

MOHINGA MATTERS

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Recap

Folks, the month of April had been such a roller coaster ride with several loose ends. We cheered on the news about drone attacks at the airport, air force base and army headquarters in Nay Pyi Taw earlier this month. Even though it did not cause major damage or casualties, the act alone alarmed the regime and proved how far the resistance had come since the coup. Days after, the same drone fighters attacked a military base in Mon State, and the attack allegedly injured the regime's second-in-command Lieutenant General Soe Win. The praises for the NUG and resistance groups were tremendous, and these news served as another wave of morale boost for the people of Myanmar since the ceasefire agreement of Operation 1027.

News also traveled from Nay Pyi Taw prison that detained leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was transferred from the prison to an undisclosed location in Nay Pyi Taw around mid April. Junta's spokesperson confirmed the transfer, stating that it was to save the Lady from terribly hot weather in the prison. U Win Myint was also said to have been moved but no precise information was released as usual. Another notable move is the removal of Vice President Henry Van Thio due to "health reasons". Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's aide remained in this position since the coup but he was rarely seen in the military council's meetings. We certainly cannot speculate what difference it will make for him as he seems to have been kept under house arrest with or without the retirement from the regime's cabinet.

Since 2020, Myanmar people have not celebrated Thingyan, the water festival to welcome the

Burmese New Year, and there has been no joyous moment since the coup took place in 2021. Every Thingyan since then, the coup leader Min Aung Hlaing ensured to organize extravaganzas to showcase his reign, but people, be they military supporters or not, seemed to be exhausted from the country's struggle under the military rule. As usual, the regime released over 3000 prisoners on the new year's day but only 4% of the released individuals were political prisoners. It seemed that the military deliberately continued to lock up its strong-spirited dissidents.

Beginning of this month also witnessed a brief victory where resistance troops led by Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) seized the border town Myawaddy after successfully capturing the regime's infantry battalion 275. The regime's troops were seen crossing the border and taking refuge in Thailand. Myawaddy is a key border town for trade along the Thai-Myanmar border, but is also cursed with multiple armed groups with different interests. Unfortunately, it did not take long to fill the power vacuum as the Karen Border Guard Force, which showed allegiance to the regime, took control of the town again. This incident has raised a very important question to the NUG, armed actors, and all other resistance supporters how to strategically and promptly assume control when there is a power vacuum.

The situation in Rakhine State is intense, too, as the Arakan Army (AA) and regime continued to engage in intensified clashes. More than 200 houses were burned down in mid April in Buthidaung, and Doctors without Borders

(MSF) reported that its office and pharmacy were also destroyed. Meanwhile, more than 1,000 Rohingya youth were forcibly recruited in the military's troops according to UN special rapporteur for Myanmar Tom Andrews.

The news from northern Shan State also resurfaced with MNDAA's public execution of its commanders and soldiers at the end of this month. A total of 10 individuals, seven MNDAA members and three civilians, were at the public trial in Laukkai, and three of them were publicly executed. Their crimes included extortion, taking hostages and murder.

As Myanmar's situation becomes more dire, Thailand, a close neighbor that has sheltered thousands of refugees, has become more vocal and taken initiatives to help restore peace. This month alone, Thailand has declared to facilitate if parties from Myanmar wish to hold dialogues. It has also proposed the involvement of three or more ASEAN member states in negotiations with the Myanmar regime to bring peace. Notably, the Western media has once again paid attention to Myanmar with the New York Times publishing a series of news articles, photo essays, and Instagram reels featuring Myanmar resistance fighters.

What does all this mean? Are some powerful groups starting to shift their stance because our anti-regime resistance has started to prove fruitful? Still, certain incidents in April have alarmed all of us, including the NUG, different armed groups and pro-resistance civilians, to be more strategic, practical, and united as one if the end of the regime comes tomorrow.

April 1, 2024

The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) successfully occupied the regime's last remaining strategic military base, Sein Lone, located between Momaik and Lwelgel towns in Kachin State.

April 4, 2024

The Ministry of Defense of the NUG announced that the military headquarters in Nay Pyi Taw, and the Aela Air Force base came under simultaneous drone attacks. These strikes were reportedly carried out by the Kloud Drone division of the Special Technical Force and the PDF joint force at the military headquarters, while the Lethal Props division of the Special Technical Force and the PDF joint forces targeted the Aela Air Force base. The military council announced via state-owned newspapers individuals will only be permitted to cross the border if they possess a UID certificate with ten-digit unique identity numbers issued by the regime, obtained after the collection and registration of each person's biological information. The National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) commenced its five-day long 2nd People's Conference.

April 7, 2024

The Karen National Union (KNU) announced that approximately 617 regime personnel, including family members, surrendered to them at the Thingan Nyi Naung strategic base in Myawaddy Township, Karen State. This surrender represents the largest in KNU territory to date.

April 9, 2024

The National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) announced that during the Second People's Conference, it was decided to repeal the 1982 Citizenship Law. This decision aligns with Chapter 5 of the Interim Legislation of the Federal Democratic Charter. The council's statement also outlined plans to combat the military council's illegal military conscription law and address its impacts through collaboration with the public and revolutionary forces.

April 2, 2024

Advocacy group Justice for Myanmar alleged that Schlumberger, a prominent American corporation, has been supplying oil drilling equipment to the Myanmar Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (MOGE), a state entity controlled by the regime.

April 5, 2024

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres announced the appointment of Ms. Julie Bishop, former foreign minister of Australia, as his special representative for Myanmar and she replaced Singapore's Ms. Noeleen Heyzer.

