

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight

ASEAN FAILURE

Regional forum calls for end to Myanmar violence but no answers apparent

● Remembering Dr Zaw Myint Maung



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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.

CALLING FOR AN END TO MYANMAR JUNTA'S BAD TREATMENT OF PRISONERS

EDITORIAL

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WEEKLY

The death last week of Dr. Zaw Myint Maung, the former Chief Minister of Mandalay Region, who had just been officially released from a Myanmar junta prison, was a chilling reminder of the brutal and cold-hearted attitudes of the country's coup-makers.

Dr. Zaw Myint Maung passed away at Mandalay Hospital at 3 am on 7 October. He was suffering from leukemia and was 73 years old at the time of his death. He was officially released from his prison sentence by the Myanmar junta on the evening of 6 October.

Previously, he was treated at Mandalay's Obo Prison before being transferred to Mandalay Hospital for further treatment on 25 June.

Dr. Zaw Myint Maung had been diagnosed with leukemia since 2019. After the military coup on 1 February, 2021, he was arrested and later sentenced to 29 years in Mandalay Obo Prison on what critics claim were trumped up charges of corruption, election fraud, and violation of COVID-19 rules.

The junta refused to release him on humanitarian grounds as his health got worse – only doing so at the eleventh hour as it was clear he was dying.

Dr. Zaw Myint Maung was a high-profile prisoner who arguably received better treatment than normal political prisoners held in the jails of Myanmar.

As tributes were made over this last week over the fate of this former National League for Democracy politician, it is important to remember the many political

prisoners who remain in Myanmar's jails who face much harsher treatment.

The sheer horror of the brutal treatment meted out to political prisoners can be seen in the statements of released prisoners, the details of accounts that slip out, and the testimony of a few whistleblowers.

A recent report by Fortify Rights, documenting the horrific torture, is hard to stomach. The report and videos expose numerous incidents of severe torture of detainees by Myanmar junta personnel, including fatal beatings as well as electrocutions.

In March 2023, Fortify Rights received ten videos from a 35-year-old former private in the Myanmar Air Force who secretly recorded fellow Myanmar military soldiers torturing detainees in an interrogation centre in Mandalay Region in October and November 2021. The private defected from the military and fled the country, bringing the videos with him. Fortify Rights interviewed the defector, who served as a security officer at the interrogation facility, and a civilian whom the military detained at the facility and later released.

What is clear from this report and many others is the brutality used against political prisoners in Myanmar jails – brutality that leads to injury, trauma and in some cases death.

As we remember Dr. Zaw Myint Maung, take a moment to pray for those prisoners still living a hell-like existence under the jackboots of the junta.

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Cover photo of a Lao guard at the ASEAN meeting in Vientiane, Laos by AFP





ASEAN
LAO PDR 2024
ASEAN: Enhancing Connectivity and Resilience



14TH ASEAN-UN SUMMIT

11 OCTOBER 2024, VIENTIANE, LAO PDR



Photo: AFP

ASEAN FAILURE REGIONAL FORUM CALLS FOR END TO MYANMAR VIOLENCE BUT NO ANSWERS APPARENT

Southeast Asian leaders have condemned Myanmar's efforts to implement the Five-Point plan to end the country's civil war as "substantially inadequate", but have failed to make any progress in encouraging the junta to end the crisis.

There statement was issued at the end of an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) meeting held last week in Vientiane, Laos – the country currently chairing ASEAN.

Myanmar's junta agreed on the Five-Point plan with ASEAN weeks after seizing power in February 2021 but has still pushed ahead with a bloody crackdown on dissent.

ASEAN has led so far fruitless diplomatic efforts to end the conflict that has killed thousands, forced millions from their homes and driven many young people to seek a better future abroad.

After discussing the conflict at their annual summit, held this year in Vientiane, the leaders of the 10-member bloc demanded the junta take steps to implement the

Five-Point consensus, saying progress so far had been substantially inadequate.

ASEAN leaders urged "all stakeholders and parties in Myanmar, in particular the armed forces and security forces concerned, to de-escalate violence and stop targeted attacks on civilians and public facilities", according to the statement on the Myanmar crisis.

The bloc made similar appeals after summits in 2022 and 2023 but to little or no effect.

The UN's special rapporteur on the rights situation in Myanmar, Tom Andrews, said the international response to the war was "clearly not working".

Andrews, during a visit to Australia, called for a coordinated effort to starve the junta of "money, weapons and legitimacy".

The junta has suffered a series of battlefield defeats in recent months to ethnic minority armed groups and pro-democracy People's Defence Forces that rose up



Laotian guard at the ASEAN meeting. Photo: AFP

to oppose its coup – the most dramatic being Operation 1027 launched in October in northern Shan State by the Three Brotherhood Alliance.

The military junta issued an unprecedented invitation to its foes late last month to stop fighting and join talks on ending the war. However, some leading armed groups dismissed the call, which analysts saw as a sop to key junta ally China - which is keen to stop the chaos on its doorstep and has been pressuring ethnic armed groups in the north.

ASEAN leaders held their first face-to-face talks with a senior Myanmar junta representative in more than three years at the summit on Wednesday last week, although the meeting yielded no major breakthrough.

With formal diplomacy making no progress, Thailand will host informal talks on the Myanmar crisis in December involving ASEAN members and possibly neighbouring countries such as China and India.

This follows a meeting last weekend in Jakarta between ASEAN and other diplomats and representatives of Myanmar armed groups.

ASEAN leaders condemned attacks on civilians and “urged all parties involved to take concrete action to immediately halt indiscriminate violence”, according to the chairman’s statement.

After condemning Myanmar for ignoring the Five-Point Plan at summits in 2022 and 2023, the leaders insisted again on Wednesday last week that it was still their “main reference” to deal with the crisis, the chairman’s draft statement said. But how to enforce it remains unclear.

“We are trying to find ways to move forward, because we have to admit that although the five points have been there... we have not been very successful in actually changing the situation,” Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos told reporters.

“We are trying to formulate new strategies,” he said, adding that those new strategies had not yet been decided.

Thai foreign ministry spokesman Nikordej Balankura confirmed there was no discussion at the summit on how to implement the peace plan.

Myanmar sent a senior foreign ministry official to the meeting after three years of shunning summits because the bloc barred junta chief Min Aung Hlaing in the wake of the coup.

Bloc’s clout in doubt

ASEAN’s failure to make any tangible progress in resolving a civil war inside one of its own members has fuelled longstanding questions about its effectiveness.

“The longer the Myanmar crisis remains unresolved, the greater the risk of ASEAN outliving its usefulness in resolving conflicts within the Southeast Asian region,” Mustafa Izzuddin, international affairs analyst at Solaris Strategies Singapore, told AFP.

Daniel Kritenbrink, the top US diplomat for East Asia, said there had been “virtually zero progress” on these issues from the junta.

Reporting: Mizzima, AFP

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Census taking in Naypyidaw.
Photo: AFP

MYANMAR'S CENSUS TAKERS FACING THREATS

The 2024 Myanmar census, with an estimated cost of 56 billion kyats (approximately \$12 million), is facing significant challenges as resistance forces ramp up attacks on data collectors.

Unlike the previous 2014 census, which was supported by international aid, the State Administration Council (SAC) is fully funding this year's operation. The census adds 27 questions to the previous one, drawing criticism from activists over personal inquiries. Analysts have also raised concerns about the country's current flood situation, questioning whether this is the right time for data collection.

Resistance forces, including ethnic armed groups and PDFs (People's Defense Forces), have openly opposed the census, arguing that it will be used for conscription and to cement the military's long-term control. The Karen National Union (KNU) and PDF members attacked junta troops in Hpa-An Township on October 10, killing three soldiers and injuring three

others. In a separate incident the same day, around 15 junta troops were killed by local PDF forces in Yamethin Township while they were providing security for census collectors.

Earlier, on October 6, Launglon PDF arrested nine individuals, including eight school teachers involved in the census and one general administration staff member. Further attacks on census teams occurred on October 8, when Yinmarbin PDF's No. (9) Battalion killed two police officers and injured four others during an assault on census workers. Similar attacks were reported on October 4 in Shwetaung Township, Bago Region, where a PDF group used landmines against a census team.

Resistance groups, particularly in Chin State, have declared their intent to take action against anyone assisting the census, accusing the SAC of using the data collection for military conscription. The Chin Defense Force (CDF) in Hakha announced on September 23



In many cases, flooding has wrecked infrastructure. Photo: AFP

that they would target any staff involved in the census.

A resident from the Ayeyarwaddy Region commented, "Ayeyarwaddy is an area fully controlled by the SAC, and they are using heavy security for the census. In some villages, each data collector is accompanied by up to five armed soldiers." Many locals report feeling pressured to participate, with some expressing discomfort at being forced to answer questions under such circumstances.

In Yangon, anecdotal evidence indicates the population is worried by the census-taking, particularly young people – both men and women – who fear the process may be used to draft them into the military.

UPDATE ON FLOODING AND AID

On October 8, Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced a \$2 million donation to assist victims of Myanmar's devastating floods. The aid, which will be distributed through United Nations agencies, is aimed

at providing water, sanitation, food, and temporary shelters. UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP) will each contribute \$1 million as part of this effort.

However, reports indicate challenges in delivering aid to certain affected communities. In Myitthar Township, villagers are expressing frustration over the misallocation of donated funds. According to locals, their village received donations both from individual donors and through the junta administrator.

Despite this, the administrator has withheld the money, citing plans for village development projects instead of addressing immediate needs. "Ordinary people still need help even though the water level has gone down significantly. We need to solve the current challenges rather than focus on village development programmes," said one of the villagers.

In Naypyidaw, the junta authorities provided



The TNLA have captured Hsipaw.
Photo: AFP

compensation of 2.35 million kyats per house on account of the floods. However, no detailed information has emerged regarding support for flood-damaged houses in other areas of Myanmar, raising concerns about transparency in the junta's response.

Meanwhile, ASEAN+3's APTERR (ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve) programme has stepped in to supply rice to flood victims. On October 9, the State Administration Council (SAC)'s Bago Region Chief Minister and local government officials distributed rice bags to those affected in the Bago Region.

TNLA FULLY CAPTURES SHAN STATE'S HSIPAW AFTER LONG OFFENSIVE

The Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) successfully captured Hsipaw town in northern Shan State on 13 October, following more than two months of intense offensive operations, according to TNLA spokesperson Lway Yae Oo.

The TNLA took control of the last remaining military stronghold outside the town, Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) -23. After securing the area, the TNLA reported that some junta soldiers surrendered, while others fled.

"We seized the town at around 1 pm. Some junta troops joined our forces during the offensive, some fled, and others surrendered their weapons. We captured LIB-23 through cooperative efforts," the TNLA spokesperson said.

Hsipaw had been defended by junta forces, including Light Infantry Battalions 503 and 504, as well as Infantry Battalion 23. The TNLA initiated its assault on the town in early August, capturing the downtown area within a week.

Over the following months, the TNLA targeted military bases on the town's outskirts, eventually seizing two infantry battalions. Fierce fighting continued around Infantry Battalion 23 for months before the TNLA finally took control.

The junta responded with heavy bombardment in areas where the battles took place, and the TNLA is still assessing the extent of civilian casualties.

"We are verifying the civilian casualties. Our focus will shift to establishing an administrative mechanism once military operations are complete," the spokesperson said.

Hsipaw is now the fifth town under TNLA control in the second phase of Operation 1027.

Northern Shan State comprises nine districts and an autonomous region, with 24 townships in total. During Operation 1027, in coordination with the Three Brotherhood Alliance, the Kokang Army (MNDAA) and TNLA have taken control of five districts and the Palaung autonomous region, capturing 14 townships across the state.

