

MOHINGA MATTERS

APRIL 1

WWW.MOHINGAMATTERS.COM

VOL 4. ISSUE 3



Recap

Hi folks, the danger of forced conscription is dire. In March, youths across the country were summoned to enlist for the service. This created panic not only for young people but also for their parents. The drafting process varies in different states and regions but the same fate looms over every abled young individual of Myanmar. Throughout March, the regime conducted necessary preparations to accommodate the new recruits, and it commenced the first military training on March 29 at No. 1, Tatmadaw Advanced Training School which is located in Taikkyi Township, Yangon. To escape from this fate, many fled to liberated areas while others crossed the border to Thailand both legally and illegally where Thai authorities tightened security, and repatriated when they found them. As the mass exodus of youth was more visible this month, business owners raised concerns about losing human resources.

When ill fate befalls, it falls on the most vulnerable first. The Rohingya community has always been targeted by the military, and unfortunately, this time around too. In mid-March, 97 Rohingya died in the battle in Rathedaung Township, Rakhine State, and the regime instructed officials from the Rohingya camp in Sittwe to pick up the bodies. Most of the deceased were young Rohingya from these camps who were forcibly recruited by the regime. Arakan Army (AA) also reportedly found dead bodies of Muslim youths in the same township after they had seized the regime's outposts.

As several developments emerged in Rakhine State where AA was in upperhand, its Commander-in-Chief Twan Mrat Naing stirred up the internet. On X, he addressed Muslim community in Rakhine State as Bengali, refusing to use the

term Rohingya for which he was widely criticized. Regardless, AA's clashes with the regime's forces in Rakhine State have intensified, and consequently, the regime recalled its civil servants who were working in the territories controlled by AA, and imposed travel restrictions on Rakhine State ID card holders.

Meanwhile, seven ethnic armed organizations that had signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) and has remained decent engagement with the regime formed a new coalition called "the 7 EAO Alliance" led by General Ywad Sit of the Restoration Council of Shan State as the leader and Nai Aung Min from the New Mon State Party (NMSP) as the deputy. While this alliance strives for the establishment of a federal democratic union, the members exclude leading ethnic armed groups that have publicly opposed the coup since day one such as KNU and KIA. This formation could cause further division among the ethnic armed organizations as we had already witnessed a separated group emerged from NMSP earlier this year.

On March 22, the civilian elected National Unity Government (NUG) published the amended military code of conduct which modified the first version published in May 2021. In this edition, the conduct clearly defined "military targets" and "civilians" to ensure that its troops uphold the rules of wars and international humanitarian laws.

Later in the month, the military council auctioned Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's residence on University Avenue Road but the auction failed to attract buyers. No. 54 has been so important of a venue that the NUG also warned the public not to participate in this auction.

On the international front, the joint effort of Thailand's and Myanmar's Red Cross branches to distribute aid for displaced people began on March 25 via the "Humanitarian Corridor" created by Thai authorities. The first shipment was sent for 20,000 people with eight trucks. Many had rejected this plan as they were concerned that aid items would not reach displaced people who were outside of the regime's territory. However, in the final plan, one shipment will be distributed to IDPs via KNU.

The Human Rights Council convened this month in Geneva, Switzerland where UN Special Rapporteur for Myanmar Mr. Tom Andrew presented the latest situation in Myanmar, urged the international community to cut ties with the military council, and called on the countries to show action to help the people of Myanmar. As of March 2024, UNOCHA reported that 2.8 million people have been displaced across Myanmar due to the conflicts, and UNICEF reported that six million children are in need of help.

This month also witnessed the Armed Forces' Day which many of us now associate with the regime's ruthless crackdown on protesters in 2021. As usual, junta chief Min Aung Hlaing put on yet another show but observers concluded that this year was the weakest military parade ever in his reign since there were no armored vehicles or tanks in the parade, and more than 2000 troops marching were women.

Another Myanmar new year has approached. Now seems like the darkest moment we have ever lived, but then Min Aung Hlaing's side does not seem to be any brighter. If we are burning now, they are indeed burning with us too.

March 1, 2024

The KNU Brigade 5 issued a warning to the public, urging them to reject the conscription law enforced by the military council to prolong Min Aung Hlaing's rule. In response to the regime's announcement of compulsory recruitment, the KNU Brigade 5 has disseminated notices and warnings to inform the public and encourage defiance.

March 3, 2024

Trade between Myanmar and Bangladesh, facilitated through the Teknaf port in Bangladesh, is suspended due to the ongoing conflict in Rakhine State.

March 5, 2024

A Karen Border Guard Force (BGF) official confirmed plans to break away from the regime's alliance and operate independently as the Karen National Army (KNA). Major Naing Maung Zaw of the BGF said that all commanders have tentatively agreed to the formation change, with official approval expected to be announced this month following briefings with lower-ranking forces.

March 7, 2024

The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) initiated an offensive targeting regime stations along the Myitkyina-Winemaw highway road. Among these stations was one controlled by U Shwe Min, a prominent Lisu militia leader. During the attack, U Shwe Min attempted to flee the battle, but KIA troops intercepted and assaulted his vehicle, resulting in his death near Aungmyay Village.

March 10, 2024

Groups affiliated with the regime started gathering names of eligible individuals for military service across the country. The drafting process varies across the country, with administrators in charge of households conducting the recruitment based on their own plans.

March 2, 2024

The Arakan Army (AA) called upon the Muslim community in Rakhine State to rally against the Military Council's conscription law, aiming to foster a peaceful, progressive, and united nation.

March 4, 2024

The regime announced that Namsan, Mantong, and Namtu cities in northern Shan State, held by the TNLA, were under martial law. Consequently, the Three Brother Alliance (MNDAA, TNLA, AA) released a statement that fighting might start again in northern Shan State.

March 6, 2024

Five individuals, including the rector of Loikaw University in Karenni (Kayah) State, were sentenced to two years in prison and fined 900,000 MMK each by the state court of the Karenni Revolutionary Force under Section 17 (1) of the Unlawful Association Act. The lawsuit was filed by the Karenni State Police (KSP), according to the Karenni State Court.

March 8, 2024

The Japanese government announced additional humanitarian aid for those affected by the military coup in Myanmar. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan stated that the aid would be channeled through various organizations, including the UN and community-based groups.

March 11, 2024

The Arakan Army (AA) has successfully captured Yanbye town. The town is located in Kyauk Phyu District in southern Rakhine State and is the starting point of the China-Myanmar natural gas pipeline. Yanbye became the first achievement of AA in southern Rakhine since the inception of its offensive in November last year.

The Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army reopened two border crossings at Chinshwehaw and Kyu Kot (Pansai) to facilitate the movement of people and resume trade.

