ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY
Analysis & Insight



THE CHASM BETWEEN PARALLEL TRACKS

Why Sasakawa's Return Cannot Bridge Myanmar's Core Divide

ISSUE 31, VOL. 3, NOVEMBER 5, 2026 | PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY | WWW.MIZZIMA.COM

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.

HUMANITARIAN AID MUST NOT BECOME A LIFELINE FOR MYANMAR'S JUNTA

The recent visit to Myanmar by Philippine Foreign Secretary Theresa Lazaro, ASEAN's special envoy on Myanmar, has renewed debate over the regional bloc's approach to the country's continuing crisis. Her mission, from October 28 to 30, included observing humanitarian aid distribution in southern Shan State and meeting Myanmar's foreign minister in Naypyidaw. While the delivery of essential supplies is welcome, critics fear that humanitarian diplomacy could inadvertently strengthen the military-backed authorities without bringing meaningful change to the country.

There is no question that Myanmar's people urgently need assistance. More than five years after the military coup of February 2021, the country remains engulfed in conflict, with millions displaced and civilians facing severe hardship. Rice, hygiene kits and household necessities can make a tangible difference to families struggling to survive. ASEAN should not abandon humanitarian efforts simply because the authorities controlling parts of the country are politically illegitimate.

The problem is whether aid reaches those who need it most. Assistance distributed through channels accessible to the military authorities risks overlooking communities in areas controlled by resistance forces and ethnic armed organisations. Critics have repeatedly raised concerns that restrictions on humanitarian access can leave displaced people and vulnerable civilians without essential supplies. The envoy's visit to selected locations in southern Shan State cannot, by itself, demonstrate that aid is reaching the wider population affected by the conflict.

There is also a political danger. The military leadership has sought to restore international acceptance after seizing power and suppressing opposition. Meetings with senior officials and carefully managed diplomatic visits can be presented domestically as evidence that Myanmar's rulers are returning to normal international relations. The authorities have an obvious interest in portraying humanitarian engagement as a step towards restoring their standing within ASEAN.

This concern is particularly serious because the bloc's Five-Point Consensus, agreed in 2021, calls for an end to violence, inclusive dialogue, mediation and humanitarian assistance. Progress towards these objectives has been deeply inadequate. ASEAN has consequently restricted the military leadership's participation in its highest-level meetings. Renewed engagement must not quietly replace these conditions with business as usual.

ASEAN's responsibility is to the people of Myanmar, not to the political survival of those in power. Humanitarian assistance should be delivered impartially, with transparent monitoring and access for independent humanitarian organisations. The envoy should also engage democratic representatives, ethnic organisations and other relevant stakeholders, rather than allowing Naypyidaw to determine whose voices can be heard.

Lazaro's mission may provide an opportunity to improve humanitarian access. But its success must be measured by the lives it improves, the communities it reaches and the pressure it generates for genuine progress towards peace. Aid is a moral necessity; diplomatic legitimacy is not a humanitarian entitlement. ASEAN must ensure that helping Myanmar's people does not become a means of helping its military rulers consolidate power.

mizzima WEEKLY

Managing Director and Editor In-Chief
Soe Myint

Managing Editor
Thaw Zin Tun

Network Engineer
Wai Min Han

Video and Graphics Editor
Wai Yan Shein Zaw

General Manager
No No Lin

Mizzima Weekly is published by Mizzima s.r.o

Address:
Salvatorska 931/8,
Stare Mesto, 11000,
Praha 1, Czech Republic

Contact email:
sm@mizzima.com

Phone/Signal/WhatsApp
+420 608 616688

CONTENTS mizzima WEEKLY Analysis & Insight

3 EDITORIAL

6 THE CHASM BETWEEN PARALLEL TRACKS: Why Sasakawa's Return Cannot Bridge Myanmar's Core Divide – Sai Wansai

10 ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR Analysis & Insight

14 CORE DEVELOPMENTS
ASEAN envoy ends Myanmar trip with no public Aung San Suu Kyi meeting

15 UN rights expert calls Min Aung Hlaing the 'same ruthless dictator' as Myanmar's death toll passes 100,000

16 Myanmar sees 118 reported attacks on health care this year as aid funding covers just over half of needs

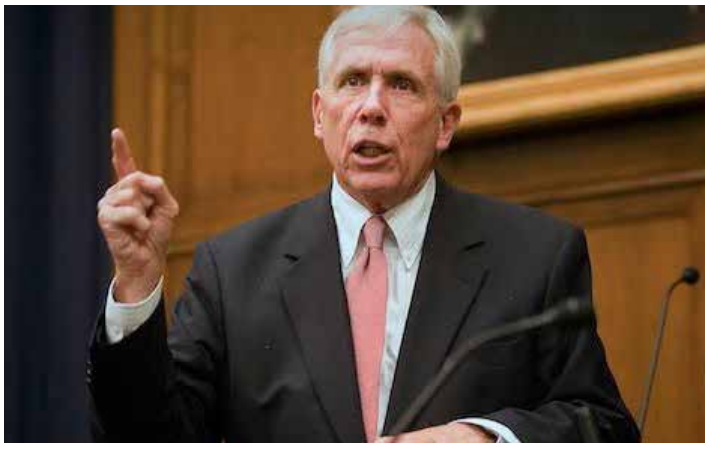
17 70 Arakanese civil society organizations call for No-Fly Zone and condemn airstrikes

18 PPNM marks Political Prisoners Day with call for release of all, including Aung San Suu Kyi

19 Myanmar junta jets bomb Hakha site holding detained junta personnel, killing at least 10, CDF-Hakha says

20 ISP report expresses concern over Myanmar's parliament remaining silent on military conscription









21 Justice for Myanmar: The Myanmar junta's aviation fuel trade fraud exposed

22 Russia and China defend Myanmar's military at UN as EU rejects the elections behind Min Aung Hlaing's presidency

24 US Congressman Frank Wolf denounces Burmese military's $3 million lobbying contract and persecution of Christians

25 Myanmar junta airstrikes target monasteries in Myaing and Pakokku during Thadingyut festival

26 Thai villagers protest after cross-border shelling from fighting in southern Myawaddy

27 Indian agencies say raids across Northeast broke India–Myanmar drug network; 18 arrested, 1,424 bank accounts frozen

28 Myanmar junta court seizes Nawnghkio's central mosque and jails two trustees for 11 years

29 MIP documents continued threats from Myanmar junta airstrikes on civilians

30 Malaysia to seek clarification over reports of detained Myanmar returnees

31 Thai foreign minister to visit Myanmar ahead of ASEAN summit

32 Myanmar Witness reports on the damaging effects of landmines on civilians in Myanmar

33 **COMMENTARY**
TIME TO RETURN TO THE ROOTS: The CSSU Manifesto as Blueprint for Shan Harmony and a Federal Democratic Union - Sai Wansai

36 They Bombed Mahasi Sayadaw's home monastery in Burma: Will the World Awaken? - Alan Clements

39 **ASIAN & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**
U.S. to China after demolition report: 'End interference in Tibetan religious life'

41 **COLUMNS**
INSIGHT MYANMAR – Turning the Page

42 **JUNTA WATCH**

43 **SOCIAL WATCH**

Cover photo of Yohei Sasakawa meeting with Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing provided by SHAN



Yohei Sasakawa meets with Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing. Photo: Supplied

THE CHASM BETWEEN PARALLEL TRACKS: WHY SASAKAWA'S RETURN CANNOT BRIDGE MYANMAR'S CORE DIVIDE

SAI WANSAI

As Myanmar's junta faces unprecedented territorial losses, Yohei Sasakawa's October 2026 return to Naypyitaw signals a renewed push for Japan's "silent diplomacy." Yet this quiet engagement collides with a structural reality that no backchannel can easily dissolve. According to Burma News International (BNI), the peace process anchored in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) and the 2008 Constitution, and the resistance forces' push for a new federal democratic union are running on parallel tracks with little prospect of convergence.

This is not a gap of mistrust that mediation can close. It is a chasm of incompatible objectives. As repeatedly noted by this writer, Myanmar's military clique wants to preserve its doctrine of military supremacy and continue calling the shots in Burma's political arena, as it has done since 1962. The people and the resistance revolutionary organizations, by contrast, want to end military dictatorship and establish a genuine federal democratic union.

The Structural Gap No Mediator Can Paper Over

Sasakawa's historical value lay in his ability to bridge gaps where none existed—witnessing the 2015 NCA signing, brokering the 2022 Rakhine truce. But those efforts operated within a framework the resistance now rejects outright.

BNI's assessment is unambiguous: the coup regime seeks reforms within the existing 2008 constitutional framework, while resistance forces aim to transform the entire political system, completely ending the military's role in politics. Ma Tin Tin Nyo, secretary of BNI's Steering Committee, describes these paths as "parallel lines," making convergence nearly impossible. Ko Hninn Ko Oo of the Myanmar Peace Monitor adds that the junta's actions are "mainly aimed at keeping itself in power," while ending military involvement remains a core pillar of the resistance's Six Consensuses.

The Ethnic-Democratic Alliance or Steering Council for the Emergence of a Federal Democratic Union (SCEF) in Myanmar has outlined six key political objectives as follows:

Overturn the military's usurpation of state power and end its involvement in politics.

Ensure all armed forces operate under the command of a civilian government elected democratically.

Abrogate the 2008 constitution entirely and prevent any attempts to reinstate its provisions.

Draft and implement a new constitution that embodies federalism and democratic values, with consensus from all parties.

Establish a federal democratic union that guarantees equality among nationalities and the right to self-determination.

Provide justice for victims of conflict and ensure accountability for past injustices.

For Sasakawa, this presents an existential dilemma for silent diplomacy. A mediator who engages only the junta risks legitimizing a framework designed to preserve military supremacy. At the same time, one who engages the National Unity Government (NUG) and its Federal Democracy Charter (FDC) risks abandoning the very channel that makes him acceptable to Naypyitaw. The 2022 truce collapse taught both sides that humanitarian pauses without political resolution are tactical tools, not pathways to peace.

Civilian Protection: The Practical Measure Beyond Symbolic Diplomacy

While the political tracks remain irreconcilable, civilians bear the brunt through junta airstrikes, drone attacks, artillery shelling, and village burnings. Thus inclusive dialogue mediation and a shared interest in peace becomes an impossible task because the junta's doctrine of supremacy actively negates it entirely.

This is where practical protection must supplement diplomatic aspiration. Sasakawa's foundation has delivered schools and clinics in ethnic areas; the next phase should prioritize civilian defense infrastructure in resistance-held territories, if possible.

These are not substitutes for political settlement. They are the minimum requirements for civilian survival while that settlement remains elusive. Without them, "silent diplomacy" becomes complicit in a status quo where civilians pay the price for parallel tracks that never meet.

The Geopolitical Balancing Act and Its Human Cost

Japan's potential role as a counterbalance to China's unilateral influence and a bridge to US-led diplomatic efforts is an issue to ponder also. Yet this geopolitical utility cannot obscure the human cost of failed mediation. Every externally brokered pause that collapses without addressing military supremacy extends the timeline of civilian suffering. The AA's use of the 2022 truce to regroup was not betrayal—it was rational adaptation to a deal that offered relief without security guarantees.

Japan's advantage as a trusted, less coercive actor is real. But trust requires consistency between engagement and values. If Tokyo supports ASEAN's July 2026 benchmarks for measuring progress, those benchmarks must center civilian protection metrics—airstrike frequency, humanitarian access, displacement trends—not merely ceasefire duration or meeting counts.

