

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



GRIM FUTURE

Yanghee Lee and Chris Sidoti
assess Myanmar's prospects

First Myanmar junta conscripts began duty at the end of July

HRW calls for action against foreign banks aiding the Myanmar junta

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DIGITAL MAGAZINE

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

SHOCK OVER MYANMAR PRISON'S BRUTAL TREATMENT OF FEMALE POLITICAL PRISONERS

A total of eight NGOs representing prisoners in Myanmar have expressed outrage over the brutal treatment of female political prisoners at Bago Region's Daik-U Prison by prison staff. In a joint statement on 25 June, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) and seven other organisations called for the just treatment of the prisoners following incidents at the prison.

On 12 June, in Kyaikemaraw Prison [in Mon State], a male prisoner was electrocuted when he was forced to put a corrugated iron fence between the male and female prison block, after prison lockup. His fellow political prisoners requested emergency treatment be provided for him. But, the Correction Department under the State Administration Council (SAC) responded with the forceful transfer of 160 political prisoners, both male and female, to Daik-U Prison.

During the transfer, they also alleged that prisoners were in the possession of drugs, threatening to charge them under drug laws, and forcefully confiscated the utilities and clothes of female political prisoners. They only gave some of those utility items back to these female political prisoners.

On 15 June, female political prisoners protested after lockup, demanding that their utilities be returned to them. In response, prison staff committed numerous atrocities including using verbal sexual harassment against them, threatening them with gunshots, and forcefully shooting at them with slingshots and pieces of brick. As a result, more than 30 of the female political prisoners who were transferred to Daik-U Prison, suffered injuries whilst five female political prisoners suffered severe injuries. Those thirty female political prisoners were locked up in solitary confinement and were not provided with any medical

attention or treatment.

The NGOs said that the inhumane treatment and torture of female political prisoners, perpetrated by male prison staff inside Daik-U Prison, highlights a worst case of human rights violations. In Burma's prisons, one does not even have the basic human rights like the right to life, and one's freedom from torture is lost, they said.

"We strongly believe that prison staff should not treat female political prisoners, as though they are simply 'the cards in their hands.' They are human beings with flesh, blood, and emotions."

The NGOs have called on the SAC to immediately allow family visits and accept parcels from families of the female political prisoners who are forcefully transferred and locked in solitary confinement; unconditionally release the female political prisoners who are in solitary confinement; provide adequate medical attention and treatment to all those injured by unlawful beatings; drop all alleged charges including those drug charges that were imposed without evidence; and return all utilities of female political prisoners that were confiscated without reason.

Their statement also included a call on governments and human rights organizations to place greater and more substantial pressure on the SAC for the cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment of political prisoners.

Unfortunately, the NGO's statement is a reminder of the general behaviour of prison authorities in Myanmar in which they treat prisoners badly, noticeably targeting political prisoners – treatment that has on occasion resulted in the intimidation, injury, torture and death of inmates. In this particular case, it is female political prisoners who have experienced the wrath of prison officials.

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Cover photo of a KIA fighter in Kachin State by AFP





Myanmar protesters in Manila demonstrate against the illegal junta. Photo: AFP

GRIM FUTURE

**YANGHEE LEE AND CHRIS SIDOTI
ASSESS MYANMAR'S PROSPECTS**

When it comes to assessing the depth of the crisis in Myanmar, two human rights experts and members of the Special Advisory Council for Myanmar (SAC-M), Yanghee Lee and Chris Sidoti, are well placed to offer in-depth analysis.

Recently Yanghee Lee and Chris Sidoti sat down with Asia Society Executive Vice President and Asia Society Policy Institute Senior Fellow Debra Eisenman in New York for an interview to discuss the current state of play in Myanmar, where effective control of the country lies, and prospects and recommendations for the future.

Myanmar, a country of over 50 million people, which was under military rule for decades and has been embroiled in a more than 70-year civil war, was for nearly 10 years starting in 2011, undergoing a top-down democratic transition. This came to an abrupt and brutal halt in February 2021 with the military coup.

The Special Advisory Council for Myanmar is an independent group of international experts working to support the peoples of Myanmar in their struggle for human rights, peace, democracy, justice, and accountability. The Council has just released a paper on the status of military control of the country.

Here is the full interview:

Debra Eisenman: Hello and welcome. I'm Debra Eisenman, Executive Vice President and COO of the Asia Society and founding Director and Senior Fellow at the

Asia Society Policy Institute. I'm delighted to be with you today to talk about Myanmar with two renowned human rights experts who comprise two thirds of the Special Advisory Council on Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, former UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights on Myanmar and Chris Sidoti, who is a member of the UN International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar.

The Special Advisory Council for Myanmar is an independent group of international experts working to support the peoples of Myanmar in their fight for human rights, peace, democracy, justice and accountability. And the council has just released a compelling report on the state of play in Myanmar, a country of over 50 million that was under military rule for decades, has been embroiled in a 70-year civil war but for nearly a decade starting in 2011 was undergoing a top-down democratic transition which came to an abrupt and brutal halt in February 2021 with a military coup.

With this in mind, Yanghee and Chris, what's the state of the country three and a half years into the coup?

Yanghee Lee: Well, I'd like to say well thank you for having us and we're delighted to be part of this podcast. I'd like to remind our audience that you hear very little now but and you hear that there's the situation is very bad which is very true, but you don't hear about a country where, there is no country in the world where the people have stood against the attempted coup, the coup hasn't succeeded yet and it's been three and a half years, well into the fourth year, into year four, where the people have stood up fearlessly against the military



and for the first time the all of the ethnic nationalities and the majority Bamar are in line with fighting against the military junta.

Chris Sidoti: But in spite of all those gains the situation of the people can only be described as miserable. There have never been so many displaced people in Myanmar, the extent of the humanitarian crisis has never been greater and the brutality of the military, long regarded as one of the most brutal in the world, has only intensified over the course of the last three and a half years. Intensified, interestingly because precisely of the positive developments that Yanghee has referred to. The more that the people are determined to resist the military's control the more the military brutalizes the situation as their only means of defense. The military is losing and the people are being made to suffer.

Debra Eisenman: What counterforces have arisen or fortified in these last four years?

Chris Sidoti: The counterforces are very diverse. As Yanghee has indicated, the alliances that are now being forged between the ethnic nationalities and their long-standing well experienced well-equipped militias and with the Bamar majority population are without precedent. The military learned from the British colonial period that the best way to sustain control is through divide and rule and they did that extremely successfully for decade after decade. But their bluff has now been

called and we are seeing collaboration between the various ethnic groups including the Bamar ethnic majority at an unprecedented level. So that's the real hope of Myanmar that that we can see emerging a new Myanmar that is not only democratic but united with a common commitment to nationhood, Now, there's still a long way to go. The struggle has only begun in that area but there is a commitment there and a determination that we've not seen before.

Yanghee Lee: In the first days after the coup attempt, you saw the young people risking their lives and the young people I think it is where the future of Myanmar lies and the young people are determined - they've had the experience of democracy and freedom of speech for a very short period of time and they want to keep it that way and the military, on the other hand, will want to quash any freedom of speech or any democratic movement in Myanmar and the more the people resist the more, as Chris said, the more brutal the army is, I won't call it the army, I'll call it the Tatmadaw, because they're not a national armed forces of Myanmar, they are just one ethnic armed Bamar ethnic military. But the junta is bombarding and really destroying many of the cities but what's really atrocious is they're targeting schools and they're targeting hospitals, clearly violence in contravention to all international norms and war crimes are being committed and crimes against humanity are being committed on a daily basis in Myanmar for the past three and a half years.



Debra Eisenman: Well, you know even before the coup the military had never extracted itself from significant political power and key systems of government. Can you speak more about how the junta is running the country now what portions of the country, and on the other side of the coin, there's this National Unity Government (NUG) which stood up post-coup, a number of them being elected officials serving as a shadow government some inside some outside of the country. How are they and ethnic armed organizations providing leadership and services as the junta tries to (challenge them)?

Yanghee Lee: Well, thank you for that question and I'd like to correct you Debra, please that it's not a shadow government because it is the legitimate government but many people around the world think the military is the de facto government but military is not the de facto government at all. They are losing ground and as our research and our analysis shows that we've looked at 330 plus townships and we were able to map 14% of the 330 townships that are uncontested, that are under the junta rule, that's about it and they've lost all of the borders and the military the junta is not able to deliver services. The only service that they can deliver is visas and that's why the UN wants to have the presence there and many of the foreign diplomats are still there through the junta's ability to stamp the visas. Other than that, we see in the ethnic areas where services are being delivered in ethnic communities, there are ethnic states that have full functioning judiciary, full functioning administration, health services, education is going on in these other ethnic areas.

Chris Sidoti: At the International level there are only two claimants to represent Myanmar being the military and the National Unity Government and there is no doubt when we compare the two, the National Unity Government has the de jure claim that it is a legitimate government that is the product of the elected members of the parliament from 2020. And it also has a much stronger de facto claim than the military does because of control of territory, control of effective governmental functions. Now that's not to say that the National Unity Government itself is the sole actor in all of these areas. The ethnic organizations, that Yanghee has referred to, play enormously important roles. Most of them either recognize the national leadership of the NUG or are prepared to cooperate with the NUG, while wanting to focus very much on their own territorial national areas, which is fair enough. That there are some ethnic organizations that don't recognize the leadership of the

NUG and that's to be expected at this stage, so it's a patchwork picture but certainly if we're looking at is the military or is the NUG more appropriately recognized as the representative of the state of Myanmar, there's no question about that, it's the NUG if we're looking at where governmental functions are being delivered as Yanghee describes it's in those areas where the ethnic organizations or the NUG or a collaboration of both are developing and delivering essential governmental services. The military, putting it bluntly, bottom line, ain't capable of much.

Debra Eisenman: And I want to come back to a lot of the points you made on the NUG because I know in the recommendations and the excellent report you've written you talk a lot about the recognition of the NUG and really bringing them to the fore internationally. But before we do that can you speak a little bit more about what has happened to the economy, I mean the country was growing before the coup. What has happened to education, to health care. Covid hit right during the coup, doctors weren't being able to administer care, hospitals were understaffed. Can you talk a bit what's happened there and how people are coping and where areas this is working and where perhaps it's not?

Chris Sidoti: The economy in the nation as a whole is a basket case. It's almost true to say there is no economy and certainly no economy in the sense of a modern nation state with a modern economy. In the military controlled areas, almost nothing has happened and there is an economic crisis uh the military is staved for funds as it should be - we have long advocated the cutting of uh all economic ties that lead to cash going into the hands of the military and economic sanctions where they have been imposed by a number of states are proving already to be very effective. Perhaps the best indicator of that is that the military has very little access to foreign reserves and is even talking about promoting a bartering system because they just don't have foreign currency and their approach to domestic currency is to print more and more and more money so inflation is enormous and people in military controlled areas struggle to sustain that the very minimum standard of living for life to be livable. In the ethnic controlled and more generally resistance-controlled areas there is an economy continuing but struggles because it was operating from such a poor base. The most important thing for us to say though is that the shift of effective control on the ground over the last six months has meant that there are new and different opportunities for economic development of Myanmar.

Myanmar when the military took over back in the 1960s was one of the richest countries in Asia. It is now after all those years, 60 years of military domination, one of the poorest countries in the world. So there is a desperate need for economic development. The fact that the resistance organizations now control such large territories makes it possible for the rest of the planet, organizations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, international governmental donors, private companies to talk about economic development strategies for the liberated areas and that very much needs to be the focus. It is an absolutely urgent priority but it is now possible to economic development large sections of Myanmar without the money finding its way into the pockets of the generals.

Yanghee Lee: Well, you mentioned about Covid where the military stopped all medications and they were targeting ambulances and clinics and the oxygen tanks they were hoarding for their own use, but we have to remember that it was the doctors that were the first CDM, we call them the Civil Disobedience Movements and they were still providing assistance to the general population. When we talk about effective control in our research, people think it's the territorial control but we looked at it from three different dimensions. One would be of course the territorial dimension is one. The second is the ability to govern and we're seeing more and more that the junta dominated areas where the ability to govern is dwindling. And the third area is the people's acceptance. Normally when there's a coup, people will whether they like it or not, be it an authoritarian government or not, the people will accept that is life but in the case of Myanmar the acceptance is not there by the people.

Debra Eisenman: Thank you for that. You know before we talk about the recommendations in your report and what you think lies ahead and what others can do I want to talk about one ethnic group that hasn't come up yet today. Given your former incredible roles in Myanmar on the human rights fact-finding mission as UN Special rapporteur, can we speak a bit about the plight of the Rohingya and what's happened since the ethnic cleansing campaign since 2017 and the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. Can you talk about where that stands today and how the Rohingya are doing?

