those words differently. Many young people believed they had no alternative and entered armed resistance. You cannot understand their decisions without understanding what happened to them. But we must also remain honest about what violence does to a society.

The question is therefore not simply whether nonviolence has limits. It is whether the international community is willing to protect political spaces in which nonviolent change remains possible.

ALAN CLEMENTS: Looking back at Daw Suu's years in government, is there something you wish she had done differently?

MON MON MYAT: People ask me that frequently, and I often return the question: Put yourself in Aung San Suu Kyi's shoes. What would you actually have done? Her choices were limited, the meaningful governing period was short, and civilian power was constitutionally constrained.

The Rohingya crisis became the most internationally consequential example. Bill Richardson and others argued that she failed to provide moral leadership. International criticism concentrated heavily upon her language and her public response. But we also need to examine actions. Her government supported the Kofi Annan-led Advisory Commission on Rakhine State and attempted to implement recommendations involving citizenship and legal status. Those processes were imperfect and contested, but they existed.

I also do not interpret her appearance before the International Court of Justice simply as defending the military. I understand her as representing Myanmar and defending what she believed to be the truth concerning the specific legal accusation before the Court.

ALAN CLEMENTS: This is where the conversation must remain uncomfortable. Nothing we say should diminish the catastrophic suffering of Rohingya civilians: people killed, terrorized and displaced, families and communities shattered. Their suffering cannot become merely an instrument in an argument about Aung San Suu Kyi.

At the same time, Daw Suu was attempting to govern within a constitutional order in which the military retained extraordinary autonomous power. And at the same time again, her words, silences, decisions, and appearance at the ICJ remain legitimate subjects of moral and historical scrutiny. All three realities have to fit inside the room.

At the ICJ, Aung San Suu Kyi appeared formally as Myanmar's Agent in her capacity as foreign minister. That distinction matters. One can disagree profoundly with what she argued there, but historical accuracy requires examining what she actually said, what legal case was before the Court, what authority the civilian government possessed, and what she believed she was doing.

People can argue that she should have spoken differently, demonstrated greater public solidarity

with Rohingya suffering, confronted the military more explicitly, or used different language. Those are serious arguments. But serious criticism should begin with what she actually did and said rather than with either sanctification or caricature.

My love and respect for Daw Suu do not require me to place her beyond questioning. They require that the questions themselves be worthy of the truth. Integrity cannot mean protecting someone we love from difficult inquiry. But neither can it mean accepting a preassembled verdict because it has become internationally fashionable. If integrity is the subject of this conversation, intellectual integrity requires us to interrogate the narrative about Aung San Suu Kyi with the same rigor with which we interrogate Aung San Suu Kyi herself.

MON MON MYAT: This is why I return to political integrity. Aung San Suu Kyi's international reputation changed dramatically after the Rohingya crisis, but international reputation and integrity are not the same thing.

I studied her political philosophy, observed her political journey, interviewed her, and examined the system within which she attempted to govern. What I saw cannot simply be erased because the international narrative changed.

At the ICJ, I believe she defended what she understood to be the truth regarding the specific allegation of genocidal intent. Courts must decide the legal questions. I am describing her political reasoning as I understand it.

Maybe internationally people believe she betrayed democracy or human rights. But for many of us who followed her life and political history closely, she did not lose her moral authority. Her reputation changed internationally, but I believe her spirit remained free. Even when physically detained, nobody could completely detain her mind or spirit.

ALAN CLEMENTS: There is another dimension of Daw Suu that is essential to understanding her politics. We shared the same meditation and Dhamma teacher, Sayadaw U Pandita. I sat in conversations involving the two of them, sometimes with U Tin Oo and others, so I witnessed something of the contemplative and ethical language from which she drew.

This Dhamma was not merely meditation understood as closing one's eyes and observing the breath. It was rigorous training in one's relationship to consciousness: how fear becomes hatred, how injury becomes vilification, how perception hardens into certainty, and how easily we manufacture an enemy and then use that enemy to justify what we ourselves become.

Daw Suu was deeply conversant in non-vilification, non-demonization, listening before judging, understanding the conditions that produce another person's viewpoint without necessarily agreeing with it, and seeing the humanity of an opponent without surrendering principle.

That matters enormously in a country as wounded and divided as Myanmar. Reconciliation is not pretending atrocities did not happen. Listening is not surrendering discernment. Forgiveness is not impunity. The harder question is whether I can oppose you without allowing hatred of you to determine the quality of my own consciousness.