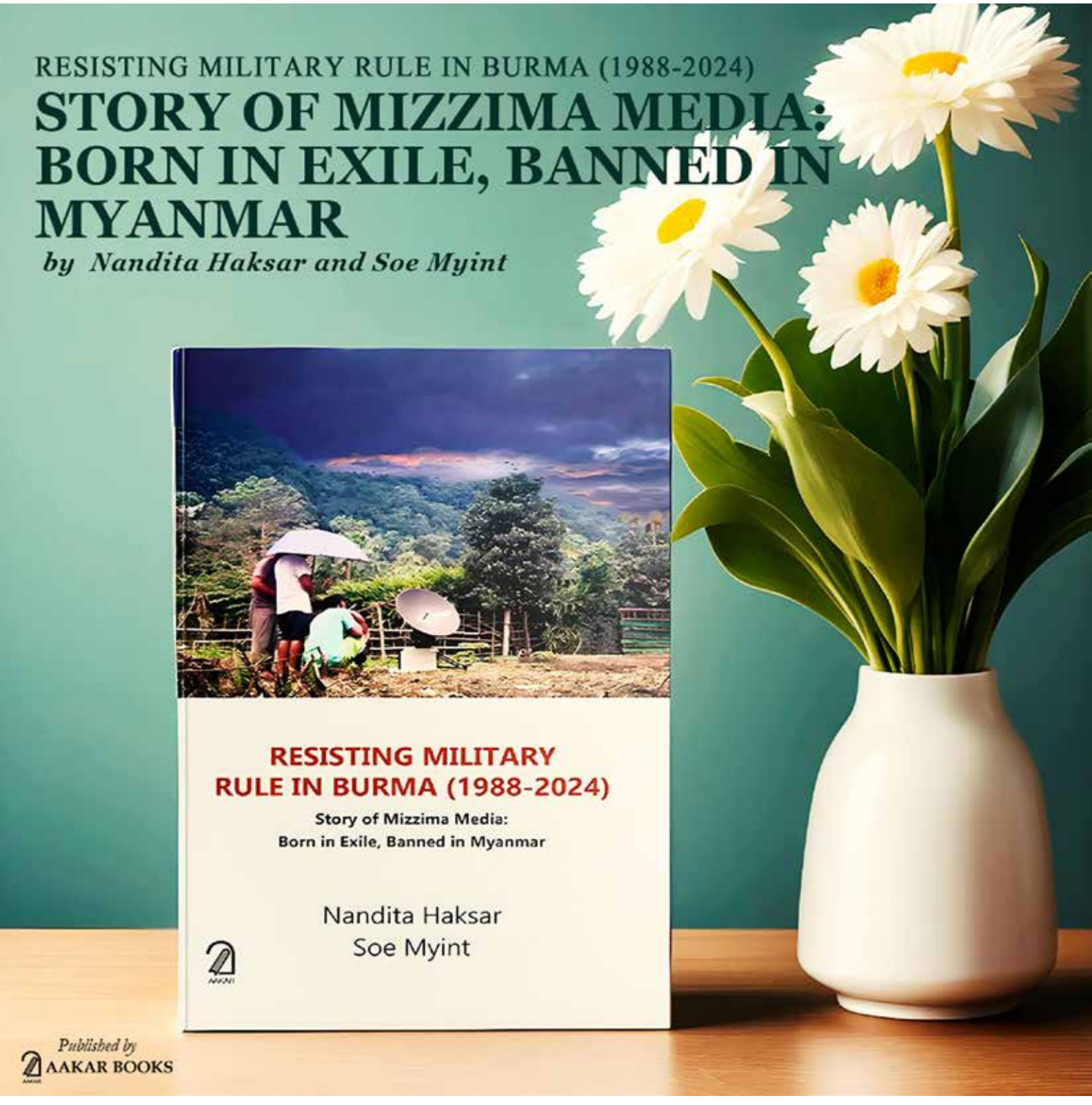
Toward Diplomacy That Names the Core Conflict

Sasakawa's October 2026 meetings may yet yield localized humanitarian gains. But lasting resolution requires confronting what BNI identifies as the irreconcilable gap: military supremacy versus federal democracy. Silent diplomacy that avoids naming this divide will produce another temporary truce, another collapse, another cycle of civilian devastation.

The path forward demands that mediators engage the FDC and NUG as legitimate partners in designing federal power-sharing frameworks, not merely as parties to be managed during humanitarian pauses. It demands that Japan leverage its ODA and economic presence to condition reconstruction on verifiable civilian protection. And it demands that international actors acknowledge, that this conflict's root cause is a military doctrine of supremacy the people have rejected.

Silent diplomacy served Myanmar when the question was how to implement a shared agreement. The question now is whether any agreement is possible when one side insists on supremacy and the other on its abolition. Until that question is answered honestly, every truce Sasakawa brokers will be a reprieve, not a resolution—and civilians will continue paying the price for parallel lines that refuse to converge.

Courtesy of Shan Herald Agency for News



TO PURCHASE THE BOOK ON AMAZON, CLICK HERE:

https://amzn.in/d/5n9Lkhd

TO DONATE AND HELP MIZZIMA'S WORK:

https://donate.mizzima.com/



PDF fighters working with the Kachin Independence Army. Photo: Supplied

KACHIN INDEPENDENCE ARMY STEPS UP THE FIGHT

The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and allied resistance forces have intensified operations against junta troops and their allied Shanni Nationalities Army (SNA) in Homalin Township, Sagaing Region, while simultaneously facing renewed military pressure around Bhamo in southern Kachin State. The developments indicate that KIA is seeking to strengthen its strategic positions in northern Sagaing while defending territory against the junta's attempts to regain ground in Kachin State.

On October 30, KIA and allied forces captured two military positions belonging to the SNA and junta troops in Homalin Township. One was an SNA outpost on the eastern bank of the Uru River, where approximately 200 SNA personnel had been stationed. Although resistance forces seized the position, the SNA continued to maintain control of Yebawmee village on the western bank of the river.

On the same day, resistance forces also captured a junta military position in Thezalaut village, where around 100 junta personnel had been based. The troops reportedly withdrew without putting up significant resistance. Following the operations, KIA and its allies reportedly recovered 24 SNA bodies, captured four prisoners of war and seized weapons, ammunition and other military equipment.

The October 30 operations followed the capture of another SNA position on October 23, reportedly the headquarters of its No. 4 Regiment, from which KIA seized weapons and ammunition. The group and its allies had also captured several SNA outposts in Homalin Township in late September and mid-October.

The repeated losses suggest that KIA is conducting a sustained campaign to push the SNA out of strategic positions along the Homalin–Phakant corridor, which connects the area with the important jade-mining region of Phakant in Kachin State. Weakening the SNA's military presence along this route could expand KIA's operational influence and disrupt the junta's allied militia network.

Meanwhile, the situation remains more challenging for KIA around Bhamo, where the junta has intensified efforts to reverse territorial losses. In late October, junta troops launched offensives in the southeastern part of the city, where KIA and allied forces had established control. In the northeastern sector, the military also attempted to advance into KIA-controlled areas around the three-mile and four-mile villages.

In response, KIA and allied forces launched an offensive against Moe Sein Kyun, an island in the Irrawaddy River located behind the junta's No. 21 Military Operations Command (MOC). The island holds strategic importance for military operations around Bhamo. However, despite a week of attacks, the junta has managed to resist the offensive using artillery and air support.

Karen State fighting spills over into Thailand

The Myanmar military's prolonged offensive to advance toward Hpapun in northern Karen State has made limited territorial progress despite reportedly suffering heavy casualties over the past six months. Meanwhile, renewed fighting around Myawaddy in southern Karen State has increasingly spilled across the Thai–Myanmar border, prompting stronger military and diplomatic warnings from Bangkok.

The junta launched its operation toward Hpapun, an area under the control of the Karen National Union's (KNU) Brigade No. 5, last May. However, after approximately six months of fighting, its troops have reportedly advanced only around 20 miles from their original positions. According to the KNU, the military has lost 208 personnel, including a regiment commander, while another 232 have been injured, also including a regiment commander.

Thousands of junta troops are currently concentrated around Sinswe village, where intense fighting continues as KNU forces and allied resistance



Karen fighter. Photo: Supplied

groups attempt to prevent further advances. The slow progress, despite the deployment of substantial manpower, suggests that the military is struggling to penetrate resistance-controlled territory.

The KNU has also highlighted the humanitarian consequences of the operation. According to its statement, seven civilians have been killed, more than 54,000 people have been displaced and over 20 schools have been forced to close. However, the statement did not provide information about casualties suffered by KNU forces and their allies, making it difficult to assess the full military balance of the operation.

Further south, the junta has resumed offensives against KNU-controlled areas around Myawaddy, an important hub for Thailand–Myanmar border trade. Since October 20, military columns have attempted to advance toward Minlatpan village after initially targeting Thephyu Chyaung village but failing to penetrate the area. The offensive subsequently shifted toward Minlatpan and Phalu villages.

The military's use of artillery during the clashes has also endangered displaced civilians. On October 21, junta artillery reportedly killed one internally displaced person (IDP) and injured another.

More significantly, the fighting has increasingly affected communities on the Thai side of the border. On October 23, four artillery rounds reportedly landed in Thailand, injuring a Thai woman when shrapnel from an RPG round struck her hand and back near her home. Thai media reported that fragments from Myanmar-side artillery damaged 17 buildings, including a hospital, medical centre, child development centre, sub-district administration office, church and mosque. Images reportedly showed RPG tail sections among the debris, while Thai military experts suggested that some fragments could have originated from 500-pound aerial bombs.

The repeated incidents have prompted Thailand to strengthen its border security. The Thai Army deployed additional personnel and weapons along the border in



Karenni fighters. Photo: AFP

Tak Province, while two Thai F-16 fighter jets conducted armed patrols over the province in early November.

On November 2, the Thai Army Chief summoned Myanmar's military attaché to warn that continued fighting and cross-border attacks could have serious consequences for the safety of Thai civilians. Nevertheless, another round of Myanmar artillery reportedly struck a Thai civilian house on the evening of November 3. The Thai military responded by firing warning illumination rounds in accordance with its Rules of Engagement (ROE).

Thai media have also reported that the prime minister issued clear warnings to Myanmar through both military and diplomatic channels.

Karenni State fighting intensifies

Revolutionary forces in Karenni State have intensified attacks on junta positions along the border between southern Shan State and Karenni State, particularly around Loiyinn and Loi Wine villages, since early October. The fighting reflects the junta's continued efforts to expand its territorial control beyond Mobye, which it recaptured in mid-2025, while resistance forces seek to prevent further military advances.

Although the junta has regained control of Mobye town, revolutionary forces continue to maintain influence over much of the surrounding countryside. The military has been conducting operations toward nearby villages to extend its control, prompting resistance forces to launch counterattacks. The clashes have resulted in casualties on both sides. Resistance sources reported that at least two of their fighters were killed between October 8 and 15, while junta troops have also reportedly withdrawn from some positions after suffering losses.

Beyond the battlefield, the military's air operations have increasingly threatened civilian communities. On October 31, a junta airstrike targeted an internally displaced persons (IDP) school in eastern Loikaw Township, killing three students from Grades 4 and 5 and seriously injuring 10 others, including two teachers and eight students. One of the injured students reportedly sustained life-threatening injuries. The school building was also severely damaged.

According to Karenni sources, the attack involved a jet fighter followed by a Y-12 aircraft, which reportedly conducted additional bombing runs. Banyar, Secretary-2 of the Interim Executive Council (IEC), told Mizzima that the military deliberately targeted the school despite having conducted reconnaissance flights beforehand.