April 6, 2024

438 civil organizations from Myanmar and around the world have urged the New Zealand government to exclude Myanmar military delegates from the ASEAN-New Zealand gatherings and instead extend invitations to representatives from the NUG.

April 8, 2024

Resistance forces launched drone attacks at the regime's Southeastern Regional Military Headquarters in Mawlamyine, Mon State. The regime's second-in-command General Soe Win was allegedly injured.

Reports indicate that the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) has gained full control of Lwelgel township in Moe Mauk Township, a pivotal trade city on the Myanmar-China border. Following the departure of soldiers from Infantry Battalion 142 stationed near the local high school, KIA troops are now overseeing the city's administration and security operations.

In an exclusive interview with Reuters, Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin emphasized the urgency of halting the conflict in Myanmar and initiating dialogue. He highlighted the Burmese army's intensified presence, urging all parties to consider the consequences of continued fighting.

April 10, 2024

The military council initiated legal proceedings against U Myint Hlaing, former Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation under U Thein Sein's administration, invoking Section 55 of the Anti-Corruption Law. The 71-year-old former lieutenant general was apprehended at his residence in Nay Pyi Taw on the same day.

April 12, 2024

The Karen National Union (KNU) declared concerted efforts with Thai authorities to restore peace and stability along the Thai-Myanmar border. This collaboration involves internal and external alliances, including border-based Karen organizations, aimed at ensuring the safety of residents on both sides of the border.

April 14, 2024

Casualties were reported in a blast incident near the water festival pandal of the Mandalay Mayor. Two explosions occurred around 10:30 am at the corner of 71st Street, between 26th and 27th Streets, despite heavy security in the area.

April 16, 2024

According to the PNLA, 15 soldiers, including Captain Wai Lin Maung and Major Aung Kyaw Tun from the Battalion 507 and 509 respectively, were killed in the conflict in Hsihseng Township. As the junta's army entered Hsihseng Township, a string of clashes erupted with the revolutionary forces.

April 18, 2024

A protest erupted at Myitkyina Prison in Kachin State, resulting in four inmates killed and eight others injured. The protest took place because only three out of 42 inmates who received the New Year pardon were political prisoners. According to sources close to the prison, the protest was suppressed by prison authorities and regime troops who opened fire on the inmates.

April 11, 2024

According to a Karenni Army (KA) spokesperson, the regime suffered heavy losses in men killed and captured alive during a clash. The reinforcements that arrived in Hpasauung were intercepted by Karenni resistance forces midway, resulting in a day-long battle.

April 13, 2024

According to reports from Thai media, Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin directed the Thai Army and Air Force to promptly respond and take necessary measures in case of any violation of Thai airspace by Myanmar military's aircrafts. In the decree issued by the Thai defense minister, it ordered an immediate response within a five-minute window should fighter jets from the Myanmar military breach Thai airspace.

April 15, 2024

Data For Myanmar group, which tracks burnings, reported that more than 80,000 homes have been burned and destroyed across Myanmar in the over three years since the military coup. According to the statement, as of March 2024, a total of 83,746 homes had been destroyed by arson perpetrated by the military council army.

April 17, 2024

The Political Prisoners Network of Myanmar (PPNM) reported that out of the 3,303 prisoners granted amnesty by the military council on the first day of the Myanmar New Year, only 101 are political prisoners, amounting to a mere four percent. Ko Thaik Tun Oo, head of the Political Prisoners Network, noted that not a single political prisoner was released in Sagaing, where the resistance groups hold significant influence.

April 20, 2024

A recent UNCDF report titled “Aspects of Myanmar’s Economic Recovery and Digital Transformation” cited the State Administration Council (SAC) as the “government of Myanmar” and advocates for economic collaboration with this group. Following backlash, UNCDF has taken down the report from its website.

April 22, 2024

According to an article published by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), leaders of the Karen Border Guard Force (BGF) are allegedly linked to Chinese money laundering syndicates in Myawaddy Township, Karen State, along the Thai-Myanmar border. The individuals implicated in these activities include BGF leader Colonel Saw Chit Thu, Lieutenant Colonel Saw Moat Thon, and Major Tin Win.

April 25, 2024

According to a report by Bangladesh’s bdnews on April 25, 288 military council troops and border guards who had fled to Bangladesh have been repatriated. They were handed over to a military navy vessel in Bangladesh’s territorial waters on the morning of April 25. The report also mentions that on April 24, a vessel dispatched by the military council transported 173 detained Bangladeshis back to Myanmar in exchange.

April 26, 2024

The European Union (EU) announced the extension of sanctions against Myanmar for another year, citing the lack of progress in the country’s situation. The decision comes in response to ongoing suppression of democratic efforts and escalating human rights violations in Myanmar.

April 29, 2024

SOAS University of London is under scrutiny for the ASEAN Film Festival that it hosted as the university invited Tun Aung Kyaw, the regime’s UK representative, to the opening ceremony. His participation was highlighted by the regime-controlled media and used for propaganda purposes.

April 21, 2024

312 Thai and international civil society groups have issued an open letter addressed to the Thai government to acknowledge the wishes of the Burmese people to recognize that State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and President U Win Myint are the legitimate leaders of Myanmar.

April 23, 2024

Seven youths from two villages near the regime’s Aelar airbase in Naypyitaw were arrested. Prior to the arrests, the Aelar airbase had reportedly come under rocket attack. Subsequently, regime soldiers conducted raids on the nearby villages, seizing one individual from each household.