Yanghee Lee: There's more than a million refugees, Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar and the number is growing and we've had about 250, prior to

the 2016 and 2017 purge they last they started they go back to like in the 1990s there's been several waves and many of them were born in the refugee camps. We are worried about the Northern Rakhine (State) where the majority of the Rohingya live there, Buthidaung and Maungdaw, and in Sittwe, after the 2012, what they call the intercommunal violence, they were placed in IDP camps and in Kyaukpyu even the recognized of the 135 ethnic nationalities, races, the Kamar Muslims were even put in IDP camps for several years. Now this is a population where there is a Lost Generation. They have not had any education from 2012 after the violence, of the communal violence, and so it's been now 12 years since then and the people living in Cox's Bazar there is no formal education for them and so I think the international community should be really worried about the large number of children who have no education or no livelihood skills and that I call them the Lost Generation.

Chris Sidoti: The situation today is not the same as it was in 2016 or 2017 during the period of mass expulsions but it's very troubling. There's been a recurrence of anti-Rohingya violence in Northern Rakhine State over the last few weeks. There appeared to be a variety of different reasons different interpretations of that but there doesn't seem to be any doubt that there have been incidents of significant violence which have resulted in a significant number of deaths and a very large number of expulsions, not internationally but internally. So the problem has not gone away it's not only not gone away for the million in Bangladesh but for the around 600,000 still in Rakhine State and for the reasons that Yanghee has described. We need to revive international interest in and commitment to the human rights of Rohingya people both those who are in Bangladesh and those who remain in Rakhine State. The position of the Arakan Army which is now the dominant group in most of Rakhine State is complex and still to be proven. We know that there have been incidents in the past of Rakhine violence against Rohingya. We know that there have been Rakhine political parties and Rakhine military groups that have been involved in anti-Rohingya violence. The Arakan Army is making public assurances of respect for all the people of Rakhine State including the Rohingya but that needs to be proven.

So, the heat at the moment is very much on the Arakan Army to prove that they act for all the people of Rakhine State and not just for the Rakhine people we can understand after a very long period of repression

of the Rakhine people by the military why there is a priority for the majority population of concern. But we cannot understand, we cannot accept and we fear what happens for minorities particularly the Rohingya minority as the politics and the military situation in Rakhine changes. It's up to the Arakan Army now to prove its credentials, to prove its commitment to human rights.

Debra Eisenman: Thank you, Chris. As we look back at the country holistically as you've said in this conversation today you know the military hasn't consolidated its power over the country. They don't have control over most of the border territories there are analysts who are pretending the complete downfall of the junta, others that are talking about fragmentation of the country. What do you think lies ahead?

Yanghee Lee: There's going to be more violence, more clashes by the junta. The more the people resist the junta is going to use more air power and that's why it's so important for the international community here and in the UN to have jet fuel sanctions, aviation fuel sanctions. But right now, we want to see that the junta and I think they will eventually, but we don't know when, recede most of their control because as Chris said the country was very rich in the past country is very poor now but at the same time the generals and the cronies have become very rich and now they're frustrated because some of their income is not coming as they want it to come in.

Chris Sidoti: And there are in those circumstances a wide range of possibilities for Myanmar. The military may win although we think that's unlikely, the country could fragment, although we think that's unlikely. We don't expect fragmentation in fact we are seeing a greater deal of commonality across the ethnic national groups including importantly between the minority groups and the Bamar majority for the first time. So we identify a future direction that is the opposite of fragmentation that is increasing commitment to a nation that is Myanmar. The military could continue the war for a long time. It could change very quickly as well we've seen that happen historically in many parts of the world but its strategy seems to be retreating and fortifying the major cities and looking to the future where they control a significant part of the population, they have the vestiges, the clothes of power but but no more effective clothing than the emperor in Hans Anderson's story.

There's nothing there if you look underneath it, so they are fortifying the cities like Yangon and Mandalay and Naypyidaw and a couple of others of the major cities and I think they're, while not for a minute conceding that they're losing, I think their actions in fact show a mindset that is conceding most of the country and a decision to fortify the population centres and try to defend them. And the resistance, wisely in my opinion, is not attempting or contemplating head-on attacks on the major cities but rather besieging them and it's not generally reported but the capital city, the military capital, Naypyidaw, is almost surrounded. There is almost no possibility of road transport into Naypyidaw at this stage and the major road left open is the Mandalay to Naypyidaw road that is subject to attack, they're moving in and Naypyidaw could soon be a besieged city. And the direction that we expect will be more of that. There's no sign of the military giving up and it probably won't give up under its current leadership because if it does it's the end of that leadership.

Min Aung Hlaing is hanging on because 'there ain't no option for him! Whether he's able to hang on in the face of increasing military dissatisfaction with his persistent failures is another matter but not under this current leadership is there any prospect of a negotiated settlement. So long as the current military leadership is there we will see a withdrawal into fortified cities in the hope that they can hang on by their fingernails to the edge of the barricades.

Debra Eisenman: How do Myanmar's large neighbours particularly China and India view this kind of instability at their borders and what are they doing about Myanmar?

Chris Sidoti: Well, China doesn't like instability. I get worried that much of the media reporting of China's approach to Myanmar in my view does not reflect the reality. First and foremost, China wants stability in Myanmar and it wants to protect its economic interests in Myanmar and it wants to advance its geopolitical strategic interests through Myanmar. And China will always act as most nation states do in the interests of China as they perceive it. So, we've seen China over the three and a half years tilting slightly one way or the other at different times as it makes reassessments of the tides of battle, while at all stages having a foot in each camp to protect its interests. I think looking at some recent developments that there's a growing awareness on the part of the Chinese leadership that the military cannot win and so we are seeing China shift more. There are

signs that it's dealing directly now in a more serious way with the opposition forces and particularly as we see more and more territory being controlled by the opposition forces including territory that is important to China like the port of Kyaukpyu in Rakhine State and the railway that runs between Yunnan and Kyaukpyu both of which are now largely under resistance control China's economic interests are going to lie in dealing with the resistance.

India is surprisingly somewhat more complex than China and India's had a long military to military relationship with the Myanmar military and I think that's the basic problem. I don't know that there is all that much civilian government interest in Myanmar on the part of the Indian government except in relation to countering China but it's going to be very hard to break the Indian military's mindset that it has an ally in the Myanmar military but even India is going to have to face up to that fact as the Myanmar military keeps on losing. If they can't win India will not be interested in them.

Yanghee Lee: And the recent cyber scam, I think that should really worry China and there's been more clashes on the borders of China and Myanmar in the northern Myanmar that really worries China but the indication that the long postponed Chinese development projects like the Myitsone Dam and Dawei projects, they are being resuscitated now I think that's an indication that perhaps the, that's a sign where the China is negotiating or engaging more directly with the ethnic resistance as Chris is saying because they're not satisfied with the military because otherwise the roads are all being controlled by the resistance groups and without their okay the projects can't go and I think they feel that the military is losing, that's why they're resuscitating these programmes.

Chris Sidoti: And that last point is an important one that the trade routes between Myanmar and China, both road and rail, are now predominantly in the hands of the resistance.

Debra Eisenman: That's incredibly interesting. I'd love to turn to now in our final minutes really what you think others can do to help Myanmar so looking at the US the UN, ASEAN in particular, what do you recommend happens next to support the people of Myanmar?

Chris Sidoti: From the time we were set up, which is now just after the military staged its coup, three and a bit years ago, we've had two fundamental objectives. The first is to provide as much support as we can to the resistance movement, the democratic movement, in at the beginning which has become the resistance movement and the second is to do as much as we can to undermine the military. Those two objectives still remain our objectives and they're the objectives that we advocate with the representatives of other nations that we meet.

In relation to the first of supporting the democratic movement that means knowing what's going on the ground, supporting the development of the National Unity Government (NUG), recognizing the plurality of Myanmar with the ethnic organizations. In a humanitarian sense ensuring that humanitarian aid gets through, which means going through in the on the ground in conjunction with the NUG and the ethnic organizations, not only dealing with the military as most United Nations agencies and most governments are continuing to do. And then as I mentioned earlier looking at economic development in the resistance controlled areas so building up the democratic movement in these ways.

So far as undermining the military is concerned, we've had three strategies, the three cuts - cut weapons, cut cash, cut impunity - and we continue to see those three strategies as important. Some of them are bearing fruit already. The arms supply is greatly reduced compared to what it was. And ironically one of one of the more positive results of the Ukraine war is that Russia is no longer capable of being the major arm supplier to the Myanmar military. So, they are having increasing difficulty, they are doing a lot of domestic production of ammunition and light weapons now and we have investigated that we'll shortly be publishing another report on that looking at cutting supply chains and technology transfers that enables them to produce weapons locally.

Cutting the cash, the sanctions policy, has been working and is hurting. There is absolutely no doubt about that. It's unfortunate that the Security Council is so dysfunctional that it will not impose arms and economic sanctions on the military and the military leadership but in the absence of an effective Security Council, individual states have stepped up and more need to do so.

And on impunity, we are seeing the investigation in the International Criminal Court continue it should come to a head, we need arrest warrants and we need people who are marked out for trial so that they can be judged as to whether they have committed the war crimes and crimes against humanity that in our view they have committed. We can't get the Security Council to do a comprehensive referral to the International Criminal Court but we have looked at alternative systems of international justice. We produced a significant paper on that last year which canvases a range of ways in which international accountability can be ensured. So, in each of these three areas there are steps that can be taken, practical steps, immediate steps and we continue to advocate for those.

Yanghee Lee: The role of the ASEAN countries will be more crucial as the days go by. I think Thailand has the longest sharing border with Myanmar and Thailand can play a tremendous role in providing across the border humanitarian assistance and once it crosses the border to the ethnic states, they have they've been working on providing their own humanitarian assistance for the past 70 years when they were fighting against the military and they have the networks and they have the knowledge and they can they've assured us that they can help in getting cross border assistance to the heartland of Myanmar to where the population there's a greater number of population.

Debra Eisenman: And as we talk about ASEAN, years ago they released a five-point consensus plan on Myanmar to try to help close the conflict, figure out the conflict, it was a fairly toothless plan. I'd love to hear your thoughts on how they could build on that or what you might see ahead for ASEAN and Myanmar.

Yanghee Lee: I'll start off and Chris will add to it. I'm sure the ASEAN countries will not like this but I and we've been very vocal that the Five-point Consensus, we understand it was adopted by consensus and Min Aung Hlaing was there to adopt this as consensus but it really was "dead on arrival". And still when the UN and others speak about or cling on to the Five-point Consensus we think that the situation has completely changed since three years ago when they came up with the Five-point Consensus

First of all, Min Aung Hlaing is not the person to deal with anymore and the second is their reliance on the AHA centre the ASEAN Humanitarian Agency

was not the right choice but because the AHA centre does not have the mandate nor the resources nor the capacity to deliver humanitarian assistance to the parts of Myanmar that are in dire need of humanitarian assistance.

Chris Sidoti: If the Five-point Consensus is to continue to be the basis on which ASEAN looks at the situation in Myanmar and its relationship with Myanmar it it's going to have to confront the question of what does that mean now? As Yanghee says the situation now three-and-a-bit years down the track is totally different from when it was on, I think it was the 24th of April 2021, the Five-point Consensus was adopted. It desperately needs replacement. But because of ASEAN's consensual approach it's not replaced and if that continues to be the basis on which they work then ASEAN has to say what does it now mean what are the actions that need to be taken to advance the vision that they had three and a half years ago? Unless ASEAN takes account of the situation in Myanmar now it will simply make itself irrelevant to the future development of one of its members.

Debra Eisenman: Thank you Yanghee and Chris. That's all the time we have left but I so appreciate this illuminating conversation and you're sharing your time and expertise with us on what lies ahead for Myanmar and what the international community can do to support the Myanmar people.

Thank you so much.

Check out the video of the interview here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Riio_qS-lhA

Courtesy of the Asia Society and the Special Advisory Council for Myanmar (SAC-M).



TNLA fighters on the march. Photo: AFP

TNLA AND ALLIES REVIVE OPERATION 1027 IN NORTH AND MANDALAY

The conflict in Northern Shan State has intensified following the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) launching the second wave of its Operation 1027 on June 25. The battles have spread across multiple townships including Naungcho, Kyaukme, Thibaw, and Moegok.

In Naungcho township, fierce fighting erupted in Kyaukkyan, Ohmatee, Khemon, and Gantgaw villages, as well as in urban areas of Naungcho. The military junta has responded with four airstrikes to support its ground troops. Naungcho residents report that TNLA forces have seized key locations including the hospital, fire brigade, and the city entrance gate, which were previously held by State Administration Council (SAC) troops.

In Kyaukme township, TNLA forces captured one of SAC's posts on the first day of the offensive. On June

26, TNLA secured more victories by seizing several SAC departmental offices, including the district police office and special investigative bureau. Additionally, the TNLA captured the No. (352) Artillery Battalion and released photos and videos showing 17 prisoners of war from No. (1) Military Operation Command.