March 12, 2024

Carl Skau, Deputy Executive Director of the World Food Program (WFP) met with U Than Swe, the foreign minister of the regime in Nay Pyi Taw and stressed the Myanmar's continued humanitarian woes and called for the international assistance.

March 14, 2024

The junta's Colonel Aung Kyaw Soe and about 60 soldiers reportedly surrendered to Brigade 6 of the KNU/KNLA in Kyaikdon, Kyarinseikkyi township, Karen State. The KNLA and its allies initiated a heavy offensive on the previous day to seize the regime's strategic hill on the Thai-Myanmar border, located 12 miles east of Kyaikdon.

In Bago Taungoo District, the junta's Taungoo Air Base was reportedly attacked by five missiles around 8:45 pm. The Mountain Knights Civilian Defense Force (MKCDF) launched five 107 mm missiles under the supervision of the Brave Warriors for Myanmar (BWM) team inside Taungoo Air Force Base.

March 17, 2024

The regime forcibly recruited young Muslims from refugee camps in Rakhine State, subjecting them to military training. According to reports from the Arakan Army (AA), regime's battalions stationed in Rathedaung, northern Rakhine State, were overtaken on March 17, with the discovery of deceased Muslim individuals who had recently undergone compulsory military training, a violation of military service laws.

March 19, 2024

Mr. Tom Andrews, the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Myanmar, called on international actors to show solidarity by taking action including cutting ties with the regime at the Human Rights Council meeting in Geneva.

March 13, 2024

In a meeting at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City, Ambassador U Kyaw Moe Tun, the National Unity Government's permanent representative to the UN, urged international action to halt the junta's unlawful recruitment of soldiers in Myanmar.

The regime instructed officials at the Rohingya refugee camp in Sittwe to pick up the bodies of 97 Rohingya who died in the battle near Angoo Maw, Yathaytaung Township, Rakhine State. According to the Myanmar-Rohingya Association, the junta is exploiting the Rohingya as human shields in the fighting in Rakhine State.

March 15, 2024

The New Mon State Party (NMSP) declared its intention to take decisive action against ward and village administrators who enforce the conscription law imposed by the regime.

The regime's village administrators reportedly destroyed roads in the Bago Region, that lead to Naypyitaw via the Yangon-Mandalay expressway. Many speculated that the destruction was intended to cut the resistance forces' access to Naypyitaw, as per the widely known "All road lead to Naypyitaw" chant.

March 18, 2024

It was announced that seven ethnic armed groups, signatories of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), have united to establish the 7 EAO Alliance. The purpose of this alliance is to address the ongoing political crises through political means and work towards the formation of a federal union.

March 20, 2024

Officials from the Kamayut District Court in Yangon attempted to auction Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's residence on University Avenue Road. Despite their efforts, the auction failed to attract any buyers. No bids were made, prompting the court employee to announce that interested parties could register and purchase application forms, yet still, no buyers emerged.

March 21, 2024

Thai authorities repatriated 48 members of the military council who had sought refuge in Thailand back to Myanmar. These individuals, originating from Karen State, had deserted from the regime camp situated near the border between Kyar Inn Seikkyi township and Kawkareik township.

March 24, 2024

About 50 soldiers led by Major Thant Zin Ko from the Mai Khao Ywar Thit camp in Mansi Township, Kachin State, fled the army camp while the Kachin Independence Army was approaching. KIA managed to seize the station without any firing.

March 26, 2024

Acting President Duwa Lashi La of the National Unity Government emphasized the need for unified efforts until the complete eradication of the junta's army during the cabinet meeting.

Residents reported that the MNDA and the military, who had a temporary ceasefire earlier this year with China's mediation, resumed clashes near Lashio, Shan State.

The Central Bank, operating under the regime, declared on March 26 the suspension of licenses for six foreign currency businesses in Myanmar, with an additional four businesses suspended for six months.

March 28, 2024

The Russian government's RIA news agency reported that the Russian and Myanmar armies are set to undertake more than 50 joint military operations in 2024, as disclosed by the Russian Ministry of Defense.

Derek Chollet, US foreign affairs adviser, revealed on March 28 that he held discussions with leaders of the three ethnic armed alliances, collectively known as K3C. Chollet conveyed this update on a social networking site, X.

March 30, 2024

The National Unity Government (NUG) issued a statement, announcing the initiation of a public service endeavor aimed at assisting individuals impacted by the military council's enforced conscription.

March 23, 2024

The Karenni joint forces declared their successful control over seven towns during Operation 1111 along the border between Karenni State and the Shan-Karenni border. This operation, which commenced on November 11, 2023, has spanned over four months, reaching the acquisition of key territories. The towns of Malse, Demoso, Ywarthit, Shartaw, Mawchi, Nanmaekone, and Moby now fall under the Karenni forces' control.

March 25, 2024

Laung Lon PDF reported instances of forcible arrests by ward administrators and employees of the military group engaging in militia summoning activities in the Tanintharyi Region. The PDF said it was a violation of human rights and warned the ward administrators against such cooperation.

The Arakan Army (AA) issued a statement in Burmese, English, and Chinese, warning foreign investment projects in Rakhine State to collaborate with them.

Indonesian authorities announced that they had recovered 11 bodies following the capsizing of a Rohingya boat carrying approximately 150 people off Indonesia's westernmost coast last week.