April 24, 2024

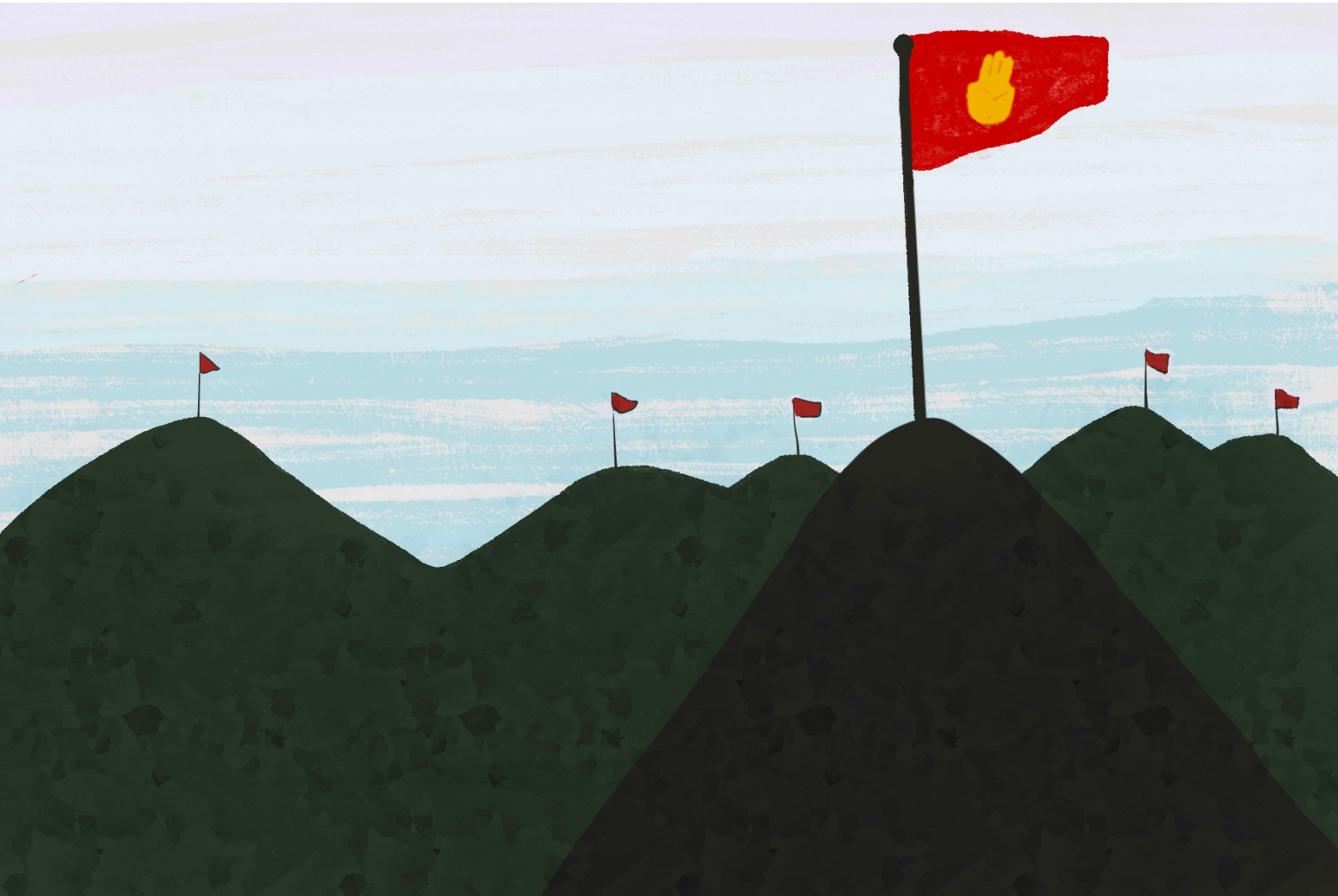
MNDAA (Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army) announced the execution of a 36-year-old district commander and two soldiers in Laukkai, northern Shan State, before the public. Alongside the death sentences, seven soldiers, including two lieutenant commanders, received prison terms. The district commander, condemned to death, abused his authority by holding two Burmese drivers, over 10 Chinese nationals, and six Vietnamese hostages between July and September 2023.

April 28, 2024

According to an official from the People’s Defense Force speaking to the Khit Thit news agency, a clash took place between a military column and resistance forces near Sintkine and Tatywar villages in Watlat Township, Sagaing Region, resulting in the death of one soldier from the regime side and three injured.

April 30, 2024

According to Khit Thit news media, deputy junta chief Soe Win has resumed his duties at his office in Nay Pyi Taw. He has been missing from public sight since after the drone attack on April 8, but is now back at his office.



Assessing Events of April

April was lively with several significant events shaping Myanmar's politics. We had a chat with Kyaw, a political analyst and former member of the National League for Democracy based in Mae Sot, on the Thai-Myanmar border, to get his perspective on the current state of armed resistance.

MM: April saw a lot of action, from reports of the deputy chief being injured to the resistance forces capturing Myawaddy, a strategic border town, and the relocation of State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi. Then, at the end of the month, everything seemed to change again, with the deputy chief appearing on TV, the regime reclaiming Myawaddy, and the Lady be-

ing sent back to prison. What's your take on all of this?

Kyaw (K): Well, battles often involve advances and retreats. Yes, the regime's deputy chief was injured in Mawlamyine, and the resistance forces, led by the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), took control of Myawaddy. These are tangible outcomes of the fighting. However, we later lost control of Myawaddy, which disappointed the public. But let's be honest, Myawaddy is just one strategic town among many, and it doesn't define the armed resistance. The Karen National Union (KNU) has also emphasized this point. I understand that the resistance forces may need to do more and try harder in this strug-

gle, but they also need support from the public, both morally and financially.