Meanwhile, in the majority Bamar ethnic region of Mandalay, the TNLA and its allies, including the Mandalay PDF, Danu People Liberation Force, and Moegok Strategic Forces, launched an offensive operation in Moegok township. According to local residents, the TNLA and allied forces surrounded Moegok, entered the police station, and captured a SAC post in the west of the city. Photos of confiscated weapons have been circulated. However, residents remain trapped amid the intense fighting.

As the conflict nears Lashio, the capital city of Northern Shan State, residents are increasingly anxious. Reports indicate a rush to purchase essential supplies, particularly motorbike fuel, in preparation for potential evacuation. The SAC is also reinforcing its military presence in the city.

In response to the intensified TNLA offensive, SAC troops have sabotaged one bridge on the highway and two other bridges leading to Lashio. A local villager reported to the media that one of the bridges was destroyed under the command of Captain Kyin Lin Oo. This tactic of destroying roads and bridges is seen as a defensive measure against the advancing TNLA forces.

During the two-day battles, TNLA claims to have seized two SAC battalion headquarters along with a significant amount of weapons. They also reported 17 prisoners of war and several dead bodies among their confiscations. The overall collateral damage in the conflict area on the first day amounted to six dead and wounded.

The National Unity Government (NUG) has expressed its support for the combined TNLA and People's Defence Forces operation in northern Shan State and Mandalay.

ROHINGYA MEN CONSCRIPTED TO FIGHT FOR JUNTA IN RAKHINE

On June 23, a significant defeat for junta troops in Maungdaw led to their retreat to the hills near Waisali village, where a United Nations World Food Programme

(WFP) warehouse storing several tons of food for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) is located. Local witnesses claim that the retreating soldiers, along with conscripted Rohingya military servants, torched local houses, destroyed the WFP warehouses, and looted the food to sell to Rohingya elites.

The Arakan Army (AA) released a video clip purportedly showing Rohingya individuals in junta military uniforms transferring sacks from the WFP warehouses to other locations. This video has fueled accusations against the SAC and its alleged collaboration with certain Rohingya factions.

SAC spokesperson, Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Htun, denied the accusations, stating that they had delivered 2,000 sacks of rice to the Rohingya (referred to as "Bengali" by him) from wards 1, 2, 3, and 4 with each household receiving one sack. He claimed that the Rohingya had already looted the rice sacks from the WFP warehouses, dismissing the allegations of torching houses and looting.

FIGHTING INTENSIFIES IN RAKHINE

On the morning of June 23, AA forces captured a strategic base in Ann township, guarding the headquarters of the SAC's western command. This capture significantly weakened the headquarters' defenses. Concurrently, AA seized the Ngapali (Ma Zin) airport, a key location guarded by two Ngapali-based battalions and reinforcements. Ngapali is a renowned tourist destination with many hotels run by cronies and



The town of Maungdaw is under siege.
Photo: AFP

authorities. Local reports indicate that junta soldiers guarding the airport fled during the AA's raid, resulting in several deaths among the junta forces. Some soldiers to AA during the intense fighting and others managed to escape. Following battles in Ngapali and Thandwe, the SAC administrative officials and residents began fleeing Thandwe on June 25.

The battle in Maungdaw began on June 25 at 11 pm and lasted until 7 am on June 26, with heavy fighting in the urban area. As the conflict escalated, the junta's air force and navy provided support to their ground troops surrounding the town to defend against the AA's offensive.

The Border News Agency reports that residents of Maungdaw town say that the AA is making a final attempt to capture Maungdaw, leading to clashes in the town and surrounding Muslim villages. Myanmar's military junta and local Muslim militias, trained and armed by the junta, have mobilized to resist the AA's advance, the June 27 report says.

Furthermore, residents of nearby Muslim villages allege that the Myanmar junta has forced them to relocate to downtown Maungdaw, holding them hostage. Reports suggest that Muslim militant groups like ARSA, RSO, and ARA are collaborating with Myanmar junta members in their operations against the AA.

A call has been made that all Muslim residents in the town must evacuate immediately. Those who have fled emphasize the danger of being amidst Myanmar

junta troops, Muslim armed groups trained by the junta, and Rohingya militants stationed and fighting in villages, neighborhoods, schools, and mosques.

"Citizens should seek safety in areas unaffected by the war. With the city now a battleground, entering it risks being caught in the crossfire. We should not risk our lives responding to calls from the junta or the ARSA group. It is safer to avoid the city altogether," the Border News Agency report says.

Meanwhile, the AA is pushing to control the southern part of Rakhine State, targeting the SAC's last No. (5) Military Operation Command. In a recent attack, AA forces swept out a junta reinforcement of about 70 personnel arriving from central Myanmar.

As of June 27, the AA had captured two Military Operation Command Headquarters (No. 9 and No. 15) along with their battalions.

The military junta has arrested hundreds of civilians forced to leave their villages near Sittwe. While seeking shelter in relatives' homes, over 200 displaced individuals were detained by junta troops. Additionally, around 60 males under 50 years old from Amyint Kyun village in Sittwe were arrested and taken to the Regional Military Operation Command headquarters. The detainees include underage pupils and disabled individuals, raising significant human rights concerns.

The conflict in Rakhine State has escalated significantly, with major territorial gains by the AA and severe humanitarian impacts. The SAC's efforts to defend against AA advances have resulted in



Daniel Kritenbrink, the US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs.

widespread displacement, destruction of essential resources, and mass arrests, highlighting the dire situation in the region.

SENIOR US OFFICIAL MEETS MYANMAR JUNTA OFFICIAL IN VIETNAM

A senior US official met with a high-ranking member of the Myanmar armed forces last week in Vietnam, suggesting a possible shift in Washington’s approach to the country’s conflict, The Diplomat reported June 26.

Daniel Kritenbrink, the US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, met Kyaw Lin Zaw, a commander in the Myanmar Navy, in Hanoi on June 21-22, a source with knowledge of the meeting told The Diplomat.

Kritenbrink arrived in Hanoi on a publicized visit on June 21, shortly after the departure of Russian President Vladimir Putin, who paid a state visit to Vietnam last week. The source said that Kritenbrink was accompanied at the meeting by Peter Lohman, director for Southeast Asia of the US National Security Council, and Susan Stevenson, charge d’affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Myanmar.

According to the source who spoke with The Diplomat, Kritenbrink and Kyaw Lin Zaw “didn’t reach a breakthrough in the meeting, but they aim to improve communication and will meet again soon.” The US is reportedly seeking to “stabilize the conflict,” end the country’s violence, and open up channels of dialogue with the military. “However, significant differences

remain within the regime, suggesting that their requirements may be only partially accepted rather than fully adhered to,” the source told The Diplomat.

MOST POPULAR MIZZIMA BURMESE VIDEOS

The following are the most popular Mizzima Burmese videos of the week:

The possibility of a repeat war in North Shan and the election of the military leader

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4zdzFu1Ro4>

At the funeral of Venerable Baddanta Muninda Bhiwan, Reverend Minthunya said that the words of Reverend Sitagu were insulting.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1j-zXcMoB8>

Report on the passing away of Venerable Baddanta Muninda

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_XrGVm5BbyY

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သတင်းခန်းစီမံခန့်ခွဲမှုအယ်ဒီတာ

EDITORIAL TALK

ရှားချန်း
မဇ္ဈိမသတင်းထောက်

TOM ANDREWS
UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar

REPORT BY UN EXPERT CLAIMS FOREIGN BANKS FACILITATING PROBABLE CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY IN MYANMAR

Foreign banks are facilitating the Myanmar military junta's access to weapons and related materials that are sustaining its campaign of violence and brutality against the people of Myanmar, according to a new report released 26 June by Tom Andrews, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar.

Banking on the Death Trade: How Banks and Governments Enable the Military Junta in Myanmar identifies 16 banks in seven countries that have processed transactions linked to the junta's military procurement in the past two years, and an additional 25 that have provided correspondent banking services to Myanmar's state-owned banks that are controlled by the junta.

"By relying on financial institutions that are willing to do business with Myanmar state-owned banks under its control, the junta has ready access to the financial services it needs to carry out systematic human rights violations, including aerial attacks on civilians," the Special Rapporteur said.

"International banks that facilitate transactions that include Myanmar state-owned banks are at high risk of enabling military attacks on Myanmar civilians. I urge them to stop doing so. Banks have a fundamental obligation to not facilitate crimes – and this includes war crimes and crimes against humanity," Andrews said.

"The good news is that the junta is increasingly isolated. The Myanmar military's annual procurement of weapons and military supplies through the formal banking system declined by a third from the year ending March 2023 to the year that followed – from US\$377 million to \$253 million.

"The bad news is that the junta is circumventing sanctions and other measures by exploiting gaps in sanctions regimes, shifting financial institutions, and taking advantage of the failure of Member States to fully coordinate and enforce actions."

The report examines a dramatic shift in the role of two ASEAN countries as sources of weapons and

CORE DEVELOPMENTS

military supplies for the junta. After a report last year by the Special Rapporteur identified Singapore as Myanmar's third largest source of weapons and related materials, the government of Singapore launched an investigation of the Singapore-based entities involved in the trade. In the year ending March 2024, the flow of weapons materials to Myanmar from Singapore-registered companies dropped by nearly 90 percent compared to the previous year.

Military procurement through Thailand has moved in the opposite direction. In the year ending March 2024, the junta imported nearly US\$130 million in weapons and military supplies from Thailand-registered suppliers, more than double the total from the previous year. Thai banks have played a crucial role in this shift. Siam Commercial Bank, for example, facilitated just over US\$5 million in transactions related to Myanmar military in the year ending March 2023, but that number skyrocketed to over \$100 million in the following year.

"Singapore's example demonstrates that a government with sufficient political will can make a significant difference toward shutting down the Myanmar death trade. Thailand has an opportunity to follow this powerful example by taking action that will deal a huge blow to the junta's capacity to sustain its

escalating attacks on civilian targets. I urge it to do so," the expert said.

Over 5,000 civilians have been killed by the junta since the coup, at least 3 million people are displaced, and more than 20,000 political prisoners remain behind bars in Myanmar. Over the last six months, military airstrikes against civilian targets have increased five-fold while the junta continues to lose military outposts, territory, and troops to resistance forces.

"With the junta on its heels, it is critical that financial institutions take their human rights obligations seriously and not facilitate the junta's deadly transactions. It is also critical that States step up by fully coordinating their actions, including by closing loopholes in sanctions regimes," the Special Rapporteur said.

"Sanctioning governments should be targeting the networks supplying jet fuel to the junta. It is also critical that they target Myanma Economic Bank, which is not subject to international sanctions and has become the go-to bank for the junta. These actions could play a decisive role in helping to turn the tide in Myanmar and saving untold numbers of lives," he said.

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HRW CALLS FOR ACTION AGAINST FOREIGN BANKS AIDING THE MYANMAR JUNTA

The United States, European Union, and other governments should urgently counter illicit activities by foreign banks that are assisting the Myanmar military in evading sanctions imposed after its 2021 coup, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said 28 June.

A United Nations report released on June 26, 2024, reveals that since 2022 the military junta has switched the banks it uses to receive foreign revenue and make payments for weapons and other military needs, after the US, EU, and other government-imposed sanctions on military-controlled entities and banks.

The report, by the UN special rapporteur on Myanmar, Tom Andrews, focuses on the military's use of banks in third countries to engage in sanctioned transactions. The special rapporteur found that from 2022 to the present, most of the junta's foreign revenue that previously was sent to foreign accounts at the sanctioned Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank has instead been sent to accounts at the non-sanctioned but also junta-controlled Myanmar Economic Bank.

The report also claims that after authorities in Singapore began restricting the military's use of banks to make arms purchases in 2022-2023, the junta dramatically ramped up the use of its other accounts

at banks in Thailand, mostly at Siam Commercial Bank (SCB).

"Sanctions on Myanmar's military have reduced its capacity to receive revenue and purchase arms, but funds are still getting to the junta and vigilant enforcement is essential," said John Sifton, Asia advocacy director at Human Rights Watch. "Authorities in Thailand, Singapore, and other countries need to put banks on notice that they should not provide services that facilitate further junta atrocities."

The UN report provides figures showing that the largest source of the junta's outside income still comes from Thailand: at least US\$660 million in payments for natural gas sent to Thailand by pipeline. The payments, made to the military-controlled Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE), come from Thailand's government-owned energy company PTT. The US and EU have sanctioned MOGE, and banks in numerous other jurisdictions have enforced some US and EU sanctions, including in Singapore and China, since many of these banks operate internationally and have close ties with the US and EU financial systems.