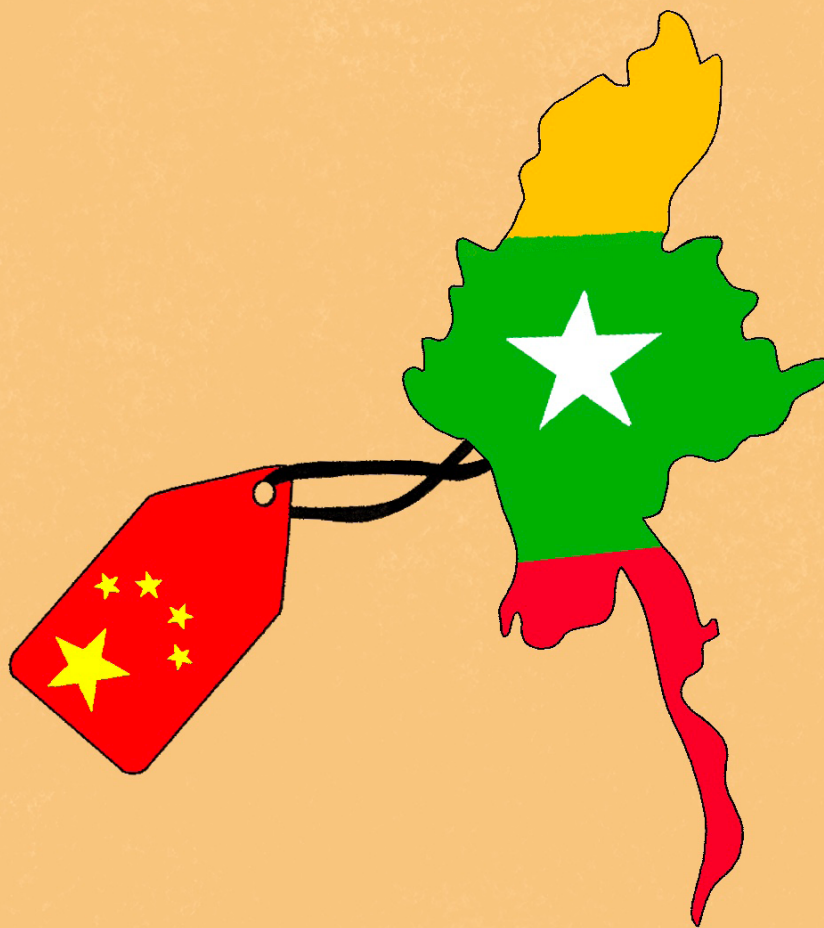
March 27, 2024

Local residents reported clashes along the Myanmar-China border between the regime and the Kachin Liberation Army (KIA), with two artillery shells striking Chinese territory.

The Karen National Union (KNU) has condemned the manner in which humanitarian aid, dispatched by the Thai government on March 26 to assist displaced people, was distributed through the Myanmar Red Cross Society, deeming it insensitive to the plight of the people.

March 29, 2024

The military regime commenced its first military training session at the No. 1 Tatmadaw Advanced Training School in Taikkyi Township, Yangon Region.



China Stands Firm, it's the Land that's Shifting

The conflict and territorial control situation in Myanmar has shifted markedly since October 2023. Operation 1027 caused the junta to lose massive manpower, military hardware, and the control of a large swath of land to opposing forces. In the two main theaters of war, i.e. Northern Shan State and Rakhine State, the junta today has only minimal control of key territories. Other areas such as Kachin, Karen, and Sagaing also witnessed massive losses of military personnel, hardware and lands, albeit to a smaller degree than in Northern Shan and Rakhine. By the end of 2023, it was not far-fetched to assume that, if things were to keep on progressing at the same rate, the junta

might not be in power when the Myanmar New Year comes in mid-April.

However, looking back now, that proved to be a big "if". Militarily, the junta keeps on losing; in terms of public support, let alone the already overwhelming majority of pro-democracy masses, even the diehard military supporters are denouncing the junta, and the economy, despite the junta Min Aung Hlaing's claims of achieving remarkable recovery despite "mismanagements by the democratically-elected ousted government", is facing the worst turn in 20 years with no signs of arrest. Nonetheless, despite all of those, it now seems

like the junta will not be removed that fast. The Three Brotherhood Alliance, three powerful ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) behind Operation 1027 now all face pressure and persuasion from China to agree to ceasefires with the junta.

It was widely speculated that China at least gave tacit approval to Operation 1027, after getting frustrated with the junta's apathy towards pig-butchering scams which are defrauding massive sums of money from Chinese citizens and trafficking Chinese citizens to fraud factories operating under the junta-allied warlords along the Myanmar-Chinese border. While the pig-butchering

“Aside from individual EAOs for each territory they control, a national organization is required to protect Chinese interests in Myanmar. Unfortunately, China seems to entrust the junta and the military establishment for this role.”

scams also prey on other nationalities, China actually has better means to make the junta compliant, and at the very least, it seems that the Three Brotherhood Alliance member calculated that China would not stop their military campaign if that meant getting rid of pig-butcherings along the border. The outcome was mutually beneficial for these EAOs and China, as much as it was devastating for the junta. However, with the scam factories along its border now shut down, the Chinese-brokered ceasefire in Northern Shan State was signed in January. While the war in Rakhine State broke out afterward, there are reports that China, despite its more limited capabilities due to not sharing a border with the Rakhine State, is now attempting to broker a ceasefire there as well.

Since the coup, the Chinese government's stance on the junta drew ire from the people of Myanmar. Since the early days

of the coup, Beijing reported the coup as a “cabinet reshuffle”, addressed Min Aung Hlaing as “the leader of Myanmar”, and repeatedly vetoed UN resolutions regarding Myanmar by dismissing incidents unfolding in Myanmar as purely internal affairs. However, the animosity between the junta and Beijing couldn't be clearer in the last quarter of 2023, with the junta claiming Operation 1027 as Chinese-sponsored and the Chinese government turning cold shoulder to the junta's misfortune. Yet, since we enter 2024, the junta now appeared more docile to Chinese influence: the junta-backed warlords who were wanted by Beijing for committing cyber scams and human trafficking are now being handed over to China, the ceasefire to save the junta's uprooting in Northern Shan State was agreed and China is now openly calling Min Aung Hlaing as the leader of Myanmar once again.

The developments in Northern Shan State highlight how the Chinese government has both the patience and capabilities to set the game in its favor. Without complete eradication of the junta's grip on the Northern Shan State, the junta's forces and its rival factions of Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) and Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) are now put into a situation where both must be in the favorable side of the Chinese government.

When it comes to China-Myanmar relations, it stands to reason that China has never taken the views of the people of Myanmar seriously. In its pursuit of Chinese national interest (clarification: we do not think any nation pursuing its national interest is making a wrong move. If anything, we think that it would be making

the opposite move that's irrational.), Chinese policymakers seem to think only those with military power can decide anything in Myanmar. Thus, since the coup, while China has a relationship with both the junta and EAOs, the National Unity Government (NUG), despite having public support, seems to be not taken seriously by China. Meanwhile, the NUG's platform of fostering federal democracy in Myanmar itself is at most an indifferent subject to the Chinese government. It seems as if, in the Chinese government's mind, the NUG has little to attract them ideologically, and little to offer strategically.

Chinese interests extend beyond any single EAO control, and while EAOs along its border might be able to deliver security to Chinese interests in their areas, projects that extend across the country, such as the transnational gas pipeline or projects that are currently under junta-controlled areas pose different challenges, the latter due to extreme mutual antagonism between the junta and the public. Aside from individual EAOs for each territory they control, a national organization is required to protect Chinese interests in Myanmar. Unfortunately, China seems to entrust the junta and the military establishment for this role. Moreover, just as the Northern Shan scenario demonstrated, China seems to see the junta and different EAOs balancing each other as a solution to securing its interests, however, that could quickly backfire for China because China does not have the same means to influence EAOs far from its border.