Toward the end of Sayadaw U Pandita's life, I asked him about the Dhamma of national reconciliation. His answer was demanding: human beings need the courage not to do what is wrong, the courage to do and say what is beneficial, and, when they have done wrong, the courage to acknowledge it. He spoke of mettā, forbearance, and confronting the internal enemies of greed, hatred, and delusion.

That ethic applies to everyone—generals, revolutionaries, governments, journalists, Daw Suu, and

me. None of it places her beyond criticism. If Dhamma means anything, it requires self-examination.

MON MON MYAT: One of the things I most want to carry from Aung San Suu Kyi is truthfulness. She might call it political integrity. I'm not a politician, but whatever I do—as a writer, academic, educator, filmmaker, or simply someone trying to help people—I want to act with integrity and truthfulness because those qualities can last.

Her political journey went up and down. International opinion changed. But what I believe she continued to hold was her political integrity. That is the spiritual essence I want to carry into my own life and share with my students.

ALAN CLEMENTS: Let's widen the lens. I increasingly resist the language of "the dictator" because it encourages the fantasy that authoritarianism is one man. A face appears—Min Aung Hlaing, or some other ruler—and the face becomes the explanation. Remove him, we imagine, and the system disappears.

But dictatorship is an ecosystem. It includes military institutions, ministries, business networks, families, cronies, banks, resource extraction, international trade, weapons, aviation fuel, surveillance, technology, foreign governments, and geopolitical interests. Somewhere a weapon is designed, manufactured, financed, transported, maintained, and eventually used. Responsibility does not begin only with the person who pulls the trigger.

There is also a psychological ecosystem: fear, obedience, silence, opportunism, propaganda, resentment, inherited trauma, the desire for security, the fear of losing privilege, and the normalization of what once seemed intolerable.

So dismantling authoritarianism requires something infinitely more demanding than removing one general.

How do people conditioned by domination stop reproducing domination themselves? If a revolution changes only who holds the gun, has it transformed the architecture that made dictatorship possible?

And perhaps this is the most intimate political question of all: Where does the dictator live in us? Where do domination, certainty, humiliation, vengeance, and the desire to control another human being reproduce themselves inside our own consciousness? A revolution capable of transforming Burma may ultimately have to occur simultaneously in institutions and in the human heart.

Where, after everything Myanmar has endured, do you find hope?

MON MON MYAT: I return to a principle associated with Gandhi: a relatively small number of rulers cannot indefinitely control millions of people if those people ultimately refuse to cooperate.

Myanmar has tens of millions of people. If enough reach the point where they no longer accept this authoritarian legacy, eventually even soldiers must understand that people do not want it anymore.

When a mother refuses to surrender her son to a military order because she knows it is unjust for him to die for the preservation of military power, that becomes an individual revolution against dictatorship. These everyday acts matter. That is where I find hope.

ALAN CLEMENTS: And this returns us to Aung San Suu Kyi. Not because one woman can magically save a country, and not because her record should be immune from criticism, but because releasing her could return an enormously consequential Burmese political voice to the national conversation.

I imagine the possibility—not the certainty—of Daw Suu emerging and saying: Stop killing long enough for us to hear one another. Find a way toward

ceasefire. Bring democratic forces, ethnic nationalities, resistance movements, military representatives, religious leaders, women, artists, intellectuals, and international mediators into sustained dialogue. Give Burma enough silence to discover whether political imagination remains alive.

After so much bloodshed, perhaps even imagining such a room has become a radical act. But someone eventually has to imagine the first conversation after the last gunshot.

Do you believe her release could still matter in that way?

MON MON MYAT: Yes. That is why I believe her immediate release is important. People have suffered enormously. Young people are losing their lives in war. I believe Aung San Suu Kyi could have an important role in helping to stop the conflict.

Her release could bring international attention and perhaps help begin movement toward ceasefire and dialogue. After that, justice still has to be addressed because there cannot be sustainable peace by simply pretending that nothing happened. Too many people have suffered.

ALAN CLEMENTS: Then perhaps the deepest question is how to create justice without becoming what we oppose. How do we confront authoritarianism without becoming authoritarian ourselves? How do we demand accountability without becoming intoxicated by humiliation and revenge? How do we recognize the humanity of someone whose actions we may find abhorrent without confusing humanity with absolution?

For me, after nearly half a century of Burma—monasteries and prisons, dissidents and generals, courage and betrayal, hope and unbearable loss—I increasingly feel that this is not merely a philosophical question. It is the question: What quality of human being do we become while attempting to create the world we claim to want?