As for the news about the relocation of the state counselor and the president, it's politically significant. The pretext might have been to protect them from public unrest, but it could also be the regime's way of acknowledging the ongoing revolution. However, it is clear that the public's ultimate goal is to end military dominance in the country. Our imprisoned leaders currently lack control, and Min Aung Hlaing has ensured they remain behind bars.

MM: We're hearing about divisions among the resistance

forces in Shan-north, who achieved much in Operation 1027. How might this affect the armed resistance if the Allied forces break apart?

K: Operation 1027 was a victory for the ethnic groups, especially in the north, and it's seen as a model operation nationwide. The Shan-north has made strides toward establishing a military dictatorship-free state. Given the diverse ethnic makeup of Shan State, efforts to fairly divide and govern the land will lay the groundwork for a federal country in the future. I see these tensions as a necessary part of progress. As long as those responsible continue to weaken the regime's power and act in the state's best interests, we shall see a peaceful

scene in northern Myanmar soon.

MM: The regime's Home Affairs Minister Lieutenant-General Yar Pyae visited China at the same time as the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. What impact might this have on Myanmar politics?

K: It's no secret that China influences Min Aung Hlaing's military. Meanwhile, the US has been a key ally in our fight for democracy, as evidenced by the Burma Act. While it's intriguing that both visits occurred simultaneously, China will likely encourage Min Aung Hlaing's administration to crack down on online scams and address issues like the Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone, which is increasingly falling under the

control of the Arakan Army (AA).

MM: April was a challenging month for all involved in the armed resistance, particularly for Min Aung Hlaing and his army. We've heard rumors of coup attempts within the military. What's your perspective on this?

K: It's simple. Whether these rumors are true or not doesn't matter. Even without Min Aung Hlaing, the military would continue to oppress the people of Myanmar. Our focus should be on completely removing this institution from our country. We must continue our efforts regardless of rumors.



VOX POP

THE IMPACT OF CONSCRIPTION LAW ON WORKFORCE

We have a lot of younger staff in our organization, so the implementation of the conscription law has affected us significantly since the news came out. The first thing we needed to do was to reassure them that we would support them as much as we could. The organization has provided recommendation letters to all staff, stating that they are working for an agricultural organization, as a supporting document if they ever need to show it to related authorities, during the conscription listing or drawing lots. Also, because of the fear of conscription, relocation of some staff to other countries affected our operations to some extent. Due to the nature of our organization, we cannot arrange remote work for all staff. But we are considering case by case where the role allows remote working while also monitoring that the operations still run smoothly and that the remaining employees are not demotivated.

-Phyo, head of department in an agriculture company

The enforcement of the law has sparked fear in the young workforce, especially the male workforce. Hiring has been more difficult than ever as the talent pool has become very limited with aggressive outward migration since the law came into effect. In my team alone, a male employee in their late 20s urgently relocated to Thailand as he started to see signs of actual implementation in his neighborhood. Since he could not commit to our work after relocation, we have started looking for a replacement, however, it has been very difficult to find ideal candidates. If this continues, we might have to compromise on the quality of the candidates or be open to alternative ways of working such as project-based or remote working.

-Lin, vice president of a consulting firm



Suddenly people quit. Some of them didn't even send in an official resignation letter and left immediately. More and more women are hired in the labor force. In some positions, there is even a requirement to reduce the qualification to the 10th grade, where only graduates used to be recruited. Now we are told by the association if our staff is summoned to serve or listed, we can request a suspension for them as an organization. There was one guy from our bank who was given a suspension

-Ben, head of department in a local bank

The conscription law has made a very large negative impact on us, even more than the coup itself. It has caused a number of our team to quit and pursue other opportunities overseas, some good some bad. We have prepared a program for anyone who can work remotely to be sent to Thailand with the company's financial support.

-Mark, managing director of an engineering company

The introduction of the conscription law significantly disrupts our operations by affecting daily productivity and complicating long-term planning. The uncertainty has already led to the departure of key personnel, and it has become increasingly difficult to identify and hire new employees, particularly in specialized fields like IT development and graphic design. In response, we are enhancing our remote work capabilities to maintain flexibility and continuity. Additionally, should the situation deteriorate further, we are prepared to consider relocating our operations to either Chiang Mai or Mae Sot to ensure the safety of our team and the sustainability of our business.

-Mike, operation director in a software company



Reading Between the Headlines Where Myanmar Stands

On April 20, 2024, The New York Times published an article called [A Ragtag Resistance Sees the Tide Turning in a Forgotten War](#), which followed a young girl fighting against the junta in the Karenni State, Myanmar. What caught our attention was the use of the word “Forgotten” in the title. In the very first sentence, the word appears again. We could not agree more with the usage. Another article was published in The New York Times on April 20, 2024. It’s titled [Why Myanmar’s War Matters, Even if the World Isn’t Watching](#). Once again, the title is spot on. Although it is deep into three years, Myanmar’s fight for resistance has long been forgotten. To be fair, the world has its fair share of troubles to

monitor. A country in Southeast Asia between China and India does not make enough noise to keep an eye on all the time. The New York Times is reminding the world about our existence now as if the great media platform itself has not forgotten our fight.