"We recognize schools as the safest places. The junta attacks with intention, and it was a dehumanized action. It was not an accident," he said, expressing concern about the physical and psychological trauma suffered by the children.

Farmers have also become increasingly vulnerable to military attacks. On October 24, three farmers were killed and two others seriously injured in drone attacks in eastern Loikaw Township while harvesting rice near Loithoi village. The drones reportedly originated from the military's Loikaw Regional Operations Command (ROC).

The incidents highlight the growing danger facing civilians in Karenni State, where military operations are increasingly affecting schools, agricultural activities and communities already displaced by conflict. While resistance forces continue to challenge the junta's attempts to expand its territorial control, the military's use of airstrikes and drones is placing an additional burden on civilians, undermining their safety, education and livelihoods.



ASEAN's special Myanmar envoy, Philippines Foreign Secretary Theresa Lazaro on her visit to Shan State. Photo: AFP

ASEAN ENVOY ENDS MYANMAR TRIP WITH NO PUBLIC AUNG SAN SUU KYI MEETING

ASEAN's special Myanmar envoy, Philippines Foreign Secretary Theresa Lazaro, wrapped up a two-day visit to the nation on 29 October, with no sign of meeting detained democratic ex-leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

The Philippines, which holds the rotating chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), has repeatedly called this year for access to Suu Kyi, detained since being unseated in a 2021 military coup.

The status of 81-year-old has long been a sticking point for the 11-nation ASEAN bloc, which has frozen Myanmar's leaders out of its summits since the putsch.

Lazaro and Foreign Minister Tin Maung Swe "held substantive discussions on ways to restore Myanmar's original role and rights within ASEAN", according to a statement from Myanmar's foreign ministry.

It did not mention any meeting with the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Suu Kyi, who authorities say is under house arrest in the capital Naypyidaw.

The Philippines foreign ministry earlier said Lazaro had spent Wednesday in the eastern state of Shan, overseeing humanitarian schemes aiding those displaced in the civil war triggered by the coup.

This year, analysts say authorities have allowed Suu Kyi increasing -- albeit still extremely limited -- contact with the outside world in a bid to shake off their pariah status abroad.

Last week, there were two rare updates on Suu Kyi.

On Monday, authorities in Myanmar said she received a package from Britain's King Charles, including two books about soil and a "sealed diplomatic communication" from the monarch.

Her UK-based son Kim Aris was then allowed a 20-minute consular phone call with her last Thursday, their first spoken communication in more than half a decade.

He told AFP his mother sounded "fairly healthy" but he feared she was being used as a pawn to improve the public image of those detaining her.

The Philippines requested "brief access" for Lazaro to meet Suu Kyi in April, after authorities said she was moved from prison to house arrest.

In August, when she met Myanmar's senior Red Cross official, they made a renewed call for access.

AFP


Photo: AFP

UN RIGHTS EXPERT CALLS MIN AUNG HLAING THE 'SAME RUTHLESS DICTATOR' AS MYANMAR'S DEATH TOLL PASSES 100,000

Myanmar's military ruler remains the same dictator using the same tactics despite assuming the presidency, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar told the UN General Assembly on 27 October. She reported that the country's conflict death toll since the 2021 coup has passed 100,000, the vast majority of them civilians.

Addressing the Assembly's Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) in New York, Kelley Anne Eckels-Currie said junta leader Min Aung Hlaing, who declared himself "president", "may have changed his outfit, but he's still the same ruthless dictator."

The military seized power in February 2021, claiming fraud in the 2020 elections, which the National League for Democracy (NLD) had won in a landslide. Min Aung Hlaing later took the presidency after military-run elections. The European Union told the same session that those elections could not legitimize military rule rebranded as a civilian administration.

According to Currie, the military intensified its attacks during the 100-day plan Min Aung Hlaing announced to restore peace and prosperity. She said the regime also used new coercion and surveillance technologies, supplied by its Chinese and Russian allies, to shut down dissent. She cited reports that three humanitarian workers were tortured and killed in Dawei in July for helping local communities. She also warned that regional efforts to normalize relations with the regime risk prolonging civilian suffering. At the same time, she pointed to local governance in areas outside military control, including community-run resource management in Karenni State and education and health services for displaced people in Karen State.

Nicholas Koumjian, head of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM), said the military is increasingly relying on air power. He said planes, drones and paramotors, which are powered paragliders, have hit homes, hospitals, places of worship, displacement camps and schools. Two weeks earlier, he said, aircraft bombed a monastery in Sagaing Region and a church complex in Chin State, while last month a market bombing in Rakhine State killed more than 50 people. The mechanism is also investigating a growing number of alleged atrocities by armed groups opposed to the military.

Koumjian said more than 155,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh since early 2024. The mechanism has now gathered evidence from over 1,600 sources and more than 750 witness testimonies, up from over 1,300 sources and 600 testimonies a year earlier. It has shared that evidence with international courts and with several states that have opened preliminary investigations.

UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Myanmar Julie Bishop warned that conditions do not exist for the safe, voluntary and dignified return of Rohingya refugees. She noted that the Arakan Army, an ethnic armed group in western Myanmar, now controls 14 of Rakhine State's 17 townships.

During the dialogue that followed, Russia's representative rejected the UN assessments as seriously imbalanced, saying "it is unacceptable to brand Naypyidaw as being to blame" for the crisis. China's representative cautioned Currie against misleading the public.

Myanmar's representative to the UN held up a scarf bearing the names and ages of civilians killed in the conflict. "The youngest was just two months old. The oldest was 105," he said, urging states to stop supplying jet fuel, weapons and money to the military.

MYANMAR SEES 118 REPORTED ATTACKS ON HEALTH CARE THIS YEAR AS AID FUNDING COVERS JUST OVER HALF OF NEEDS

Health care in Myanmar came under 118 reported attacks between 1 January and 30 October, almost double the 62 incidents verified by the World Health Organization, even as health agencies received only 54 per cent of the funding they sought for 2026, the Myanmar Health Cluster said in a bulletin dated 30 October.

The Myanmar Health Cluster, which coordinates 156 health agencies working in the country, said the 118 incidents were reported by the monitoring group Insecurity Insight, while the 62 were verified through the World Health Organization's Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care. Most attacks were recorded in Sagaing, followed by Rakhine, it said.

Beyond direct attacks, the bulletin listed bombing of health facilities, roadblocks, confiscation of medical supplies and arrests of health workers among the obstacles to delivering care, with partners also working under the threat of drone attacks. Access restrictions eased slightly in September from August but stayed well above the 2025 average, with 72 per cent resulting from military operations and fighting, according to figures from the UN humanitarian office (OCHA) cited in the bulletin. Rakhine accounted for 57 per cent of incidents, northern Shan for 11 per cent and Sagaing for 6 per cent.

In Sittwe, the Rakhine State capital, heavy fighting is impeding a cholera vaccination campaign, the bulletin said. It added that checkpoints blocked access to camps for displaced people in the early stages of the outbreak, allowing the disease to spread further.

Health agencies reached 1.5 million of the 2 million people they targeted between 1 January and 30 September, with $50 million received against $92 million required. For 2027, a mandatory new formula in the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan raises the proposed target to 5 million people and the funding requirement to $126 million, which the bulletin listed among issues with the plan. The Health Cluster said it would explore other planning and fundraising tools to give partners and donors a more realistic framework.



70 ARAKANESE CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS CALL FOR NO-FLY ZONE AND CONDEMN AIRSTRIKES

A coalition of 70 Arakanese civil society and philanthropic organizations issued a joint statement 30 October, strongly condemning the Myanmar military junta's deliberate airstrikes on civilian targets in Rakhine State and urgently demanding the establishment of a No-Fly Zone.

The appeal, directed at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), ASEAN, international governments, and humanitarian agencies, outlines four primary demands:

1. Immediate designation of a No-Fly Zone.

2. Direct provision of emergency international humanitarian aid.

3. Imposition of sanctions on aviation fuel and arms transfers.

4. Facilitation of accountability and justice through the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM).

According to data from the Humanitarian and Development Coordination Office (HDCO) of the Arakkha People's Government, airstrikes and attacks between October 2024 and 30 October, 2025, resulted in 298 civilian deaths and 678 injuries. Among the deceased are 55 children under the age of 18. The statement notes that the total civilian death toll since the military coup has reached at least 1,152.

The military junta has targeted markets, including the India Market in Kyauktaw, displacement camps, clinics, monasteries, and residential areas across various townships, including Thandwe, Ponnagyun, Mrauk-U, Paletwa, and Sittwe.

The statement highlights that thousands of civilians have been displaced due to military operations. Blockaded transport routes, a reduction of approximately 500,000 acres in agricultural cultivation, and severe shortages of medicine and essential goods have pushed displaced populations toward famine and extreme crisis.

The coalition condemned these actions as blatant violations of the Principle of Distinction under the 1949 Geneva Conventions and Article 8 of the Rome Statute, characterizing them as war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Despite these challenges, the Arakanese civil organizations affirmed their commitment to providing aid to conflict-affected populations and vowed to protect and promote civilian rights until justice and accountability are achieved.



Insein Prison in Yangon. Photo: AFP

PPNM MARKS POLITICAL PRISONERS DAY WITH CALL FOR RELEASE OF ALL, INCLUDING AUNG SAN SUU KYI

The Political Prisoners Network Myanmar (PPNM) urged the United Nations, ASEAN and governments to press for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, in a statement on 30 October, International Day of Political Prisoners.

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) counts 32,199 people arrested since the 2021 coup, with 15,086 confirmed in detention as of 22 October. PPNM said political prisoners face torture, sexual violence, denied medical care and inhumane conditions, and that release is a human rights matter, not only a political negotiation. PPNM reported in June that 282 political prisoners had died in prisons in its first three years, according to Mon News Agency.

PPNM said expressions of concern are no longer enough and called on the international community to increase diplomatic and political pressure, allow independent international inspections to prevent torture, medical neglect and deaths in prison, and provide emergency humanitarian aid. It called for those responsible for torture, killings and other serious violations against political prisoners to be held accountable under international law.

It also urged more health, mental health, social, humanitarian and rehabilitation support for released prisoners and their families, and security protection and funding for domestic groups defending political prisoners' rights.



MYANMAR JUNTA JETS BOMB HAKHA SITE HOLDING DETAINED JUNTA PERSONNEL, KILLING AT LEAST 10, CDF-HAKHA SAYS

Myanmar junta fighter jets bombed a site in Hakha Township, Chin State, where Chinland Defense Force-Hakha (CDF-Hakha) was holding detained junta personnel, killing at least 10 and injuring at least five, the CDF said.

The attack was on 28 October between about 8:20 and 9:00 p.m., involving five jets and, according to the CDF, 250-pound bombs and rockets, m.CDM reported. The CDF said the guards at the site were unharmed. Mizzima couldn't independently verify the toll, and the junta has not commented.

Salai Hram Lian, CDF-Hakha chairman, told Mizzima that he believes the strike and another at 1:30 a.m. on 30 October near Zokhua village are meant to weaken resistance forces before a junta column moves to Thantlang. He said non-CDM staff are gathering at the General Administration Office in Hakha to travel there, and he suspects the junta targeted the camp using information from recently released or escaped detainees, which he gave as his own view. The 30 October strike hit a former CDF-Hakha outpost, which his forces left three months ago to protect the village, so no one was hurt, he said.