Moreover, another, more important reason why this is a bad strategy for China is the much-shifted political landscape of Myanmar. Myanmar in 2024 is no longer a

playground for strongmen and powerful militaries. The Spring Revolution has shown the world the resilience of the people of Myanmar in resisting oppression. From now on, it would be near

impossible for anyone to govern the country securely if the governments lack the consent of the governed. Ignoring this shifted landscape and discounting the people's will will only prolong the

conflict, erode the goodwill of the people of Myanmar towards the Chinese government, and ultimately will do no good to either one.





On Conscription Law & its Impact on the Resistance

In March, the regime officially initiated the recruitment process to implement the conscription law. Thousands of youths were coerced into the mandatory military training while several fled their homes in time to escape the imposition, by either finding opportunities abroad or taking up arms under various resistance forces. Families were broken apart and jobs were abandoned due to this action from the regime. The National Unity Government (NUG) received criticism from the public for failing to respond and handle this situation adequately. This month, we interviewed an official from the Karenni Nationalities Defense Force (KNDF) to gain insight into their approach to

addressing this challenge independently.

MM: Please introduce yourself.

ZH: My name is Zaw Htet, people know me as White Tiger on the battlefield. I serve in the Karenni Nationalities Defense Force (KNDF) in Karenni State.

MM: What was your initial reaction to hearing about the conscription law?

ZH: We knew that the regime planned to exhaust the resistance. So there was not much reaction there. Safe to say we saw that coming. Hence, we always encouraged the public to support us and we also made efforts to grow our manpower, etc. There

was no surprise.

MM: Do you mean you had received the information ahead of time? Or just speculation?

ZH: No, we did not receive the information beforehand. In our opinion, the regime is getting short of manpower, they would do anything to expand their forces, especially with youths in times like this where they are losing every battlefield. Conscription was one of the possible ways we thought they would do.

MM: What actions have KNDF taken in response to this law?

ZH: Since day one of the resistance, we have sworn to protect all the ethnic people of Myanmar.

The people who are facing difficulties due to this law are the people we swore to protect. Hence, we are helping youths who want to join us to fight on the just side of the war. It is the main thing we are doing. We can't say the exact figure but several youths have joined our uniform since the conscription law was introduced. Not just our force, I have seen on Facebook that a few credible resistance forces have also recruited the same way.

MM: What was the key motivation behind this move?

ZH: Many youths across the country both from urban and rural areas, are left with not many options. Since the situation is going to place them on a battlefield, they decide to stand with the resistance side instead of fighting for the regime, as simple as that. Our recruitment rate has increased due to the conscription law. We experienced that some of the youths who wanted to join us did not even have money to travel. We had to make sure they arrived safely and soundly. That said, we only like to welcome people with determination to fight the regime. Those who just want to move places and live an easy life under our shelter are not encouraged.

MM: Those recruits are mainly from Karenni State or also from mainland Myanmar?

ZH: Karenni is a fairly liberated area, two out of three family members are already resistance soldiers. Recruits are from other areas.

MM: How are you dealing with equipping all of them?

ZH: If there are 1,000 new recruits today, we cannot arm all of them. Probably 500-600 of them will receive proper equipment. Areas in the Sagaing Region struggle

more with that, due to the challenging logistics issues. We in Karenni State are still okay with equipping rangers.

MM: For youths who are considering joining the armed resistance forces like yours across the country, who should they trust to make a move?

ZH: Multiple forces are recruiting in Sagaing, Karen, Karenni, etc. I would encourage them to follow those organizations on social media and monitor what they have done and what they are doing. There are many credible organizations out there.

MM: The National Unity Government (NUG) received a lot of sticks for simply releasing statements one after another including in handling this situation. What are your thoughts regarding it?

ZH: In many ways, KNDF is coordinating with the Ministry of Defense under the NUG but we are not technically under the command of them. We can only give suggestions in this case. They need to take more actions other than releasing statements. At the end of the day, we fight on the ground, not on radio. The NUG can do better in coordination with the Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations (EROs) to welcome youths in the resistance, as well as in the aspect of international liaison.

MM: Some of the resistance rangers have mocked the youths in the urban areas for failing to join them earlier. What is your stance on it?

ZH: It is neither wise nor justified to mock youths like this. A lot of young people inside the country participate in the resistance in different ways, some donate cash regularly, some join fundraising campaigns, and some operate in

urban guerilla forces. On top of that, people have various problems, they may not have been in a position to join the resistance in the jungle. It is a different situation now. Think about this, if several youths end up serving in the military, obviously the resistance will have to fight them too. We must take this opportunity to convince them to join us, instead of pushing them away. One of the key military strategies is to reduce the enemy's manpower. We must do it wisely by encouraging them to join us, mocking does not help.

MM: Do you think the conscription law has benefitted or weakened the resistance?

ZH: Both. Obviously, more youths have joined our side, which is a huge benefit for us. At the same time, the regime is going to have more manpower. It does not necessarily weaken the resistance but we might be forced to fight them too, which is a sad consequence.

MM: Anything to add?

ZH: I would just encourage youths again to avoid the mandatory drafting and join us, fight with us against the regime. It also goes out to the families to let the young souls make brave decisions, instead of blocking their ambitions and being stuck under the junta's rules.



In Memory of Heroes_ Those Who Fought with Both Pen and Fist

The regime has cost thousands of lives during the Spring Revolution in Myanmar: some were gunned down during non-protest movements while others were killed in interrogation rooms, and many on battlegrounds. Those who gave their lives were from all walks of life including artists, doctors, teachers, students, and housewives. Some of them had been involved with political activism their entire lives, some joined the resistance as they could not accept the regime's coup.

Three years ago, a famous poet K Za Win @ Chan Thar Swe was killed during an anti-coup demonstration in Monywa, Sagaing Region. On March 3, 2021, K Za Win was shot and his injured body was dragged on the street by the regime's soldiers following a protest he had organized. K Za Win died at the scene, his death was mourned by the public, especially those who admired his work. K Za Win's talent had been recognized as early as the age of

16 when his poem appeared in a school magazine. After his land was notoriously seized by the Chinese-owned company for the Letpadaung copper mine project, he later got involved with advocating for land rights and education reforms. His most famous published work was a collection of poems called *My Reply to Ramon*. Although he had been critical of the National League for Democracy (NLD), K Zay Win defended the party's election victory and led protests to show his support. Just before his death, K Za Win wrote on Facebook:

"Though I have different views than you all, I would still lay down my life for you."