The timing could not have been better

A week before the article was published, precisely on April 12, The New York Times ran an article titled [Myanmar Rebels Take Key Trading Town, but Counter-offensive Looms](#). The piece was about the news of the capture of Myawaddy, a strategic border town between Myanmar and Thailand, by the resistance forces. The event shook all stakeholders

involved in the resistance, including the regime itself, the people of Myanmar, and other armed organizations across the country. Never once in history, the Myanmar military has been defeated like this to lose a town as significant as Myawaddy. Apparently, it has also raised the eyebrows of onlookers from afar, such as the so-called international community, and the international media. At that moment, the seizure of Myawaddy suggested the ultimate victory could be on the verge. Some people may have taken notes and decided to place a bet on the leading horse in the race.

The news about Myawaddy reminded people of the real pos-

sibility of the resistance forces coming out on top in this fight. And no one better than the Western media, such as the likes of The New York Times does it well; educating the world about why it exists and why it matters, just in time, just when the most significant town of Myanmar's border trade was seized. On April 20, 2024, a third article appeared in The New York Times titled [What's Happening In Myanmar's Civil War?](#) This time, the piece is about the Myanmar war, with appealing visuals and infographics where the fights are happening, the location of armed forces, the number of displacements, and at the end, it informs about the people of Myanmar and whether the country is called Burma or Myanmar, fact-based explainers which can be easily grasped for those who want to understand the situation.

We are not blaming them

It's necessary to clear the air here that the point of the article is not to call the Western media out. We do not count on anyone outside the country to keep monitoring events happening in Myanmar. We do not think it's in the best interests of a total stranger to care for our cause. In the early days of the coup, the people of Myanmar hoped for a UN intervention where the US soldiers would save us. But the fantasy did not last long. People learned fast and learned hard. The armed resistance in Myanmar would not have come this far without the quick realization of the fact that we are on our own.

There are a few things that attention from the outside world could potentially contribute to the cause at hand; such as advocating for an embargo on arms trade and aviation fuel between the junta and its allies, as well as

urging the UN to place "No Fly Zone" in Myanmar to prevent more airstrikes and calling for the United States to unfreeze [USD 1 billion](#) for the revolutionary forces. Other than that, we are pretty much okay being on our own. Hence, we do not believe the Western media has the "duty" to serve our purpose. We just have one question, considering the timing of growing coverage on our resistance: "Do they know something that we don't?"

Do they really know something we don't?

Before the publication of the articles mentioned above, The New York Times rarely ran more than one article about Myanmar in the same month, let alone on the same day. Its previous coverages on Myanmar were routine news on the well-being and updates of Aung San Suu Kyi, the latest conscription law, and featured stories on individuals contributing to the resistance in their own ways. Even during Operation 1027 which was one of the greatest highlights of the resistance, only one article titled [Rebels Are Notching Key Wins Against the Military Junta in Myanmar](#) reached a wider audience.

In early April, we happened to experience much positive news, the victory of Myawaddy, the attack on Deputy Junta Chief Soe Win, and the relocation of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and President U Win Myint. All the Western news coverage took place at the same time. This sparked a question amongst us: why now? It feels as if the Western media already know who is coming out on top of the fight and they want to be prepared for the outcome. The situation parallels the irony of a newspaper drafting an obituary for a former president on the brink of death. If there is no such

thing, why are we on the news suddenly? Do they, the Western media, find that the world has too many problems to focus on, it's time to close this tiny chapter that features us. If so, do they call the shots?

Tables have been turned, sadly

Just when we were so excited about the positive news and the international coverage of Myanmar, the dynamics of the politics in the country changed again. In the later stages of April, the regime somehow took hold of Myawaddy through its ally. The state counselor and the president have been put back in prison after unsuccessful negotiations with the regime, the deputy chief is reportedly back controlling the military operation surrounding Karen State. In reality and the long run, they may not even turn out to be negative news. However, at least, all this news serves as reality checks for us, the ultimate victory may not be that soon.

The latest coverage about Myanmar in The New York Times has been the news that the regime has captured the strategic Myawaddy back, titled [Myanmar's Junta Recaptures Town That Was a Significant Gain for Rebels](#). With this, all the questions we had above were proven wrong. The Western media is not particularly aware of any potential victory, and it does not call the shots. At best, the paper was simply hoping to predict a winner and willing to bet on it for the time being.

We don't know how long until another piece is run by The New York Times about Myanmar. It will probably not write many more stories until it is confident of another potential ending to this madness, no matter who the winner may be.

Onlookers in Myanmar's fight

In every sport, there are fans and there are onlookers. Fans cheer on their teams regardless of the game's result or the dynamics of the games. The onlookers only start jumping when they sense a positive result out of the game. Fans drive and motivate the players during the matches,

but onlookers only join in the celebration afterward. Myanmar's current situation has many onlookers who will observe from a distance and join in when it's time for celebration. Until then, the players on the pitch have so much work to do. Once again, it's not the duty of Western media to cheer on a fight where they don't

have a dog in. They should just better be ready with facts and information about the winner when the results are clear.

Until then, it could be long before we read about Myanmar's war in the international media.



Clean

Back home they're throwing water under the stifling sun
I remember too how it used to be fun
A new year for new beginnings
They like to say
The beginning of ends is the most we pray

It's a nice idea I used to think
Wash away a year's worth of guilt
If only it was that easy to undo what has been done
To repair transgressions once they've begun
The streets are stained with sins that can't be washed away
The remnants of rectitude left astray

I look in the mirror and see the cracks I've opened
No amount of water could fix what feels broken
The sickly hot smell of wet pavements in heat
I think about all that was washed away
and at times I wish I hadn't stayed

I'll scrub my skin raw and red
Pull out the weeds of my twisted nest
I lay in the water hot and cold
Cursing the bones of this makeshift home

How do you wash away racked up rot?
Absorbed by the pores of concrete floors and little girls
Something foul and alive under the surface
An ice cold flood to rinse off this curse
As long as I can't cleanse myself of this grief
It means nothing to turn over a new leaf.