Displaced Thantlang residents in Hakha formed a committee on 11 October to coordinate rebuilding the town, and it has asked the public to be understanding of its choice to work with the military administration so civilians can return. Thantlang's status is contested. Eleven Media reported the Tatmadaw regained the town in June, while Mizzima reported in July that junta forces held about half of it.

The junta used a similar approach in Falam, which it retook on 25 April, then sent about 100 non-CDM staff from Kalay on 6 May, BorderLens reported.

ISP REPORT EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER MYANMAR'S PARLIAMENT REMAINING SILENT ON MILITARY CONSCRIPTION

A newly-released report by the Institute for Strategy and Policy (ISP-Myanmar) examines the Myanmar military's conscription programme and the failure of the country's legislatures to adequately address the serious concerns it has created for civilians.

Since the military introduced the People's Military Service Law in February 2024, it has substantially increased its recruitment of new soldiers. According to estimates based on research by the Myanmar Defense and Security Institute (MDSI), the military had potentially recruited more than 136,300 people by its 29th training intake in October 2026.

Annual recruitment has risen from an average of approximately 7,200 soldiers before conscription to more than 56,400, an increase of nearly eightfold. These figures exclude graduates from military academies and officer training schools.

Despite the scale of the programme, parliamentary discussion has been remarkably limited. Between March and October 2026, the People's Parliament raised the issue only three times, despite asking the government at least 495 questions on other matters. Neither the Union Parliament nor the National Parliament discussed conscription at all. Five additional questions were raised in regional and state legislatures.

The limited discussions highlighted allegations of forced recruitment, unlawful arrests, extortion and abuses by local authorities and armed groups. Reports described young people being detained in public places, travellers being seized, and families being pressured to pay money to prevent recruitment. Such practices have reportedly contributed to fear, corruption, labour shortages and declining public confidence.

The report argues that the military shows little intention of abandoning conscription because it is central to rebuilding its forces. Meanwhile, young people face the loss of educational and employment opportunities, forced participation in a conflict against fellow citizens, and the risk of death. The wider economy also suffers as people leave Myanmar to seek work abroad.

ISP-Myanmar concludes that the legislatures have failed to provide meaningful oversight or adequately address public suffering. Their silence raises serious questions about their willingness and ability to hold the military and government accountable, potentially widening the divide between political institutions and the population they claim to represent.


Photo: AFP

JUSTICE FOR MYANMAR: THE MYANMAR JUNTA'S AVIATION FUEL TRADE FRAUD EXPOSED

A recent report by Justice For Myanmar exposes an alleged international trade fraud scheme used by Myanmar's military junta and associated businesses to import aviation fuel while evading sanctions and concealing the identities of buyers, suppliers and the origins of shipments.

Analysis of leaked records from the junta's Ministry of Commerce identified six imports between December 2024 and November 2025, involving more than 843,000 barrels of aviation fuel worth US$109.5 million. The shipments were deliberately misdescribed as high-speed diesel, with proxy companies and complicated corporate arrangements used to disguise their true purpose.

The report argues that these practices help sustain the junta's air campaign against civilians. Airstrikes have become increasingly important to the military as it loses territory to resistance forces.

According to figures cited from the UN Human Rights Office, civilian deaths from airstrikes increased from at least 641 in 2024 to 982 in 2025, including 232 children. During the junta's election period from December 2025 to January 2026, 170 civilians were reportedly killed in 408 aerial attacks. The report also highlights the December 2025 attack on Mrauk-U General Hospital, which killed at least 33 people.

Justice For Myanmar found that the six shipments followed a consistent pattern. Aviation fuel was declared as diesel and assigned the corresponding customs classification, while prices were set at approximately US$129.50 to US$130 per barrel. These prices were around 50 per cent above prevailing diesel market rates and remained remarkably consistent despite market fluctuations.

The report states that aviation fuel and diesel face the same Myanmar customs tariff and specific goods

tax, meaning the misclassification offered no apparent tax advantage. Instead, the evidence suggests that the principal motive was to avoid scrutiny by international regulators, banks, insurers and businesses concerned about sanctions.

Two Myanmar companies, Dynamic Wave and PP Petroleum, featured prominently in the transactions. Dynamic Wave acted as a proxy for National Energy Prime Aviation Services Company Limited (NEPAS), the junta-controlled aviation fuel importer. NEPAS is 51 per cent owned by the state-owned Myanma Petrochemical Enterprise, while its private-sector partner belongs to the corporate network identified as the Asia Sun group. PP Petroleum was also linked to this network and is associated with the operator of Myanmar's dedicated aviation fuel terminal at Thilawa, Yangon.

The report presents documentary evidence that the junta's Foreign Exchange Supervisory Committee actively authorised the arrangements. Its decisions instructed officials to issue import licences describing aviation fuel as diesel and to name Dynamic Wave as the importer on NEPAS's behalf. Payments were channelled through corporate accounts, concealing the real buyer. The committee's senior membership, including junta ministers and central bank leadership, suggests that the alleged fraud was facilitated at an institutional level rather than being an isolated commercial practice.

International connections extend across Thailand, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates. Thai company Tawan-Oil Trading supplied the three Dynamic Wave shipments, worth US$68.49 million combined. Justice For Myanmar identifies Tawan-Oil as part of the Asia Sun network and raises concerns about its continued transactions after entering liquidation. The other three shipments, valued at US$41.06 million, involved PP Petroleum and the UAE-registered seller NEC Trading LLC. Singapore's Banyan fuel terminal was also identified in the documentation as a proposed loading point, although the report could not confirm the precise route taken by the fuel.

The investigation highlights serious gaps in international sanctions. Although the United States, United Kingdom, European Union, Canada and Australia have imposed measures targeting parts of the aviation fuel supply chain since 2023, companies have continued operating through rebranding, proxy businesses and changes in corporate structures. Myanmar's jet fuel imports more than doubled, from 64,562 metric tonnes in 2024 to 140,306 tonnes in 2025, according to port authority data cited in the report.

Justice For Myanmar calls for coordinated sanctions against the junta, NEPAS, Myanma Petrochemical Enterprise, the Asia Sun network and associated companies, individuals, vessels and financial intermediaries. It urges a comprehensive ban on aviation fuel exports to Myanmar, stronger investigations by Thai, Singaporean, Emirati and South African authorities, and enhanced corporate due diligence by banks, shipping companies, insurers and fuel terminals.

The report's central conclusion is that sanctions will remain ineffective unless governments close regulatory loopholes and disrupt the entire supply network. It argues that international businesses must ensure they are not inadvertently facilitating the junta's military operations, while governments must strengthen enforcement and avoid actions that confer political legitimacy on the military authorities.



RUSSIA AND CHINA DEFEND MYANMAR'S MILITARY AT UN AS EU REJECTS THE ELECTIONS BEHIND MIN AUNG HLAING'S PRESIDENCY

Russia and China defended Myanmar's military authorities at the UN General Assembly on 27 October, while the European Union rejected the elections that preceded junta leader Gen. Min Aung Hlaing's move into the "presidency.

The positions emerged during a Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) dialogue in New York. There, UN experts reported that more than 100,000 people have been killed in conflict since the military seized power in February 2021, ousting the elected National League for Democracy (NLD) government. Min Aung Hlaing, who declared himself "president", took office after military-run elections.

UN Special Rapporteur Kelley Anne Eckels-Currie told the session that the regime had used new coercion and surveillance technologies, supplied by its Chinese and Russian allies, to shut down dissent.

Russia's representative rejected the UN assessments as seriously imbalanced, saying "it is unacceptable to brand Naypyidaw as being to blame" for the crisis. China's representative cautioned Currie against misleading the public. He said the international community should help bridge differences rather than intensify tensions.

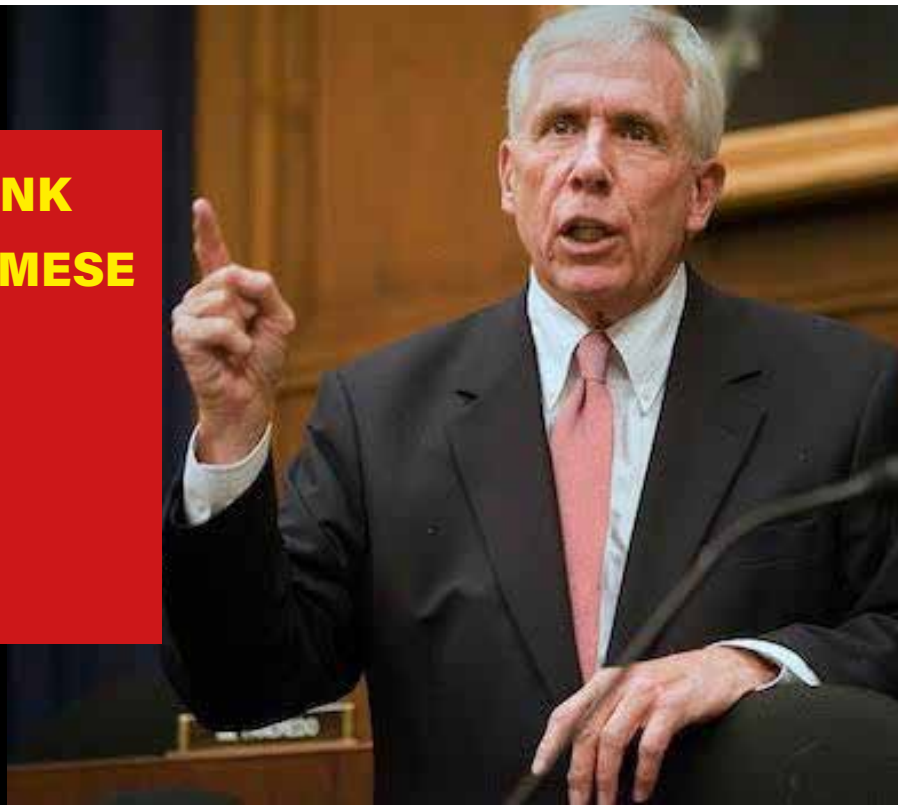
The European Union, speaking as an observer, said the military's elections could not confer legitimacy, describing them as a "rebranding of the military rule under a nominally civilian administration."

Japan's Deputy Permanent Representative, Ambassador Shigeru Umetsu, called on the military to end violence against civilians and to release those arbitrarily detained, including Aung San Suu Kyi. He also pledged support for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' (ASEAN) Five-Point Consensus. He said Japan has provided about $241.5 million in humanitarian assistance for the Rohingya since March 2017, including $17.5 million this year. His statement made no reference to the elections or the new presidency.

Among Myanmar's neighbors, Thailand's representative highlighted humanitarian assistance delivered through ASEAN channels and the repatriation of more than 13,700 people rescued from scam centers in Myanmar. Bangladesh's representative warned of sexual violence and forced recruitment in Rakhine State. He said prolonged displacement cannot become a permanent solution for Rohingya refugees and called for predictable international funding.

Myanmar's representative to the UN held up a scarf bearing the names and ages of civilians killed in the conflict. He urged states to stop supplying jet fuel, weapons and money to the military.

US CONGRESSMAN FRANK WOLF DENOUNCES BURMESE MILITARY'S $3 MILLION LOBBYING CONTRACT AND PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS



US Congressman Frank Wolf, a leading champion of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, highlighted the Burmese military's severe persecution of Christians during his remarks at the 2026 Frank Wolf International Religious Freedom Award Program, hosted by 21WILBERFORCE in Falls Church, Virginia, on October 27.

President Bill Clinton signed the International Religious Freedom Act into law on October 27, 1998, and it remains one of the central pillars of U.S. foreign policy for promoting religious freedom worldwide.