HRW says PTT and all Thai banks named in the UN report should stop payments to MOGE and divert future payments to escrow accounts. Governments

should call on Thailand to instruct Thai companies to end transactions involving MOGE.

The UN report shows that sanctions are impeding the junta's capacity to make military purchases. The military's use of the international banking system to procure weapons and military supplies declined by 33 percent between March 2022 and March 2023, from \$377 million to \$253 million. The use of military procurement agents and banks in Singapore, Malaysia, and Russia all declined markedly from 2022 to 2024.

During the same period, however, the use of Thai banks and Thailand-registered military suppliers doubled, from approximately \$60 million to almost \$130 million. Most of these payments, over \$100 million, were handled by Siam Commercial Bank.

For years, the Myanmar military has engaged in war crimes and other atrocities in the context of armed conflict with ethnic armed groups and grave human rights violations against the civilian population. It carried out atrocities and ethnic cleansing of Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State, including crimes against humanity and acts of genocide in 2017. Since the 2021 coup, the military has been engaged in a broad crackdown on civilians who oppose its rule and committed numerous war crimes in fighting with armed opposition groups. Despite the abuses over many years, however, international efforts in response have been meager, Human Rights Watch said.

Amid economic and infrastructure collapse in Myanmar, the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance has grown to 18.6 million. The UN estimates that 10,000 children under age 5 died in 2023 due to lack of treatment for malnutrition. Over 2.7 million people have been internally displaced or have become refugees. But the junta has ramped up its deadly blocking of humanitarian aid as a form of collective punishment of the population. These blockages sustain the military's longstanding "four cuts" strategy, designed to maintain control of an area by isolating and terrorizing civilians.

Cutting funds to Myanmar's military and impeding its capacity to make military purchases is essential to limiting abuses, Human Rights Watch said. The US, EU, and other concerned governments should quickly

sanction the Myanmar Economic Bank, which is now handling most junta banking transactions on the international level, as well as the Myanmar Agricultural Development Bank and the Myanmar Investment and Commercial Bank. The US, Canada, and Australia have already sanctioned some of these banks, while the EU and UK have not sanctioned any of them.

All governments should also sanction the networks that provide aviation fuel to the Myanmar military, including insurance and trading companies, owners of storage facilities and transport vessels, and Myanmar-based agents and buyers. Governments should also establish cooperative agreements on sanctions and coordinate their implementation and enforcement.

"All of Myanmar's state-owned and military-controlled financial institutions and companies should be sanctioned," Sifton said. "Depriving the junta of revenue and banking services impairs the military's capacities to brutalize the people of Myanmar."

The SCB has issued a statement in response to the report.

"Siam Commercial Bank (SCB) would like to clarify the situation regarding financial transactions between Thailand and Myanmar. SCB currently provides international transaction services with the primary objective of supporting Thai and international businesses in paying for consumer products and services to Myanmar. These services adhere to laws and prioritize compliance with anti-money laundering regulations.

"In response to media reports on transactions related to Myanmar, the bank conducted an internal investigation. It was found that several transactions made by corporate customers were payments for consumer goods and energy, which are typical business activities.

"SCB reaffirms its commitment to adhering to relevant anti-money laundering and related regulations, ensuring compliance with principles of good governance and transparency, and aiming to deliver long-term value to all stakeholder groups based on sustainable practices," said the statement.



Arakan Army fighters. File photo

ARAKAN ARMY CAPTURES TAW HEIN STRATEGIC HILLTOP BASE IN ANN TOWNSHIP, RAKHINE STATE

The Arakan Army (AA) captured the Taw Hein strategic hilltop base in Kazugai Village, Ann Township, Rakhine State, from the junta's Western Command, at around 2:30 am on 23 June 2024.

A source close to the AA said: "It is 100 percent certain that the entire strategic hilltop base has been seized by AA. It has taken three months to capture the camp completely."

The AA also captured a significant number of junta soldiers and seized ammunition when it took the base. A source close to the AA said that the AA is also treating injured junta soldiers.

A few hours after the AA captured the base, at around 8:00 am on 23 June, a fighter jet from Western Command headquarters flew over the base and dropped nearly 30 bombs, according to residents.

Villagers living near to the Taw Hein base, including those from Kazugai Village, have fled to the nearby towns of Ann and Myepon and other nearby villages.

The AA first started launching offensives against the base in April

Around 600 junta soldiers were stationed at the Taw Hein hilltop base which is a fortified tactical

operations base strategically positioned to defend the Western Command headquarters and the No. 5 Military Operation Command in Ann Township.

Taw Hein is located a few kilometers from Kazugai Village and about 32 km northwest of Ann Town in Rakhine State.

According to military sources in Rakhine State, the AA could easily enter and attack Ann Town from the Taw Hein base. This has led the junta to increase the number of its troops stationed in Ann and to strengthen the military defences there.

Attempts by Mizzima to contact AA spokesperson Khaing Thukha by phone were unsuccessful.

Since 13 November, fighting between the Arakan Army (AA) and the junta has intensified in Rakhine State. Currently, the AA controls nine towns out of 17 in Rakhine State—Rathedaung, Ponnagyun, Kyauktaw, Mrauk-U, Minbya, Myepon, Pauktaw, and Ramree. It also controls Paletwa Town in Chin State.

Currently, there is heavy fighting ongoing between the AA and the junta in the Rakhine State townships of Thandwe, Maungdaw, Taungup, and Ann. The military situation remains tense.



ETHNIC REBELS SEIZE AIRPORT IN MYANMAR BEACH TOWN

Ethnic rebels seized the airport that serves one of Myanmar's premiere resort beaches in Rakhine state on Sunday, as thousands of civilians fled fighting between the military and rebel forces in embattled Thandwe township, according to residents.

The takeover is the latest win for the Arakan Army, or AA, since November, when it ended a peace treaty that had been in place since the military's February 2021 coup d'état and embarked on an offensive in Rakhine state.

The AA took control of the airport, which serves the Ngapali resort beach in Thandwe, after junta troops withdrew from the site, a township resident told RFA Burmese on Monday, speaking on condition of anonymity due to security concerns.

"The junta troops stationed at the airport retreated and the AA took control," he said. "Artillery fire can still be heard and fighter jets are flying over the area amidst the sound of bombing, but the targets remain unknown."

The AA began attacking Thandwe on April 22 and have been trying to take the airport since early June. Armed conflict began about 32 kilometers (20 miles) north of the seat of Thandwe and is now within 8 kilometers (5 miles) of the urban center.

The military has responded by reinforcing its local battalion, the town and its prison, while using airstrikes

and naval vessels to defend its positions.

Clashes are now underway near the military's No. 566 Infantry Battalion, which is located near the airport, and the military's No. 55 Light Infantry Battalion, some 3 kilometers (2 miles) away.

As of Monday, neither the AA or the junta had released any statement on the airport takeover. Attempts by RFA to reach AA spokesperson Khaing Thukha and junta spokesperson Major General Zaw Min Tun went unanswered.

Pro-junta channels on the social media network Telegram claimed that the airport was still under military control, but said fighting in the area remained intense on Monday.

'THOUSANDS' OF CIVILIANS FLEE

Meanwhile, "thousands" of civilians from Thandwe township have fled the fighting to Gwa township and other areas in neighboring Ayeyarwady region, said another Thandwe resident, who also declined to be named.

"The fighting is getting closer to the town [center] where we live and some locals have been trapped," the resident said, adding that none of his family members had been able to leave. "We plan to flee 24-32 kilometers (15-20 miles) to the south of Thandwe township and do whatever we can to live normally."

Pe Than, a veteran ethnic Rakhine politician and former Lower House MP, told RFA that the Thandwe area is "the strategic key to controlling southern Rakhine state," which is why the AA is trying to seize the entire township.

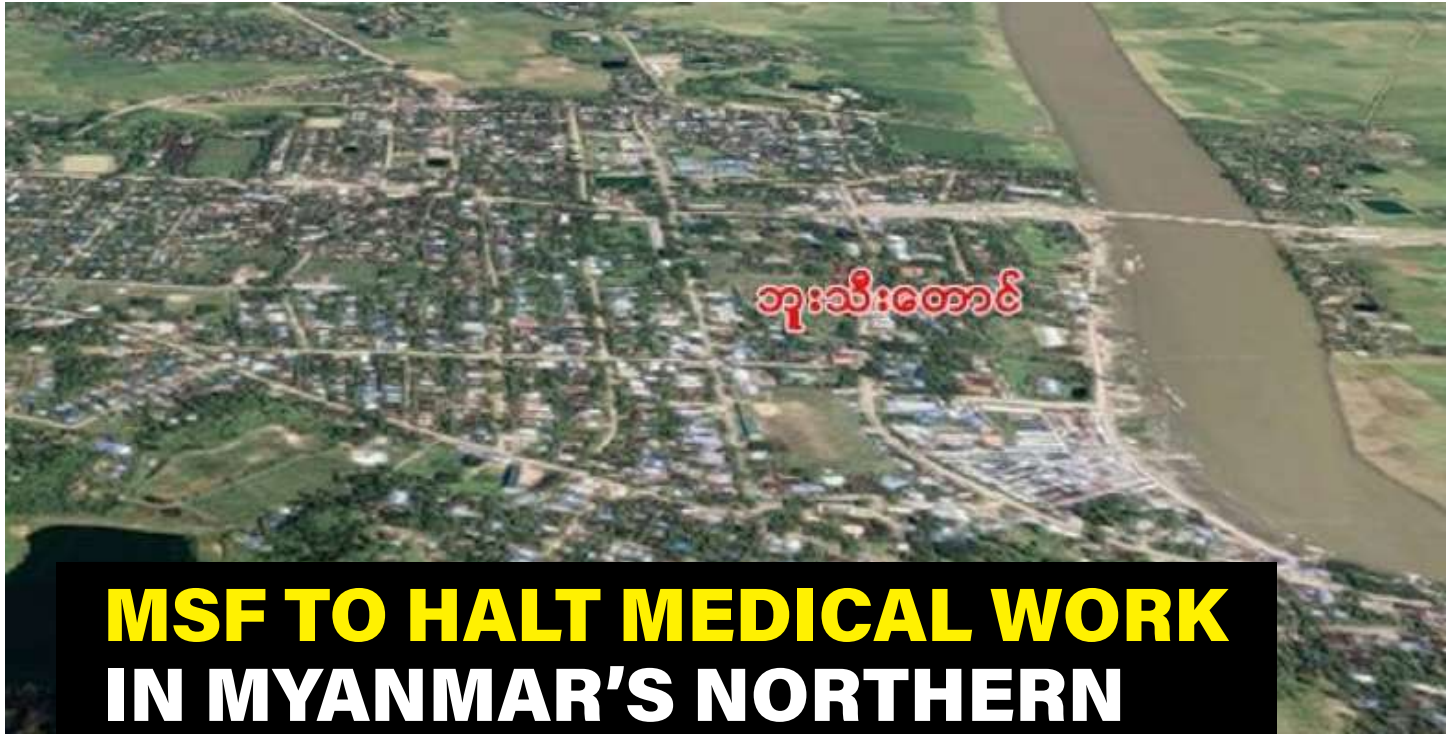
"The junta can no longer rely on its ground troops, while its navy vessels are too large to enter the creeks and rivers, so they can only fire ineffectively from a distance," he said, adding that the military could be "totally removed" from Rakhine state "by the end of 2024."

In the meantime, civilian casualties have increased in Thandwe amid the military's use of artillery fire and airstrikes, residents told RFA.

At least 23 civilians were killed by airstrikes and artillery in Thandwe township in May, they said, while 22 civilians were killed and 32 injured since the start of June.

Translated by Aung Naing. Edited by Joshua Lipos and Malcolm Foster.

Courtesy of Radio Free Asia



MSF TO HALT MEDICAL WORK IN MYANMAR'S NORTHERN RAKHINE

The charity Doctors Without Borders will halt medical activities in Myanmar's northern Rakhine state due to an "extreme escalation of conflict" between an ethnic armed group and the military, it said.

Clashes have rocked Rakhine state since the Arakan Army (AA) attacked security forces in November, ending a ceasefire that had largely held since a military coup in 2021.

AA fighters have seized swathes of territory, piling further pressure on the junta as it battles opponents elsewhere in the country.

MSF was suspending "medical humanitarian activities" in northern Rakhine due to the "extreme escalation of conflict, indiscriminate violence, and severe restrictions on humanitarian access," it said on Thursday.

The suspension would affect 14 mobile clinics in the townships of Rathedaung, Buthidaung and Maungdaw, it said.

Fighting had impacted "regular healthcare services" by MSF teams in central and northern Rakhine since November, the charity said, adding that it faced difficulties moving medical and other supplies.

Many roads and waterways in riverine Rakhine state have been blocked by the military or the AA, closing options for villagers to flee to safety.