From Entertainment to Resistance: Evolution of Drone Usage in Myanmar

This year, right before the Thingyan festival, the traditional new year festival for the Buddhist calendar, the whole country was celebrating when they heard the regime's strongest hold Nay Pyi Taw had been attacked by the resistance forces with handmade drones. Even though the attack did not cause significant damage in the regime's bases, Myanmar people took this attack as the first milestone by using handmade, improvised drones in the history of the resistance. U Yee Mon, Defense Minister for National Unity Government (NUG), wrote on his social media that "Every target of the terrorist military council had been registered and could be attacked."

Days later, more exciting news

was delivered to Myanmar people as the regime's number two leader Deputy Commander-in-Chief General Soe Win was attacked and injured in Mon State as the same drone unit that carried out the attack in Nay Pyi Taw launched multiple drone attacks.

Although none of the reliable news media has received verified information about Soe Win's situation, it is rare to see his public appearance on the national television ever since. Whether Soe Win was eventually attacked by drones or not, these attacks have boosted the morale of the resistance groups, their supporters and the civilian government.

So many questions arose. Why

is drone warfare so important for the revolution? When drones were introduced to Myanmar? How have drones evolved to such capacities? To answer these questions, we shall take a look back at the history of drones in the country.

Before drones came into the scene, aerial shots were made with various means depending on the budget of a project in the International film industry. As for our poor country, we did not have the privilege of filming aerial footage with commercial aircrafts before drones came into the scene. Crane shots were the best we could get. However, I witnessed the waves of introduction of commercial improvised drones for videography for the first time

Since the early phase of our revolution in February 2021, drones played an instrumental role, helping to produce visually stunning overhead footage of thousands of nonviolent protestors in the streets.

in 2011 as I was working in the industry. My first improvised drone experience was also in the same year as I worked for a commercial video production company in Myanmar.

When commercial drones were introduced, filmmakers and videographers from both mainstream and independent scenes were thrilled to use these new gadgets to get rare aerial footage of Myanmar's significant landmarks. Those in Yangon dreamed and eventually attempted to fly over Shwedagon Pagoda to take magnificent aerial shots of the world famous stupa. Unfortunately, authorities prohibited it, reasoning that it was disrespectful to the holy site.

A private drone engineer who goes by the name DES recollected the time he was asked by Shwedagon Pagoda's patrons to submit quotations for anti-drone EMI (Electromagnetic Interference) guns to prevent fly-over to Shwedagon pagoda during Thein Sein administration.

It's very expensive," he said. "Even if you can afford it, you have to be ready 24/7 because you can't predict when the drone will fly to the target."

During the reign of quasi-democratic government, commercial drone development was significantly visible in the country. Professionals and enthusiasts alike were not only using improvised

drones, but also Chinese-made drones that were imported in the country in large quantities. DJI is a famous brand for Myanmar drone users.

Later on, the use of drones expanded to industries other than film and videography. Technicians from the agricultural sector, as well as, satellite mapping sector were introduced to drones for their work. Although the use of drones were beneficial and widely adopted, those in power tried to limit the drone usage.

The government then did not have any proper directive or law for importing modern drones and domestic usage. However, there were incidents where drone users were prosecuted for simply flying drones in certain locations. In one of the significant incidents, two foreign journalists, a local journalist and their driver were taken in custody for flying their drone over a restricted zone which was the parliament building in the administrative capital, Nay Pyi Taw. Despite the international community's request for their release, all four of them were charged with the 1930 Anti-Aircraft Act and sentenced to jail for two months. By that time, I shifted from commercial filmmaking to video journalism, and I actually witnessed that incident as I was in Nay Pyi Taw to cover a news event.

Aung Naing Soe, the local journalist who was detained in said

event, recalled the event on how he had tricked the police by switching the SD cards to keep the footage of parliament building they were shooting. He was amused just for revealing their sneaky secret that had done right in front of the police.

He said, "I told them that I would replace the battery of the drone in the shade, then I secretly switched SD card. They are just fools. If they noticed our intention of switching the SD card and if they eventually located the right one that was hidden in the van, they would be able to charge us with the highest accusation like the Official Secrets Act".

He added that the act that was used to charge them was constituted back in 1930. "It was just a joke. It showed that their intention to put us behind bars is to teach us lessons. Not just to us but to journalists around the country."

Since then, it was obvious that Myanmar was not ready to face the threat of drones both constitutionally and militarily. However, around 2021, a sophisticated drone prevention system emerged in Singapore, another country in the region.

DES said, "When I was living in the neighborhood called Pasir Ris, Changi airport was in its vicinity. I was testing my drone and when my drone reached the altitude where flights usually fly. Singaporean law enforcement detected it, and about 15-20 minutes later, they even located the pilot. I was astounded that Singaporean authorities had the ability to detect not just drones but the pilot."

Even to this day, the Myanmar military surely does not own such

a drone defense system.

Since the early phase of our revolution in February 2021, drones played an instrumental role, helping to produce visually stunning overhead footage of thousands of nonviolent protestors in the streets. These photos and footage were widely recognized by both local and international media.