It is unclear at this stage how the junta will respond. As has been seen with Lashio, the junta has been responding by bombing the town. Is this in store for Hsipaw?



Supporters of the NLD. Photo: AFP

DEATHS AND REPRESSION SIDELINE AUNG SAN SUU KYI'S NLD PARTY AHEAD OF MYANMAR VOTE

Death, detention and dissolution have decimated Aung San Suu Kyi's political party, easing the way for groups backed by Myanmar's ruling military to claim victory at elections expected next year, analysts say.

The death this week of National League for Democracy (NLD) vice president Zaw Myint Maung -- a close confidante of Suu Kyi -- was the latest blow to a party crippled by the junta's crackdown.

It came after party co-founder Tin Oo -- a military general turned democracy activist -- died of old age in June.

Nobel laureate Suu Kyi remains enduringly popular in Myanmar and the NLD would undoubtedly win a third landslide victory if she was to lead it into a free election, analysts say.

But the junta dissolved the party last year for failing to re-register under a tough new military-drafted

electoral law, and it is barred from any new vote.

State media said on Wednesday that junta chief Min Aung Hlaing "clearly reaffirmed" the military's plans to hold elections next year.

Many in Myanmar would see the polls as a "cunning" attempt by the junta to "earn some veneer of legitimacy", said Htwe Htwe Thein of Curtin University in Australia.

NLD members still inside the country are struggling to "reorganise" the party due to the junta's continuing crackdown, one senior member recently released from prison told AFP, requesting anonymity.

Fighting peacock

The NLD was forged in the bloody aftermath of a failed democracy uprising in 1988 that catapulted Suu Kyi to global fame.

For decades it was the main democratic opposition to the military's iron grip over Myanmar, with its members enduring harsh repression.

After the generals enacted democratic reforms, it won crushing election victories in 2015 and 2020, using the logo of a fighting peacock.

But in February 2021, hours before the new parliament was to be sworn in, the military mounted a coup and detained the NLD's top leadership.

Weeks after the coup, former NLD spokesman Nyan Win died in custody of Covid-19.

Zaw Myint Maung died of leukaemia aged 72 on Monday, days after being released from military custody.

Suu Kyi is serving a lengthy jail sentence, as is former president Win Myint, following a trial in a junta court that critics say was a sham designed to remove them from politics.

She remains widely popular in Myanmar, although her international standing has waned over her failure to stop a brutal military crackdown on the Rohingya minority now the subject of a genocide case at the UN's top court.

Around a dozen parties have been permitted to re-register so far for next year's vote, including the military's proxy Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP).

Main ally Beijing has backed the junta's plans for the polls and this year invited the USDP and three other parties for talks in China.

'Crushing repression'

Some younger members of the NLD have turned to armed struggle since the coup, joining People's Defence Forces and ethnic rebels fighting the military -- and breaching a key NLD tenet of non-violence.

An opposition National Unity Government set up to overturn the coup has also drawn NLD members away,

while splits have emerged between those underground in Myanmar and those in exile, according to party sources.

Party members who have stayed inside the country have faced severe consequences in the junta's crackdown.

Phyo Zeya Thaw, a hip-hop artist turned NLD lawmaker was executed by the junta in 2022, in Myanmar's first use of capital punishment in decades.

Following the coup, he was accused by the junta of orchestrating several attacks on regime forces, including a shooting on a commuter train in Yangon that killed five policemen.

He was sentenced to death at a closed-door trial and executed, drawing huge criticism from rights groups.

"We will keep fighting for democracy against the regime," a second senior NLD member said, also requesting anonymity to speak from inside Myanmar.

"We will be back."

The NLD "has faced crushing repression for three decades and still holds together", said independent Myanmar analyst David Mathieson.

Much hinges on its talisman Suu Kyi, 79, who languishes in a prison in the military-built capital, has not been seen in public for years and who has designated no successor, he added.

"What happens to the party after Suu Kyi's eventual passing is the major question, and whether it could ever regroup and be a viable national force."

AFP



The late Dr. Zaw Myint Maung. Photo: Mizzima

FORMER SENIOR U.S. OFFICIALS PAY TRIBUTE TO MYANMAR'S DR. ZAW MYINT MAUNG

JACK MYINT

A number of former U.S. officials have paid tribute to the former National League for Democracy (NLD) vice president Dr. Zaw Myint Maung who died of leukemia a day after he was released from prison.

This tribute series was compiled for Mizzima by Jack Myint.

Ambassador Derek Mitchell, former U.S. Ambassador to Myanmar (2012-2016):

"Dr. Zaw Myint Maung was a man of impeccable integrity and courage whose passing on October 7 hits hard for anyone who cares about Myanmar. I got to know Dr. Zaw Myint Maung during my time as U.S. ambassador and like everyone who knew him was in awe of his story and character, which reflected unwavering dedication to country despite relentless hardship. He emerged from two decades as one of Myanmar's longest-serving political prisoners to become one of the NLD's most trusted and beloved public servants. The emotional response of the Mandalay people to his passing says everything about the quality of the man and how Myanmar citizens viewed his service to them. And it says all one needs to know about the quality, character and insecurity of successive generations of so-called "military" men that they felt the need to imprison him, even as he suffered from a deadly illness, rather than allow him to continue to serve his constituents and country. Dr. Zaw Myint Maung should be honored and remembered as one of the titans of the

democratic struggle not only in Myanmar but globally. May his memory be a blessing. And may his dream of a truly peaceful, just and democratic Myanmar become a reality soon."

Erin Murphy, former U.S. government official and Founder and Principal of Inle Advisory Group. Author of *Burmese Haze*:

"Dr. Zaw Myint Maung was the quintessential public servant. He demonstrated throughout his life of putting his country first and to push forward democratic and personal freedom ideas that ultimately led to his long periods of imprisonment. He sacrificed his own freedoms and time with his family so others may have the chance to have theirs. I met Dr. Zaw Myint Maung during my time as a consultant to implement a project to provide renewable energy to a small village that never had electricity. His efforts defined his role as a public servant: delivering services and finding solutions for those that needed it most. The manner of his death was senseless and cruel, and is an unfortunate symbol of what Myanmar has lost and continues to lose. For his family and for his country, let us hope his sacrifices have not been in vain. It is stories like his that reminds us the importance of democracy, public service, and fighting for a greater cause, a story that is so important today. Rest in peace, sir."

Mr. Scot Marciel, the former US Ambassador to Myanmar:

"I was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Dr. Zaw Myint Maung on October 7. When I was U.S. Ambassador to Myanmar, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to meet with him many times to hear his thoughts and discuss how the U.S. might contribute to Myanmar's effort to build a prosperous democracy. I was always struck by Dr. Zaw Myint Maung's dedication to the people of the country and to his constituents in Mandalay Region.

"Even though he had already sacrificed greatly as a political prisoner for nearly twenty years and was very ill from the disease that eventually would take his life, he never talked about himself. Rather, he always focused on the work that needed to be done to help the people and to build a better Myanmar. I found him extremely knowledgeable and realistic about the challenges the country faced, yet also remarkably hopeful and optimistic.

"Dr. Zaw Myint Maung was a friend of the United States, and was a regular visitor to our American Center before he took office in 2016. He often expressed appreciation for the long-standing U.S. support for Myanmar's pro-democracy movement, even as he did not hesitate to suggest ways the United States could do more to support the country. He deserved better than to die in prison, denied the medical care that could have allowed him to live. I will remember him for his kindness, honesty, incredible courage, and unrelenting commitment to the people of Myanmar and the cause of freedom and democracy."



Tom Andrews. Photo: AFP

UN EXPERT SAYS RESPONSE TO MYANMAR WAR 'NOT WORKING'

Global efforts to stop Myanmar's civil war were "clearly not working," a UN expert warned Thursday last week as he urged leaders to starve the ruling junta of "money, weapons and legitimacy".

Describing a situation that has "gone from bad, to worse, to horrific", UN special rapporteur Tom Andrews said more than three million people have been displaced by fighting in the Southeast Asian nation in as many years.

The conflict is on the table at this week's meeting in Laos of Southeast Asian leaders, who pressed Myanmar's junta and its opponents to take "concrete action" to stop the bloodshed.

Since Myanmar's military seized power in February 2021, the junta has arrested more than 20,000 people in its crackdown on dissent and bombed opposition-controlled areas, according to Andrews, a former member of the US Congress.

Yet despite its firepower, it has struggled to quash multiple armed offensives from ethnic groups and civilian militias across several states.

It has lost control of swathes of the country and garnered widespread international condemnation.

During a visit to Australia, Andrews said the regime had lost "tens of thousands" of soldiers in battle and had turned to conscription to reconstitute its forces.

"The junta has been responding to its losses by escalating attacks on civilian targets," he said, estimating junta forces have killed more than 5,600 civilians.

Andrews urged regional and global powers to deploy further legal, financial and trade sanctions.

"There is a great imperative for international action," he said, urging regional powers to starve the regime of "money, weapons and legitimacy".

"The international response to this crisis is clearly not working," he said while calling for an emergency summit.

"I'm worried that the deepening crisis in Myanmar has become invisible to much of the world," he said.

Andrews urged Australia and like-minded nations to help prosecute Myanmar's leaders for genocide and to back moves to bring war crimes charges before the International Criminal Court in the Hague.

Those prosecutions relate, for the most part, to decades of persecution of the Rohingya Muslim minority, who have been killed, abducted and forced over the border into neighbouring Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is home to around one million Rohingya refugees, most of whom fled a 2017 crackdown.

AFP

FREE ELECTION UNDER MYANMAR JUNTA 'IMPOSSIBLE': US OFFICIAL

A free election in junta-ruled Myanmar is currently "impossible to imagine" a US diplomat said Friday, days after the junta chief doubled down on plans for fresh polls backed by close ally China.

The military seized power in 2021 after making unsubstantiated claims of electoral fraud and has since arrested and killed thousands and banned political parties in a sweeping crackdown on dissent.

It has said it will hold fresh polls, likely next year, even as it has lost territory across the country to established ethnic rebel groups and newer "People's Defence Forces" formed since the coup.

It is currently "impossible to imagine conducting a free election" in Myanmar, United States Ambassador-at-Large for Global Criminal Justice Beth Van Schaack told reporters.

Any poll would "simply be an election that will return them [the military] to power," said Van Schaack, who advises the US government on responses to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

With clashes in almost every region of the country "it is hard to imagine even just logistically how one would administer an election, no less do so in a way that is fair," she said.

State media said Wednesday that junta chief Min Aung Hlaing "clearly reaffirmed" the military's plans to hold elections.

The military has pushed back a timetable for fresh polls several times, and in March the top general hinted any vote may not take place nationwide due to the conflict.

Junta officials are currently conducting a national census, which is seen as a pre-requisite to any new polls.

Any vote would not feature Aung San Suu Kyi's hugely popular National League for Democracy party, which was dissolved by the junta-stacked election commission last year.

In August, China's foreign minister said Beijing supports the military's plan to hold fresh elections and return the conflict-torn country to a "democratic transition."

The civil war in Myanmar dominated discussions at a summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Laos on Thursday.

Leaders of the 10-nation bloc -- of which Myanmar is a member -- condemned the military's efforts to implement a peace plan as "substantially inadequate", according to a draft summit statement seen by AFP.

AFP



Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra with US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken at the meeting in Laos. Photo: AFP

NEW THAI PM CALLS ASEAN TO PLAY A KEY ROLE IN ENDING MYANMAR CRISIS

Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra said on October 7 that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) must play a key role in ending the crisis in Myanmar.