I want to end with you rather than with governments, generals, courts, or even Daw Suu. Imagine a young Burmese person finding your book fifty years from now. Perhaps today's governments no longer exist. Perhaps authoritarianism has acquired forms we cannot presently imagine. What would you want that person to receive from your life and from your study of Aung San Suu Kyi?

MON MON MYAT: I would return to truthfulness and integrity. Whatever I do, whether I am a writer, academic, educator, or something else, I want to do it with integrity because integrity can last beyond political popularity.

That is what I want to carry from Aung San Suu Kyi. I am not going to become a politician. My role is to share what I have learned through writing and education. My students come from different parts of Myanmar, and I try to share what I understand about the nonviolent spirit of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Whether she is alive or not, that spirit can remain alive. It is like lighting one candle from another. She has planted seeds. Future generations will decide how that garden grows and whether they allow it to blossom.

ALAN CLEMENTS: Perhaps that is the right place to leave this conversation—not with a verdict on Aung San Suu Kyi, and certainly not with another mythology, but with the responsibility that remains when mythology falls away. A candle can illuminate, but it cannot choose for us. A seed can contain possibility, but every generation must decide what it will cultivate. Burma's unfinished struggle is therefore not only for freedom from authoritarian rule. It is for the inner and outer conditions in which freedom does not reproduce the very forces it struggled to overcome.

Thank you, Mon Mon Myat, for your scholarship, your honesty, and, most of all, for remaining willing to inhabit the difficult territory where love of one's country, respect for another human being, and the obligation to question everything can coexist.

ABOUT ALAN CLEMENTS

Alan Clements is an author, investigative journalist, former Buddhist monk, and longtime advocate for human rights and freedom of conscience in Burma. He trained in Buddhist psychology and meditation in Burma under the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw and Sayadaw U Pandita. After being expelled from Burma by the military authorities in 1984, he returned during the country's democratic uprising and subsequently documented the lives of political prisoners, dissidents, monks, ethnic communities, artists, and democracy activists.

In 1995, following Aung San Suu Kyi's release from six years of house arrest, Clements conducted an extensive series of conversations with her in Rangoon. Those conversations became *The Voice of Hope*. His subsequent work on Burma includes *Burma: The Next Killing Fields?*, *Burma's Revolution of the Spirit*, and the multi-volume *Burma's Voices of Freedom*. He is also the author of *Conversation with a Dictator*, *Unsilenced*, and his latest book, *Politics of the Heart: Nonviolence in an Age of Atrocity*. Clements wrote the foreword to Mon Mon Myat's *Aung San Suu Kyi: The Realities of Power in Burma's Authoritarian Legacy*.

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.

Truth. Voice. Future.

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



The banner features a scenic view of Prague's Old Town Bridge and Charles Bridge over the Vltava River. In the foreground, there is a glass teapot, a cup of coffee with latte art, and a cup of tea. The background shows the historic architecture of Prague.

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The Asian Tea & Coffee Festival will be held in Prague in the Czech Republic at the Opero on 23 October 2026. The aim is to bring together those interested in connecting, trading and investing in products from the hot beverage industry in Asia.

The festival aims to bring together those interested in the Asian hot beverage industry in Europe, including Thai and Asian companies, and members of the Myanmar diaspora in Europe.

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CHINA'S FENTANYL TRADE AND THE GAPS IN BEIJING'S CRACKDOWN

SUN LEE



The fentanyl crisis is often described through the deaths it causes in American cities or the cartels that manufacture and distribute it from Mexico. Less visible is the chemical infrastructure that makes this trade possible. Much of the illicit fentanyl reaching the United States is manufactured in Mexico using precursor chemicals sourced from China. Chinese companies may not always ship the finished drug, but they remain deeply embedded in the supply chain that produces it, supplies it and moves the proceeds of its sale.

This distinction has become central to the diplomatic dispute between Washington and Beijing. China maintains that it has already taken substantial steps to control fentanyl-related substances, while American authorities argue that Chinese chemical firms, brokers and money-laundering networks continue to support the trade. The disagreement is not simply about whether China has introduced regulations. It concerns the gap between regulation on paper and enforcement across a vast chemical industry whose products can be sold legally, diverted illegally and exported through intermediaries.