Soon after, the purpose of drone usage quickly changed as young and creative activists used drones to spy on the junta's movements. The peaceful protestors gained an unparalleled upper hand over the ruthless army, thanks to new technology strategically. As this signaled a turning point, the military council moved quickly to outlaw the use of drones in public. When this ban took place, the regime probably did not expect that it was the beginning of modern warfare. As the regime became more vulnerable to this type of technical assistance, it tried to prevent drone usage. When the peaceful protests were violently cracked down by brutal army forces, the streets of Myan-

mar were covered with the blood of its own citizens. The brutality of the regime pushed people to pick up arms to protect themselves from the coup regime. That was when the long journey for resistance fighters and their supporters had begun. At first, there were many people who did not believe in the armed revolution, including both local and international experts who did not believe that newly recruited fighters could topple the Myanmar military. Many assumed that the regime might have ruled the country with iron fists for decades the way other previous dictators did. Myanmar military also showed off that they were the strongest institution in the country which also ranked 38 in the global list. It has also experienced various insurgencies since Myanmar's independence from the British empire.

However, the resistance fighters' deployment of unconventional tactics with a twist of advanced technology and creative innovation has been a nightmare for the Myanmar military. Three years after the coup, the resistance fighters' creativity has evolved, and the unwavering financial and moral support of the citizens who love to see the end of the regime has sustained Myanmar's armed revolution.

Local news quoted U Yee Mon, the NUG's defense minister, that it had formed the Air Force on 7 September 2021. Some people joked about this statement while many shrugged that it was technically impossible. However, when the regime accelerated its aerial attacks on civilians, resistance groups invested time and energy to find ways to defend themselves from air strikes and establish capacity against the junta. In 2022, the NUG an-

nounced that Project Dragonfly, one of their fundraising campaigns for air defense, raised USD 2.2 million, and some funds had been used for aerial defense and counter-aerial offensive. Two years later in 2024, the public was amazed to hear the news of aerial drones infiltrating the air defense system of Nay Pyi Taw, the heart of the regime. Just a few days later, another drone attack which allegedly injured the regime's second most important person was reported.

On the ground, the Myanmar army has been facing defeat left right and center even before these drone attacks by the resistance forces. With sponsorship of the NUG, independent resistance groups successfully waged drone war against the regime's forces, and the attacks have been so impactful that the regime's deputy home affairs minister admitted that their major threat in modern warfare is drone attack. Lieutenant General Ni Lin Aung, who also serves as the chief of Myanmar Police Force, made a comment at the 2023 Conference of Global Public Security Forum, which was held August last year in China's Jiangsu province under the theme "One World, Common Security." He said at the conference that "terrorist groups" are increasingly using drones worldwide, which is creating a challenge. He also suggested that it is essential to enhance regional and bilateral cooperation to prevent weapons, including drones, from falling into the hands of criminals and malicious groups worldwide, and that border controls should be strengthened to prevent so-called terrorist groups from receiving drones.

Why has the Myanmar army failed to prevent the resistance's improvised drone war? One may won-

The regime's notorious generals may get rich by milking the institution dry but they are not willing to spend a penny to protect its troops and subordinates.

der, and drone Engineer DES has an answer. He said, "If you want to defend drones in effective ways, you need money, technology and also connections. And even if you have money and connection, you must choose the right vendor. Otherwise, you'll end up with low quality, inauthentic products."

It is true that resistance forces have managed to infiltrate Myanmar military's jamming techniques in most of the scenarios. In some cases, we heard that the drone dropped the bombs right on the building where the jamming equipment was on top of it.

U Maung Swe, deputy secretary of NUC's Defense Ministry, recently told RFA Burmese that their drones can be easily used despite the junta's jammers, because they know the jammer frequency of anti-drone guns used by the regime. The regime's notorious generals may get rich by milking the institution dry but they are not willing to spend a penny to protect its troops and subordinates. Apart from the ones to protect the VIPs, most of the drone-preventing equipment are bought from China and mostly second hand equipment or outdated ones.

However, Aung Naing Soe shares a different perspective. He explained how bad the Myanmar army is losing in the technology war based on his experience. When he was in custody in Nay Pyi Taw, he met a so-called technical expert. "By that time we had been brought to the police station, an army officer who called himself as a technical expert came to the police station to inspect our drone. He could not even locate the data from the SD slot."

Having seen this, it did not come

as a surprise for Aung Naing Soe to witness the junta troops being defeated by the resistance's drone attacks due to their lack of knowledge of such innovative technology.

Ironically, Myanmar's is not the only army that faces losses in the drone battle. Russia, Myanmar's devil brothers-in-arms, also encounters defeat due to Ukraine's drone attack. However, Ukraine is fortunate because it has been supplied with the most sophisticated arms and weapons including cutting-edge kamikaze drones by some friendly nations. The international community has acknowledged that the Russia-Ukraine war is an invasion, hence, Ukraine has received tremendous support to defend its sovereignty from a powerful foreign country.

Meanwhile, what has happened in Myanmar to this day is widely seen as merely an internal political turmoil. Despite this view from the outside world, people of Myanmar have time and again shown the world their eagerness to eradicate the fascist military regime from the country to build a better future. If the world applauds Ukraine for achieving victories against Russia with their citizens' courage, Myanmar people are also winning the most brutal army in the region, minus the international help and arms supplies.

DES explained, "While Ukraine troops use military-grade drones with fuel cells which can fly for up to 24-hours, Myanmar's resistance fighters are using RC-grade lithium batteries in their improvised drones which inevitably limits the flight time due to the lack of high-tech support."

"Imagine if the resistance groups

are upgraded to use the fuel-cell power batteries, there will be more milestones," he added.