She spoke at an event in Bangkok ahead of the 44th and 45th ASEAN Summits and related meetings set to take place in Laos from October 8-11.

This is the first talk about the Myanmar issue after the new Thai government led by PM Paetongtarn assumed office.

Reuters reported on 8 October 2024 that Myanmar has been in turmoil since February 2021, when the elected civilian government was ousted, sparking protests that turned into an armed rebellion against the ruling junta.

The Thai PM said she noted that Thailand will work with Malaysia, the ASEAN Chair for next year, to employ diplomatic measures to address the issue.

Paetongtarn's predecessor, Srettha Thavisin, told Reuters in April that Myanmar's military junta had been weakened, creating an opening for talks. He posited, "Maybe it's time to reach out and make a deal."

Laos is hosting the ASEAN meeting from 6-11 October. On 9 October there will be a summit meeting

attended by the heads of the ASEAN states.

In April 2021, ASEAN introduced a Five-Point Consensus to address the crisis in Myanmar, but it has made little progress.

ASEAN continues to bar junta leadership from its summits over their failure to comply with the peace plan they had initially agreed to, vexing the bloc's most prominent member countries.

The junta leaders are banned from attending this summit, although it is learned that a senior official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will attend this summit and represent Myanmar.

The grinding conflict, which has left a third of Myanmar's 55 million people in need of humanitarian aid, will be high on the agenda at the Laos gathering.

The National Unity Government (NUG) objected to a representative of the Myanmar junta attending the summit.

In the last week, Indonesia, an important country in the 10-member bloc, invited resistance forces fighting against the junta to a meeting along with UN delegates.



Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun. Photo: AFP

AMBASSADOR KYAW MOE TUN'S STATEMENT AT THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The following statement was released on 10 October by Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun, Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the United Nations, at the General Debate of the Second Committee of the 79th Session of the UN General Assembly held in New York on 8 October 2024.

Mr. Chair, At the outset, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to you and other bureau members on your election. I assure you of our delegation's full support and cooperation for the fruitful outcomes of the Committee. Myanmar aligns itself with the statements delivered by ASEAN, the LDCs and the G77 and China respectively.

Mr. Chair, The world today stands at a critical crossroad, facing multidimensional and interconnected challenges that demand our urgent, collective and effective actions. Conflicts, climate change, extreme weather events, biodiversity loss, elevated debt distress and food insecurity are posing significant threats to our timely implementation of the sustainable development goals.

The combined effects of these crises and the growing impacts of climate change are hitting the LDCs hardest, widening the development gap and leaving them further behind in global progress. In this regard, Myanmar welcomes the adoption of the Pact for the Future and the call to accelerate reform of the international financial architecture to strengthen its capacity to support developing countries more effectively and equitably during systemic shocks.

Myanmar also supports the theme of the committee on "Fostering resilience and growth in an uncertain world". We are of the view that a reinvigorated multilateral system, with enhanced international cooperation and strengthened UN development system, is the way forward to fostering resilience, lasting peace and sustainable development for the current and future generations.

Mr. Chair, Under the elected civilian government, Myanmar experienced high economic growth, with an average annual GDP rise of 6.2%. The government introduced clear and practical policies aimed at socio-

economic development, including the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan, in line with the 2030 global sustainable development goals.

These policies attracted more foreign direct investment, which played a key role in the country's rapid economic growth during its term. The civilian administration also promoted transparent policies to strengthen the democratic framework, and Myanmar achieved notable progress in various sectors.

In the 2018 Triennial Review by the Committee on Development Policy (CDP), Myanmar met all three criteria to graduate from the LDC status for the first time.

Unfortunately, much of our progress in socio-economy and democratic reforms was reversed by the illegal military coup attempt in 2021. Four years into the illegal coup, Myanmar has been undergoing a severe economic crisis and a humanitarian catastrophe.

Frequent electricity outages, material shortages, trade and foreign exchange restrictions are causing major disruptions to business operations. According to the World Bank and IMF, Myanmar's economy is projected to grow by only 1 percent in 2024.

More than 3.4 million people are internally displaced. UNDP reported that nearly half of the Myanmar's population is now living below the national poverty line. In addition, over 15 million people are facing food insecurity, and 18.6 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance.

Thousands of young people are fleeing to remote jungles, mountains, and neighboring countries to avoid the forced conscription and arbitrary arrests by the military junta. The livelihoods and well-being of people in Myanmar are now in peril.

Impacts of the recent Typhoon Yagi, including floods and landfalls, have also damaged houses, crops, farmlands and livestock, exacerbating the suffering of the people of Myanmar. To no one's surprise, the military junta has continued to impede humanitarian access and weaponize aid even in natural disasters.

Mr. Chair, Amid these challenging circumstances, the National Unity Government (NUG), along with other ethnic resistance organizations and CSOs, are working tirelessly to provide essential services, including humanitarian and life-saving assistance to those affected by both man-made and natural disasters. The

NUG stands ready to cooperate with the international community to scale up further assistance and coverage for all people in need.

Mr. Chair, The people of Myanmar, particularly our younger generation, deserve to fulfill their own potential and realize their economic, financial, social developments just like everyone else from our region and beyond. Instead, they have to worry about surviving daily from targeted, deliberate and indiscriminate attacks by the military junta on their homes, schools, hospitals, religious buildings and more.

Here, I wish to emphasize that the military dictatorship and the illegal coup remain the root cause of the conflict, chaos and suffering in Myanmar. In this context, the military's attempt to conduct any sham election will never be free, fair and inclusive. It will create more violence and suffering to the people.

Therefore, the people of Myanmar will never accept the junta's sham election, and I urge the international community to reject it steadfastly and strongly.

In conclusion, Mr. Chair, peace and stability are prerequisites to sustainable development. The only path to fully resolving the situation in Myanmar is to address the root cause, bring the military dictatorship to an end and build a federal democratic union in line with the aspirations of our people. In this light, we renew our call to the international community to provide strong and decisive support to the people of Myanmar for the better, stronger and more sustainable future of the current and future generations of Myanmar.



Myanmar girls have been in the frontline of the protest against the junta. Photo: AFP

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL QUIETLY MARKED IN MYANMAR

October 11 is the International Day of the Girl, a day that aims to highlight the challenges and opportunities for girls globally, promote their empowerment, and human rights. For girls in crisis-hit Myanmar, the day is likely to be quietly marked.

The theme for this year's International Day of the Girls is "girls' vision for the future" and focuses on the disproportionate impact of global crises on girls – including climate change, conflict, poverty, the rollback of rights – alongside their resilience and potential to lead positive change.

In Myanmar, ongoing conflict, poverty, natural disasters, and lack of effective governance by the State Administration Council (SAC) have left girls insufficient

access to education. The junta's Department of Basic Education claims there are 6.2 million basic, private, and monastic schools across Myanmar. Data from the World Bank compiled in 2018 points to 76% of the population enrolled in secondary school.

United Nations Development Program (UNDP) data from 2024, says that 76% of the population in Myanmar lives below or perilously close to a subsistence existence. Poverty rates have almost doubled from 24.8 percent in 2017 to 49.7 percent in 2023.

Despite the ongoing conflict across the country and skyrocketing poverty rates, girls are still managing to study when they can and try to hold on to their dreams.

Fourteen-year-old Khin Khin (all names have been changed in this article) dreams of becoming an engineer when she grows up.

However, Khin Khin hasn't been able to live at her own home for almost two years. Her family did well before the coup but had to flee for their safety when fighting started in their area. They have heard that the military has since burned down their home, leaving the family no place to return to.

Staying in another village, she attends a school set up especially to teach children affected by the conflict. However, her family's economic situation is tenuous and they cannot afford to buy pens and paper.

Schools are not safe spaces in Myanmar. Khin Khin is constantly worried whether her school will be hit by an airstrike or artillery fire as so many others have been. She worries her dream of becoming an engineer may no longer be feasible.

Khin Khin dreams of returning to her village and studying in a safe and secure place. She wants to be able to buy pens and paper and to learn in a space with enough teachers who follow an effective curriculum, and is fully equipped with learning aids.

Aye Aye is thirteen years old and wants to become a doctor. The obstacles in her way are enormous.

Her father's leg was amputated after he was injured by shelling, making their family business much more difficult. The family struggles to eat regularly and their situation constantly feels precarious.

She goes to the market each morning with her mother to sell things to get money for the family. She studies hard in her free time, but living in a noisy monastic hall together with many other people makes it difficult for her to study.

Although Aye Aye goes to school in an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp, the school is often closed or only open at irregular times due to the conflict. That conflict and the threat of airstrikes seem constant, and she wishes there was an end in sight for her family's hardship.

Another girl, Wai Wai, 17 years old, dreams of becoming a nurse. The current political situation has meant that she has studied at home for the past two years. The economic collapse of the country since the coup has left her family struggling to make ends meet. Wai Wai is afraid the even if the political situation improves, her parents will be unable to send her to school. She fears she will never reach her goal.

In order to alleviate some of these problems and provide hope for girls that their dreams may not be over, the UK and its partners provided education supported in 2023 in over fifteen states and regions in Myanmar. This includes support to 3,999 schools and learning spaces attending by 350,000 learners, of whom 170,953 are female. Training has been provided to 22,390 teachers, including 17,601 female teachers.

In addition, emergency support was provided, including dignity and hygiene kits for adolescent girls, to 21,800 people who have been displaced or affected by natural disasters, including the recent floods.

In the first half of 2024 the UK has also supported over 7,300 adolescent girls with adolescent sexual and reproductive health services. Over 15,900 women of all ages were reached by specific gender and genderbased violence prevention-related awareness-raising sessions.



ARAKAN ARMY CAPTURES STRATEGIC CAMP IN ANN TOWNSHIP, RAKHINE STATE

The Arakan Army (AA) announced on 8 October that they have captured the junta's Mae Taung strategic camp and several surrounding military bases near the Western Regional Military Headquarters in Ann Township, Rakhine State.

The camp, located about 14 kilometers (8.5 miles) from the Western Regional Military Headquarters, was reported by the AA as fully seized on the evening of 7 October.

In their statement, accompanied by photos, the AA confirmed they had seized weapons, ammunition, and military equipment from the camp.

The Mae Taung strategic hill was defended by a combination of forces from Light Infantry Battalions 362, 365, and 369, as well as battalions under the Western Regional Military Headquarters. Also present were additional forces from Light Infantry Battalions 346, 372, and 373 under Military Operations Command No. 5.

The AA revealed that the Mae Taung strategic camp and surrounding bases were encircled for an extended period before the successful assault. The camps, located approximately 400 meters west of Kyauksakwe village in Ann Township, were captured one by one following a skirmish on 26 September.

The AA further stated their intention to continue capturing all remaining junta bases in Rakhine State, specifically in Ann, Maungdaw, Taungup, and Kyeintali, where clashes are ongoing. They highlighted their efforts to seize Border Guard Police Command Office No. 5, the last junta stronghold in Maungdaw township.

In Taungup, AA forces have surrounded battalions under Military Operations Command No. 5 and are advancing on those positions. Additionally, in Kyeintali, the AA reported that fierce fighting led junta forces to blow up the Kalapyin Bridge and retreat toward Gwa town on 7 October.

The AA accuses the junta of resorting to airstrikes on civilian targets and committing war crimes. It describes the junta as being in a weakened military state following a series of defeats. The capture of Mae Taung camp is seen as a significant victory for the Arakan Army in its ongoing resistance against the junta.