Three years after K Za Win's death, we lost another poet/activist who had written a peace poem and died fighting for it. His name was Ko Aung Khant Zaw @ Ko Japan Gyi. Ko Japan Gyi was a student at Patheingyi Technological University between 2012

and 2015, he was a member of Patheingyi District Students' Union and Patheingyi Technological University's Students' Union under the All Burma Students' Defense Front (ABSDF). During his university years, his poem titled *We Set Out a Journey to Find Peace*, which was composed in collaboration with a friend, won first prize in the poem competition organized by Pen Myanmar.

Following the coup, Ko Japan Gyi decided to join the armed resistance and participated in the military training batch 2 of Daung Taman Station under the ABSDF. On March 22, 2024, Ko Japan Gyi was one of the rangers who was carrying out battles to siege the regime's stations in Karen State. Tragically, he took a bullet in his neck and passed away with wounds. He was just 30.

The National Unity Government (NUG)'s ambassador to the Czech Republic U Linn Thant wrote the following tribute to Ko Japan Gyi

on his Facebook page.

“A resistance ranger and poet Ko Aung Khant Zaw, who had been regarded as a potential young leader for the Ayawaddy Region nobly sacrificed his life fight-

ing for the Spring Revolution on March 22. Salute to him.”

ABSDF also released a statement that the Front will forever be proud of Ranger Japan Gyi for his sacrifices for the federal demo-

cratic revolution.

In solidarity, we would like to show respect and appreciation to him by publishing a stanza from his award-winning peace poem with permission from his co-writer.

*Amidst the false gestures of arms and peace,
Genuine faith fades away,
While desires multiply.*

*When the line blurs between counterfeit and genuine,
True kin is torn apart.*

*With sincere hope
For peace’s discovery,
We embark on our journey.*

*In peace,
We must seek
Love and compassion,
Support and partnership,
And retiring to bed without fear,
Waking without dread.
Peace where no soul perishes, no earth lays waste.*

*Let us unbar the cage,
Release the binds and chains.
Our journey shall commence,
In pursuit of peace,
With white doves as our guides.*

*As Ba Gyi Hmaing (Thakhin Kodaw Hmaing) said,
“I yearn for peace before my last breath.”
So too shall it be,
One day peace shall prevail,
And we shall persist in reciting peace’s verse.*



The poem was written in the Myanmar language originally under the pennames of Ottaya Lamin & Bal Gyaw (Ko Japan Gyi).



Min Aung Hlaing or Myanmar's Most Unfortunate Dictator?

For the past 60 years, the anger that Myanmar's 60 million population feels about military dictators only turned into cursed words. The curse of the people of Myanmar was more personal toward General Ne Win when he staged a coup in 1962 by using the power of the army that was built by General Aung San. People back then might have thought that the army as an institution was used by the junta and the main actor behind the coup was Ne Win himself, and the Burma Socialist Programme Party that dragged Myanmar into the darkness. So, all the curses upon the army institute were somehow overlooked. Throughout Myanmar's history, there have

been many clashes between the military and its citizens. The moment when the people of Myanmar finally realized that the military would never stand up on the people's side was the 8888 Uprising. The bloodthirsty army showed its true form to the world by killing hundreds of protesters, proving that it was more than obedient servants of the tyrant and that every single soldier was a willing perpetrator. Though the successive military leaders tried to govern the country in a closed system, the memories of the 8888 Uprising remind the public about the true nature of the army and its generals. Even after that, people in central regions and ethnic areas have held different

views on the army which is predominantly made up of Bamar people.

During the time of quasi-democratic governments, the brutal army showed its fangs by committing violent acts on the Rohingya in northern Rakhine State. However, several Myanmar citizens, who were kept in the dark by the military leaders, supported the army's atrocities openly. Little did they know they would face the same fate shortly. When the time came, the wildfire of violence burned in every corner of the country. Following the coup on February 1, cold-blooded soldiers began killing the opposers of the military regime by shooting in

“When Min Aung Hlaing was appointed as the commander-in-chief of the military that ranked 38 in the world, he was extremely proud, and he announced that he would transform the military into a standard army.”

the heads. People witnessed the army that vowed to protect them turn its back against them. They saw security forces smashing the car windshields for no reason, destroying the public's property rampantly, and looting the people's belongings as if they were a group of thugs. They heard how the soldiers shouted “Come out if you dare to die” to unarmed civilians on the streets.

Thanks to information technology, civilians are now able to observe the atrocities committed by the military in split seconds. This is the major difference between the previous coups (in 1962 and 1988) and 2021. In the previous coups, people were kept in the dark while this time around, people benefited from the booming global network connections. As a result, the view that the public has on the military has changed. Citizens have now seen the true form of the army and immediately realized that there is no safety guaranteed under the military regime. Just like the previous generations who cursed at then-military, similar words reached the lips of the younger generation. They cursed Min Aung Hlaing and his army to meet the worst fate possible in a human life. While his predecessor managed to dodge the consequences of such profanity, the curses of the generations of Myanmar people seem to be coming true onto Min

Aung Hlaing.

“The army has failed”

In this anti-regime revolution, every protester chanted “The army has failed” in unison. They wished to see the Myanmar military collapse. Since Min Aung Hlaing is backed by this institution, people assume that the collapse of the Myanmar army means the end of Min Aung Hlaing too. However, it is widely believed that the collapse of the Myanmar military is not going to happen soon. When the National Unity Government (NUG) declared war against the military regime, both local and international observers and analysts speculated that it was a long shot to defeat the military.

When Min Aung Hlaing was appointed as the commander-in-chief of the military that ranked 38 in the world, he was extremely proud, and he announced that he would transform the military into a “standard army”. During General Than Shwe's time, only infantry columns marched and saluted him in Armed Forces' Day military parades. When Min Aung Hlaing took the chief position, he stood before parades of infantry troops, armored vehicles, tanks with multi-launching rocket systems, and high-tech anti-air defense columns to simply show off the strength of his army. All-black tactical-suited commandos per-

formed fast-rope from hovering helicopters and saluted Min Aung Hlaing. He ensured that the Armed Forces' Day parade made headlines in newspapers every March 27. In addition, he instructed the military to conduct army, navy, and airforce joint military training sessions and invited both local and international media outlets to cover the training. He usually puts so much effort into convincing the world that the army he leads is powerful.

Soon after the coup, the military dressed its troops in new camouflage uniforms and sent them to major cities with armored vehicles. They shot and killed peaceful protesters, and that was when the Myanmar public decided to respond with armed resistance which no one had anticipated. Since then, the public has defended themselves by picking up arms.

