



ND-Burma Justice Newsletter

September 2022



Thematic Analysis



Situation Overview



Member Update

PROSPECTS FOR PEACE IN MYANMAR

Achieving peace in Myanmar has been a long and troubling journey as the Myanmar junta has historically jeopardized and devastated all possibilities. This is evident through a long line of broken ceasefires and attacks on vulnerable, unarmed populations. Throughout different periods, the violence perpetrated against ethnic people has led to hundreds of thousands fleeing for their lives to border areas in order to seek refuge. Since the attempted military coup on 1 February 2021, efforts for peace have all but exhausted themselves as the terrorist-in-chief, Min Aung Hlaing, attempts to engage on a peace dialogue with ethnic armed organizations.

For ND-Burma members, such as the Association Human Rights Defenders and Promoters, peace is rooted in freedom from civil war, and agreement and harmony among all people. One challenge that has remained across Myanmar's seven decades of brutal warfare has been building a truly federal arrangement that addresses the self-governance aspirations:

“For a multicultural society like Myanmar, the greatest test of democracy and peace is whether the government treats its minorities equal to the majority,” said Ko Aung Zaw Oo of the Association Human Rights Defenders and Promoters.

“Peace building becomes strategic when it works over the long run and at all levels of society to establish and sustain relationships among people locally and globally,” he added.

Unity is also a significant challenge as noted by ND-Burma affiliate member the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO). A free and fair federal union has long been the goal of ethnic people who believe peace is rooted in, *“the right to work without any interference and disturbance when working in a group,”* said Salai Benjamin, a field staff at CHRO, adding peace requires that everyone is equal.



Thematic Analysis

PROSPECTS FOR PEACE IN MYANMAR

At its core, one of the major challenges to achieving peace in Myanmar has been the deeply flawed and problematic 2008–military drafted Constitution. The document protects the military junta across nearly all legal and social sectors of society. This on its own also enables and emboldens impunity.

In addition, chauvinism and authoritarian rule have undermined prospects for peace as the military corrupts the economy. There is a lack of rights for ethnic people who have long felt marginalized and discriminated against. Consequently, there is a lack of trust in the peace building process.

ND–Burma member, the Kachin Women’s Association Thailand, has advocated for truth–seeking and protection mechanisms to be developed.

“The Myanmar Army commits atrocities against civilians and deliberately commits genocide and war crimes as well as crimes against humanity,” said Ah San, the Program Coordinator of the Documentation and Research Program at ND–Burma member organization, the Kachin Women’s Association Thailand (KWAT).

Women have also routinely been denied roles in the peace building process, and have had their inputs and experience side–lined. *“Women must be involved and must be supported in any matters related to peace,”* said Ah San from KWAT.

Another key element discussed by ND–Burma members as it relates to peace is the importance of reparations and truth–seeking initiatives to ensure that past grievances are resolved through an inclusive process of national reconciliation. This begins by dismantling the Myanmar military and reinstating the democratically elected National League for Democracy.



Situation Overview

OVER ONE MILLION PEOPLE ARE DISPLACED ACROSS MYANMAR AND IN URGENT NEED OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE.

CHIN STATE

Offensives in Chin State have put civilian lives at risk. However, opposition to the regime is fierce and unrelenting with 70% of territory in the State being controlled by resistance groups. Attacks on a Chin military base saw military junta soldiers killed following clashes on 19 September 2022. In the last month, at least sixty Myanmar Army soldiers have been killed in Hakha Township, Chin State.

KACHIN STATE

Since July 2022, 3000 civilians in Waingmaw Township, Kachin State have been forced to flee military junta offensives. Air and ground strikes have made life in their respective villages unsafe as they seek to reach safer areas. The military has attacked forces of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) in Waingmaw, Hpakant, Tanai and Shwegu townships. The KIA has responded with violence forcing thousands to abandon their villages. During the fighting, the junta also deliberately set fire to hundreds of homes. Over 150,000 people are displaced in Kachin State alone.

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KAREN STATE

Fighting resumed in Lay Kay Kaw between the Myanmar military and the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). The junta is trying to secure bases held by the KNLA in Brigade six. Mortar shelling was relentless as warnings were issued to local people to be cautious. The Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) reported incidents of enforced disappearances on 12 August and 14 August.



KARENNI STATE

According to the Progressive Karenni People's Force (PKPF), the Myanmar military is responsible for the deaths of 332 civilians in Karenni State. The majority of those were killed after being abducted by the junta.

The Karenni Human Rights Group reported that a year old boy was killed from mortar shelling, and six others were injured after stepping on a landmine. During fighting between 8 and 12 September, KnHRG also documented 100 buildings, including a church, were damaged and up to 5000 people were newly displaced.

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MON STATE

According to ND-Burma member, the Human Rights Foundation of Monland, locals reported that in some villages in Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon, the junta is forcing them to serve as sentries to protect their Administration Offices, schools and other community perimeters from attack. Although village security falls under the junta troops' authority. The area's ongoing conflicts have resulted in the soldiers forcing the local civilians to guard the villages and the junta-related departments and buildings.



RAKHINE STATE

A Rohingya man was shot and killed at a military checkpoint while traveling by motorcycle to Sittwe, Rakhine State at the beginning of September. The victim was just twenty years old after being stopped by the junta and was shot fatally in the neck while calling home to tell his family he was detained. Rohingya locals remarked that the lack of security has made them feel like there is no one to protect them while the police committed brutal acts of warfare. The situation in Rakhine State is worsening as tensions build between the junta and the Arakan Army.

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SHAN STATE

Human rights violations perpetrated by the military junta included a farmer who was beaten by three Myanmar Army soldiers in Southern Shan State. His neck was thrashed while taking his livestock to graze fields near his village. Upon seeing soldiers preparing to shoot his cows, he waved for them to stop, at which point he was ordered to kneel. When the farmer refused, he was brutally assaulted and had to have stitches.

Following heavy clashes in Moebye, Pekon Township, the military junta retreated after dozens of soldiers were killed. Before the troops left, they laid landmines around civilian areas, including churches. Approximately 5000 residents fled the offensives, though two PDFs and an eight year old were killed.

In Shan camps for internally displaced people, including Nawngkio, there are food shortages threatening their survival.



TANINTHARYI REGION

Tanintharyi region has been hard hit by worsening human rights violations perpetrated by the military junta. ND-Burma member the Human Rights Foundation of Monland has reported that the Myanmar Army troops are patrolling around villages in Kanbauk, Ka Laing Aung Township, Dawei. They are arresting anyone on suspicions of being affiliated with opposition grounds. Consequently, civilians are hesitant to leave their homes for work and to pursue livelihood opportunities.

The junta is also torturing detained more than 130 locals including women and children who have been used as human shields in eastern Dawei. The men have been assaulted with weapons and deprived of food and water.

Member Updates

Human Rights Foundation of Monland

The Human Rights Foundation of Monland released a monthly summary of human rights violations and key findings in Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi Region throughout the month of September 2022.

Chin Human Rights Organization

The Chin Human Rights Organization participated in a panel discussion with the International Colloquium: Democracy In Crisis on 15 September 2022.

Progressive Voice

Progressive Voice participated in the 'Right to Seek Safety' series on 30 September with Migrant, Immigrant & Refugee Rights Alliance, the US Campaign for Burma and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee



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