In May, the AA said it had seized the town of Buthidaung in northern Rakhine, home to many of the

persecuted Rohingya Muslim minority.

Several Rohingya diaspora groups later accused the AA of forcing Rohingya to flee and then looting and burning their homes -- claims the AA called "propaganda".

The AA has said its fighters are moving in on the nearby town of Maungdaw, on the border with Bangladesh.

The World Food Programme (WFP) condemned on Tuesday the "looting of food supplies" and burning of one of its warehouses near Maungdaw.

The incident occurred last Saturday, the WFP said, without specifying who it believed was responsible and adding it had not been able to access the site since May due to the conflict.

The junta and the AA have blamed each other for attacks on the warehouse.

Fighting is also ongoing around the southern Rakhine town of Thandwe, around 300 kilometres (186 miles) away, where junta troops and police have retreated to an airport, according to military sources.

The AA, which says it is fighting for autonomy for the state's ethnic Rakhine population, has vowed to capture the whole of the state.

AFP



Queue of traffic up to the pass.
Photo: AFP

THREE-PAGODAS MYANMAR-THAILAND BORDER CROSSING CLOSED

The Three-Pagodas Border Crossing on the Thai-Myanmar border has been closed since 17 June 2024 and locals do not know when it will reopen.

The crossing was first closed on the Myanmar side on the morning of 17 June. Later in the day it was also closed on the Thai side.

The Three-Pagodas Border Crossing had become the main border trade route between Thailand and Myanmar since traders had to stop using the Mae Sot to Myawaddy border crossing as fighting along the Asia Highway between Myawaddy and Kawkaik has made it impassable, meaning that importers face great difficulties getting their goods from Myawaddy to the rest of Myanmar.

The closure of the Three-Pagodas Border Crossing has stranded about 100 trucks on both sides of the border. According to locals, over 40 trucks a day were using the crossing.

Prices of some goods in Myanmar imported from Thailand are, according to reports, already rising.

The flow of goods from border crossings with Thailand has been delayed and disrupted due to fighting and damaged roads. Affected crossings

include Tachileik to Mae Sai, Myawaddy to Mae Sot, Htee Khee to Nam Phu Yaw, Myeik to Mawtaung, and Kawthaung to Ranong.

Traders are hoping that the Asia Highway between Myawaddy and Kawkaik reopens soon, so that they can again send goods to Myanmar.

Myanmar state-run media said that reports of Thai border posts being closed and hundreds of trucks being trapped were rumours and that goods and people were crossing at the border posts as normal.

In an effort to increase trade flows, regional Thai and Myanmar authorities have opened 22 illegal border crossings between the two countries, according to the Singapore Strait Times.

According to the junta's Ministry of Economy and Commerce between 1 April and 16 June 2024 border trade with Thailand was worth US\$ 606.686 million.



TWO KEY JUNTA CAMPS ON INDAWGYI TO HPAKANT ROAD IN KACHIN STATE CAPTURED

Two military bases in Mohnyin Township, Kachin State were captured by joint forces from the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and people's defence forces (PDFs) on 23 and 24 June 2024.

The Nyaungbin Security Checkpoint and Chaungwa Joint Militia Camp are between Indawgyi Lake and Hpakant on the Indawgyi to Sezin to Hpakant road.

The combined defence forces started attacking several junta bases along the Indawgyi to Hpakant road on 22 June.

The Nyaungbin Security Checkpoint, manned by soldiers from Infantry Battalion (IB) 42 under the Hpakant-based Light Infantry Division 33 and soldiers from the Shanni Nationalities Army (SNA), was captured around 9:00 pm on 23 June.

The Chaungwa Joint Militia Camp was taken at about 5:00 am on 24 June.

But fighting is ongoing and junta aircraft bombed the area on the afternoon of 24 June, according to villagers from Chaungwa.

One said: "The fighting continues, with ongoing shooting. I've heard that the KIA has taken control of two Military Council camps, but the battle is still raging."

Initial reports indicate that, so far, during the fighting, three residents from Hmankin Village, near to Nyaungbin Security Checkpoint and Chaungwa Village were injured.

According to Mizzima's reporter on the ground, residents of Chaungwa, Hmankin, Lawsunt, and Innmhee villages in Mohnyin Township are fleeing the fighting.

According to a Kachin military source, KIA Battalion 6 briefly seized the Chaungwa Joint Militia Camp in 1980, but the Myanmar Army recaptured it and had held it for over 40 years until it was seized again on 24 June.

Efforts by Mizzima to contact the KIA spokesperson, Colonel Naw Bu, for comments on the ongoing fighting in the Indawgyi area have been unsuccessful.

CEASEFIRE IN NORTHEAST MYANMAR ENDS AS JUNTA BATTLES ETHNIC REBELS

Fighting broke out in northeast Myanmar on 25 June 2024, as a five-month ceasefire brokered by China between junta forces and ethnic minority insurgents fell apart, with clashes including air strikes by military jets, residents of the area told Radio Free Asia.

An official in the Ta'ang National Liberation Army, or TNLA, insurgent force said the fighting in Shan State started because of attacks by junta forces on their positions.

"Fighting erupted around 5 a.m. and can still be heard," said one resident of the area, about 220 km (140 miles) northeast of the city of Mandalay.

"Fighter jets shot and bombed near the side of Kyauk Kyan Village," said the resident who declined to be identified for security reasons. "The villagers have fled. We can't leave through Kyauk Kyan because the road is closed and there's fighting there."

The TNLA is a member of the Three Brotherhood Alliance of insurgent factions that launched an offensive in October and made significant gains against junta forces, especially in areas of Shan State near the border with China.

Chinese officials brokered a ceasefire between the insurgent alliance and junta forces on 11 January and organised talks between the rivals in May in the Chinese city of Kunming. Sources with knowledge of the talks said China was keen to protect its economic interests on the border and in Rakhine State on the coast.

The other two members of the insurgent alliance are the Arakan Army (AA), from Rakhine State, and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), based on the Chinese border.

AIRSTRIKES IN RECENT WEEKS

A TNLA statement on Tuesday said the junta has repeatedly violated the January truce over the last two weeks by conducting airstrikes and drone and artillery attacks in Kyaukme, Nawngkhio and Mogoke townships in Shan State.

The TNLA will defend itself if the junta continues to use airstrikes and heavy weapons, said the group's general secretary, Major Gen. Tar Bone Kyaw.

The TNLA's head of information, Lway Yay Oo, told RFA that the fighting began after junta troops attacked their camps.

"Fighting broke out with the junta army at the intersection of Nawngkhio's Ohn Ma Thee Village and Kyaukme's Nyein Chan Yay Kone Village," she said.

Junta jets struck on the outskirts of Nawngkhio Town, near an army camp at Kyauk Kyan Village, residents said.

Fighting spread to the villages between Nawngkhio and Mandalay Region's Pyinoolwin, along a 56 km (35 mile) stretch of road where junta troops were attacking villages by air.

TNLA forces surrounded Kyaukme Town while junta troops were shelling them from the camps in the town, residents said.

Two civilians were killed and four others were injured when the shells dropped in neighborhood No. 8 and in Kyaukme Township's Tilin Ward, according to a volunteer for war-displaced persons.

"The official death toll is two until now," the volunteer said. "But casualties are expected to be higher."

A death toll report hasn't been received from nearby Man Hkar Village, which faced a barrage of artillery shells. Artillery attacks also hit two other villages, he said.

COULD GROW WIDER

The junta has yet to release any information about the renewed fighting. RFA called its national spokesperson, Major Gen. Zaw Min Tun, for comment but he did not respond.

A former military officer told RFA that the resurgence of fighting in northern Shan state is likely aimed at reducing pressure on the Arakan Army.

"This will prevent the military from sending reserve troops to Rakhine state," he said.

However, political analyst Than Soe Naing said the renewed fighting could grow into a wider effort to capture more towns.

"The TNLA will decide if they take control of Kyaukme and Lashio townships," he said. "If they continue to fight to control these townships, MNDAA will also join in the offensives."

The junta appears to be preparing for wider conflict as well. Earlier this month, troops used bulldozers and other heavy equipment in northern Shan State to make several key roads impassable as the TNLA and MNDAA began to reassemble forces.

The main road to Kyaukme was one of the roads that was destroyed and blocked. As a result, the cost of transporting goods into the area has nearly doubled, one truck driver said.

"I no longer wish to continue. There's no profit left," he said. "Crossing the creek now costs about 700,000 kyats (US\$180), including payment to both sides."

The military junta has also imposed restrictions on the transportation of rice, edible oil, medicine and fuel into the area, according to several sources who have traveled through the area.

That has led to a severe shortage of items like meat, fish and medicine, a shop owner in Hseni said.

Courtesy of Radio Free Asia



INDIAN EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER MEETS WITH VISITING MYANMAR DEPUTY PM THAN SWE

Dr S. Jaishankar, the External Affairs Minister of India discussed Myanmar and Indian affairs 26 June with Myanmar Deputy PM and Foreign Minister Than Shwe as he transited New Delhi.

Dr S. Jaishankar, reporting on the meeting on Facebook, said he discussed India's deep concern over the impact of continuing violence and instability in Myanmar on their border.

He stressed that India is open to engaging all stakeholders in addressing this situation.

Dr S. Jaishankar said he particularly flagged illegal

narcotics, arms smuggling and trafficking in persons as priority challenges, and sought cooperation for the early return of Indian nationals trapped in Myawaddy.

In addition, he pressed for credible security protection for India's ongoing projects in the crisis-hit country.

Dr S. Jaishankar "urged (the) early return to the path of democratic transition in Myanmar," noting that "India stands ready to help in any manner"



The award winners.

SEVEN 'JOURNALISTS OF COURAGE AND IMPACT' HONORED AT EWC INTERNATIONAL MEDIA CONFERENCE IN MANILA

Mizzima's Editor-in-Chief and Co-founder Soe Myint was one of seven "Journalists of Courage and Impact" honoured at an awards banquet held Monday evening as part of the East-West Center's International Media Conference this week in Manila, Philippines.

The Center recognized the seven journalists who exemplify the impact that EWC media program participants have had throughout Asia and the Pacific.

Since they began in 2014, the "Journalists of Courage and Impact" awards have been given out at each of the Center's biennial media conferences, with 30 total recipients thus far.

"This award really reflects the East-West Center's commitment to the critical role of journalism in fostering good governance and healthy and free societies," master of ceremonies Glenn van Zutphen, founder and CEO of Van Media Group in Singapore, said at the ceremony. "It also reminds us all of the adversity and challenges facing many journalists today. As we sit here tonight, scores of journalists across the globe reporting courageously in conflict zones and elsewhere are being targeted for their dedication to shining light in some very, very dark places, and to holding power to

accountability."

This year's honorees are:

Sincha Dimara, News Editor, Inside PNG, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.

After she was suspended by the country's largest private TV station while investigating a series of stories on a controversial Australian businessman and convicted drug dealer living in the country, the station's newsroom of 24 journalists walked out in protest. As a result, Dimara and the entire team were fired. Refusing to be silenced, she and her team created a new online news service, "Inside PNG," which today is owned and run by its journalists and content producers, with a mission to provide the best possible independent alternative for Papua New Guineans.

Tom Grundy, Editor-in-Chief & Founder, Hong Kong Free Press, Hong Kong.

Grundy founded the nonprofit Hong Kong Free Press in 2015 as an impartial and independent news source funded by readers, run by journalists, and backed by an ethics code. As Hong Kong has plummeted in international press freedom indices in recent years, his

team has seen it all: cyberattacks, threats, visa trouble, harassment, physical attacks, media bans, and more than their fair share of pepper spray and tear gas. But they have also won prestigious awards and grants and were nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize as they remain focused on delivering original features and on-the-ground reporting.

Alan C. Miller, Founder, the News Literacy Project, Washington, DC, USA.

A former Pulitzer-winning investigative reporter with The Los Angeles Times, Miller helped launch the field of news literacy when he started the News Literacy Project in 2008. Today, the project's widely acclaimed resources are being used in all 50 states, helping students, teachers, and people of all ages and backgrounds learn how to identify credible news and understand the indispensable role a free press has in a democracy. For this work, Alan has received the East-West Center's Distinguished Alumni Award and the 2022 AARP Purpose Prize, and he was named one of the Washingtonians of the Year in 2020.

John Nery, Columnist and Editorial Consultant, Rappler, Quezon City, Philippines.

An acclaimed journalist for over 25 years, Nery's analysis and reporting focus on politics, history, and the rule of law, but he also tracks climate change issues and the South China Sea disputes. He is active in efforts to help journalists organize themselves against attacks on journalism. Nery is a member of the board of trustees of the Asian Center for Journalism in Manila and a member of the board of directors of the World Justice Project in Washington, DC. He has received both national and international recognition for his work, including a National Book Award in the journalism category and an Award for Excellence from the Society of Publishers in Asia for opinion writing. He is a biographer of Philippines national hero Jose Rizal, and a book of reflections on journalism, media, and the press is forthcoming.