This year's award was presented to Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley, Executive Director of the Burma Advocacy Group. Rev. Dr. Robin Stoops, Chairman of the Board of the Burma Research Institute (BRI) and former Associate General Secretary of American Baptist Churches USA, and Zo Tum Hmung, BRI's President and CEO, attended the program, along with U.S.-based Baptist leaders from the Chin, Kachin, and Karen communities.

In his remarks, Congressman Wolf condemned the Burmese military's $3 million-a-year contract with DCI Group, a Washington, D.C. lobbying firm, to cultivate relations with the United States. He also described the military's grave violations of religious freedom, particularly its targeting of Christian communities.

Following the remarks, Zo Tum Hmung thanked Congressman Wolf for raising the plight of Burma's Christians and for underscoring the need for legislation to bar the Burmese military from hiring U.S. lobbying firms.

"Congressman Wolf has stood with persecuted people of faith for decades, and we are deeply grateful that he continues to speak for the Christians of Burma," said Dr. Robin Stoops. "The military should not be able to buy influence in Washington while it bombs churches and terrorizes communities of faith. Congress should act to close that door."

The call echoes a recommendation in the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom's (USCIRF) 2026 Annual Report, released in March 2026. The report urged Congress to introduce and pass legislation banning the Burmese military (Tatmadaw) from using U.S.-based lobbying firms to evade accountability for its crimes and to cultivate ties with the United States. BRI welcomed the report's recommendation at the time of its release.

On October 19, 2026, the International Religious Freedom Secretariat sent a multifaith letter to Secretary of State Marco Rubio urging him to take action to protect persecuted Christians in Burma.



MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKES TARGET MONASTERIES IN MYAING AND PAKOKKU DURING THADINGYUT FESTIVAL

Military junta forces deliberately conducted airstrikes on villages in Myaing and Pakokku Townships, Magway Region, during the Thadingyut festival period. The attacks destroyed monasteries and residential houses, forcing thousands of local civilians to flee to safety, according to displaced persons assistance groups and local residents.

On the afternoon of 25 October, during the early Thadingyut period, three gyrocopters from Bagan-Nyaung U Airport and a jet fighter from Tada-U Airport bombed a monastery in Thit Pu Lway Kone Village, Pakokku Township.

According to the Anyar Myay Civil Society Organization-Myaing, the airstrike resulted in the total destruction of the village monastery and seven houses by fire. Additionally, shops, a village power transformer, and three heads of cattle were struck and destroyed.

There were no human casualties as residents had evacuated in advance due to the presence of a military column in the nearby Twin Ma village controlled by pro-junta armed militias.

The Anyar Myay Civil Society Organization-Myaing stated that there were no active clashes or revolutionary troop bases in the village at the time of the attack, asserting that the junta specifically targeted civilians.

"The junta is deliberately attacking and destroying monasteries. We strongly urge everyone to remain vigilant. The Anyar Myay Civil Society Organization-Myaing cautions residents near Kaing Taw Ma Village to be extremely alert to air raid risks," the organization announced via social media.

Similarly, on 21 October, four gyrocopters from Nyaung U Air Base bombed a monastery in Tharsi Village, Myaing Township, damaging both the old and new monastic buildings. Tharsi Village, home to over 200 households, has been torched by the military twice since the coup.

Furthermore, a junta airstrike in Myaing Township on 24 October killed three civilians and injured three children. On 18 October, an airstrike on Ohn Taw Village in Kamma Town, Pakokku Township, claimed the lives of six locals, including an eight-year-old child.

Since early June, the military junta has deployed approximately 500 troops to control oil fields - a critical resource for local revolutionary forces - in Pakokku, Myaing, and Pauk Townships. This column has been stationed in Te Gyi Village at the Pauk-Myaing border for nearly two months.

Local media reports indicate that since early October, revolutionary forces have launched offensives against the stationed column, inflicting heavy casualties on the military. Consequently, the junta continues to send reinforcements via convoys from Pakokku-based 101st Division and through aerial deployments.



Thai protestors. Photo: AFP

THAI VILLAGERS PROTEST AFTER CROSS-BORDER SHELLING FROM FIGHTING IN SOUTHERN MYAWADDY

Residents of Mae Kon Ken village in Mae Sot District, Tak Province, protested on 27 October after shells and gunfire from fighting in the Palu and Min Let Pan areas of southern Myawaddy, Myanmar, landed in Thailand.

Four 60 mm mortar shells fired from Myanmar landed in Ward 9 of Maha Wan tambon on 22 October, damaging the zinc roofs of four Thai homes and lightly injuring a Myanmar migrant woman, m.CDM reported. Some villagers near the river have moved to safer areas, and several learning centres for Myanmar migrant children are closed.

Protesters called on Thai authorities to take effective steps to protect lives and property.

The commander of the Thai Army's Ratchamanu Task Force visited the area on 23 October and ordered 24-hour monitoring of the border. Khaosod English reported on 26 October that the task force would fire warning smoke rounds toward suspected firing positions if fire crosses the border, may take proportionate countermeasures if it finds the fire was intentional, will set up compensation for affected Thai residents, and will coordinate the voluntary return of displaced people from Myanmar once fighting ends.

Fighting continues along the Moei River in southern Myawaddy between junta forces and combined forces of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and People's Defense Forces (PDF).



INDIAN AGENCIES SAY RAIDS ACROSS NORTHEAST BROKE INDIA-MYANMAR DRUG NETWORK; 18 ARRESTED, 1,424 BANK ACCOUNTS FROZEN

Indian agencies arrested 18 people and froze 1,424 bank accounts in a coordinated operation against a drug trafficking and money-laundering network linked to Myanmar, officials said.

India's Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) led "Operation Trident" with the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Mizoram Police on 23 October, using 38 teams at 38 locations in Assam, Mizoram and Manipur, according to ANI and other Indian outlets.

The raids covered Aizawl, Champhai, Lawngtlai and the border trade hub Zokhawthar in Mizoram, as well as Churachandpur in Manipur and Guwahati in Assam, the draft says.

Officials said the operation uncovered about ₹100 crore (about US$10.5 million) in hawala transactions, attached properties worth ₹17.82 crore (about US$1.9 million), and seized 500 detonators and ₹12 lakh (about US$12,600) in cash. Authorities in Mizoram said five people from Assam and Manipur were arrested, the NCB said it arrested seven in Aizawl and Champhai, and the ED said it arrested six in Mizoram, Manipur and Gujarat under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

The ED said heroin and methamphetamine tablets from Myanmar entered through Mizoram and Manipur and were distributed locally and trafficked through Assam to other parts of India and to Bangladesh. The Print reported the ED also alleges more than 40 tonnes of chemical precursors were routed from Gujarat to Myanmar via Mizoram.

A Myanmar national living in Mizoram told Mizzima that people he knows who send money to Myanmar had their bank accounts frozen though no one among them was arrested, and that they are not involved in drug trafficking. Mizzima could not verify this, and it is unclear how many of the account holders are Myanmar nationals.

Mizoram Police said they will keep acting against international and interstate drug networks and the laundering of their proceeds. Home Minister Amit Shah said on 25 October that the operation was "another lethal blow" to drug cartels. The government has set a goal of a drug-free India by 31 December 2029.



Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA COURT SEIZES NAWNGHKIO'S CENTRAL MOSQUE AND JAILS TWO TRUSTEES FOR 11 YEARS

A Myanmar junta-controlled court in northern Shan State has ordered the central mosque in Nawnghkio to be confiscated as state property and sentenced two of its trustees to 11 years in prison under the Counter-Terrorism Law, leaving the town's Muslim community without its main place of worship over charges brought against two men.

According to Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), a UK-based religious freedom group, Kyaukme District Court convicted mosque trustees Hla Htwe and Soe Thein under Sections 50(j) and 52(a) of the law and issued the confiscation judgment on 18 September.

Nawnghkio, a town on the Mandalay–Lashio highway, was held for about a year by the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), an ethnic armed group based in northern Shan State, and allied resistance forces before the military retook it in mid-July 2025. The military has faced armed resistance across the country since it seized power in a February 2021 coup.

After the recapture, authorities sealed the mosque on the grounds that renovations had been carried out without permission. The regime later accused the mosque's management of supplying food and other support to the TNLA, CSW said, adding that local residents reject the accusations as a pretext for taking the building.

The mosque is one of dozens of properties shut in the town since the military returned. A four-storey Hindu Gurkha dharmashala, along with homes and shops, has also been sealed.

CSW founder president Mervyn Thomas said the junta was using the courts to target religious minorities. "A house of worship belongs to its entire community," he said, adding that seizing it over accusations against individual trustees amounted to collective punishment.

The ruling follows a separate move in Mandalay, where authorities in Aungmyethazan Township sealed prayer halls in the Miba Zay Mosque compound in September and banned communal prayer there under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, following pressure from the nationalist Buddhist group Ma Ba Tha, according to CSW.



Photo: AFP

MIP DOCUMENTS CONTINUED THREATS FROM MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKES ON CIVILIANS

The Myanmar Internet Project (MIP), in its report Report on Communication Disruptions and Impacts in Regions Affected by Airstrikes (July–September 2026), documents the continued use of air power by Myanmar's military junta and the close association between airstrikes and internet shutdowns. The report highlights the growing risks faced by civilians in conflict-affected areas where access to communication is restricted.

Between July and September 2026, MIP recorded 581 airstrike incidents across 99 townships in 13 regions and states, with Yangon Region the only region not affected. This represented an 11.73 per cent increase compared with the previous quarter. Sagaing Region was the most geographically affected, with 23 townships experiencing airstrikes, followed by Rakhine State with 15 and Magway Region with 12.

Rakhine State recorded the highest number of individual strikes, at 122, followed by Sagaing with 107 and Magway with 106. Together, these three areas accounted for approximately 62.65 per cent of all recorded incidents. According to MIP, these regions have experienced intense armed conflict as the junta continues its efforts to regain territorial control.

One of the report's most significant findings is the relationship between airstrikes and restricted communications. Of the 581 incidents recorded, 562, or 96.88 per cent, occurred in areas experiencing internet shutdowns. These disruptions make it more difficult for civilians to obtain warnings, communicate with relatives, access assistance and report attacks. They also hinder the collection of reliable information about casualties and damage.

MIP documented at least 353 civilian deaths during the reporting period. Those killed included at least 90 women, 34 children and 43 elderly people. The report warns that the actual death toll could be significantly higher because communication restrictions prevented information from emerging from some affected areas.

Airstrikes also damaged essential civilian infrastructure, including 39 religious buildings, mostly monasteries, 16 schools, four hospitals and clinics, two internally displaced people's camps, three bridges and three markets. Most of the affected sites were located in areas experiencing communication shutdowns.

The report concludes that the junta's continued reliance on air power, combined with internet restrictions, leaves civilians particularly vulnerable. The destruction of healthcare facilities, schools, religious buildings and displacement camps further undermines civilian safety and access to essential services. MIP also highlights attacks on markets with no apparent military connection, which it says resulted in mass civilian casualties.


Photo: AFP

MALAYSIA TO SEEK CLARIFICATION OVER REPORTS OF DETAINED MYANMAR RETURNEES

Malaysia will seek clarification from Myanmar over reports that hundreds of migrants recently returned to the country are being held in military detention, Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan said on 26 October.

Malaysia in late September sent back around 1,500 Myanmar nationals as it launched a scheme that rights groups say may endanger migrants by returning them to the war-torn country.

Kuala Lumpur said the group agreed to "voluntary" repatriate from detention centres amid an uptick in anti-migrant sentiment in Malaysia.