Strength on paper

The international community regards the Myanmar army as the most combat-experienced institution with mighty infantry troops on the ground in all of Southeast Asia. Myanmar is the only country where internal conflict remained after World War II, and also has a large number of ethnic armed groups in the country. While other Southeast Asian countries sought development by promoting the economy in the second half of the 20th century, Myanmar people lived in a barbarian way by fighting each other under military rule. When there were active wars, there was a military budget, and every corrupt general took advantage of it. While successive military dictators claimed to have built the strongest army in Southeast Asia, it was mostly on paper. Most of the defense budget ended up in the pockets of army officers

of all levels. The military has one famous slogan “We will always remain united no matter who divides us”. In reality, there is no one dividing the military except its greedy and corrupt leaders. The Myanmar military may rank 38 globally, but eventually, it is falling apart due to corruption and bribery. Commanders from infantry battalions, regional operation bases, troop commands, and regional commands are required to recruit their squads whom they can trust. This further resulted in division and friction among lower rank officers and troops.

How the Myanmar military survived in a country that was under the threat of several ethnic armed groups is always questionable. The only strategy that the military uses is to oppress one ethnic group while making a temporary truce with others. While the military focuses all of its efforts on one specific group, it keeps other groups happy by giving them business opportunities or self-administrative rules only until they are done cracking down on one group that had been singled out. Some even said that Min Aung Hlaing caught General

“Eventually, brigadier generals from Laukkai regional operation command surrendered which was a disgrace for the so-called standard army.”

Than Shwe’s attention by using this strategy when the Myanmar army clashed in Kokang region the first time. He was praised by the former dictator and appointed as the army chief when Than Shwe retired. Since then, Min Aung Hlaing must have felt invincible and so full of himself that he staged the coup, hoping people would simply submit to him.

The major miscalculation was that he thought the people’s resistance against the coup was temporary. From peaceful protests to the systematic formation of armed resistance groups, the people have shown that the anti-regime movement was certainly not temporary. With multiple warfronts opened by different groups, Min Aung Hlaing could no longer use his favorite strategy and eventually had to disperse his troops all over the country. The regime’s troops have not been rested since the coup in February 2021. Some have been sent to the frontline and have not been back to their original military bases for three years now. In this situation, the military has limited manpower to use excessive force against a targeted group. The end of the military regime can be achieved by coordinated warfronts against the regime which prevents the military from focusing on one armed group. This instance was witnessed during Operation 1027. While the Three Brotherhood engaged in northern Shan State, other armed actors across the country also clashed with the military in their respective areas. Eventually, brigadier generals from Laukkai regional operation command surrendered which was a disgrace for the so-called standard army. The regime’s troops have also reportedly defected and fled to neighboring countries such as China, India, Thailand, and Bangladesh. After

having seen these defeats, one might wonder if the fall of the Myanmar military might take place under the reign of Min Aung Hlaing.

Inadequate high-tech weaponry

For many years, more than half of the national budget has been allocated to military spending by the military-led governments, supposedly to protect against foreign invasion, to preserve the race and religion, and to carry out the duty of the country.

Modern fighter jets were bought from foreign countries using taxpayers’ money. Second-hand military equipment was bought from Russia and China. Arms brokers and relevant generals became rich and prospered in the process. Meanwhile, troops on the ground are not even dressed properly. When Min Aung Hlaing took the chief position, he equipped the Myanmar air force with European helicopters, fighter jets, latest model gun-ship (attack helicopter) from Russia in his attempt to build the so-called standard army. He even showed off locally made warships. But by 2024, the resistance forces gunned down a few fighter jets and up to three warships.

The military has terrorized the ethnic armed groups by using aerial attacks. But now, the military including Air Force with fighter jet pilots who carried out airstrikes has suffered the curses of the people. Justice is slowly taking place, it seems.

Along with the Independence emerged several ethnic armed groups in Myanmar and resisted the military for decades. The main weakness of these armed actors is the inability to counter the aerial attacks, and the lack

of air force. However, this time around, young fighters have built and used drones to infiltrate the regime's bases and carry out attacks. While the regime's infantry troops are busy requesting air support from the Air Force with bureaucratic steps, the youths have carried out multiple drone attacks. This is simply a karmic reaction for the military after having killed innocent civilians using air strikes for generations.

Myanmar's most unfortunate dictator

When the military accused the

2020 General Election of fraud and started pointing out the "correct" voters' list, the public joked, "Myanmar army knows everything except how to fight". The growing anti-regime resistance forces and severe defeats that the regime faces have proved that the military may probably not know how to fight tactically. Imagine a scenario where this poorly equipped, undisciplined, and corrupted army fights to protect the people of Myanmar from a foreign invasion. Unimaginable!

For all those reasons and the in-

evitable outcome that the military would fail sooner rather than later, Min Aung Hlaing would rank in first place among the most unfortunate dictators in the world. His seniors, namely, Ne Win, Than Shwe, Maung Aye, and Khin Nyunt, used to be the most hated men in Myanmar to whom people cursed but they seemed to have dodged the consequences. Now, it appears that Min Aung Hlaing will single-handedly have to take in the impact of these generational curses of Myanmar people since 1962.



Weekly Updates

We write weekly to document the coup, to share our experience, and to contemplate. The daily entries can be read here:

<https://mohingamatters.com/weekly-updates/>

Highlights of the Armed Resistance

In March, we continue to witness significant losses for the regime across multiple warfronts. The Kachin Independence Army (KIA)'s offensive in the north and the Arakan Army (AA)'s successes in the west are particularly encouraging. Meanwhile, activity persists in other parts of the country. With the implementation of the conscription law, the regime has bolstered its troops, making it imperative for the armed resistance to intensify its efforts.

KIA launched offensive campaign in Kachin State

The KIA, the AA, the People's Defense Force (PDF), and allied forces launched an offensive campaign in Kachin State, seizing over 30 strategic stations of the regime in March. This initiative, marked as a significant escalation in armed resistance, began on March 7. The offensive targeted multiple military camps near Laiza, the KIA headquarters, as well as strategic locations like the Myitkyina Air Force Base, Waingmaw, Bhamo, and Dawthponeyan. Within hours of the offensive's launch, regime army bases along the Myitkyina-Bhamo road fell into the hands of the KIA and its allies. Notably, as Min Aung Hlaing and his troops paraded for Armed Forces' Day in Naypyitaw on March 27, the KIA reportedly seized control of half a dozen stations in Kachin State situated between Bhamo and Lwalgal. Among them is the historically significant Yawyon station, controlled by successive military regimes for 39 years. This station served as a strategic outpost for launching artillery attacks toward KIA-controlled towns. The capture of these stations provided the KIA an opportunity to ad-

vance further and seize control of Lwalgal, a crucial border town for trading with China.