The scale of the problem is difficult to measure because precursor chemicals are not themselves fentanyl, and many have legitimate industrial uses. Nevertheless, the available evidence points to a supply chain in which Chinese manufacturers and exporters play a critical role. The United States Congressional Research Service has described the current pattern in clear terms. Most illicit fentanyl destined for the American market is produced clandestinely in Mexico, while the necessary precursor chemicals are largely sourced from China. This has shifted the geography of the trade without eliminating China's importance.

From finished fentanyl to precursor chemicals

China's role in the fentanyl trade changed after Beijing placed fentanyl-class substances under national control in May 2019. The measure made it more difficult for traffickers to ship finished fentanyl directly from China to the United States. However, it also encouraged a shift towards precursor chemicals, production equipment and less-regulated substances that could be converted into fentanyl elsewhere.

The result was not the disappearance of Chinese involvement but the reorganization of the supply chain. Mexican criminal organizations increasingly became the manufacturers of finished fentanyl, while Chinese companies supplied the chemical inputs. The trade therefore became more difficult to trace. A chemical order could appear to be a legitimate industrial transaction, pass through a trading company, move to Mexico and eventually enter an illicit production network.

Chinese authorities can point to the absence of large-scale finished-fentanyl exports from China as evidence of progress. American officials, however, focus on the fact that the chemical inputs remain available to criminal organizations. In practical terms, the location where the final pill is pressed does not necessarily identify the most important point of intervention.

Research on the China-Mexico-United States supply chain has identified Chinese chemical inputs entering Mexico through Pacific ports, with Manzanillo emerging as a major point of arrival. This illustrates how the trade operates through commercial logistics rather than a single clandestine route.

A global chemical marketplace

The fentanyl trade is frequently presented as a bilateral dispute between China and the United States. Its actual geography is considerably wider. China's chemical industry supplies markets across the world, and the same commercial networks that provide precursor chemicals to Mexican criminal organizations can also serve customers in other regions.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has reported the emergence of dozens of fentanyl analogues and other synthetic opioids across multiple countries. According to Chinese government data cited in its 2025 white paper, 86 fentanyl analogues had been reported by 46 countries since 2013. These figures demonstrate the expanding diversity of synthetic opioids and the difficulty of controlling chemicals that can be modified faster than regulatory lists can be updated.

The scale of China's legitimate chemical sector creates a further challenge. China is one of the world's largest producers and exporters of pharmaceutical ingredients, industrial chemicals and laboratory equipment. Many precursor substances have legitimate applications in medicine, research and manufacturing. A blanket prohibition would therefore disrupt lawful industries, while narrow controls can leave room for traffickers to shift to chemically similar alternatives.

This is where the enforcement problem becomes more significant than the existence of regulations. The complexity of the supply chain creates opportunities for firms to claim that they are merely selling chemicals, rather than participating in the production of narcotics.

Regulation without sufficient enforcement

American investigations have repeatedly identified Chinese companies and nationals involved in manufacturing, brokering or financing fentanyl-related transactions. In 2024, a US congressional investigation found that Chinese companies involved in producing fentanyl precursors could continue to access certain tax rebates and other financial benefits after exporting their products. If accurate, such findings suggest that the problem is not only the conduct of individual criminal firms but also the incentives created by weak oversight and the continued integration of questionable exports into legitimate commercial systems.

The financial dimension is equally important as fentanyl trafficking requires payment systems that can move money across borders while avoiding conventional banking scrutiny. Chinese money-laundering networks have been identified in cases involving proceeds linked to Mexican drug cartels. In one widely reported US case, a Chinese national was

sentenced for laundering tens of millions of dollars connected to cartel activity. These networks allow drug organizations to move profits through informal value-transfer systems, currency exchanges and layered transactions.

This means that an effective response cannot focus exclusively on chemical shipments. It must also target the brokers, logistics firms, online marketplaces, payment channels and financial intermediaries that connect manufacturers to criminal organizations.

The dispute over fentanyl has become increasingly entangled with wider US-China tensions. Washington has used sanctions, criminal indictments, diplomatic negotiations and tariffs to pressure Beijing. China, in turn, has criticized what it sees as unilateral coercion and has argued that its regulatory measures receive insufficient recognition.

Counter-narcotics work requires information sharing, investigations, extradition and coordination between law-enforcement agencies. When bilateral relations deteriorate, the practical mechanisms needed to identify suppliers and prosecute networks become more difficult to sustain. The suspension of US-China counternarcotics cooperation after the 2022 Taiwan crisis demonstrated how quickly drug enforcement can become vulnerable to geopolitical disputes.