Myanmar pledged "safe and dignified" returns for its citizens displaced abroad, after criticism from the United Nations and rights groups.

Mohamad told parliament on Monday that Malaysia's charge d'affaires in Myanmar would investigate the allegations and learn the condition of those reportedly detained.

"If there is news that the 300 people are still being detained, we will ask the Myanmar government to explain to us," he told parliament in response to a lawmaker's question.

"We will ask the Myanmar government to ensure that the assurances it gave us are honoured," he added.

Myanmar news outlet the Democratic Voice of Burma reported on Thursday that more than 400 ethnic Rakhine residents who returned from Malaysia earlier this month "remain in military custody" after arriving in Yangon.

They were among a group of 1,476 returnees who arrived by ship outside Yangon, the first of 5,000 that Kuala Lumpur says Myanmar agreed to take back amid the anti-migrant sentiment in Malaysia.

An additional 3,524 people are expected to be repatriated in a second phase.

The UN has warned conditions in Myanmar, which has been consumed by civil war since a 2021 military coup, mean safe homecomings cannot be guaranteed as required under international law.

Myanmar's coup leader turned president Min Aung Hlaing has been a pariah in many capitals abroad since the putsch, but Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim invited him for talks about returning Myanmar migrants earlier this month.

During the visit, Min Aung Hlaing said migrants from his country held in Malaysian detention centres will be returned home "as soon as possible".

"We will take those verified nationals back as soon as possible," he told a joint news conference with Anwar.

The opaque repatriation scheme has been criticised by rights monitors, some fearing ethnic Rohingya may be sent back to a country where they have experienced persecution that rights experts say amounted to genocide.

AFP



THAI FOREIGN MINISTER TO VISIT MYANMAR AHEAD OF ASEAN SUMMIT

Thailand's foreign minister said he will visit Myanmar on November 12, days before a regional summit where Bangkok will be pressing to normalise ties with the war-torn country.

Sihasak Phuangketkeow's trip also comes during raised tensions along the countries' shared border, where Bangkok said clashes between Myanmar's military and ethnic rebels caused property damage and injured a Thai civilian in Thailand last week.

His visit, announced 3 November, is scheduled shortly before a November 16-18 summit of leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Manila.

Myanmar's leaders have not been invited to high-level ASEAN meetings since former general Min Aung Hlaing led a 2021 military coup that ousted democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi, triggering a civil war.

Sihasak told reporters in Beijing his government wants to "hear Myanmar's latest position" ahead of the summit.

"De-escalation by all parties will help create a conducive atmosphere for essential dialogue and the peace process," he said.

"If there is progress on these fronts, it will be a positive factor for ASEAN to consider at the leaders summit, as we decide how to move forward on the situation in Myanmar, including Myanmar's participation in ASEAN meetings," he added.

Sihasak, who last visited Myanmar in April, said he would meet his counterpart, Tin Maung Swe, on November 12, and a meeting with Min Aung Hlaing was "in the works".

In July, Bangkok hosted a meeting between Tin Maung Swe and foreign ministers of several ASEAN member states, the first such gathering since the 2021 coup.

The following month Min Aung Hlaing met with Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul in Bangkok, with the two nations' military chiefs holding talks two weeks after.

Min Aung Hlaing took over as civilian president in April following elections widely dismissed by monitors as a charade.

Since then he has been given a red-carpet welcome across the region, in India, China and several ASEAN nations.

Myanmar is expected to send a senior civil servant to the Manila summit.

Thailand has stepped up security on its western frontier following last week's cross-border fire.

On Wednesday, Myanmar's military blamed "terrorist insurgents" -- how it refers to ethnic-minority armed groups and pro-democracy forces -- for wounding a Thai national, according to a statement in state media.

AFP



MYANMAR WITNESS REPORTS ON THE DAMAGING EFFECTS OF LANDMINES ON CIVILIANS IN MYANMAR

Landmines and other types of explosive remnants of war (ERW) continue to affect civilians across Myanmar, not only in areas of conflict but also elsewhere in everyday life, notes Myanmar Witness. This includes roadsides, near homes, gardens, monasteries and public market areas. Moreover, the ramifications of these weapons extend far beyond the initial blast; alongside people being killed, many are left seriously injured and with consequences that may affect long-term impairment and disability-related needs.

Myanmar Witness documented 170 reported landmine and ERW incidents across 12 regions and states between April 2025 and March 2026. Within that it involved 56 of the country's 330 townships. With 52 reports, the highest concentration was recorded in Shan State, followed by Rakhine State with 50, and Kachin State with 16. Note that these figures reflect varied open-source reporting and civilian harm patterns rather than an exhaustive map of total explosive contamination in the country.

One defining pattern that emerged from Myanmar Witness's investigation is the locations of the reported incidents, which highlighted the risks civilians face in everyday spaces. For example, public areas accounted for the largest share of reported locations, including roadsides and riversides. This was followed by residential and community spaces where landmine incidents were reported near homes, gardens, monasteries and markets. These findings indicate that civilians routinely encounter explosive hazards in their ordinary activities such as travelling, working, farming or worshipping.

Additionally, the documented human cost within Myanmar Witness's dataset is also significant to underscore, as it accounts for 230 reported casualties, including 57 fatalities and 173 traumatic injuries. Notably, of those, 77 individuals were reported to have sustained amputations across 71 distinct incidents. These types of injuries trigger enduring disability-related needs, requiring rehabilitation and assistance in returning to daily activities such as education or work. Of all casualties, men accounted for the largest share, with 136 reported incidents. Importantly, children were also notably affected, with 30 incidents documented, including cases where they encountered ERW in community spaces or while playing.

Myanmar Witness stresses that definitive actor attribution remains a challenge; 120 of the 170 incidents could not be assigned to a specific party. Of the remaining cases, 37 incidents were linked by open-source reports to the Myanmar military, and 13 others to various non-state armed groups. However, Myanmar Witness could not verify these claims.

Ultimately, these findings in this report underscore that landmines and ERW represent not only an immediate threat to life, but can also create long-lasting physical, social and economic consequences for survivors, their families and communities. This report uses open-source information to document where these reported incidents occurred, how civilians are affected and what can be established about the circumstances of individual cases.



TIME TO RETURN TO THE ROOTS: THE CSSU MANIFESTO AS BLUEPRINT FOR SHAN HARMONY AND A FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC UNION

SAI WANSAI

With tensions flaring across northern Shan State, the spectre of ethnic displacement and cultural erasure has returned with a vengeance. The recent stern warning issued by the Shan State Joint Action Committee (SSJAC) against the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), also widely known as Kokang, whose population speaks Chinese as their mother tongue, has brought the region's simmering inter-ethnic conflicts into sharp, dangerous focus. The SSJAC's complaint is specific and grave: that MNDAA is imposing a "Sinicization" scheme through heavy-handed governance, forcing Chinese language on public institutions, seizing local land, and renaming historic towns and temples in ways that alienate the indigenous Shan population. This is not merely a political dispute; it is a crisis of identity and survival.

It is a stark reminder that the vacuum left by the military junta is being filled by new forms of domination. As the SSJAC noted, replacing one set of administrative structures with another is acceptable, but the current MNDAA actions constitute a wholesale violation of the basic rights and cultural heritage of local communities. If these are left unaddressed, the region risks sliding into a cycle of retaliation that will drown the people in blood once again.

Now is the moment for all multi-ethnic people of Shan State to think earnestly about how to return to harmonious living, as our forefathers managed to do in the past. In this regard, the Committee for Shan State Unity (CSSU) Manifesto, issued on 7 February 2022, is the document where we must start our journey toward nation-building and state-building. It is time to give ourselves a chance, so that peace might have a chance to take root, allowing us to live together again.

The Anatomy of the Crisis

The current unrest is not an isolated incident but the latest chapter in a long history of broken promises and military-driven centralization. For decades, the people of Shan State have lived under the shadow of the "four cuts" military strategy, a policy designed to sever the support between resistance groups and the civilian population. The CSSU Manifesto vividly

describes this era as a "living hell" where basic human rights were stripped away by military dictators and those in disguise. The recent events in Kokang and the broader northern Shan region are a continuation of this legacy, where the state's monopoly on violence is now being exercised by armed groups who have replaced the junta in certain territories.

The SSJAC's report highlights several alarming trends. The MNDAA, in areas it controls, is enforcing the use of the Chinese language in official capacities, overriding the local Shan dialects. Local land is being illegally transferred to Chinese nationals through dubious legal mechanisms, effectively dispossessing the indigenous population. Furthermore, there are reports of arbitrary arrests and intimidation against those who protest these changes. The MNDAA has renamed the towns and is compelling residents to use Chinese and Burmese signage, erasing the local Shan scripture in their own cultural heritage and landscape. For example, locals said entrance signs in several villages along the Lashio-Hsenwi road, including Nam On, Kho Mong, Hsai Kao, Ho Kho, Mong Yu, Kutkai and so on, have also been changed to display only Burmese and Chinese.

This "colonization mindset" and territorial expansion urge, at the expense of traditional local people, are direct threat to the multi-ethnic fabric of Shan State. It is not just about the Shan people; it sets a dangerous precedent for how any dominant ethnic group might treat minorities within its sphere of influence. If the MNDAA, a member of multi-ethnic alliance, can impose its cultural will on the Shan, then who is to say that other groups will not do the same? The result is a fragmented, distrustful society where every community lives in fear of the next.

The CSSU Manifesto: A Framework for Unity

Amidst this chaos, the CSSU Manifesto stands out as a beacon of reason and a practical guide for recovery. Unlike many political documents that are drafted in isolation, the CSSU was a coalition of Shan armed groups, political parties, and civil society organizations. Its manifesto was not just a theoretical exercise but a negotiated agreement among those who were often at war with each other. The document's core premise is simple yet profound: true peace can only be achieved through "Peaceful Coexistence," which requires the recognition and respect of all nationalities residing in the State.

The manifesto explicitly rejects the idea of a single ethnic dominance. It states, "We shall equally value and recognize all the nationalities residing in the State and cooperate with them on matters that are mutually beneficial." This is a direct rebuke to the Sinicization policies currently being enforced in parts of Shan State. By framing sovereignty as belonging to the "original owners of the State" — the people themselves, regardless of ethnicity — the CSSU provides a legal and moral basis for resisting cultural erasure.

Moreover, the manifesto's vision of "State Building Machinery of Government" offers a concrete alternative to the current power vacuum. It calls for:

Autonomous Local Governments: Ensuring that each ethnic group has a say in how their own communities are governed.

Fiscal and Resource Autonomy: Guaranteeing that local revenues and benefits from natural resources stay within the community, preventing external exploitation.

Mother-Tongue Education: Mandating a multilingual schooling system that respects and preserves local languages and cultures.

These are not just lofty ideals; they are the exact mechanisms needed to prevent the kind of cultural and economic domination currently being experienced in

Kokang. If these principles had been in place, the recent conflicts over land and language might have been resolved through local councils and legal channels rather than through intimidation and force.

Why the CSSU Model is the Right Path Forward

A Shan language signpost in northern Shan State was reportedly demolished by the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), prompting concerns over the erosion of local cultural identity

The current political landscape in Myanmar is dominated by the struggle against the military junta. The National Unity Government (NUG) and its allied armed groups have made significant strides in the battlefield, but their political vision for the post-junta era remains somewhat abstract and centralized. The NUG's charters, while progressive, have been criticized for not adequately addressing the specific needs of ethnic states or for creating a "Bamar State" that would balance the power of non-Bamar ethnic groups.