Ana Marie Pamintuan, Editor-in-Chief, The Philippine Star, Manila, Philippines.

Starting as a reporter and rising through the ranks to become Editor-in-Chief, Ana Marie Pamintuan has been with the English-language daily The Philippine Star since the paper was launched in 1986. Along the way, she has covered various beats from the police and judiciary to local government and national politics,

and has built a reputation for fearless journalism, addressing controversial and sensitive topics with clarity and insight. She has won numerous awards for her work, most recently as Journalist of the Year by the Manila Overseas Press Club, the oldest press club in Asia. In addition, she co-hosts "The Chiefs," a news and current affairs television talk show that has won several prestigious awards for public affairs programming.

Kamal Siddiqi, Former Director of News, Aaj TV, Karachi, Pakistan.

A journalist and media analyst with over 30 years of experience in print, digital and electronic media, Kamal Siddiqi was the Director of News for Aaj TV, one of Pakistan's leading news channels, until March 2024. Previously, he was the first editor of The Express Tribune, an English language daily in Pakistan affiliated with the International New York Times from 2009-2016. Like many journalists in Pakistan, he has faced intimidation, harassment, and threats by both state and non-state actors, as well as corporate pressures. He has written extensively and spoken widely about the state of the media in Pakistan, attacks on journalists, media censorship, and state harassment of reporters.

Soe Myint, Editor-in-Chief and Managing Director, Mizzima, Chiang Mai, Thailand.

In 1998, Soe Myint cofounded the news organization Mizzima in India while living in exile from Myanmar's previous military dictatorship. Despite harsh government treatment of anyone accused of giving information to news outlets, Mizzima News continued to provide accurate and timely information on the closed nation to exiled citizens and the outside world. In 2012, Mizzima became the first exiled news organization to return to the country as it emerged for a period from repressive military rule.

But in 2021, after the military again seized full power and plunged the country into civil war, Soe Myint was forced to take Mizzima into exile once again when the regime forcibly shut down its free-to-air TV channel. Operating from across the border in Thailand, however, Mizzima continues to broadcast and publish independent news and information reaching more than 30 million readers and viewers worldwide. Mizzima News Summary 26 June 2024



FIRST MYANMAR JUNTA CONSCRIPTS BEGAN DUTY AT THE END OF JULY

A first batch of 5,000 conscripts called up by Myanmar's junta began duty at the end of July, military sources told media as the generals struggle to crush opposition to their coup.

The junta enforced a conscription law in February, three years after it seized power and sparked a widespread armed uprising that has spread across swathes of the Southeast Asian country.

The law allows the military to summon all men aged 18-35 and women aged 18-27 to serve in the armed forces for at least two years.

"The first batch of recruits, who started in early April, will conclude training at the end of this month," one military source said, referring to the end of July.

The source said that upon graduation the 5,000 conscripts would be posted to "different military commands around the country to serve their duty", without giving details on how they would serve.

He requested anonymity as he was not authorised to talk to the media.

Another military source who also requested anonymity said individual military commands would decide how to employ the recruits they received.

"It will be up to the commands they arrive at after their training," he said.

Myanmar has 14 regional military commands across the country, from the Himalayan foothills in the north to the sprawling Ayeyarwady delta region bordering the Indian Ocean.

At least 10 of them are currently engaged in fighting established ethnic minority armed groups or newer "People's Defence Forces" that have sprung up to resist the junta.

'CHALLENGES'

The military service law was authored by a previous junta in 2010 but was never brought into force.

The terms of service can be extended up to five years during a state of emergency -- which the junta declared when it seized power.

Those ignoring a summons to serve can be jailed for the same period.

Thousands of young men and women have been trying to leave the country since the law was enforced.

Conscripts from the third batch of 5,000 recruits have already begun arriving at training centres, the first source said.

A junta spokesman previously told AFP the military has the capacity to train 50,000 a year although about 13 million people will be eligible to be called up.

Last month, state media quoted the junta's defence minister as saying the military had faced "challenges" in filling quotas.

Local media have reported cases of young men being pulled off the streets in Yangon and other cities and taken away to undergo military training.

The junta has denied the reports.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military coup in February 2021 toppled the government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Since then, more than 5,200 people have been killed in the military crackdown on dissent, and more than 26,000 others arrested, according to a local monitoring group.

AFP



Photos of the vehicle that was struck by bullets. Supplied.

JUNTA KILLS ABBOT IN AMBULANCE IN MANDALAY REGION'S MYINGYAN TOWNSHIP

Junta soldiers shot dead a Buddhist abbot when they shot at the ambulance he was travelling in, at around 9:30 pm on 22 June 2024 in Mandalay Region's Myingyan Township.

Sayadaw U Uttama, aged 49, the abbot of Sakhama Village Monastery in Myingyan Township was escorting a patient going from Sakhama Village to Myingyan Hospital in Myingyan Township, in an ambulance operated by the Myat Ponnyakari Social Assistance Association based in Myingyan Township.

The shooting took place as the ambulance was taking a detour from the main road between Maung Yin Maung and Sakhama villages.

A resident of Sakhama Village said: "There are always junta security outposts on that road as it is just outside of town. The ambulance was clearly marked with the Social Assistance Association's logo, yet they opened fire without warning. The monk was seated in the front, in front of two of the patient's family members and three aid workers. The junta soldiers kept shooting continuously. I'm not sure how many shots were fired. The monk had often made similar trips at night before. The remaining people were slightly injured."

Following the incident, the Myingyan Township Social Assistance Association attempted to retrieve the monk's body to return it to the village but was prevented from doing so, by the junta.

Currently, the junta is conducting a medical examination of U Uttama's body in Myingyan Town, while his devotees are seeking a way to bring it back to the village monastery.

Telegram channels supporting the military junta claimed that Myingyan Black Tiger (MBT), a local resistance group, was responsible for the shooting. However, MBT leader Lieutenant Michael denied any involvement.

He said: "The junta forces shot and killed the monk while he was escorting a patient. This has nothing to do with MBT. We haven't had any military activities in the area recently. We will take action against those who accuse MBT forces of shooting at the monk's car."

MBT troops insist they were not present at the location of the incident and emphasise that no military activity took place there on that day. MBT's own investigation revealed that junta troops were responsible for the attack.

Lieutenant Michael also pointed out that recently, on 19 June 2024, when junta forces in Ngazun Township, Mandalay Region shot dead the abbot of Win Nein Mi Tar Yon Monastery, the junta also initially blamed people's defence forces (PDFs) for the killing. But, when a monk who survived the shooting made a viral video about the junta carrying out the killing, the junta admitted to being responsible for the monk's death.



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MYANMAR JUNTA CHIEF APOLOGISES AFTER SECURITY FORCES SHOOT DEAD PROMINENT BUDDHIST ABBOT

Myanmar's junta chief has made a rare apology after security forces killed the popular abbot of a Buddhist monastery in an incident the military initially blamed on opponents of its coup.

Sayadaw Bhaddanta Munindabhivamsa, 78, was a prominent teacher and author on Buddhism and head of a monastery that had publicly opposed the military's 2021 coup that has plunged Myanmar into turmoil.

He was shot dead on June 19 as he travelled by car through central Mandalay region.

Junta-controlled media initially blamed opponents of its coup for the killing but the next day a senior monk who had been at the scene said security forces were responsible.

His accusation went viral on social media and the junta said it would investigate the incident.

"We are extremely heartbroken for losing Sayadaw Bhaddanta Munindabhivamsa," junta chief Min Aung Hlaing said in a letter that was read out at the abbot's monastery on Monday.

"We would like to give our sincere apology for this case," the letter said.

The car the abbot had been travelling in had no

religious markings on it, according to the letter, and had not slowed down at a checkpoint, leading junta troops to open fire.

An investigation would be carried out and the junta would take "action based on the facts."

The abbot's funeral would take place on Thursday

The military has long sought to portray itself as a protector of Buddhist identity, the majority religion in Myanmar.

Since seizing power in 2021 it has arrested and jailed locals and foreigners accused of "harming" Buddhism in its sweeping crackdown on dissent that has seen thousands jailed or killed, according to a local monitoring group.

But the clergy have also been at the forefront of political protests.

Huge demonstrations sparked by fuel price hikes in 2007 were led by monks, and the clergy also mobilised relief efforts after 2008's devastating Cyclone Nargis and the inaction of a former junta.

AFP



Aftermath of a junta attack. Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR ARMY'S KILLING OF CIVILIANS IN KARENNI STATE POSSIBLE WAR CRIME

The National Unity Government of Myanmar (NUG) and the Interim Executive Council (IEC) of Karenni State should investigate the killings of three women and their three children and hold the perpetrators of the killings accountable, said Burma War Crime Investigation (BWCI) and Fortify Rights.

A new joint investigation by BWCI—a community-based human rights organisation in Myanmar—and advocacy group Fortify Rights found that the Myanmar military captured seven civilians during a military operation in Shadaw Township, Karenni State on 5 February 2024. Although one man escaped, three women—including a pregnant woman—and their three children were killed during an armed clash between the Myanmar army and ethnic resistance fighters.

The civilians killed were identified as Soe Mae, 50, Law Mae, 45, and Ma Mae Mo, 33, who was pregnant, Nang Khin, 7, Baw Reh, 5, and Li Reh, 3.

“Wartime killings of civilians should be thoroughly investigated and perpetrators held accountable,” said Swe Lin, a researcher from BWCI. “The NUG and the IEC are well-placed to investigate the killings of civilians and work alongside international investigators. Resistance forces fighting against the junta should actively seek to protect civilians and work to support victims and ensure accountability for crimes.”

The killings took place during a battle between the Myanmar military and resistance fighters, including the Karenni Nationalities Defense Force (KNDF) and the Karenni Army (KA) near the village of Daw Ka Tel located northeast of Shadaw Town in Shadaw Township.

In June 2024, BWCI and Fortify Rights spoke with members of IEC and NUG and shared the findings of their investigation. A member of the IEC said they are concerned about “any killing of civilians” and would investigate and charge perpetrators from the Myanmar military or Karenni forces who are responsible for crimes.

Between February and June 2024, BWCI and Fortify Rights interviewed 11 people, including a Myanmar military prisoner of war (POW) in the custody of the KNDF, a survivor of the incident who escaped, relatives of victims, two medical doctors, and a soldier from KA. BWCI and Fortify Rights also analysed and reviewed photographs and videos taken by resistance fighters of the dead bodies on 6 February 2024. BWCI and Fortify Rights's investigation could not independently verify the perpetrators of the killing.

According to the witnesses, on 5 February 2024, Myanmar junta soldiers from Light Infantry Battalion 249 detained the group of seven civilians who were hiding in a small house on top of a hill. The Myanmar

military POW interviewed by BWCI and Fortify Rights also confirmed that soldiers from his unit detained the civilians.

Describing the incident, a 20-year-old Karenni man who escaped after being captured together with the women and children by the Myanmar military soldiers said:

I was working in the forest in the mountains and was resting for one or two days afterward. That was the same time when the [Myanmar military] soldiers came, and I was detained. The military caught me and other women and [children].

He went on to describe what happened after the junta soldiers detained the group:

[The Myanmar soldiers] tied me up with white nylon rope. ... I was worried, of course. Capture means death. ... [I was] thinking, when would I die? But nothing could be done. When they first arrived and captured me, they kicked me in the head and hit me with their gun. One [soldier] took out a knife and threatened to cut my ear off.

The man explained that the soldiers forced him to walk ahead with a few soldiers, while women and children were behind with other soldiers. When the soldiers began exchanging fire with the resistance troops, he escaped. He said:

There was active shooting. Because of that, they

could not capture me again, and I escaped. ...When I walked a bit far in front of the military, I ran. [The children and women] were left behind. ... I ran, and the rest shouted. [The soldiers] shouted that I escaped and started shooting. ... I ran and didn't look back. I could only hear the screams [of the young girls]. They were shouting, "Please let us go," and "We want to go back home." I heard the girls screaming. It could be when they were shot and killed. When I escaped, I went to the farming field. When I got back to the displaced camp, I met with people who released me from the tied ropes.

Although he managed to escape, his niece was among those killed.

A KA resistance fighter who was part of the battle described the scene:

We had the area surrounded, with our forces both down the hill and on top. The [junta] troops were climbing up the middle, split into two units, unaware we were there. We started firing as they climbed towards us. As soon as the fighting started, we heard women screaming and thought the [junta soldiers] had brought their families. But it turned out they were [captured] civilians.