The bodies of some of those killed. Photo: Supplied

JUNTA BOMBING KILLS 19 CIVILIANS, INCLUDING CHILDREN IN TAUNGUP TOWNSHIP, RAKHINE STATE

The Arakan Army (AA) accused the Myanmar's junta of conducting airstrikes on Taungup Township in Rakhine State, killing 19 civilians, including children, during two separate incidents on 4 and 7 October.

At around 11:00 pm on 7 October, two 500-pound bombs were dropped near Ywarmayarthit market in Tanhlwe Ywama town and Shwe Pyi Thar harbor, resulting in 12 civilian deaths and leaving 6 others critically injured. The bombs also reportedly damaged 17 houses in the area, according to AA spokesman Khaing Thukha.

"There was no fighting. It was a deliberate and targeted attack on civilians," Khaing Thukha said.

Tanhlwe Ywama town is located more than 15 miles north of Taungup Township. Photos obtained by Mizzima confirmed the dead included one child, 7 men, and 4 women. Local sources indicating the condition of the injured is severe.

In an earlier attack on 4 October, junta forces conducted two airstrikes on King Taung village in Taungup – one in the morning and another in the evening. These attacks left 7 civilians dead, including a 10-year-old child, and injured around 20 others, according to local residents.

A resident of Taungup said, "The 500-pound bombs were dropped. Civilians were affected when bombs landed near their homes. There was no fighting around here."

On 8 October, the Arakan Army reported the junta was suffering significant losses and retaliating with aerial attacks on civilians, committing what the AA described as war crimes and crimes against humanity. The intensifying violence in Rakhine State has raised serious concerns over the targeting of civilians in the ongoing conflict.

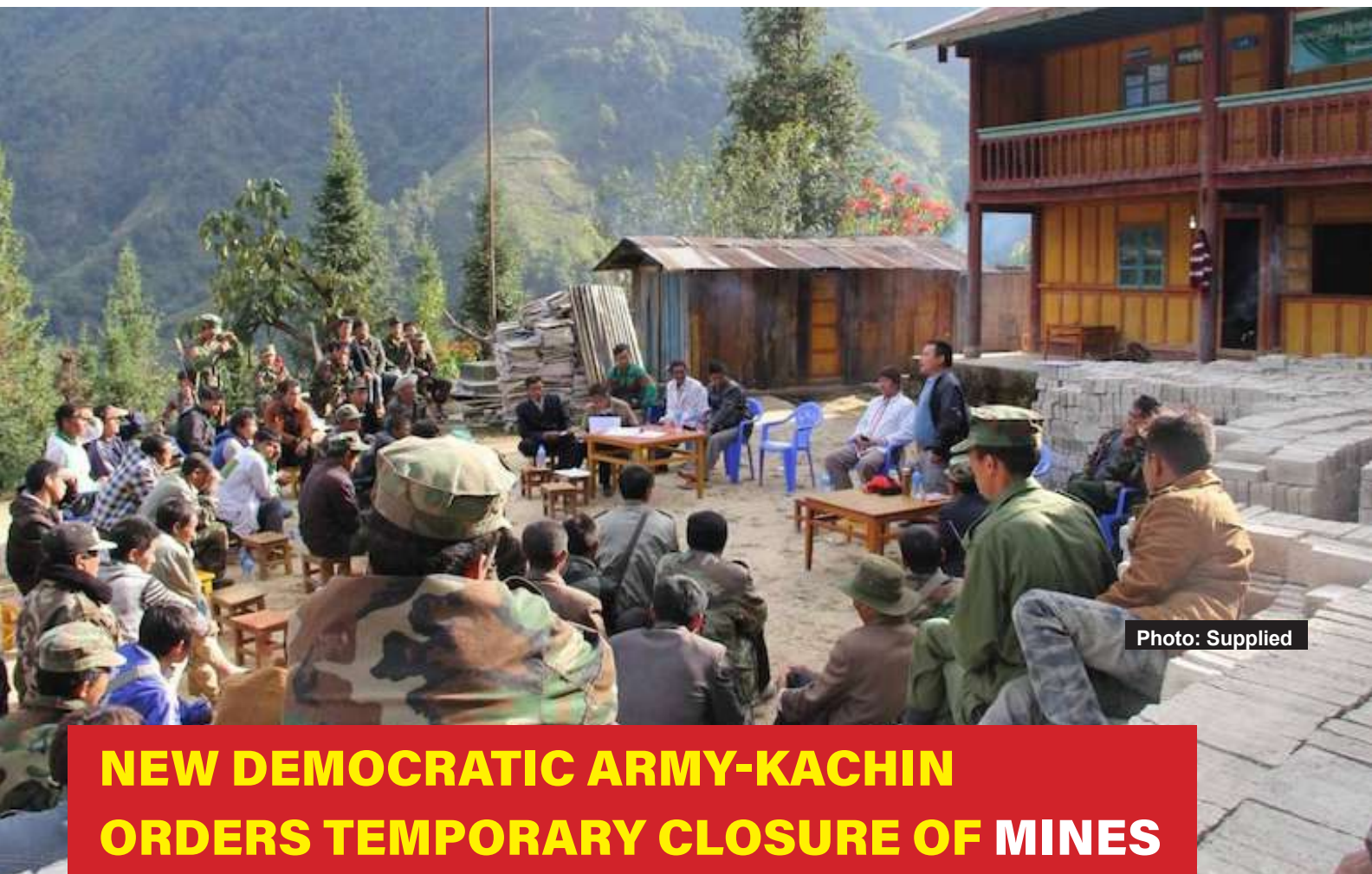


Photo: Supplied

NEW DEMOCRATIC ARMY-KACHIN ORDERS TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF MINES AMID ESCALATING CONFLICT WITH KIA IN KACHIN SPECIAL REGION-1

The New Democratic Army-Kachin (NDA-K), a junta-aligned Border Guard Force (BGF), has issued a temporary closure order to all mining blocks and gold mines, including rare earth mining sites, in Kachin Special Region-1 due to ongoing clashes with the Kachin Independence Army (KIA). The order affects areas such as Nozunbaw, Phimaw, Kangfang, and Lanse, according to information gathered by Mizzima's ground team.

Local sources report that fighting continues in the region, with junta military jets providing air support to the NDA-K.

"The military boundary is gradually expanding in the area," a local source said.

In its statement, the NDA-K announced a ban on travel to Kachin Special Region-1, although the road connecting the region to Myitkyina remains open.

Clashes in the area have intensified since June, with NDA-K militia leader U Zakhung Ting Ying issuing orders for attacks on both the KIA and the People's Defense Forces (PDFs).

On 30 September and 2 October, KIA's Brigade 7, in collaboration with the Kachin People's Defense Forces (KPDF), launched successful assaults on key NDA-K bases in Chipwi and Tsawlaw towns, capturing several strategic positions.

As the conflict escalates, local ethnic communities in the Chan Maw Khone area of Chipwi Township held protests on 7 October, expressing opposition to the presence of KIA joint forces in their region.



PDF-ZOLAND DETAINS COUSIN OF CHIN STATE'S JUNTA-APPOINTED CHIEF MINISTER FOR PARTICIPATING IN CENSUS PROCESS

The People's Defense Force-Zoland (PDF-Zoland) detained Kam Lian Thang, a cousin of Chin State's junta-appointed Chief Minister, for his involvement in the junta's nationwide census-taking process.

The arrest took place in Tedim township's Myo Ma ward, where Kam Lian Thang resides, following allegations that he actively participated in the census despite warnings from both PDF-Zoland and the Chin Brotherhood Alliance prohibiting such actions.

According to Jabez, a representative of the Tedim Township People's Administration, Kam Lian Thang's involvement in the census had been monitored for some time.

"He is part of the township administration and a cousin of Chin State's Chief Minister. This connection strongly suggests that they are staunch supporters of the Military Council," Jabez said.

He added that a judicial team would determine Kam Lian Thang's punishment, making it difficult to predict what consequences he might face at this stage.

PDF-Zoland emphasizes that any other individuals who take part in the census will face similar repercussions, in line with the group's stance on the junta-led process.

The Chin Brotherhood Alliance, comprising six revolutionary groups, including PDF-Zoland, condemns the junta's intention to conduct a national census amid widespread turmoil in the country. The alliance criticizes the junta for prioritizing the census, which they claim is part of a ploy to legitimize a future sham election, instead of addressing pressing crises like natural disasters and ongoing armed conflict.

The alliance warned that anyone involved in the census within their controlled areas would face consequences.

In a related development, the Launglon People's Defense Force (Launglon-PDF) in Tanintharyi Region detained a General Administration Office staff member and eight non-CDM (Civil Disobedience Movement) schoolteachers for their participation in census activities in Yay Phyu village, Launglon Township.

The junta has announced that the population and household census will be conducted across the country from 1 to 15 October. Revolutionary groups, however, have refused to recognize the legitimacy of the process and have vowed to take action against anyone involved in the census.



Photo: MNLA

MON NATIONAL LIBERATION ARMY (MNLA) BATTALION-5, JOINS ANTI-MILITARY FACTION NMSP-AD

Mon National Liberation Army (MNLA) Battalion 5, under the New Mon State Party (NMSP), has officially aligned with the New Mon State Party (Anti-Military Dictatorship), also known as NMSP-AD, a spokesperson for the faction confirmed to Mizzima.

MNLA Battalion 5, led by Lt. Col. Nai Vut Mon and based in Payathonzu town, formally joined the NMSP-AD on 6 October, according to spokesperson of NMSP-AD, Nai Banyar Mon.

"Yes, on 6 October, the entire MNLA Battalion 5 joined us," Nai Banyar Mon said.

The battalion is active in areas along the Thailand-Myanmar border, such as Japan Yedwin, Khalauk Khani, Balarduphite, and Sinte, and is reported to have approximately 500 soldiers, according to sources close to both the NMSP and NMSP-AD.

"One unit alone in the Japan Yedwin region consists of a few hundred members, with the total battalion estimated to be around 500," the source said.

The MNLA is composed of five battalions. Earlier in February, Mawlamyine District Battalion 1 split off to form the NMSP-AD. Now that Payathonzu-based Battalion 5 has also joined, only three battalions remain under the main NMSP - Dawei District Battalion 2, Thaton District Battalion 4, and Ye District Battalion 7.

Detailed discussions between the NMSP (Central) and NMSP-AD are underway following this move to address territorial divisions, according to sources familiar with the situation.

"There are indications that the NMSP is hesitant

to divide the areas, but the details remain unclear," a source said.

Many senior leaders in the NMSP continue to support the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) and remain in dialogue with the junta.

However, on 14 February, a group led by NMSP General Secretary Nai Zeya, Deputy Chief of Staff Brigadier General Salon Htaw, and Central Committee member Nai Banyar Le split from the main party to form the NMSP-AD, with the intention of opposing the military regime.

On 7 April, the NMSP-AD, Mon State Revolutionary Force (MSRF), Mon State Defense Force (MSDF), and Mon State Federal Council (MSFC) issued a joint statement declaring their intention to collaborate on political and military activities aimed at resisting the military dictatorship.

The NMSP-AD is currently conducting military operations in coordination with the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and People's Defence Forces (PDFs) in Thanbyuzayat Township of Mon State and Kyainseikgyi Township of Karen State.

Nai Banyar Mon added that the NMSP-AD remains active across four war zones: Kyainseikgyi, Kyaikmaraw, Mudon and Mawlamyine, and Thanbyuzayat and Ye.