At the same time, Beijing's insistence that it has done enough is difficult to reconcile with the continuing availability of Chinese precursor chemicals in international illicit markets. The fact that finished fentanyl production has shifted to Mexico should not be treated as evidence that China's role has ended. It indicates that traffickers have adapted to regulation by moving one stage further down the supply chain.

The central issue is therefore not whether China has introduced controls, but is whether those controls are sufficiently comprehensive, consistently enforced and supported by penalties that outweigh the profits available to chemical exporters and intermediaries.

The fentanyl crisis is therefore not simply a story of Mexican cartels or American demand. It is also a story of how legitimate global commerce can be repurposed for illicit production, and how regulatory gaps allow criminal networks to exploit the distance between manufacturing, export and consumption. China may not control every stage of the trade, but its chemical and financial networks remain central to it. The continuing flow of precursor chemicals suggests that Beijing's response has neither been consequential, nor sufficient.

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

PHILIPPINES ARRESTS 244 'MOSTLY CHINESE' WORKERS IN ONLINE SCAM CRACKDOWN

Philippines authorities arrested more than 200 "mostly Chinese" foreign workers in the country's largest crackdown on illegal online gaming operators this year, the immigration bureau said.

Manila banned Philippine online gaming operators, known locally as POGOs, in 2024 on the grounds that organised crime groups used them as a cover for human trafficking, money laundering, online fraud, kidnappings and murder.

The military and other law enforcement agencies raided two addresses in the southern region of Mindanao on Friday, arresting 110 Chinese nationals, two Cambodians and a Hong Kong resident at one site, an immigration bureau statement released late Saturday said.

Another 131 foreigners were arrested at the second site. They were "mostly Chinese" and also included citizens of Malaysia, Indonesia and Myanmar.

The bureau said "large quantities" of computer equipment, mobile phones, laptops and SIM cards were seized.

The government is investigating possible human trafficking-related offences by a number of those arrested, while the rest will be deported.

International concern has grown in recent years over similar scam operations in other Asian nations that are often staffed by trafficking victims tricked or coerced into promoting bogus cryptocurrency investments and other cons.

"We will continue to enforce our immigration laws against foreign nationals who violate the conditions of their stay and ensure that the Philippines is not used as a base for illegal activities," immigration chief Joel Viado said in the statement.

He described the raids as "the largest POGO bust of 2026".

"We are reaching out to the Philippine law enforcement agencies on the details of this case," Chinese embassy spokesman Ji Lingpeng told AFP.

"Chinese law prohibits any form of gambling including Chinese nationals gambling overseas or working for gambling companies," he added.

AFP



BIRTH OF AN ICON

Jostein Kobbeltvedt, director of the Rafto Foundation for Human Rights based in Bergen, Norway, situates himself within a long, institutional tradition of international human rights advocacy. The Foundation awards the Rafto Prize to human rights defenders around the world. In this conversation with Insight Myanmar Podcast, he speaks about one of the most consequential recognitions in the history of Myanmar's democracy movement: the 1990 Rafto Prize selection of Aung San Suu Kyi. Kobbeltvedt's reflections illuminate how this international recognition helped elevate Myanmar's struggle against military rule onto the global stage, and how the symbolic narrative that developed around Aung San Suu Kyi eventually collided with the political realities of governing a deeply divided country.

The Rafto Foundation emerged from Cold War-era Norwegian support for dissidents in Eastern Europe. It was established in 1986 after the death of Thorolf Rafto, a professor of economic history in Norway who supported dissidents in Eastern Europe who were trying to flee the Iron Curtain. Unlike awards that honor achievements after a struggle concludes, the Rafto Prize aims to intervene in the middle of unfolding conflicts by giving visibility and legitimacy to people still under threat. As Kobbeltvedt explains, "At the core of the Rafto Prize, it's trying to see where can this prize make a difference." Early laureates reflected that mission. As might be expected, the first

awards went to Eastern European dissidents from Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Hungary, and Romania. Their selection established the pattern of awarding the prize to people who were not yet global icons, but whose work deserved attention and protection. Within this context, the Rafto committee's "discovery" of Aung San Suu Kyi marked a pivotal expansion of its focus to struggles outside Eastern Europe.

In 1990 Suu Kyi was under house arrest in Myanmar and was largely unknown outside the country. Kobbeltvedt describes how her name appeared briefly in a small newspaper article, which caught the attention of members of the Rafto committee, sparking curiosity about a democratic leader imprisoned by a military regime. This was at a time when Myanmar's political crisis was largely peripheral to global attention; the committee decided to award her the Rafto Prize even though few people in Norway or Europe knew her name.