The KA resistance fighter told BWCI and Fortify Rights how he heard screams from the battle field, saying: "I heard [screams], but we had no idea who [the civilians] were or how they got there. Since we started the

fight, we had to finish it. We couldn't tell if we hit the children, because we were firing from far away. We couldn't see them clearly as they were with the junta troops. We could only see the junta troops and fired at them."

He continued, saying: "During the fight, kids and moms were screaming things like, 'Oh, my son, 'or 'Oh, my daughter, 'frightened. We heard the junta troops ordering them to stop screaming."

Describing the aftermath of the offensive and seeing the civilians 'dead bodies, the resistance fighter said: "We did [see the bodies] after the troops fled. ... I couldn't bring myself to check on the children I didn't

have the courage to check on the children when asked. When I saw their bodies, I couldn't stop crying and was too scared to uncover them."

He continued, saying:

The youngest one, a child, was found a bit away from the group and was still breathing at first. I called a medic, but the child died on the way. I didn't know where he was shot, but the medic said he was hit in the back. He was the youngest boy [Li Reh], and I couldn't save him.

Photographs and videos on file with BWCI and Fortify Rights show the six dead bodies, including 45-year-old Law Mae and seven-year-old Ma Nang Khin with gunshot wounds to the head.

Relatives of the women and children described the impact. One woman said, "[The military] took everything. ... I don't know what to say. I lost my sisters. My elder sister, my younger sister, my nieces."

A 55-year-old Karenni farmer also described how Myanmar military soldiers ransacked his home during the same attack, saying: "[The soldiers] looked inside the hut to see if anyone was inside and stirred things up before heading back downstairs. We could see and hear them as they looted the house."

When the junta soldiers arrived, the farmer hid in his uncut fields, saying, "Otherwise, we would have been exposed and potentially shot on sight."

Starting 11 November 2023, the KNDF, together with other ethnic resistance organisations, initiated "Operation 1111" to attack the Myanmar military in Karenni State. The KNDF, KA, and People's Defence Forces (PDF) have liberated Demoso, Mese, Ywar Thit and Shadaw townships in Karenni State. The battle that liberated Shadaw took place between 15 January and 12 February 2024.

At the time of writing, the KNDF continued to detain three junta soldiers captured during the battle in Shadaw Township.

According to Fortify Rights, international humanitarian law—known as the laws of war—is applicable in the situation of Karenni State, where armed conflict is taking place between the Myanmar military and armed resistance organizations including KNDF, KA, and other resistance fighters. The Geneva Conventions expressly guarantee the protection of civilians "against all acts of violence."

On 1 February 2021, the Myanmar military launched a deadly coup d'état, killing untold numbers of civilians and imprisoning tens of thousands of others in a bid to secure nationwide political power.

In February 2022, Fortify Rights released a flash report documenting how the Myanmar military massacred civilians, used human shields, and committed other atrocities in Karenni State in acts that amount to war crimes. The junta's ongoing attack against civilians provides further evidence of crimes against humanity and war crimes.

"The IEC and NUG should work cooperatively with international accountability mechanisms to address ongoing war crimes in Karenni State," said John Quinley, Director at Fortify Rights. "Both parties to the conflict should uphold the laws of war, including ensuring that the rights of prisoners of war are respected.



Junta torches seized drugs.
Photo: AFP

MYANMAR JUNTA SAYS 'FACING CHALLENGES' CURBING OPIUM BOOM

Conflict-ravaged Myanmar is “facing challenges” in stemming opium poppy cultivation, the junta said Wednesday last week, months after the UN warned the country had become the world’s biggest producer of the narcotic.

Myanmar’s legal economy has been gutted by conflict and instability since the military seized power in 2021 and sparked a widespread armed uprising.

The country was “severely facing challenges related to opium poppy cultivation”, the junta’s home affairs minister Lieutenant General Yar Pyae said in a statement carried by the state-owned Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper.

He said there had been a “slight increase” in illegal cultivation of opium poppy -- essential for producing heroin -- in 2023 compared to the previous year.

According to the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Myanmar produced an estimated 1,080 metric tonnes of opium in 2023, up from 790 the year before,

That harvest made Myanmar the world’s biggest producer of opium poppy in 2023 after production in

Afghanistan slumped to around 330 tonnes following the Taliban government’s ban on poppy cultivation.

Yar Pyae accused some of Myanmar’s ethnic armed groups of manufacturing synthetic drugs using precursor chemicals imported from Myanmar’s neighbours.

The Southeast Asian nation’s borderlands are home to a plethora of ethnic armed groups, many of which have fought the military for control of local resources and over the drug trade.

Myanmar authorities said on Wednesday they had torched \$349 million worth of drugs to mark World Drug Day.

The total estimated value of Myanmar’s “opiate economy” rose to between \$1 billion and \$2.4 billion, the equivalent of 1.7 to 4.1 percent of the country’s 2022 GDP, the UNODC said.

Analysts say the military, which ousted an elected government and seized power in 2021, is not serious about ending the multi-billion-dollar trade.

AFP




AA Info Desk
June 25, 2024

Aerial view of soldiers taking away supplies. Photo: AA

WFP WAREHOUSE IN MAUNGDAW, RAKHINE STATE BURNT DOWN BY MYANMAR JUNTA

A United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) warehouse in Maungdaw Township, Rakhine State was looted and burned down by junta forces.

According to the WFP, the warehouse, which held 1,175 metric tons of life-saving food and supplies - enough emergency food to sustain 64,000 people for one month, was burned down on 22 June 2024.

According to the Arakan Army (AA) the warehouse was burned down on 21 June at about 5:00 pm. The AA also released drone footage of WFP warehouses in Waisali Village, Maungdaw Township being looted as they burned down. People are seen apparently removing bags of cement from the burning warehouse and using them to construct defences in front of a building that the AA said was a junta district office.

The AA claimed that the looting and burning was carried out by the State Administration Council (SAC) and "Muslim Militants". According to eyewitnesses who spoke to the Rakhine-based media outlet Narinjara, the looters came from the Second Border Guard Police Battalion (Nakhakha 2).

The WFP issued a statement following the burning down of the warehouse. Below is the statement in full:

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) strongly condemns the looting of food supplies and the burning of its warehouse in Maungdaw, in Myanmar's northern Rakhine State last Saturday [22 June].

WFP is providing emergency food support to conflict-affected populations in Myanmar and has assisted almost one million people so far this year. The seizure of food and other goods and the destruction of humanitarian facilities in Maungdaw undermine these efforts and must be stopped.

WFP calls on all parties to the conflict to uphold their obligations under International Humanitarian Law to ensure that humanitarian facilities and assets are respected and protected, and safe and secure access is provided for the delivery of vital assistance to those in urgent need.

WFP staff have been unable to access the Maungdaw warehouse since late May due to increasing conflict in northern Rakhine. The warehouse was holding 1,175 metric tons of life-saving food and supplies - enough emergency food to sustain 64,000 people for one month. WFP continues to gather details of the circumstances surrounding the incident.



Photo: AFP

JUNTA STARTS SELLING SUBSIDISED RICE IN YANGON

The Myanmar Rice Federation announced that it will sell rice at below-market prices to anyone who produces their household list and National Registration Card (NRC), from 24 June 2024.

But, purchases are limited to one bag of Pawsan rice and one bag of Aemahta rice per family and the rice can only be purchased from the Wardan Rice Trading Centre or the Bayinnaung Rice Trading Centre in Yangon between the hours of 9:30 am and 3:30 pm.

A rice merchant said that though the junta is selling rice at reduced prices the price of rice on the open market is likely to remain unaffected as the subsidised rice is only available from two locations in Yangon.

They said: "The current state of imports and transport costs makes rice pricey. Their [the junta's] ideas don't seem to be working, as they can only sell at two locations in Yangon. Although their stated price was reasonable, it did not disguise the circumstances. They used to utilize this strategy before, but everyone knows it doesn't work."

Currently, the market price of Pawsan (Shwe Bo) rice is at least 180,000 kyats per 50kg bag, Pawsan (Ayeyarwady) rice is up to 160,000 kyats per bag and Aemahta rice is at least 90,000 kyats per bag.

Subsidised Pawsan (Shwe Bo) rice costs 135,000 to 145,000 kyats per bag, subsidised Pawsan (Ayeyarwady) rice costs 110,000 to 120,000 kyats per bag and subsidised Aemahta rice costs 72,000 to 75,000 kyats per bag. The subsidised rice is also available in smaller-size bags.

FORMER MYANMAR PRESIDENT THEIN SEIN MAKES RARE TRIP TO CHINA

Former Myanmar president Thein Sein departed for an official visit to China on Thursday last week, Beijing's embassy in Yangon said, in his first foreign trip since the military seized power three years ago.

Former general Thein Sein, 79, ruled Myanmar from 2011 to 2016 as the reformist president of a quasi-civilian government which ceded power to Aung San Suu Kyi following landmark elections.

He later retired to the military-built capital Naypyidaw and has largely stayed out of the public eye since.

On Wednesday Thein Sein met China's ambassador and discussed "the situation in Myanmar and cooperation between the two countries," the embassy in Yangon posted on its Facebook page.

Ties between the junta and Beijing -- a major ally and arms supplier -- frayed last year over the junta's failure to crack down on online scam compounds in Myanmar's borderlands.

The compounds were staffed by citizens of China and other countries who were often trafficked and forced to work swindling their compatriots in an industry analysts say is worth billions.

Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing has not visited China since the 2021 coup that plunged the country into turmoil.

The Southeast Asian nation has seen widespread fighting since the military coup ended democratic rule.

Myanmar is a vital piece of China's Belt and Road Initiative, President Xi Jinping's flagship \$1 trillion project that includes maritime, rail and road projects in Asia, Africa and Europe.

But progress in Myanmar has been hampered by the conflict since the military coup.

Last year an alliance of ethnic minority armed groups seized swathes of territory in Shan state along the border with China's Yunnan province.

AFP



Chinese naval vessel.
Photo: AFP

CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY'S AGGRESSIVE TACTICS THREATEN INDO-PACIFIC STABILITY

SUN LEE

As the United States and its allies work to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific region, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) continues to undermine regional stability and challenge the rules-based international order. The CCP's aggressive actions and expansionist policies pose a significant threat to peace, security, and prosperity in this critical area of the world.

The Indo-Pacific, spanning from the U.S. Pacific coastline to the Indian Ocean, has become the epicenter of global competition between democratic nations and the authoritarian Chinese regime. Home to over half the world's population and nearly two-thirds of global GDP, this region's importance cannot be overstated. The CCP's relentless pursuit of regional dominance threatens the delicate balance of power and the sovereignty of numerous nations.

One of the most alarming aspects of the CCP's strategy is its willingness to use economic coercion and military intimidation to achieve its goals. Australia, for instance, has faced significant economic pressure from Beijing in retaliation for its calls for an independent investigation into the origins of COVID-19. This blatant attempt to punish a sovereign nation for exercising its right to seek transparency demonstrates the CCP's

disregard for international norms and its readiness to weaponize economic ties.

The CCP's aggressive behavior extends to territorial disputes as well. Along the Line of Actual Control with India, Chinese forces have engaged in violent clashes, resulting in casualties and heightened tensions between the two nuclear-armed neighbors. This reckless approach to border issues not only strains bilateral relations but also destabilizes the entire region.

In the East and South China Seas, the CCP's bullying tactics have reached new heights. Beijing's expansive maritime claims, in defiance of international law and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, have led to numerous confrontations with neighboring countries. The militarization of artificial islands in the South China Sea and frequent incursions into disputed waters demonstrate the CCP's willingness to use force to assert its claims, endangering freedom of navigation and the territorial integrity of sovereign states.

Perhaps most concerning is the CCP's increasing pressure on Taiwan. The democratic island nation faces constant military threats and diplomatic isolation as

Beijing seeks to undermine its autonomy and force reunification. The CCP's refusal to renounce the use of force against Taiwan and its ongoing military buildup in the region create a powder keg that threatens to explode into a wider conflict.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), touted by the CCP as a benevolent infrastructure development program, is another tool in Beijing's arsenal for expanding its influence. While promising economic benefits, the BRI often saddles participating countries with unsustainable debt and allows the CCP to gain strategic footholds in critical locations. This "debt-trap diplomacy" has already resulted in China gaining control of key ports and infrastructure in several nations, raising concerns about the long-term implications for national sovereignty and security.

Moreover, the CCP's efforts to establish military bases and sign security agreements with Indo-Pacific nations pose a direct challenge to regional stability. These actions aim to project Chinese military power far beyond its shores and potentially disrupt longstanding security arrangements that have maintained peace in the region for decades.

The CCP's disregard for human rights and democratic values is evident not only in its treatment of its own citizens but also in its approach to international relations. By supporting authoritarian regimes and undermining democratic institutions abroad, Beijing seeks to create a world more amenable to its interests and ideology. This poses a significant threat to the liberal international order that has fostered peace and prosperity since the end of World War II.