Attempts by Mizzima to reach NMSP spokesperson Nai Augn Ma Ngae for comments on MNLA Battalion 5's defection to the NMSP-AD were unsuccessful, as were efforts to contact Lt. Col. Nai Vut Mon, the battalion commander.



Sagaing People's Defence Forces

PEOPLE'S DEFENCE FORCES GAIN FULL CONTROL OF PINLEBU TOWN AMID HEAVY BOMBING BY MYANMAR JUNTA

The Sagaing People's Defence Forces (PDF) announced they have gained full control of Pinlebu town in Sagaing Region after a 53-day battle, despite the junta dropping over 3,000 powerful bombs during battle. Fighting is still ongoing, and the PDF joint forces continue to face airstrikes.

The junta launched more than 130 airstrikes, using bombs weighing 200, 300, and 500 pounds dropped from various aircraft. Despite the intense bombardment, PDF forces alongside allied groups successfully captured the town.

A ground source revealed that the offensive against the junta's camps in Pinlebu began on 15 August, with the PDF cutting off food supplies. After weeks of continuous fighting, the town was fully seized on the morning of 8 October. On 7 October, junta forces, including those at the police station and reinforcements in the Bank Kone area, reportedly requested permission to surrender and retreat due to injuries, food shortages, and mounting pressure.

The junta's forces in Pinlebu included troops from Light Infantry Battalions (LIB) 301, 101, and 111, Shanni Nationalities Army Battalion 601, and police forces. They were reinforced by additional troops from LIBs 363, 16, 368, and 87 during the operation.

Over 400 weapons were seized from junta forces and the Pyu Saw Htee militia. Numerous prisoners were captured, and some junta soldiers defected. Additionally, around 80 boxes of heroin were confiscated from the police station, the junta's last defensive position in the town.

"A cache of drugs was discovered, and the prisoners are still being interrogated. Ground clearance operations are ongoing," said a Sagaing PDF member.

The operation to capture Pinlebu involved a wide range of forces, including the No. 1 Military Region PDF, special battalions, commando units, strategic extraction units, regional drone units, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), and active combat forces from Sagaing, Kantbalu, Wuntho, and Pinlebu townships.

While the PDF has not yet released details on casualties or damages, resistance military sources confirmed that some PDF fighters were killed during the battle.

Despite the victory, the junta continued to carry out airstrikes on 9 October.

"Four jet fighters and one Y-12 have dropped the bombs every day on the town and surrounding areas. Bombing is still ongoing as of today," said a Sagaing PDF member.

PDF forces have warned residents in nearby townships, including Pinlebu, to be cautious of further airstrikes.

With Pinlebu now under PDF control, there are five towns in the Sagaing Region under PDF control – Shwepyiaye, Khampat, Myotthit, Mawluu, and Pinlebu. However, military tensions remain high in Kawlin, Inndaw, and Budalin towns as the conflict between the PDF and junta forces continues to escalate.



Paletwa IDPs and Humanitarian Supporting Committee

DISPLACED PEOPLE IN PALETWA IN URGENT NEED OF HUMANITARIAN AID AMID MYANMAR'S ONGOING CONFLICT

Around 20,000 people displaced by ongoing fighting in Paletwa Township, Chin State, are facing severe livelihood challenges and urgently require humanitarian assistance, according to the Paletwa IDPs and Humanitarian Supporting Committee.

More than 15,000 people displaced by local fighting that began in 2019, and over 4,000 individuals who fled to Mizoram State in India, are in dire need of food and medical supplies.

The displaced population includes people who fled during the 2019 clashes between the junta and the Arakan Army (AA) in Paletwa. Many sought refuges in rural areas and across the border in Mizoram following the military coup in 2021.

"The most urgent needs are rice and medicine. Due to the rice shortage, some families are forced to survive on gruel," said Salai Soe Than, head of the Paletwa IDPs and Humanitarian Supporting Group, which is working to assist those affected.

Goods were previously transported into Paletwa from Kyauktaw Township in Rakhine State and Pakokku Township in Magway Region. However, due to ongoing conflict, these supply routes have been cut off. Displaced residents report that food brought in by motorbikes from nearby areas is both costly and insufficient for their needs.

Salai Soe Than stated that while some aid has been provided by the National Unity Government (NUG), the

Chinland Council, and various social organizations, it remains inadequate to meet the overwhelming needs of the displaced population.

"The number of preventable deaths due to a lack of medicine is increasing," he said.

Children in the camps are trying to continue their education with the help of their parents, but face significant obstacles, including limited communication with the NUG's township education board. Educational materials and financial support for teachers are also desperately needed.

In addition to those within Paletwa, more than 4,000 people are sheltering in 18 refugee camps across the Lawngtlai, Siaha, Lunglei, and Mamit districts of Mizoram, India.

"They don't have regular jobs and rely on daily wage work in the villages where they are staying," said Salai Soe Than.

The Paletwa IDPs and Humanitarian Supporting Group has issued an appeal to both local and international donors for urgent support in the form of food, medicine, and warm clothing for the upcoming winter months.

The Institute of Chin Affairs reports that more than 100,000 people have fled conflict in Chin State. In light of these challenges, the Chin National Federation has called on international humanitarian organizations to provide urgent assistance.



Military checkpoint in Yangon.
Photo: AFP

URBAN GUERRILLA FORCES HIT JUNTA SECURITY GATE AND ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE IN YANGON

Urban guerrilla forces carried out the attacks on junta-controlled sites in Yangon on 10 October.

An explosion targeted the junta's security gate near Thamada Cinema in Dagon Township, and another attack was made on the No. 19 ward administrative office in Shwepyitha Township.

An official from the God's Hand Force reported that the detonation near the security gate at Thamada Cinema occurred at 11:45 am, with the explosive device going off 20 feet away from junta personnel.

The official stated that there were three soldiers and two policemen at the gate at the time of the attack, but detailed impact assessments have yet to be completed due to adverse weather conditions.

"We waited for the right moment, but because it started raining, we had to proceed quickly with the attack," a spokesperson from the God's Hand Force said.

Later that evening, around 8:00 pm, a second attack was launched on the No. 19 ward administrative office in Shwepyitha Township. A grenade attack injured

four people, including ward administrator U Soe Tun. The attack was a joint operation by the Yangon Army urban guerrilla force and the Western District People's Defense Force (PDF), according to a spokesperson from the Yangon Army urban guerrilla force.

"Following the incident, junta soldiers quickly arrived at the scene, blocking off roads and reviewing CCTV footage," the spokesperson said.

Local residents reported that two military vehicles patrolled the area after the attack.

Urban guerrilla forces in Yangon have stated that they plan to target administrators and officials involved in the junta's population census for its upcoming national election. They also issued warnings for civilians to avoid junta-related sites, checkpoints, and patrols.

Revolutionary forces have further advised youth members of the urban guerrilla forces, as well as participants in anti-regime protests, to remain vigilant, as the Military Council has ramped up arrests in city areas.



Paing Phyo Min

MYANMAR JUNTA AUTHORITIES ARREST PROMINENT PROTEST LEADER PAING PHYO MIN

Myanmar security forces have arrested a prominent democracy activist and protest leader in a nighttime raid in commercial hub Yangon, a member of his protest group said on Thursday last week.

Paing Phyo Min was arrested late Wednesday after authorities entered a residence in east Yangon's Thaketa township, Nan Lin of the "Anti-junta Alliance Yangon" protest group told AFP.

Paing Phyo Min had not been heard from since, he said, adding, "We are very concerned about his life and safety."

Amnesty International said it understood Paing Phyo Min and Shein Wai Aung, another activist, "were

arrested on 9 October and sent to an interrogation centre."

Shein Wai Aung and his father, mother and sister were all uncontactable, Amnesty said.

Junta authorities in Yangon were not immediately reachable when contacted by AFP.

In 2019, under the quasi-civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi, Paing Phyo Min was jailed for six years for performing a satirical poem criticising the military.

The sentence sparked criticism from rights group Amnesty International and he was released in 2021, according to the watchdog.

Following the military's 2021 ouster of Suu Kyi's government, Paing Phyo Min helped organise pro-democracy demonstrations in Yangon that were later crushed by security forces.

The junta maintains a widespread network of informants and undercover police in Yangon and has largely squashed open challenges to its rule in the city of around eight million.

"The Myanmar military must urgently account for the whereabouts and wellbeing of Paing Phyo Min and of Shein Wai Aung and his family," Amnesty's Myanmar researcher Joe Freeman said.

"Unless they can be charged with an internationally recognised crime, they must be immediately and unconditionally released."

More than 27,000 people have been arrested by the junta in its crackdown on dissent since the coup, according to a local monitoring group.

"Protesting in Myanmar today is not the same as it was before the coup. Anyone involved in any kind of dissent against the military faces long jail terms, torture and other ill-treatment, and even death in custody," Freeman said.

Security forces have used torture and sexual violence in their crackdown on dissent, according to rights groups, and the United Nations rights office said in 2022 at least 290 people had died in custody.

AFP

AJAY URGENTLY CALLS FOR INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOLLOWING THE ARREST OF PROTEST LEADER PAING PHYO MIN

Anti-Junta Alliance Yangon (AJAY) is calling for the release of a high-profile protest leader.

On 10 October, AJAY announced that during a crackdown on 9 October 2024, the State Administration Council (SAC) used a guest list as a pretext to raid a location. As a result, Paing Phyo Min (also known as De Yay), a prominent AJAY leader, was unjustly arrested. He has since lost contact with his family, raising serious concerns about his safety.

The statement is as follows.

The resistance against the military dictatorship in Yangon is intensifying, with Civil Resistance Movements growing stronger each day. In response, the military junta has escalated their investigations and arrests more aggressively than before.

On October 9, 2024, during one such crackdown, the SAC used a guest list as a pretext to raid a location. As a result, Paing Phyo Min (also known as De Yay), a prominent leader of the Anti-Junta Alliance Yangon (AJAY), was unjustly arrested. He has since lost contact with his family, raising serious concerns about his safety.

Paing Phyo Min (De Yay) has been a consistent leader in the resistance against the military dictatorship.

We are gravely concerned that he could be subjected to life-threatening torture by the military regime, given their notorious record of brutal treatment of detainees.

The military junta is known for employing extreme methods to maintain its grip on power, including the use of torture, extrajudicial killings, and other forms of violence. There is overwhelming evidence that such atrocities are not isolated incidents but part of their systematic strategy of repression.

We, therefore, urgently call upon the international community, revolutionary organizations, and all strike committees to unite in exerting maximum pressure on the military council to safeguard the lives of Paing Phyo Min (De Yay), Zaw Lin Htut (also known as Pho Thar), Aung Min Khine (also known as Mae Kyi), Mya Minzu, and all other political prisoners currently detained.

The Anti-Junta Alliance Yangon (AJAY) reaffirms its steadfast commitment to intensifying the struggle for the complete dismantling of military rule and the establishment of a federal democratic system. We will continue our unwavering fight for freedom and human dignity alongside Paing Phyo Min (De Yay) and all our revolutionary comrades who have been imprisoned by SAC.



Flooding in Yangon. Photo: AFP

UNICEF MYANMAR SAYS FLASH FLOODS AFFECT 1 MILLION IN MYANMAR

UNICEF Myanmar issued a Flash Update report on 7 October 2024 about the impact of ongoing flooding and landslides across Myanmar. The new report describes the effects on the populations, particularly children, and their current needs.

Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs are as follows. Across Myanmar, an estimated 1 million people are affected by the ongoing flooding throughout 70 townships in Bago, Kayah, Kayin, Magway, Mandalay, Mon, Nay Pyi Taw, Rakhine, Sagaing, eastern and southern Shan, and Tanintharyi regions/states. The most affected areas are Mandalay Region, southern Shan, eastern Bago, Kayin, Mon, and Nay Pyi Taw.