The CSSU Manifesto, by contrast, offers a bottom-up approach to federalism. It starts with the constituent state — in this case, Shan State — and builds the constitution from the ground up. This is crucial for a region as diverse as Shan State, which is home to Shan, Ta'ang, Pa-O, Wa, Chinese, Kachin, and many other communities. A top-down federal model imposed from Naypyitaw or even from a resistance government in exile is unlikely to satisfy these deep-seated local identities.

The CSSU's three-stage unity projection — first Shan-Tai unity, then unity among all ethnic groups within Shan State, and finally unity of all ethnic nationalities across the union — provides a realistic roadmap. It acknowledges that you cannot have national harmony without first resolving the conflicts within your own house. The CSSU itself has struggled with internal fighting, particularly between the RCSS and SSPP, but its manifesto serves as a shared reference point for reconciliation. By inviting all stakeholders, including those who currently disagree with its policies, to negotiate and cooperate, the CSSU is modeling the very behavior that the rest of Shan State needs to adopt.

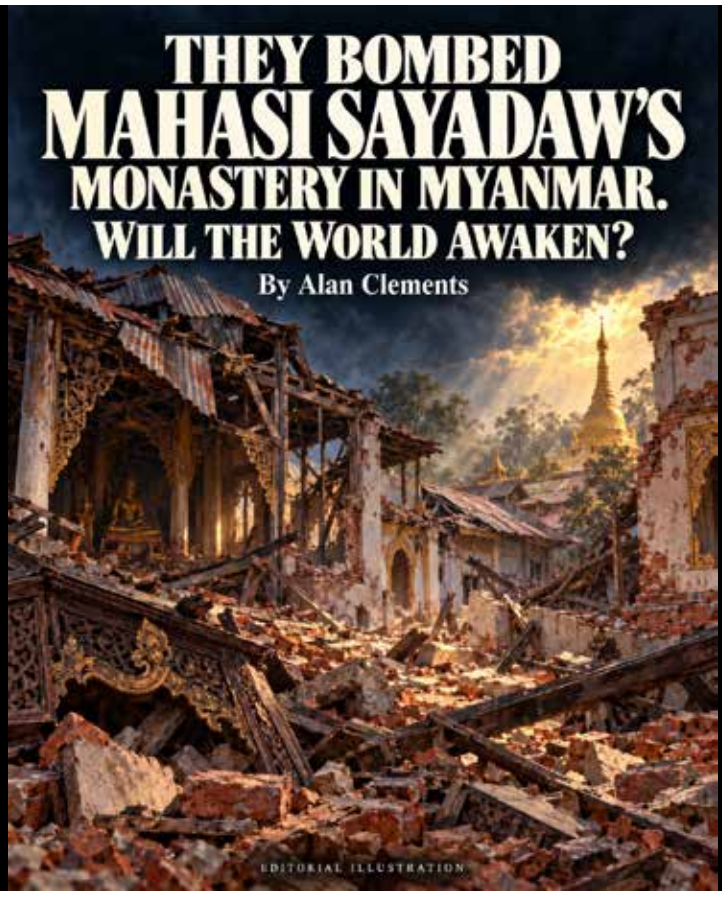
A Call for Immediate Action

The SSJAC's warning is a wake-up call. If the multi-ethnic community of Shan State does not come together to address these issues now, the region will be consumed by a new wave of ethnic conflict that will dwarf the previous struggles. The "might is right" approach, whether exercised by the junta or by groups like the MNDAA, is a dead end. It leads only to more war, more displacement, and more suffering for the innocent people who have already endured so much.

We must return to the principles outlined in the CSSU Manifesto. We must demand that all armed groups, including the MNDAA, respect the cultural and linguistic rights of the local population. We must insist on autonomous local governance that gives power back to the people. And we must use this manifesto as the starting point for a broader dialogue that includes all ethnic groups, not just the Shan.

This is not just about Shan State. It is about the future of Myanmar. If we can build a model of peaceful coexistence in Shan State, based on the CSSU's framework of mutual respect and legal autonomy, we can show the rest of the country how to do the same. We have a chance to build a state that is truly federal, truly democratic, and truly harmonious. But we must seize this chance now, before the window of opportunity closes and the cycle of violence begins anew. Let us give ourselves a chance, so that peace will have a chance.

Courtesy of Shan Herald Agency for News



On a sacred Buddhist observance day marking the new moon of October 2026, Myanmar's military bombed the home monastery of the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw in Seikkhun, in Burma's Sagaing Region, killing at least two civilians and wounding others. The bombs damaged the Dhamma hall, meditation facilities, and religious buildings of a sanctuary where people had gathered to practice harmlessness and escape the violence consuming their country. Later that afternoon, according to accounts gathered by Insight Myanmar, drones attacked the compound again. People had fled to a monastery to stay alive. They were killed there.

Almost fifty years earlier, I arrived at that monastery with a question about how to live.

It was March 1977, my first visit to Burma. I had come with Joseph Goldstein, Jack Kornfield, Steven Smith, Mark Epstein, Roger Milliken, and others, and my beloved partner at the time, Catherine Ingram. I remember our truckload of Westerners arriving to meet this revered monk. I remember him giving a Dhamma talk to the people gathered there. Whether we were the first Western practitioners to visit, I cannot say. What I remember most intimately is the aspiration that brought me.

In Florida, in 1971, I had read Mahasi Sayadaw's practical instructions on vipassana meditation. Their clarity changed my life. Here was an invitation to examine consciousness directly—to look, to feel, to know what contracts our inner being and what allows it to become free. Fear could be understood. Hatred could be understood. The movements of craving, generosity, tenderness, and awareness could be encountered within the immediacy of living.

For six years, I had wanted to meet the person who offered this extraordinary invitation. When the opportunity came, I asked whether I could ordain as a monk, remain under his guidance, and devote myself to intensive satipaṭṭhāna vipassana (insight) meditation. As I remember his answer, he explained that my visa allowed only one week. It could not be extended. We lived under dictatorship.

I heard those words without understanding the world they contained. Now, in late October 2026, their meaning reaches me through the bombing of the place where he spoke them.

Mahasi Sayadaw was among the most influential Buddhist teachers of the twentieth century. At the Sixth Great Buddhist Council, held in Rangoon from

1954 to 1956, he served as Questioner and Final Editor. Alongside Mingun Sayadaw, who answered the questions concerning the teachings, he occupied a central role in preserving the Theravada tradition. His authority joined profound scholarship with the disciplined investigation of experience.

Through his students and the generations, they taught, that inheritance traveled across continents. Its influence lives in Buddhist monasteries, insight meditation centers, mindfulness communities, and innumerable private lives. For me, it opened an embodied understanding of consciousness: the intimacy of sensation and awareness, intention and consequence, the qualities of mind through which we either deepen suffering or participate in its release.

Today, the global Buddhist, mindfulness, and insight meditation communities are being called into a profound expression of that understanding. The people who helped preserve and transmit these teachings are enduring a national catastrophe. Our relationship with them continues beyond the meditation hall. What form will our gratitude take when their homes are destroyed and their families driven into flight?

More than four million people are internally displaced, and more than sixteen million need humanitarian assistance. Behind those numbers are the disintegration of ordinary life and the relentless work of surviving its loss. Villages have been destroyed. Airstrikes and shelling have struck civilian communities, displacement sites, and health facilities. Families face hunger, interrupted medical care, forced recruitment, arbitrary arrest, and torture. Rohingya communities continue to endure persecution and deprivation. Refugees who escape across borders face insecurity and the danger of forced return.

Consider what it means to lose the place where your life makes sense: the home where your children sleep, the school that gives their days continuity, the clinic that keeps a parent alive, the monastery where grief can be spoken and food sometimes found. Displacement is the breaking of these relationships. Repeated displacement is having to gather the remnants and begin again, with fewer resources and another layer of fear. The bombing of sanctuary carries a terrible question into every refuge: will we have to run from here, too?

At Seikkhun, people had gathered for Uposatha, a sacred observance devoted to ethical restraint and spiritual practice. Others were sheltering from the conflict. Bombs struck a community seeking protection and cultivating peace. The devastation reaches into the meaning of sanctuary itself.

Imagine the international response to the bombing of the Vatican or a sanctuary intimately associated with the Dalai Lama. These comparisons help convey the spiritual significance of Mahasi Sayadaw's home monastery. Yet the people killed there required no association with a great teacher to make their lives sacred. Their humanity was enough. Our recognition of the monastery should bring us closer to every unnamed village enduring the same violence.

My reverence for Mahasi Sayadaw is inseparable from my gratitude to Sayadaw U Pandita, his successor and my Dhamma teacher. My understanding also deepened through Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, U Tin Oo, and U Kyi Maung. Through them, the revolution of the spirit became a living responsibility: metta as active loving-kindness, karuna as compassion willing to respond, nonviolence as courage, and right speech as truth offered in the service of life.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi told me of attending the Mahasi meditation center in Rangoon in her twenties, and of the help she later received from U Pandita's teachings during house arrest. Today, at eighty-one, she remains deprived of her freedom. Thousands of other political prisoners remain confined, their suffering often hidden from international attention. Our demand for her release must carry their names and their humanity with it.

What does liberation ask of those of us who can speak freely? What does mindfulness become when it includes the conditions under which other people must draw their next breath? The consciousness we investigate is also the consciousness through which we respond—or become accustomed to looking away. We can bring awareness to that moment of withdrawal. We can feel the helplessness without allowing it to decide the limits of our responsibility.

Many Burmese people and international supporters already live this commitment with extraordinary

courage. Let us strengthen their work through a coordinated alliance of Buddhist, mindfulness, and insight meditation communities. Let our institutions join forces across traditions, countries, and teaching lineages, guided by the people whose lives are at stake.

Our first commitment should be a shared international gathering for Burma: a day of teachings, public testimony, vigils, and nonviolent demonstrations, organized with Burmese communities and followed by continuing action. Let people hear directly from those living through displacement and those sustaining humanitarian work. Let every participating institution leave with a responsibility it has agreed to carry.

Our second commitment should be sustained support for Burmese-led relief. Meditation centers and Buddhist organizations can establish recurring contributions, support displaced families and prisoners' relatives, and help independent journalists continue reporting. Compassion becomes tangible when it helps someone eat, receive care, or remain connected to the world.

Our third commitment should be a common public campaign for civilian protection and the release of political prisoners. Press governments to restrict the military's access to weapons, aviation fuel, and revenue while safeguarding humanitarian assistance. Demand protection for refugees, access to detainees, and accountability for atrocities. Ask ASEAN to make the protection of human beings central to its diplomacy.

Maya Angelou's Still I Rise gives voice to a dignity that oppression cannot extinguish: "But still, like dust, I'll rise." Rooted in Black experience, her words reach across borders and find an answering courage in people struggling for freedom everywhere. I hear that courage in Burma.

In words widely attributed to Rumi, "If all you can do is crawl, start crawling." Begin with the capacity you have. Help one family, organize one gathering, sustain one commitment, and invite others to join you. Let prejudice yield to encounter. Let solidarity embrace every ethnicity and religion. Let our concern become dependable enough that someone living through this nightmare can feel its presence.

Nearly half a century ago, in 1979, after helping invite Mahasi Sayadaw and other monks to America to teach, I asked him whether I could return with him to Burma and become a monk. He encouraged me to ordain then and there in New York; once we reached Burma, we could petition the regime for permission to stay. That is what we did.