In response to these challenges, the United States and its allies have implemented the Indo-Pacific Strategy to counter the CCP's malign influence. This approach focuses on strengthening alliances, enhancing military capabilities, and promoting economic cooperation among like-minded nations. The formation of groups such as the Quad (Australia, India, Japan, and the United States) and AUKUS (Australia, the UK, and the United States) demonstrates a growing recognition of the need for collective action to address the CCP's threats.

However, the CCP's actions have not gone

unopposed. Its aggressive behavior has driven many countries closer to the United States and its allies. India, for example, has significantly strengthened its defense ties with Washington in response to Chinese provocations. Similarly, Japan has taken a more assertive role in regional security, working closely with partners to counter Beijing's influence.

The CCP's policies have also backfired in other ways. Its heavy-handed approach to Hong Kong, violation of human rights in Xinjiang, and initial handling of the COVID-19 pandemic have severely damaged China's international reputation. Many countries are now reassessing their economic dependencies on China and seeking to diversify their supply chains, weakening Beijing's ability to use economic leverage as a weapon.

Despite these setbacks, the CCP remains a formidable adversary. Its economic and military power, combined with its willingness to flout international norms, present an ongoing challenge to regional stability and global order. The international community must remain vigilant and united in its efforts to counter the CCP's aggressive tactics and promote a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific.

As the competition between democratic values and authoritarian control intensifies, the actions taken by the United States and its allies in the coming years will be crucial in determining the future of the Indo-Pacific region and the broader international order. The world must stand firm against the CCP's attempts to reshape the global landscape in its authoritarian image and work tirelessly to preserve the principles of freedom, democracy, and respect for international law.

Sun Lee is a pseudonym for a writer who covers developments in Asia.



Julian Assange looks out of the aircraft window on his flight home. Photo: AFP

WIKILEAKS FOUNDER JULIAN ASSANGE RETURNS HOME A FREE MAN

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange returned home to Australia to start life as a free man last week after admitting he revealed US defence secrets in a deal that unlocked the door to his London prison cell.

Assange landed on a chilly Canberra evening in a private jet, the final act of an international drama that led him from a five-year stretch in the high-security Belmarsh prison in Britain to a courtroom in a US Pacific island territory and, finally, home.

His white hair swept back, the Australian raised a fist as he emerged from the plane door, striding across the tarmac to give a hug to his wife Stella that lifted her off the ground and then to embrace his father.

Dozens of television journalists, photographers and reporters peered through the airport fencing to see Assange, who wore a dark suit, white shirt and brown tie.

"He will be able to spend quality time with his wife Stella, and his two children, be able to walk up and down on the beach and feel the sand through his toes in winter - that lovely chill," Assange's father, John Shipton, said.

'TIME TO RECUPERATE'

Prison time had taken a toll on Assange, who did not attend a WikiLeaks news conference to mark his return, his wife told reporters.

"You have to understand, he needs time, he needs to recuperate, and this is a process," she said, apparently close to tears.

"I ask you please to give us space, to give us privacy, to find our place, to let our family be a family."

Assange's long battle with US prosecutors came to an unexpected end in Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands, where a judge accepted his guilty plea on a single count of conspiracy to obtain and disseminate US national defence information.

The remote courtroom was chosen because of the 52-year-old's unwillingness to go to the continental United States and because of its proximity to Australia.

As part of behind-the-scenes legal negotiations with the US Justice Department he was sentenced to the time he had already served in London - five years and two months - and given his liberty.

"You will be able to walk out of this courtroom a

free man," the judge in Saipan told him.

Assange had published hundreds of thousands of confidential US documents on the WikiLeaks whistleblowing website from 2010.

He became a hero to free speech campaigners but a villain to those who thought he had endangered US security and intelligence sources.

'TOO LONG'

"Working as a journalist, I encouraged my source to provide material that was said to be classified," Assange told the court.

Assange's lawyer Jen Robinson told reporters it was a "historic day" that "brings to an end 14 years of legal battles".

"It also brings to an end a case which has been recognised as the greatest threat to the First Amendment in the 21st century," she said.

After touching down in Canberra, Assange told Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese by phone "that he had saved his life", the lawyer told reporters.

Albanese said he was "very pleased" by the outcome.

"Regardless of your views about his activities, and they will be varied, Mr Assange's case has dragged on for too long," he told parliament in Canberra.

The United Nations also hailed Assange's release, saying the case had raised human rights concerns.

But former US vice president Mike Pence slammed the plea deal on social media platform X as a "miscarriage of justice" that "dishonors the service and sacrifice of the men and women of our Armed Forces."

BANNED FROM US

The US Justice Department said after the hearing that Assange was banned from returning there without permission.

US authorities had wanted to put Assange on trial for divulging military secrets about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

He was indicted by a US federal grand jury in 2019 on 18 counts stemming from WikiLeaks' publication of a trove of national security documents.

The material he released through WikiLeaks included video showing civilians being killed by fire from a US helicopter gunship in Iraq in 2007. The victims included a photographer and a driver from Reuters.

Assange was arrested in 2019 and held in Belmarsh prison while fighting extradition to the United States.

He had spent seven years in Ecuador's embassy in London to avoid being extradited to Sweden, where he faced accusations of sexual assault that were eventually dropped.

MARRIED IN PRISON

Assange met his wife Stella while holed up in the embassy and the pair married in a ceremony in London's Belmarsh prison. They have two young children.

The announcement of the plea deal came two weeks before Assange was scheduled to appear in court in Britain to appeal against a ruling that approved his extradition to the United States.

Washington had accused Assange under the 1917 Espionage Act and supporters warned he risked being sentenced to 175 years in prison.

The Australian government made an official request to that effect in February and Biden said he would consider it, raising hopes among Assange supporters that his ordeal might end.

The plea deal was not entirely unexpected. US President Joe Biden had been under growing pressure to drop the long-running case against Assange. The decision may also have been prompted as Biden seeks reelection in the upcoming November poll.

AFP



JONATHAN CROWLEY DISCUSSES BURMESE BUDDHIST PRACTICE

This conversation for the Insight Myanmar podcast starts with Jonathan Crowley reflecting on his appointment as Assistant Teacher, which happened just after his prison course work, and he found deeply moving.

If you have not done so already, you might want to first listen to the first part of the Insight Myanmar podcast, in which he discusses his upbringing, and the second part, in which describes his deepening practice in the tradition, his experiences teaching vipassana meditation inside a maximum-security prison, and his growing awareness of social justice.

In describing how the Goenka organization makes these appointments, Jonathan explains that in addition to the need to have completed several Long Courses (i.e., any retreat of 20-days or longer), there is an unwritten “rule” that any student harboring an interest in becoming an Assistant Teacher quickly learns: “You almost have to pretend you don’t want to be an Assistant Teacher.” He describes how would-be teachers are incentivized to act in self-deprecating ways in order to mask their desire for an appointment, which often creates a sense of “false ego” around the process. Jonathan acknowledges that he had engaged in that same kind false humility around his own aspiration to become a teacher as he grew more involved with Center work and his meditation practice

Before his appointment, Jonathan had a sense of awe and admiration for the Teachers he encountered, acknowledging a certain “mystique” that many students attribute to ATs. While he believed many to be selflessly devoted to their mission, he grew to seeing them as human who had their share of strengths and weaknesses, and realizing that the reality is far more complicated.

Jonathan describes the basic role of the Assistant Teachers as facilitating the ten-day courses with loving kindness and compassion. Because many students have challenges particularly on their first few courses, he felt that providing support and instruction was rewarding and inspiring. At the same time, he found part of the work quite “rote,” such as the many “stock answers” that Assistant Teachers are trained to give.

As Jonathan began to take on this role, he also realized that in representing the tradition in an official capacity, he had to unpack some of its deeper—and often unspoken—messaging. One of the more challenging issues was the organization’s tendency towards “gurudom.” He describes a paradoxical dynamic in which, on the one hand, Goenka strongly eschews the idea of being seen as guru... while on the other hand, the culture of the organization strongly encourages it. “His audience of students were certainly creating that role... relating to him in that way,” says Jonathan. “I had a wariness around gurudom in general, and so I did keep it at an arm’s length when and where I saw that occurring in the organization.”

As a meditator, and then as a Pali student in India, he had been in fairly close contact with Goenka, and on one occasion even helped him establish a new meditation center. While he had great respect for Goenka as a teacher and as a person, he grew uncomfortable with the organizational dynamic that puts Goenka on a pedestal, and raises him to a position of unquestioned authority.

CHECK OUT THE PODCAST

Listen to the full Insight Myanmar podcast here:

<https://player.captivate.fm/episode/82653781-ff1e-4646-8d81-a909766d3eeb>

JUNTA CHIEF CALLS FOR SKILLED WORKFORCE IN AGRICULTURE AMIDST EXODUS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Junta chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing said that a large number of skillful persons are required to produce systematic agricultural and livestock products, reported the state media.

He made the remark at the opening of the Myanmar National Education Conference 2024 at the Myanmar International Convention Centre II in Naypyidaw on June 25.

In the academic years 2023-24 and 2024-25, a total of 85 basic education, industrial, agricultural, and livestock breeding schools were opened across 84 districts in Myanmar, according to Min Aung Hlaing.

Despite the junta's chief remarks, Myanmar's agriculture sector has been severely affected by the military coup in 2021. Input costs have surged, and border trade has been disrupted due to the civil war.

In February 2024, East Asia Forum reported that nearly half of the Myanmar population has been pushed below the poverty line.

The Myanmar Education Conference 2024 themed 'To Further Promote Education for the development of Human Resources,' took place in Naypyidaw from June 25 to 27.

Furthermore, the ongoing departure of young people to foreign countries, prompted by mandatory conscription laws, has impacted Myanmar's garment, construction, agriculture, imported goods, and service industries.



JUNTA SPOKESPERSON ACCUSES AA OF BOMBING WFP WAREHOUSE IN MAUNGTAW, RAKHINE

Junta spokesperson Major General Zaw Min Tun has said that the Arakan Army (AA), on June 22, used drones to scout and dropped bombs on World Food Programme warehouse in Maungtaw, resulting in the destruction and burning of some warehouse buildings.

However, the AA has claimed that it was junta troops who set fire to the AFP warehouse.

The WFP has announced that its warehouse, which held 1,175 metric tons of life-saving food and supplies – enough emergency food to sustain 64,000 people for a month, was burned down on June 22.

On June 26, the WFP issued a statement strongly condemning the looting of food supplies and burning of its warehouse in Maungtaw in Myanmar's northern Rakhine State.

The WFP's statement urged all parties involved in the conflict to adhere to their obligations under International Humanitarian Law. This includes respecting and protecting humanitarian facilities and assets, and ensuring safe and secure access for delivering critical assistance to those in urgent need.



Food supplies. Photo: facebook

NUG ALLOCATES 486 MILLION KYAT IN HUMANITARIAN AID IN MAY

The Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management of the National Unity Government (NUG) announced on June 27 on NUG's official Facebook page that it had provided a total of 486 million kyat (US\$1= 4,510 kyat) in humanitarian aid to people in real need during May 2024.

Among these humanitarian assistance, 345.2 million kyat was provided for emergency food for 171,302 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), 43.9 million kyat was allocated as emergency humanitarian aid for families of 238 people who died in the civil war, and for 335 injured people.

Additionally, 7.4 million kyat was provided to employees who participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) through labor strikes, and 0.4 million kyat was allocated as humanitarian aid to political prisoners and their family members.

Furthermore, 3.2 million kyat was allocated to those affected by natural disasters, and 86.6 million kyat was allocated as general humanitarian assistance to the public.

Facebook users also expressed their hopes that NUG could provide more support to people in need.



Ninety-eight-year old Than Than.

YANGON RESIDENTS ENDURE LONG QUEUES FOR COOKING OIL

Several Facebook pages show photos of people in Yangon standing in long queues to buy cooking oil.

The prices of rice and cooking oil have significantly increased in Myanmar.

Meanwhile, the cooking oil market is under the control of the military junta and its affiliated organizations. Local authorities in certain wards of Thingangyun Township in Yangon have introduced a scheme allowing people to buy palm oil using a quota system.

On June 24, the junta-controlled Directorate of Investment and Company Administration blacklisted 8 palm oil importing companies.

In a comment under a post on the BBC Burmese service's Facebook page, a user remarked, "While foreigners queue for the iPhone 15, we're queuing for passports, cooking oil, and now even rice."

Another Facebook user said, "If Min Aung Hlaing hadn't been obsessed with power, these incidents wouldn't have happened. If there were no more power-hungry officers in the military, these incidents would stop and vanish."

On June 28, an elderly woman named Than Than, aged 98, who could not remember her home address, was reported to have come to queue for cooking oil in Thaketa Township, Yangon, but lost her way, according to a Facebook post seeking assistance.

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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.