The flooding and landslides have caused significant damage to homes, household assets, and critical infrastructure, including health facilities, schools, water sources, major highways, bridges, and WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) infrastructure. Livelihoods have been destroyed, forcing many families to evacuate. Communication challenges persist due to flooded roads and downed electric lines. While floodwaters have receded in some areas, ongoing rain and riverine conditions continue to threaten some areas with recurrent flooding and potential river overflows.

Around 480,000 people are affected in Mandalay and Magway regions including Nay Pyi Taw. In Rakhine, more than 40,000 people from villages including IDPs locations in Mrauk U, and Myinbya and Tounangoup townships are affected. In Bago east, more than 180,000

people are affected while in eastern and southern Shan, flooding and landslides have affected over 100,000 people. In Mon and Kayin states, affected figures are over 200,000.

Across all affected areas, critical needs include access to safe drinking water, hygiene items, medicine, food, shelter, and humanitarian cash assistance.

Acute watery diarrhoea, dengue fever, malaria, cholera and measles are already a threat to children in Myanmar. The ongoing flooding is likely to worsen the spread of waterborne diseases and increasing the need to provide urgent health, nutrition and WASH services. Despite ongoing rapid response efforts, delivering essential WASH assistance—such as clean water, sanitation, hygiene supplies, menstrual hygiene management, and shelter—remains a significant challenge. Numerous schools were forced to close or are being used as shelters, affecting the access to education for thousands of children. Child Protection concerns are critical in the aftermath of the floods, with risks such as family separation, psychological distress, exposure to explosive ordnance, and physical dangers, including drowning. Initial assessments indicate that more than 270,000 children and over 180,000 parents and caregivers are in urgent need of child protection services.



Paung Loung hydropower plant.
Photo: Supplied

UPPER PAUNG LOUNG HYDROPOWER PLANT SHUTS DOWN OPERATIONS AFTER BEING FLOODED

Power generators were flooded and damaged, and power production was halted at Paung Loung hydropower plant, according to the Ministry of Electric Power. Water entered the power plant after the dam overflowed by over 20 feet from the spillway due to heavy rains brought by Typhoon Yagi.

Nyan Tun, the Union Minister of the Ministry of Electric Power, said that repairs are being made as soon as possible to the Upper Paung Loung hydroelectric power plant, which was flooded and damaged due to heavy rains. Foreign experts will be hired if necessary.

The hydropower plant had to shut down power generation after heavy rain and overflowing water from the spillway of the dam flooded the power station. Engineers from the Department of Hydropower Implementation and Electric Power Generation Enterprise are working together to restore power generation as soon as possible.

The Union Minister Nyan Tun urged officials from the ministry to assess the damage, do necessary works immediately, and to hire foreign experts if needed.

The Upper Paung Loung hydroelectric power plant is built on the Paung Loung River, about 26 miles east of Pyinmana. It has a total installed capacity of 140 MW with two 70MW power generators, producing about 454 million kilowatt hours of electricity per year through the 230 KV Upper Paung Loung-Nancho power line into the national grid system.

The two generators at the Lawpita hydropower plant also had to shut down power generation after the power station was flooded by overflowing water from Belu Creek in Loikaw.



Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing inspects a train. Photo: AFP

JUNTA CHIEF SAYS ELECTRIC TRAINS ARE A MUST FOR MYANMAR

The Chairman of the State Administration Council (SAC), Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, emphasised on 7 October that running an electric train is a must for Myanmar.

The country must do the necessary research to accomplish the project, he added, urging all to strive to continuously operate an electric multiple unit (EMU) train.

He made the comments during his inspection tour of the City Circular Diesel Locomotive Shed (Insein) of Myanma Railways under the Ministry of Transport and Communications on the morning of 7 October. He emphasized that diesel electric multiple unit (DEMU) locomotives and coaches must be built at home, stressing that it is necessary to improve locomotives and coaches as well as to build the rail tracks.

He gave guidelines to the officials concerned to keep all the locomotives and coaches, together with the rail tracks in good shape, and to make sure they were running smoothly and efficiently.

The Senior General urged all to revitalize rail transport for people as it is an essential part of the nation's transport system.

The junta chief noted that rail transport in Myanmar is still underdeveloped compared to other countries.

Although rail transport started in Myanmar in 1877, the country needed to revitalize this mode of transport.

The junta chief noted that it is necessary to conduct research on some railway sections where bends limit the speed of trains while also implementing the project in a way to raise the speed of trains to 80 kph.

Freight trains should drive at the speed of 60 kph, he stressed.

The new Yangon-Bago journey is currently being run by new Diesel Electric Multiple Unit (DEMU) locomotives and coaches imported from Spain. However, the platforms at some stations still need to be upgraded to efficiently board and deboard from the new trains. These stations currently use movable steel stairs for boarding and deboarding and people are making jokes and criticizing them.

During the 5-year tenure of the ousted NLD government people were able to get electricity nearly round the clock, but the country is currently facing severe power outages.

The junta is still promotes rhetoric of changing to electric vehicles and electric trains despite such severe power outages across the country.



A train leaves Yangon. Photo: AFP

MYANMAR JUNTA LEADER CALLS FOR REGULATION AND GREENING OF RAILWAY AREAS, POTENTIAL EVICTIONS FEARED

Railway areas and yards must comply with legal standards and be enhanced with proper landscaping and greening efforts, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, the junta leader, stated on 7 October.

His remarks were made during an inspection of the City Circular Diesel Locomotive Shed in Insein Township, Yangon Region, under Myanma Railways, part of the Ministry of Transport and Communication. He also provided guidance to officials during the visit.

Political analyst U Than Soe Naing noted that such directives from the junta might lead to the demolition of homes considered to be trespassing on land next to railway tracks.

Following the coup, the junta began dismantling numerous homes, labeling them as squatter settlements. This trend has been seen in major cities

such as Yangon, Mandalay, and Naypyidaw, with mass evictions intensifying by the end of 2021.

One resident involved in the evictions in Yangon shared that many were forced to build makeshift shelters as they could not afford rent.

“The Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) brought in soldiers to remove us. People were living in informal areas, and some returned to their villages. Many relied on casual jobs for survival, and some struggled to get enough food,” the resident said.

On 1 September, the junta leader issued further orders to limit land grant extensions under the Roads Transport and Operations Law.



Photo: WFP

MYANMAR JUNTA SAYS THEY DO NOT BLOCK HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

The junta's Deputy PM and Foreign Minister Than Swe said his government does not block any humanitarian aid from UN agencies and international organizations.

The Foreign Minister spoke these words at a briefing to the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator ad interim and representatives of UN agencies in Myanmar on 8 October 2024 at the Ayeyawady Hall of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Naypyidaw.

He stressed that the government assures all available assistance reaches the needy population without any discrimination. The government does not block any humanitarian aid from UN agencies and international organizations, he said.

He further said UN agencies and international organizations need to coordinate with the relevant focal ministries to provide relief assistance to disaster-affected areas. They need to cooperate with the National Disaster Management Committee (NDMC) for effective assistance and to avoid overlapping operations, he added.

He mentioned that the UN agencies in Myanmar need to inform the international community about the government's activities and the country's on-the-ground situation in an objective and impartial manner, the state-run daily paper reported.

Than Swe also emphasized that the Government has invited ethnic armed organizations and People's Defence Forces fighting against the junta to resolve political issues through party politics and the electoral processes.

The briefing was attended by the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator ad interim, as well as representatives of the UN agencies in Myanmar such as the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Office of Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), World Food Program (WFP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), and the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR).

BANGLADESH FISHERMAN KILLED, DOZENS DETAINED BY MYANMAR NAVY

Bangladeshi fishing boats.
Photo: AFP

Bangladesh said Friday Myanmar's navy fired on fishing boats that had strayed into its territorial waters, killing one man and detaining dozens more.

Six Bangladeshi vessels fishing near Saint Martin Island, a small outcrop at the mouth of the Naf river that divides the two neighbours, strayed into Myanmar's territorial waters on Wednesday.

Dhaka said Myanmar's navy then attacked the vessels, killing a 60-year-old man and abducting 57 others.

"Bangladesh urges Myanmar to take immediate steps to prevent the recurrence of such unwarranted actions," the foreign ministry said in a statement, adding it had lodged a diplomatic protest.

The other fishermen had since been released after an intervention by the Bangladesh Coast Guard, it said.

Giyas Uddin, an officer from the nearby Teknaf police station, told AFP another fisherman had been wounded by the Myanmar navy's fire.

The Daily Star newspaper quoted one of the vessel's owners as saying that the fishing crews had inadvertently crossed into Myanmar waters due to strong sea currents, adding that the navy had fired without warning.

Myanmar's military junta has not commented on the incident.

Border issues are a perennial source of tension between the two neighbours, with Bangladesh host to around a million stateless Rohingya refugees who fled successive waves of persecution in Myanmar.

AFP



Chinese investors at a stock exchange. Photo: AFP

CHINA'S BOND MARKET CRISIS

SUN LEE

In a troubling turn of events, Chinese investors are flocking to government bonds en masse, driving yields to near-record lows. This seemingly innocuous shift in investment patterns has set off alarm bells at the People's Bank of China (PBOC), revealing a host of underlying issues that threaten the stability of the world's second-largest economy.

The decline in Chinese government bond yields began in earnest in January 2023. Over the course of a year, the yield on 10-year government bonds plummeted from 3.0 percent to a staggering 2.0 percent. This precipitous drop has been fueled by a dramatic influx of investment from various sectors of the economy.

Bond funds have experienced explosive growth, swelling by 39 percent from the beginning of 2023 to mid-August. In a stark illustration of investor sentiment, bond investments now account for a whopping 35 percent of all Chinese fund assets, dwarfing the paltry 10 percent allocated to equities. Even more alarmingly, commercial banks have doubled down on government bonds, with their holdings roughly doubling since 2022.

The PBOC has expressed considerable anxiety over this bond market frenzy, but their focus appears misguided. Bank officials have warned that yields have deviated "significantly from reasonable core levels" – a statement as vague as it is unhelpful. Their primary concern seems to be the potential for widespread losses and bankruptcies when the rally inevitably reverses course.

While these are valid concerns, they miss the forest for the trees. The PBOC's proposed solution – to issue more government debt in hopes of satisfying demand – is shortsighted at best and potentially disastrous at worst. This strategy not only fails to address the root causes of the problem but also risks further destabilizing an already precarious financial situation.

What the PBOC fails to acknowledge, or perhaps deliberately ignores, is the fundamental issue at the heart of this bond rally. By abandoning other investments – such as equities and real business ventures – in favor of government bonds, Chinese investors are sending a clear and troubling message: they have lost faith in the country's economic prospects.

This mass exodus to the perceived safety of government bonds is a damning indictment of China's economic health. It signals that neither households nor businesses expect to see attractive returns from real economic activity. This loss of confidence is a prescription for economic stagnation, if not outright contraction.

The roots of this crisis can be traced back to the property market collapse that began in 2021. For years, Chinese investors poured funds into real estate, fueling a construction boom that served as a primary engine of economic growth. With the bursting of the property bubble and the subsequent fall in residential real estate prices, this once-reliable investment avenue has lost its luster.

The fallout from the property crisis extends far beyond the real estate sector. Private businesses, observing the broader economic slowdown and disappointed by overall economic performance, have significantly scaled back investments in modernization and expansion. This retrenchment has effectively stalled another crucial engine of Chinese economic growth.