AA occupied three major towns in Rakhine State

The AA reportedly took control of Ponnagyun, Yanbye, and Rathedaung towns on March 4, 11, and 17 respectively. Ponnagyun's last remaining battalion, Light Infantry Battalion 550, fell after a 13-day offensive from February 21 to March 4. The AA announced that a significant number of officers and soldiers, including Colonel Myo Min Ko Ko, a military strategist for the regime, Battalion Commander Lt. Col. Phyo Thu Aung, and Major Saw Htwe, were among those killed in the clash. On the other hand, Yanbye became the first significant achievement of the AA in southern Rakhine since the launch of its offensive in November last year. Yanbye town, located in Kyauk Phyu District serves as the starting point of the China-Myanmar natural gas pipeline. Rathedaung, a strategic town linking the Rakhine capital of Sittwe with the state's north, also fell at the hands of the AA despite heavy defenses by the junta's forces from the ground, water, and air. Within four months of resumed armed battles between the AA and the regime's forces, the former has reportedly managed to seize control of eight major towns such as Mrauk-U, Kyauktaw, Minbya, Myebon, Ponnagyun, Pauktaw, Yanbye and Rathedaung in Rakhine State, as well as Paletwa in Chin State. Taungpyo, a small town in the north is also included in the AA's controlled area.

Fighting intensified in Tanintharyi Region, with airstrikes happening every day

The clashes between the regime's forces and resistance groups in Tanintharyi have reached a critical point, with aerial bombardment becoming a daily occurrence since February. Entire villages are being evacuated as residents flee the relentless air attacks. According to a ranger from the Dawei District Defense Force, the junta has been utilizing air strikes regularly in battles within the Ashae Taw area, Dawei District throughout March. The Dawna Tanintharyi group, a local monitoring group has reported that approximately 7,000 residents have fled their homes due to the ongoing warfare in the Ashae Taw area. Meanwhile, the NUG has declared that the Dawna military operation has expanded its target territory in the Tanintharyi Region. This operation, led by NUG-affiliated resistance forces in Ye Township, has successfully secured areas along the Ye-Dawei highway where they conduct road inspections. The operation's scope has now broadened to include efforts to gain control over the entire Tanintharyi Region.

Resistance forces expanded territory in Karenni State

During the first week of March, the Karenni resistance forces successfully captured the base of the junta's Light Infantry Battalion 135 in Farsaung town. With this achievement, the Karenni joint forces expanded their territory in the Karenni State. They successfully controlled over seven towns during Operation 1111 along the border between the Karenni State and the Shan-Karenni border. This operation, which commenced on November 11, 2023, has spanned over four months, reaching the acquisition of key territories. The towns of Mae se,

Demoso, Ywarthit, Shartaw, Mawchi, Nanmaekone, and Moby now fall under the Karenni forces' control. Additionally, the forces have secured 81 camps, including 16 abandoned and 65 captured through attacks.

Resistance forces attempted to seize Kani, Sagaing Region

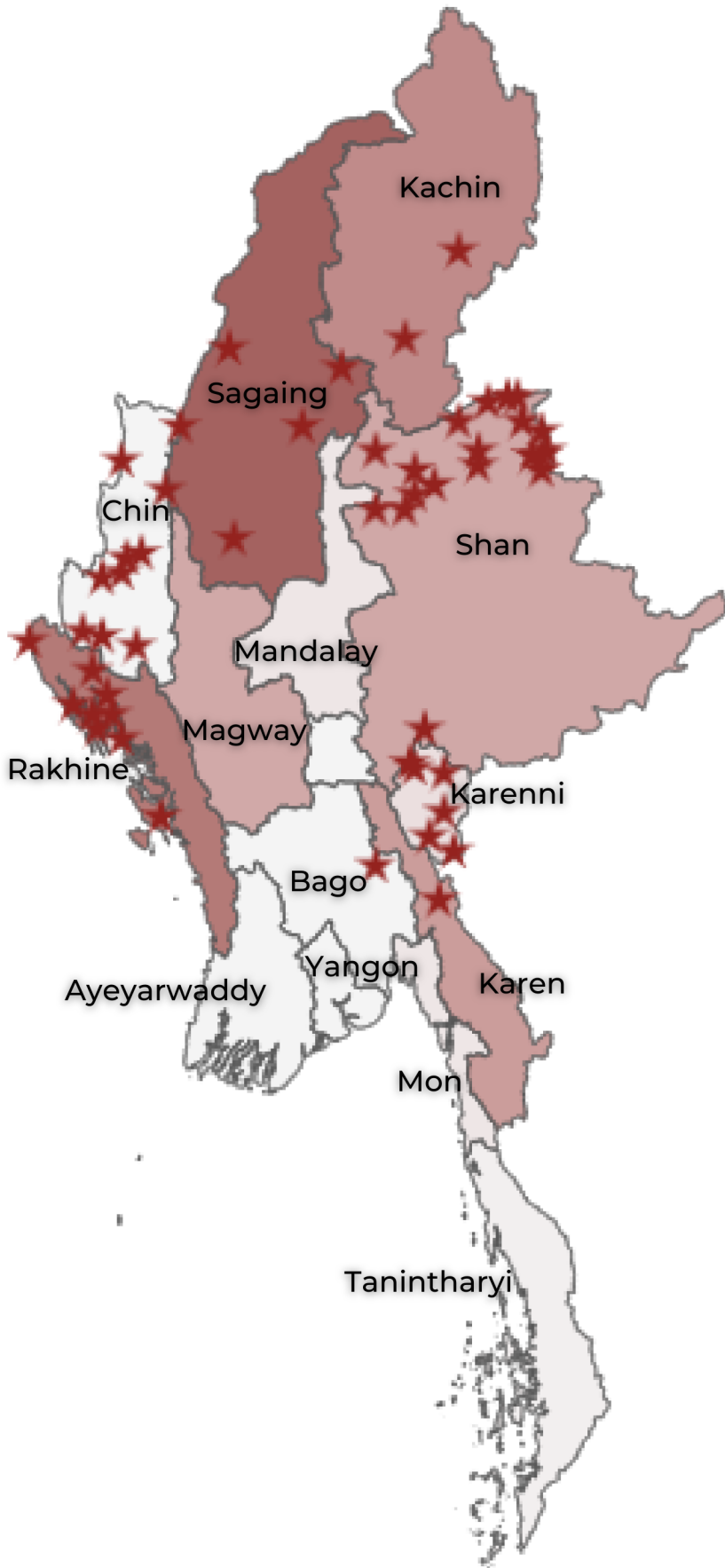
A 10-day-long clash took place in Kani, Sagaing Region as the resistance forces conducted an offensive at several regime locations. Since March 2, the regime's police station, the General Administrative Department, Shwezigon Pagoda Hill were targeted. Following successful raids, the

resistance forces nearly gained complete control of the town. However, due to the regime's reinforcement and airstrikes, they were forced to retreat. Approximately ten rangers were reportedly killed, with several casualties also reported on the regime side. Kani Town, situated on the west bank of Chindwin River, lies just 30 miles from Monywa, the location of the regime's northwestern military headquarters. Clashes resumed between the regime and MNDA near Lashio. Residents reported that the MNDA and the military, who had a temporary ceasefire earlier this year with China's mediation, re-

sumed clashes on March 26 near Lashio, Shan State. The ceasefire, established under the Haigan agreement on January 11 in Yunnan Province, was breached two and a half months later. According to locals, the skirmish lasted approximately 45 minutes, occurring between Peng Kai Village and Lon Moon Village, approximately 10 miles southeast of Lashio. Following the skirmish, around noon, the army in Kone Nyong Village fired heavy artillery three times towards the battle site. Details regarding casualties and the situation of both parties involved in the recent battle remain undisclosed.