I became one of the first Americans permitted under the dictatorship to live and practice under his guidance, only to be expelled several years later by the very dictator who had allowed me to remain. The man is gone, but a succession of dictators has carried his violence into the lives of another generation. Now the monastery where I was first welcomed has been bombed, and people who sought refuge there have been killed. I carry the memory of a teacher who helped open a door for me within a country whose rulers had closed so many. That welcome lives in me as a responsibility.

It asks something of all of us in the global Buddhist, mindfulness, and insight meditation communities who have received this extraordinary inheritance: to join forces, to stand beside the people whose generosity helped bring these teachings into our lives, and to make our practice a living expression of solidarity. I once asked for the freedom to remain in Burma and practice. Today, I ask us to practice together for the freedom of those who remain. Let us rise together in Burma's revolution of the spirit, until freedom becomes something its people can live.

About the author

Alan Clements is an author, spoken-word artist, former Buddhist monk, and human-rights advocate who trained in Burma under Mahasi Sayadaw and Sayadaw U Pandita. His books include The Voice of Hope, drawn from conversations with Aung San Suu Kyi; Burma's Revolution of the Spirit; Burma's Voices of Freedom; Conversation with a Dictator; Unsilenced: Aung San Suu Kyi—Conversations from a Myanmar Prison; and Politics of the Heart: Nonviolence in the Age of Atrocity.



U.S. TO CHINA AFTER DEMOLITION REPORT: 'END INTERFERENCE IN TIBETAN RELIGIOUS LIFE'

RFA

The U.S. government on 29 October urged China to stop interfering with Tibetan religious freedom after sources in eastern Tibet told Radio Free Asia that Chinese authorities began demolishing monks' quarters at a monastery there.

Authorities on October 25 and 26 began demolishing about 200 monks' residences at Dza Sershul Thekchen Dargyeling Monastery in Sershul County in the Kardze (Ganzi in Chinese) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, sources there told RFA, speaking on the condition of anonymity for security reasons.

"Everything is over now," the source said. "We are losing everything."

A U.S. State Department spokesperson told RFA on Thursday that the demolitions in Sershul reflect broader Chinese government efforts to bring spiritual institutions, religious education, and monastic life under government control.

"We call on Beijing to end its interference in Tibetan religious life," the spokesperson said. "Tibetan Buddhists should have the right to practice their faith freely, educate their clergy and choose their religious leaders, including the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama, without government interference," the spokesperson said, referring to Beijing's past and likely future interference with the established succession customs of the two most important figures in Tibetan Buddhism.

The demolition in Sershul is not isolated, but part of a larger campaign to reduce monk populations at Tibetan religious institutions. RFA reported in August that authorities resumed demolition of the Larung Gar Buddhist Academy. Activists noted the timing – China's new Ethnic Unity and Progress Law – had just come into effect the previous month.

The law focuses on reshaping ethnic identity, changing the legal framework around language, expanding state oversight of religion, and extending the law's reach beyond China's border.

The source in Tibet said that authorities are planning further restrictions that would prevent monks from staying at the monastery after the demolitions.

"Tibetan religion and culture are being destroyed," the source told RFA, adding that there is little recourse for those opposed to the demolitions.

"No matter how much local people speak out, the authorities do not listen," the source said. "They do not remember, they ignore us. We have no solutions and we don't know what will happen."

RFA contacted the relevant county-level officials in Sershul for comment, but the official who answered the phone did not respond to RFA's questions and hung up.

Promoting "ethnic unity"

The demolitions and reductions of the monk population are clearly intended to assimilate Tibetans so that they accept Chinese identity, Tenzin Lekshay, spokesperson for the Central Tibetan Administration, or CTA, the Tibetan government-in-exile based in Dharamsala, India, told RFA.

"This is a mask used by the Chinese government under the recently enacted Ethnic Unity Law to assimilate Tibetans and destroy Tibetan religion, culture, and language," he said. "This is not the first time. We have also seen young monks forcibly expelled from monasteries and sent to China's colonial boarding schools."

Though Beijing claims the boarding schools are aimed at providing education to a scattered population, critics have noted that their actual goal is assimilation.

"We strongly condemn the Chinese government's continued attempts to shut down monasteries and schools established by Tibetans while claiming its authority over Tibet and seeking to eradicate Tibetan national identity," Tenzin Lekshay said. "It is time for the Chinese government to acknowledge and trust that Tibetan religion and culture are beneficial to China and the world and that the destruction of Tibetan religion and culture will have negative consequences for both China and the world."

He said that the Chinese government's actions, which violate international law, would undermine Beijing's ambition to establish itself as a global leader.

Tibetan monasteries are central to preserving Tibetan culture and religious identity, Sangay Kyab, Chinese liaison officer at the Tibet Bureau, the CTA's representative office in Geneva, Switzerland, told RFA.

"Tibetan culture and religion are central to the identity of the Tibetan people. China's policy and goal is to destroy everything that keeps Tibet alive," he said. "Since China invaded Tibet, there have been successive campaigns against Tibetan monasteries, often under the pretext of reforming them."

He explained how monks and nuns are subjected to political education aimed at making monasteries conform to the Chinese Communist Party's ideology.

"The main goal is to restrict the study and practice of Tibetan Buddhism and undermine the Tibetan people's ability to unite," he said. "The incident at the monastery is connected to the Chinese government's broader policies toward Tibet, and there is a risk that similar incidents could occur elsewhere," he said.

Restrictions in Tibet threaten Tibetan Buddhist heritage, warned the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, an independent, bipartisan U.S. government commission that monitors religious freedom abroad and makes policy recommendations to the U.S. government.

"Demolition of Tibetan monasteries is just one tactic in a wider effort by Chinese authorities to sever the people of Tibet from their Tibetan Buddhist heritage, including the forced assimilation of ethnic minorities through the draconian 'Ethnic Unity' law that came into effect in July," commission chair Asif Mahmood told RFA.

He cited the resumption of demolition at Larung Gar in Sichuan province in July as another example of restrictions on Tibetan Buddhist religious freedom.

"Buddhist monks in these circumstances have faced persistent threats of harassment, expulsion from their monasteries, imprisonment, and worse," he said.

China is trying to destroy Tibetan Buddhism at its roots, Bhuchung K. Tsering, head of the Research and Monitoring Unit at the Washington-based International Campaign for Tibet, told RFA.

"Monasteries across Tibet are required to follow the orders of the Chinese Communist Party and serve its objectives," he said. "The Chinese government claims that Tibetans enjoy freedom of religion, but the reality is the opposite of its claims that it is promoting Tibetan Buddhism," he added.

Translation and additional reporting by Tenzin Dickyi, edited by Tawang for RFA Tibetan. Edited by Eugene Whong for RFA English.

Courtesy of Radio Free Asia



TURNING THE PAGE

"Even before the coup, books gave me ideas, empathy, and hope," Zu May Lwin, a student activist and library organizer from Magway, tells the Insight Myanmar Podcast. Her work includes grassroots literacy work and the creation of mobile libraries for displaced communities and political protest; which culminated in her arrest and imprisonment at the hands of the military regime. In this conversation, she argues that education and access to books are essential not only for individual growth but also for rebuilding Myanmar's society after authoritarian repression.

Zu May Lwin explains that before the 2021 coup, reading culture in many parts of Myanmar faced structural challenges that limited access to books and discouraged widespread reading habits. In Magway, a regional capital city, books were often physically difficult to obtain, and their cost placed them out of reach for many ordinary families. People spent long days working to sustain their livelihoods, leaving little time or energy for reading. In this environment, reading rarely became a social norm passed between generations. Many young people did not receive guidance about which books mattered or how reading could shape their thinking. Formal schooling introduced literature only superficially through textbooks, and classrooms often treated reading as a requirement rather than an invitation to intellectual exploration. As a result, many students finished school without developing a meaningful relationship with books.

Originally a chemistry student, she had developed a personal love of reading during her teenage years, and that interest gradually expanded into community engagement. After finishing high school, she volunteered with a mobile library initiative in Magway that sought to bring books directly to public spaces. Rather than waiting for readers to visit traditional libraries, volunteers transported collections of books to parks and university campuses. Every Sunday, they spread books across the ground in a public park, inviting anyone passing by to browse and borrow them. The program also traveled to university campuses, where students from different institutions gathered to borrow books and return them the following week. Through these activities, the mobile library became more than a distribution system for books; it functioned as a community gathering place that encouraged discussion, curiosity, and collective learning.

CATCH THE PODCAST

Read more and listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast here: https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2026/10/12/episode-624-turning-the-page



Conscripts lining up for clothing supplies. Photo: Supplied

ISP REPORT EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER MYANMAR'S PARLIAMENT REMAINING SILENT ON MILITARY CONSCRIPTION

A newly-released report by the Institute for Strategy and Policy (ISP-Myanmar) examines the Myanmar military's conscription programme and the failure of the country's legislatures to adequately address the serious concerns it has created for civilians.

Since the military introduced the People's Military Service Law in February 2024, it has substantially increased its recruitment of new soldiers. According to estimates based on research by the Myanmar Defense and Security Institute (MDSI), the military had potentially recruited more than 136,300 people by its 29th training intake in October 2026.

Annual recruitment has risen from an average of approximately 7,200 soldiers before conscription to more than 56,400, an increase of nearly eightfold. These figures exclude graduates from military academies and officer training schools.

Despite the scale of the programme, parliamentary discussion has been remarkably limited. Between March and October 2026, the People's Parliament raised the issue only three times, despite asking the government at least 495 questions on other matters. Neither the Union Parliament nor the National Parliament discussed conscription at all. Five additional questions were raised in regional and state legislatures.

The limited discussions highlighted allegations of forced recruitment, unlawful arrests, extortion and abuses by local authorities and armed groups. Reports described young people being detained in public places, travellers being seized, and families being pressured to pay money to prevent recruitment. Such practices have reportedly contributed to fear, corruption, labour shortages and declining public confidence.

The report argues that the military shows little intention of abandoning conscription because it is central to rebuilding its forces. Meanwhile, young people face the loss of educational and employment opportunities, forced participation in a conflict against fellow citizens, and the risk of death. The wider economy also suffers as people leave Myanmar to seek work abroad.

ISP-Myanmar concludes that the legislatures have failed to provide meaningful oversight or adequately address public suffering. Their silence raises serious questions about their willingness and ability to hold the military and government accountable, potentially widening the divide between political institutions and the population they claim to represent.



ASEAN PROMISES AID TO 11,000 HOUSEHOLDS AS ONLINE DOUBTS GROW

Myanmar social media users are debating what ASEAN special envoy Theresa Lazaro achieved during her visit to Myanmar, which began on 28 October. The Philippines and Myanmar's military regime have described the same trip in very different terms.

Lazaro, the Philippine foreign minister, serves as ASEAN's envoy while Manila chairs the bloc this year. Myanmar's leaders have been barred from top ASEAN meetings since the 2021 military coup that ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government. The Philippines has repeatedly asked to meet Suu Kyi, now 81 and under house arrest, without success.

Manila says the mission aims to expand humanitarian access, with rice and hygiene kits planned for more than 11,000 households. Myanmar's foreign ministry instead says talks focused on how Myanmar can regain its full role and rights in ASEAN. Its statement made no mention of Suu Kyi.

One observer posting online noted that the aid handover took place in Taunggyi, far from most of the fighting in Shan State, letting ASEAN claim progress on its peace plan.

Lazaro is expected to report on the trip to ASEAN foreign ministers in Manila ahead of the bloc's leaders' summit.

The visit followed Suu Kyi's first phone call in more than five years with her son, Kim Aris, on 22 October. A UN human rights expert warned this week that unconditional engagement with the regime risks legitimising military rule.

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.