Adding to the climate of uncertainty is the inconsistent messaging from China's political leadership. Chinese Communist Party leader Xi Jinping's past criticism of private business owners for prioritizing profits over party agenda has left a lasting impact. This political posturing has undoubtedly contributed to the wariness of business owners, further dampening their willingness to invest in the real economy.

The current situation in China's bond market is creating a dangerous feedback loop. As investors, both individual and institutional, flee to the perceived safety of government bonds, they are inadvertently setting the stage for a self-fulfilling prophecy of economic decline. The very act of avoiding real economic activity in favor of bonds is stalling spending and slowing growth across much of the economy.

This phenomenon aligns with a core principle of economic theory: bond yields generally mirror prospects for returns in the real economy. The current plunge in yields is a clear indication that expectations for real economic returns are dismal.

The PBOC's focus on technical fixes and its reluctance to implement more aggressive stimulative measures is deeply concerning. Rather than addressing the fundamental issues plaguing the Chinese economy, the central bank appears content to tinker at the margins. Its recent decision to make only the smallest effort to stimulate the economy is particularly baffling given the gravity of the situation.

China stands at a critical juncture. The bond market crisis is not merely a financial phenomenon but a symptom of deep-seated economic malaise. It reflects a profound loss of confidence in the country's economic prospects and the ability of its leaders to navigate these turbulent waters.

To avert a prolonged period of stagnation or worse, China's economic stewards must look beyond short-term fixes and address the fundamental issues eroding investor confidence. This will require a comprehensive approach that includes structural reforms, measures to revitalize the property market, and policies to encourage private sector investment.

The alternative – continuing on the current path – risks consigning China to a future of diminished economic prospects and global influence. The world watches with bated breath as the Asian giant grapples with these existential economic challenges.

Sun Lee is a pseudonym for a writer who covers Asia and geopolitics.

Photo: AFP

CHINA RESTRICTS 'PERSONAL TRAVEL ABROAD' OF PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES

SUN LEE

In a tightening grip on civil society, Chinese authorities are moving to restrict public sector employees' overseas travel. Under Chinese President Xi Jinping, new rules require teachers and other public workers to hand over their passports to local officials. This initiative aims to curb foreign influence and enforce ideological uniformity. Building on previous regulations, these restrictions necessitate official approval for any international trips, which are frequently denied. The government's heightened focus on national security and citizen control is evident in these measures, reflecting a broader strategy to maintain strict oversight and limit external exposure.

Chinese authorities have introduced a policy mandating that teachers and other public-sector workers hand over their passports. Framed as "personal travel abroad management," this initiative

is part of President Xi's broader agenda to regulate international travel and its purposes. Reports suggest that this measure is tied to China's efforts to combat corruption and reduce the impact of foreign ideologies on its citizens, particularly those in educational roles. This policy underscores the government's intent to maintain strict oversight and control over who can travel abroad and why.

The passport collection initiative, which has been expanding in recent months, originates from a 2003 national regulation that restricted travel for mid- to high-level officials. This policy now extends to rank-and-file employees in schools, universities, and other state-owned institutions, allowing authorities to monitor their travel activities and control when, where, and how often they can travel abroad.

According to The Financial Times, public sector employees in provinces like Sichuan, Hubei, and Anhui have been instructed to surrender their travel documents. A teacher from Sichuan mentioned that while teachers can apply for international travel, such requests are rarely approved. "If we want to travel abroad, we have to apply to the city education bureau," the teacher said. "But I don't think it will be approved." This reflects the government's broader strategy to maintain strict oversight over public sector employees' movements.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has consistently emphasized the importance of loyalty among educators and public sector workers, concerned that foreign ideas might weaken its control. Teachers are at the forefront of the CCP's efforts to enforce ideological conformity, with authorities particularly wary of the impact that foreign travel could have on them. In certain areas, teachers have been specifically cautioned against interacting with groups the government considers hostile, such as the banned Falun Gong spiritual movement. This reflects the CCP's broader strategy to maintain strict oversight and prevent any potential threats to its authority.

In Wenzhou's Ouhai district, local authorities have enforced new pre-travel rules requiring all public school teachers to surrender their passports. Media reports indicate that these teachers must also register their names with the public security bureau's border control division. The regulations further limit teachers to one overseas trip per year, with a maximum duration of 20 days.

Failure to comply with these rules can lead to significant consequences. Government notices warn that teachers who do not hand over their passports or travel abroad without official permission may face disciplinary actions. In more severe cases, these individuals could be banned from travelling for up to five years or even reported to China's anti-corruption authorities. This policy underscores the government's intent to maintain strict oversight and control over public sector employees' movements.

The passport recall extends beyond teachers, affecting employees in state-owned enterprises and other public sector roles. Even retirees who once held senior positions in state-run companies are

being targeted. For instance, a 76-year-old retiree from a state-owned aircraft manufacturer had his passport confiscated earlier this year for "security reasons," despite no longer having access to sensitive information. He expressed his frustration at being unable to visit his family abroad, saying, "I am a patriot, but I don't understand why I'm not allowed to visit my grandson." This highlights the broad reach of the policy and its impact on individuals' personal lives.

This trend of restricting movement extends beyond the education sector. In Nanjing, for example, a bank employee had to surrender her passport upon joining a state-owned bank. After leaving her job, she had to wait six months to complete a "de-secrecy process" before her passport was returned, as reported by The Financial Times.

The push to recall passports is driven by the Chinese government's growing concerns over foreign espionage. As part of its efforts to eliminate external interference, China has instructed state-owned enterprises to closely monitor their employees' travel activities. According to The Washington Post, the government considers this a necessary step to prevent sensitive information leaks and safeguard national security.

Sun Lee is a pseudonym for a writer who covers China and the rest of Asia.



Israeli bombing in south Lebanon.
Photo: AFP

ISRAEL STRIKES BEIRUT AFTER REJECTING CEASEFIRE AS IRAN THREATENS RESPONSE

The Israeli military launched strikes in southern Beirut on Wednesday, after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu dismissed calls for a ceasefire in Lebanon, saying it would leave Hezbollah forces near his country's border.

The actions happened as Iran's top diplomat warned UN chief Antonio Guterres that Tehran is ready for a "decisive and regretful" response if Israel attacks his country in retaliation for a recent multiple missile attack.

Netanyahu's refusal to halt the Lebanon offensive came as the United States ramped up pressure on Israel, criticising the bombing of Beirut and urging more aid access for Gazans.

In a call with French President Emmanuel Macron, Netanyahu said he was "opposed to a unilateral ceasefire, which does not change the security situation in Lebanon, and which will only return it to the way it was," according to his office.

Israel insists it needs a buffer zone along its northern border, free of Hezbollah fighters.

"Netanyahu clarified that Israel would not agree to any arrangement that does not provide this (a buffer zone) and which does not stop Hezbollah from rearming and regrouping," the statement said.

Hezbollah's deputy leader, Naim Qassem, said the only solution was a ceasefire while threatening to

expand its missile strikes across Israel.

“Since the Israeli enemy targeted all of Lebanon, we have the right from a defensive position to target any place” in Israel, he said.

Early Wednesday Israel's military said about 50 projectiles were fired from Lebanon at the country's north, without any reports of casualties.

Iran-backed Hezbollah said it launched several salvos of rockets on northern Israel and army positions.

The Israeli military said it had “eliminated dozens of terrorists during exchanges of fire and aerial strikes” in Lebanon.

US on Israeli offensives

Israel bombed several areas in southern and eastern Lebanon on Tuesday, including in the Bekaa Valley, where a hospital was knocked out of service, the official National News Agency reported.

The Israeli military said it had captured three Hezbollah fighters in south Lebanon.

Lebanon's health ministry reported nine deaths from strikes on the country's south, and five more in the east, including three children.

The US State Department criticised Israeli strikes.

“We have made clear that we are opposed to the campaign the way we've seen it conducted over the past weeks” in Beirut, said spokesman Matthew Miller.

In a letter to Israel's government on Sunday, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin warned US weapons deliveries to Israel could be withheld unless more aid reaches Gazans.

The letter made clear “there are changes that they need to make again to see that the level of assistance making it into Gaza comes back up from the very, very

low levels that it is at today,” Miller said.

‘Worst restrictions’

The United Nations warned restrictions on aid to Gaza were the worst since Israel's offensive on Hamas began in October last year.

“We see now what is probably the worst restrictions we've seen on humanitarian aid, ever,” said James Elder, a spokesman for the UN's children's agency UNICEF, noting there were several days where no trucks were allowed into Gaza.

Israeli forces have been conducting air and ground assaults on northern Gaza and Jabalia, amid claims Hamas militants were regrouping in the area.

“The whole area has been reduced to ashes,” said Rana Abdel Majid, 38, from northern Gaza's Al-Faluja area, describing the “indiscriminate, merciless bombing” that has levelled entire blocks.

Israel's military said it had “eliminated over 50 terrorists in close-quarters encounters and aerial strikes” in Jabalia during the past day.

At a shelter hit by an Israeli strike in the central Nuseirat camp, Fatima al-Azab said: “There is no safety anywhere”.

“They are all children, sleeping in the covers, all burned and cut up,” she said.

Israel launched a military campaign in Gaza after an October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas that resulted in the deaths of 1,206 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally of official Israeli figures, including hostages killed in captivity.

The Israeli campaign has killed 42,344 people, the majority civilians, according to figures from the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory which the UN considers reliable.

Lebanon strikes

Israel escalated its air campaign against Hezbollah in Lebanon from September 23, launching a ground offensive a week later to push the group back from its northern border.

Hezbollah has fired thousands of projectiles into Israel over the past year in support of Hamas, displacing tens of thousands of Israelis.

At least 1,356 people have been killed in Lebanon since Israel intensified its bombing last month, according to an AFP tally of Lebanese health ministry figures, though the real toll is likely higher.

The war in Lebanon, which has suffered years of economic crisis, has displaced at least 690,000 people, according to figures from the International Organization for Migration.

Israel is also weighing how to respond to Iran's launch of about 200 missiles at the country on October 1.

Netanyahu's office said Israel -- and not its top ally the United States -- would decide how to strike back.

"We listen to the opinions of the United States, but we will make our final decisions based on our national interest," it said.

Iran's top diplomat told UN chief Antonio Guterres his country was ready for a "decisive and regretful" response if Israel attacks, his office said.

The Iranian barrage was in retaliation for an Israeli strike in Lebanon's Beirut that killed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, and another that killed Iranian general Abbas Nilforoushan on September 27.

Meanwhile, analysts warn that an attack by Israel against Iran could lead to the Middle Eastern conflict spiraling out of control.

AFP, Mizzima

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A vigil at Hiroshima, Japan, to remember the atomic bombs dropped on Japan at the end of World War II. Photo: AFP

TEARS, WARNINGS AFTER JAPAN ATOMIC SURVIVORS GROUP WIN NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

A grassroots group of survivors formed after the 1945 atomic bombings in Japan reacted with tears and dire warnings on Friday after winning the Nobel Peace Prize.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee nominated Nihon Hidankyo “for its efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and for demonstrating through witness testimony that nuclear weapons must never be used again”.

Around 140,000 people died when the United States dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, and 74,000 others in Nagasaki three days later.

The bombings, the only times nuclear weapons have been used in history, brought to an end World War II and with it imperial Japan’s brutal rampage across Asia.

But survivors of the initial blasts, known as “hibakusha”, also suffered from radiation sickness and longer-term effects including elevated risks of cancer.

Nihon Hidankyo was formed in 1956, tasked with telling the stories of the hibakusha and pressing for a world without nuclear weapons.