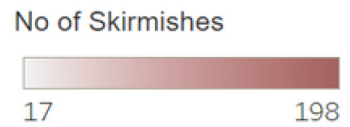
People's Resistance War in March



70
CASUALTIES FROM
RESISTANCE FORCES

1343
CASUALTIES
FROM SAC

633
REGIME SOLDIERS
SURRENDERED



**52 Towns Captured and
Controlled By Resistance Forces**

**(On February 13, the regime's
forces reportedly regained
control of key areas in
Kawlin Town, Sagaing Region.)**

Sources: NUG, Khit Thit Media, Myanmar Peace Monitor, IISS

Crimes Against Humanity

4

incidents (at least) of the regime's crimes against humanity were reported in March.

A dozen of villagers butchered by regime's troops in Taze tsp, Sagaing Region

The Taze People's Administrative Team under the National Unity Government issued a statement on March 6, revealing that between February 21 and March 1, the regime's troops brutally murdered 11 civilians from the western villages of Taze Township, Sagaing Region. According to the statement, the victims were men aged 29 to 70, who were killed after being abducted by the military as hostages. Shockingly, only one victim was shot, while the bodies of the other 10 victims showed signs of having their throats slashed and being dismembered. Eyewitnesses reported discovering severed body parts at the scenes of the crimes. The victims were U Wai, aged 70, U Zin Min Ko, aged 29, U San Po, aged 50, Ko Win Naing, aged 50, U Shan, aged 52, Ko Min Han, aged 52, Ko Swe Lin, aged 45, Ko Maung Toe, aged 27, U Nyein Cho, aged 49, U Htay Aung, aged 52, Ko Moe Zaw Oo, aged 45.

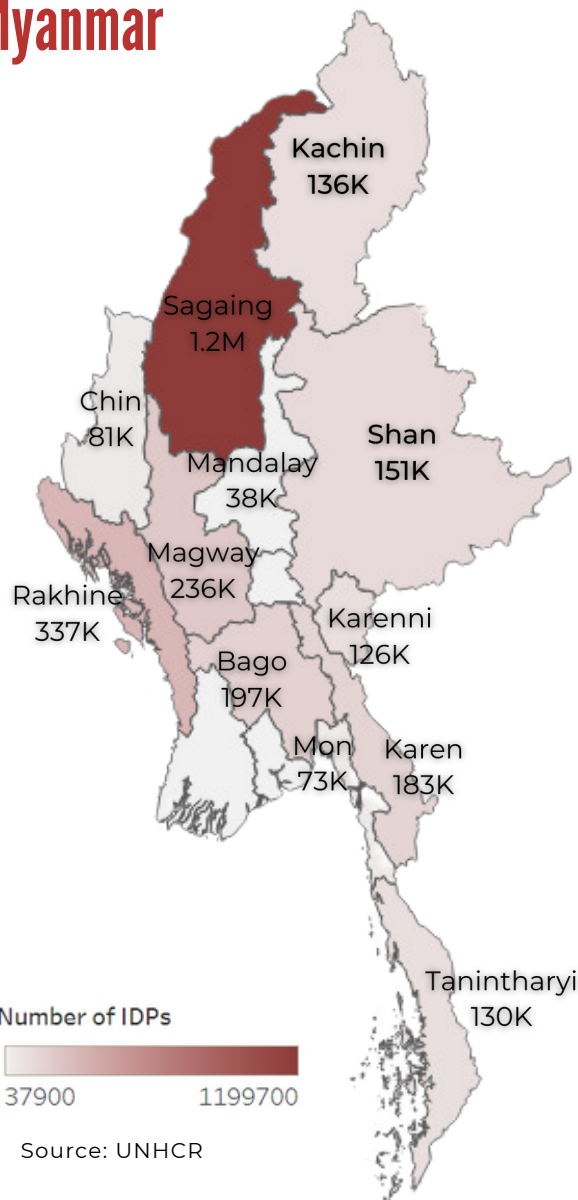
Regime's artillery fire killed 8 Rohingyas in Sittwe, Rakhine State

A tragic incident occurred in Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State, on March 9, resulting in the death of eight Rohingyas and injury to nine others. The casualties occurred when heavy artillery fired by the regime's forces exploded in a residential area around 9 pm. A resident reported that the police battalion unit 12 fired at least two shells, and one of the shells detonated near the center of the city, specifically in the vicinity of Aung Mingala Ward and Ka Thae Ward, causing numerous casualties. .

Regime's airstrike killed 22 people in Minbya, Rakhine State

The death toll from the regime's aerial bombing of a Muslim village in Rakhine has risen to 22 people. On the morning of March 18, the junta's forces conducted an airstrike, dropping two bombs on Thada Village, located four miles north of Minbya Town. Thirteen women and eight men were among the 21 people who died on the spot, including eight children between the ages of 1 and 14. Additionally, about 29 people were injured, and tragically, a 16-year-old girl succumbed to her injuries the following morning. The regime's continuous aerial strikes on civilians in towns controlled by the Arakan Army (AA) have raised significant concerns about the safety and security of innocent lives.

2.85 Million IDPs Across Myanmar



Two political prisoners beaten up by soldiers, one died in Monywa, Sagaing Region

On March 29, in Monywa, Sagaing Region, Ko Mahn Zar Myay Pon and Ko Aung Kyaw Zin, detained youth protest leaders, were beaten by regime soldiers, resulting in Ko Aung Kyaw's passing due to his injuries. The altercation began at the Monywa Police Station on March 27, where they were detained. Allegedly, the two intervened during a police assault on another inmate accused of smuggling illegal items. The following day, both were transferred to the city hall, where soldiers administered a severe beating as punishment. Tragically, Ko Aung Kyaw Zin succumbed to his injuries on March 29, while Ko Mahn Zar Myay Pon remained in critical condition.