The Foundation's decision helped introduce Aung San Suu Kyi's story—and the wider Myanmar democracy movement—to European audiences, contributing to a rapidly expanding wave of international recognition. Within a year, she received both the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize and the Nobel Peace Prize. These awards transformed Suu Kyi into a global icon of democratic resistance. As Kobbeltvedt notes, the Rafto recognition helped draw the attention of the Nobel Committee, illustrating how smaller interventions can sometimes trigger much larger cascades of global awareness, as well as the informal connection between the two institutions.

CATCH THE PODCAST

Read more and listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast here: <https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2026/9/15/episode-609>



AROUND 100 PEOPLE ABDUCTED FOR FORCED MILITARY CONSCRIPTION IN YANGON IN SEPTEMBER

Approximately 100 people were abducted in Yangon for forced military recruitment during September, according to the Rangoon Scout Network (RSN), an on-the-ground monitoring group.

"This occurred across a total of 20 townships," an RSN official said.

These forced abductions, commonly known as portering, took place in nearly half of the total townships in Yangon Region. According to the 2023 administrative territory registry of the General Administration Department, which operates under the junta, there are 45 townships in Yangon Region.

The townships where abductions occurred are Kyimyindaing, Sanchaung, Dawbon, Botahtaung, Mingalar Taungnyunt, Mayangone, North Dagon, North Okkalapa, Hlaing, Insein, Kamayut, Tamwe, Hlaingthaya, Thanlyin, Thaketa, South Dagon, Pazundaung, Latha, and Pabedan.

"Most of them were randomly snatched while they were on the streets. They use various vehicles civilian cars, military trucks, and police cars patrolling during quiet hours and after dark to grab people whenever there is an opportunity. Most of the abductions are carried out by individuals in civilian clothes using civilian vehicles, though military and police personnel in uniform are sometimes involved," the RSN official said.

While some of those abducted were released after paying ransom, the current status of the majority remains unknown, according to the source.

To secure the release of their loved ones, parents and relatives are being forced to sell or mortgage their

homes to pay ransoms, which can amount to hundreds of lakhs of kyat.

The junta is reportedly preparing to launch conscription Batch (29) soon and has issued directives requiring eight people per ward to serve. In previous conscription batches, only two people were called up per ward.

"News about calling up eight people emerged around mid-September. I heard they will start implementing this in the upcoming batch. People in the ward are talking about it. This is a moneymaking opportunity for the ward administrators," a resident of Thaketa said.

Locals said that due to the various methods used by the junta and subordinate Pyusawhti militia members to abduct people, residents in suburban neighborhoods are increasingly avoiding going outside at night. Even when staying indoors, residents fear ward administrators will come with list registers or conduct guest registration inspections to drag them away for military service.

Since Conscription Batch (29) is expected to begin in the second week of October, RSN has advised Yangon residents to exercise extreme caution when traveling outside in the coming days. RSN also urged residents to stay informed about conscription activities in their neighborhoods, arrange temporary safe havens, and memorize emergency contact numbers.

The junta enforced the military conscription law, which mandates military service for all eligible citizens, in February 2024, and announced plans to recruit approximately 5,000 conscripts per batch.



MILITARY CLAIM ABOUT NUG DONORS SPREADS ONLINE BEFORE FACT-CHECKERS REJECT IT

A claim by Myanmar's military government that it had identified more than 2,700 people who donated to the opposition National Unity Government (NUG) spread across pro-military social media channels this week, before fact-checkers and the fundraising platform itself rejected it as exaggerated and unproven.

State media reported on 29 September that 21 people had been arrested in townships including Yangon, Lashio, Mohnyin and Pyin Oo Lwin, and that their mobile wallet accounts would be closed and the money seized. The military seized power in a coup in February 2021 and treats the NUG as a terrorist organisation.

Pro-military channels on Telegram and Facebook repeated the figures within hours, presenting them as proof that donors can be traced. Many users

reacted with alarm and warned each other to check old transaction records, while others said the figures looked inflated and were meant to frighten people.

The People's Revolution Supply Family, the NUG fundraising platform named in the report, said it has never collected names, addresses or photographs, because donors register with only an alias and an email address. It said the arrests drew on a list seized earlier from a mobile wallet agent and on phones taken from detainees.

A Myanmar fact-checking network examined the claim and found no evidence that donor details came from the platform. Since the coup, opposition groups have relied on mobile wallets, online fundraising and digital banks to raise money outside the military-controlled banking system.

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.