Co-chair Toshiyuki Mimaki broke down in tears at a press conference after the award was announced, saying “never did I dream this could happen”.

“It has been said that because of nuclear weapons, the world maintains peace. But nuclear weapons can be used by terrorists,” Mimaki told reporters.

“For example, if Russia uses them against Ukraine, Israel against Gaza, it won’t end there. Politicians should know these things.”

He added that members of the group -- which was founded in 1956 -- were the "average age of 85".

"I hope that the second-generation (of atomic bomb survivors) and the general public participate in peace activities, for peace without nuclear weapons," he said.

The mayor of Hiroshima, Kazumi Matsui, denounced nuclear weapons as an "absolute evil".

"Hibakusha (survivors) are fast ageing and there are fewer and fewer people able to testify to the meaninglessness of possessing atomic bombs and their absolute evil," he told reporters Friday.

"People in coming generations must know that what happened is not just a tragedy for Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but one that concerns all humanity that must not be repeated."

'Tragedy of Japan'

"The fact that the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to this organisation, which has spent many years working toward the abolition of nuclear weapons, is extremely meaningful," Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said.

Ordinary Japanese born after 1945 welcomed the news of the award.

"I think it is very important for such people to convey to the world the tragedy of Japan in the form of the Nobel Peace Prize," consultant Masaki Ozawa, 49, told AFP in Tokyo.

"I think it is very important for us Japanese to pass on to the next generation the fact that there is nothing more cruel than war," he said.

Fellow Tokyo resident Keika Ban, 80, called the prize a "happy moment".

"As the only country to have experienced the atomic bombings, the best thing for Japan would be for atomic weapons to disappear from the world," he said.

"But now, with the situation in Ukraine and North Korea, the atomic bomb is being used as an intimidation method."

Gaza

Mimaki from Nihon Hidankyo also compared the situation of children in Gaza to what Japan faced at the end of World War II.

Palestinian militant group Hamas sparked the Gaza war by attacking Israel on October 7, 2023, killing 1,206 people, according to an AFP tally of official Israeli figures.

Israel launched a massive retaliation campaign, and according to the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza, the Palestinian territory's deadliest-ever war has killed more than 42,000 people so far, a majority civilians.

"In Gaza, bleeding children are being held (by their parents). It's like in Japan 80 years ago," Mimaki said.

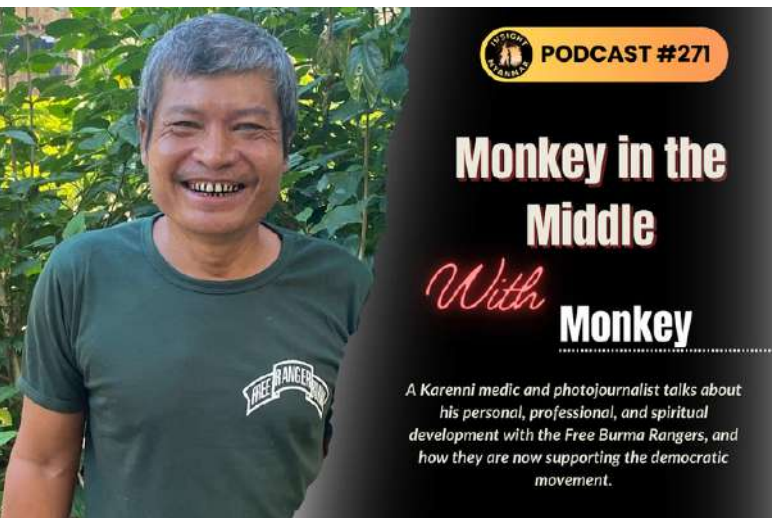
Children in Japan "lost their fathers in the war and their mothers in the atomic bomb. They became orphans", he said.

Nagasaki's mayor, Shiro Suzuki, did not invite Israel's ambassador to Japan to this year's annual ceremony marking the 79th anniversary of the atomic bombing.

He insisted that the decision was "not political" but the ambassadors of the United States and Britain boycotted the event in protest.

On Friday Suzuki welcomed the Nobel award but said it was "overdue", putting the decision down to the "extremely tumultuous" current global situation.

AFP



MONKEY IN THE MIDDLE

In 1988, the man known as Monkey was posed a simple question that he would spend years trying to answer. A friend asked him, "Are you a man? If you are a man, why do you just sit and look?"

For anyone even relatively associated with recent Myanmar history, the context surrounding this question will be clear enough, according to Insight Myanmar. 1988 was the year a wave of public protests broke out against the military government... and soldiers responded with their usual violent crackdowns. Monkey did not take part in any of these protests, leading to this friend challenging him like that.

However, for the next nine years, Monkey had the misfortune of becoming more personally acquainted with the terror of the Tatmadaw. Their campaigns would regularly bring death and destruction to his community in Karenni state, and his continued inaction began to eat away at him. Eventually he joined a Karenni resistance group, but he found that he was still looking for something more. "I felt useless, I just felt so bad. I prayed to God, 'Please give me a chance to do something! Because I'm getting older and older. I have to do something, so please provide a chance for me, and give me knowledge and wisdom.'"

His prayers found an answer in 1997, when he came into contact with David Eubank, the American missionary who founded the Free Burma Rangers (FBR). Although Monkey knew almost no English

at the time, he leaped at the opportunity that David was offering to attend an upcoming training course, which offered tutorials in basic medical aid as well as photojournalism. After the course, Monkey joined FBR missions to regions that the Burmese military had attacked, where his new skills could immediately be applied. While their mobile medical clinic provided relief, Monkey conducted interviews and filmed footage to document the military's ongoing atrocities.

Although he praised God for providing him this opportunity to gain knowledge and skills and then apply them in vulnerable regions of his country, those experiences began to take their toll, as he had to bear witness to so much needless cruelty and inhumanity. He saw entire communities sleeping in the open or on the run after their village was burned. He came across the dead and dying, those without food and medicine, and people of all ages in various stages of distress.

Monkey has developed far beyond the raw recruit he started as, eventually becoming an FBR trainer. He has overseen the development of not only those in Myanmar, but has also traveled to Sudan, Syria, Kurdistan and Iraq to support medics and photojournalists there as well. Although a Christian faith animates much of the work that Monkey and the wider FBR team do, they do not limit their service to Christian communities, and they were easily able to gain the trust of Muslim colleagues throughout the Middle East. As he explains simply, "We're not coming to convert them to our religion. We just want to show the love of Jesus. That's not our business. Only God can do that."

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<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2024/9/20/episode-271-monkey-in-the-middle>



INSIDE MYANMAR'S WAR MACHINE: 20+ WEAPONS FACTORIES STILL KEEP JUNTA IN POWER

Myanmar's junta operates about 25 weapons factories, known as "Ka Pa Sa," which produce roughly half of the munitions used in the ongoing conflict against its own people, Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported citing former junta military officials.

These factories are crucial for maintaining the junta's power and are located primarily in the Magway and Bago regions, with some in Yangon and Naypyitaw.

The facilities manufacture a variety of weapons, including rifles, ammunition, artillery shells, bombs, grenades, mines, and even rudimentary drone munitions. While most of the junta's arsenal is domestically produced, it has also obtained weapon manufacturing technologies from China and North Korea, and is seeking new capabilities from Russia, RFA reported citing former Myanmar military Captain Zin Yaw, who now advises the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM).

Former military personnel, now defectors, have provided insights into the operations of these factories. They have guessed that production had declined due to increased attacks by opposition forces, including the People's Defense Forces (PDFs) formed by resistance groups after the 2021 coup.

International concerns have been raised, with a January report from the Special Advisory Council for Myanmar, a group consisting of former high-ranking UN officials, revealing that over 45 companies across 13 countries have supplied Myanmar's junta with technology and raw materials for weapons production.

MYANMAR JUNTA CHIEF LAUNCHES CONTROVERSIAL LITERARY CENTER AMID ONGOING POLITICAL CRACKDOWN

A ceremony was held in October in Yangon's Mingala Taungnyunt Township for the construction of a new Sarso (literati) Beikman building in Yangon, according to the junta-controlled newspaper The Global New Light of Myanmar.

The event was attended by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, leader of the military junta that seized power in a 2021 coup, along with other junta officials and some prominent writers.

The project, reportedly funded by India, involves constructing a three-story building to house literary collections, displays, and a public library. While ostensibly aimed at promoting Myanmar's literary heritage, the event highlights the junta's efforts to legitimize its rule through cultural projects.

Many writers and artists have been arrested or forced into exile since the coup, raising questions about the sincerity of the junta's superficial support for literature and the arts.

During the ceremony, Min Aung Hlaing provided guidance on the building's construction and content, emphasizing the collection of historical literary artifacts and creation of public reading spaces.

While the project may provide some benefits to the public, its association with the military junta remains controversial. Many pro-democracy supporters view such events as attempts by the junta to present a facade of normalcy and cultural development while maintaining its grip on power through force.



NUG PRIME MINISTER WARNS OF JUNTA'S CENSUS TACTICS, URGES RESISTANCE

On October 8, during a meeting, National Unity Government (NUG) Prime Minister Mahn Win Khaing Than addressed the ongoing situation in Myanmar, focusing on the military junta's recent actions and the resistance movement's response, according to a statement published on NUG's official Facebook page.

The NUG Prime Minister highlighted the junta's use of the national census, which began on October 1, as a tool to suppress the ongoing Spring Revolution. He said, "The terrorist military group is using the census as a weapon to intimidate and control the population that has been facing various hardships for nearly four years."

Mahn Win Khaing Than explained that the timing and method of conducting the census, involving junta soldiers, police, and militia members, clearly indicates the junta's intention to gather excessive information about citizens and create an atmosphere of fear and oppression.

The NUG leader called on people in areas not yet controlled by resistance forces to navigate this situation carefully. He noted that the junta has been unable to conduct the census in regions controlled by resistance groups, emphasizing the importance of expanding these liberated areas.

"This is a crucial time for our revolution," the NUG Prime Minister stressed. He urged all resistance forces, including the NUG's forces, to act swiftly and decisively."

He concluded by emphasizing the need for the NUG to prepare for potential political shifts, calling for collaborative discussions to refine and adjust strategies as necessary to ensure the effectiveness of the resistance efforts.

This statement comes as Myanmar approaches the fourth year of conflict following the military coup in February 2021, with the resistance movement continuing to challenge the junta's rule across the country.

SOCIAL MEDIA ERUPTS IN GRIEF AND ANGER AFTER JUNTA AIRSTRIKE KILLS CIVILIANS IN MANDALAY REGION

Burmese social media users expressed sorrow and urged the global community not to abandon Myanmar's people after three civilians, including a 4-year-old child, were killed by a junta airstrike on Tapei Village in Mandalay Region.

On the evening of October 11, the junta launched airstrikes on the village without any ground battle occurring, causing the death of these civilians.

The incident sparked a wave of emotional responses and calls for international action on social media platforms.

A Facebook user wrote, "Civilians were killed. May the victims find peace in a good realm."

One commenter pleaded, "Please, global community, show humanity to us Myanmar people. Are we, the people of Myanmar, not worthy of sympathy? Please protect the Myanmar people with compassion and support."

A different social media post expressed despair: "Our people's lives are without hope. The future has disappeared. Who is selling jet fuel to this brutal fascist military?"

On October 10, during a meeting with Myanmar's shadow National Unity Government officials in Australia, Tom Andrews, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar said that Vietnam is the main supplier of jet fuel to the junta, which conducts daily airstrikes on civilians and revolutionary groups across Myanmar.

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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.