In the latest propaganda film made by the Myanmar military, one of the soldier characters danced to Michael Jackson's song Beat it as his outpost was crashed by the resistance forces (note: they used the term "terrorist" in the film) with bombs from drones. I honestly do not know what this particular scene intends to show. Probably, that character might have been suffering from shell shock, a form of PTSD due to active warfare.

Reflecting the realities, my personal interpretation of this scene is that it is the Myanmar military admitting that drones have become a powerful threat in its fight with the resistance.



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

April was a whirlwind for Myanmar's armed resistance, with notable highs and lows shaping the campaign. Here's a recap of the month's key military events:

Coordinated drone attacks on military bases in Nay Pyi Taw

The Ministry of Defense of the National Unity Government (NUG) announced that the military headquarters in Nay Pyi Taw, and the Aela Air Force base came under simultaneous drone attacks on April 4. These strikes reportedly involved the Kloud Drone division of the Special Technical Force and the PDF joint force at the military headquarters, while the Lethal Props division of the Special Technical Force and the PDF joint forces targeted the Alar Air Force base. Around 9 am, 16 kamikaze drones struck the military headquarters, while 13 drones targeted the Aela Air Force base. In response, the Air Defense Force, as per the military council's announcement, successfully intercepted four drones approaching from the east of Nay Pyi Taw Airport and three drones from the southeast of Zeyathiri Township, preventing any casualties or structural damage. General Zaw Min Tun, the military spokesman, downplayed the severity of the attack, dismissing the technology used by the revolutionary forces as merely for entertainment. However, this is the most significant aerial threat on the regime's headquarters since the coup. Consequently, some military leaders' meetings slated for the week were canceled, as well as the planned Thingyan party in Nay Pyi Taw, scheduled for military leaders.

Defense Service Academy tar-

geted in Pyin Oo Lwin, Mandalay Region

While the junta's headquarters was targeted, its other significant location in Pyin Oo Lwin also met a similar fate. In the early morning of April 8, a coalition of local resistance forces launched an assault on the regime's Defense Service Academy (DSA) in Pyin Oo Lwin, Mandalay Region. At around 3 am, five heavy artillery rounds were fired toward the entrance gate of the Academy, located on the Mandalay-Lashio highway road. The roadside and fences were reportedly damaged in the attack. Again, on April 14, at least two explosions reportedly rocked the compound of the Academy (DSA). The incident occurred around 9:30 pm, as two free-flight rockets struck buildings, resulting in 19 injuries, including two high-ranking officials. Significantly, the explosions coincided with the arrival of coup leader Min Aung Hlaing in the town for the Thingyan vacation. The following day, Min Aung Hlaing conspicuously abstained from attending the water festival ceremony, with only his wife seen participating in the traditional event.

KIA's intensified offensive in Kachin State

Reports indicated that the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) gained full control of two towns in April. The first and more significant one is Lwege town in Moe Mauk Township, a pivotal trade city on the Myanmar-China border. Following the departure of soldiers from Infantry Battalion 142 stationed near the local high school on April 8, the KIA forces are now

overseeing the city's administration and security operations. According to Colonel Nawbu, KIA's spokesperson, the entire city of Lwegel is under the KIA's control. The second capture took place on April 29, when the KIA and allied resistance forces seized Sinbo Town, which is situated on the bank of the Irrawaddy River, 60 miles south of Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State. Additionally, the KIA successfully reopened the entrance gate of Laiza, its headquarters on April 25 after more than 10 years. A local resident of Laiza described the recapture of the gate, previously occupied by regime troops, as a major military success. With the regime troops retreating following several KIA offensives, the KIA was able to reopen the old road, once threatened by regime forces. KIA Lt. Gen. Gun Mao emphasized the significance of this achievement on his Facebook page, stating, 'While it may not be time for ultimate celebrations, the reopening of the Linza Road has provided a sense of freedom for local residents after more than 10 years. We will continue our efforts so that the entire country can experience the taste of freedom.'

The unpredictability of Myawaddy, Karen State

The most exciting and depressing news for the public came from Myawaddy, Karen State. On April 7, the Karen National Union (KNU) announced that approximately 617 regime personnel, including family members, surrendered to them at the Thinganyinaung strategic station in Myawaddy Township, Karen State. This surrender represents the largest in KNU territory to

date. Among those who surrendered were 67 officers, 410 troops, and 140 family members. The surrender followed the KNU's offensive at the station on April 5. Following this triumph, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), along with its allied forces, successfully captured Infantry Battalion 275, the last stronghold of the military council at the western entrance to Myawaddy, on the Myanmar-Thailand border. The attack, which began on April 8 and concluded on April 11 at 4 am, resulted in the death of 50 military council members and injuries to two members of the joint resistance forces. Despite the victory, uncertainties loomed over the city's governance, with various armed forces present in the area. The power vacuum was witnessed in the city and two weeks later on April 23, the regime's forces retook the Battalion 275 through its ally, Border Guard Forces (BGF).

AA's 15th anniversary and on-going mission

On April 10, General Twan Mratt Naing, marking the 15th anniversary of the Arakan Army (AA), urged people residing in areas under the regime's control in Sittwe and Kyaukphyu towns to relocate to AA-controlled areas. He emphasized that the AA had begun administering these areas and required additional human resources to manage operations effectively. General Twan

Mratt Naing also stated that the AA was preparing for the ultimate battle against the regime to achieve Arakan liberation. AA has total control over Kyauktaw, Mrauk-U, Minbya, Myebon, Ramree, Pauktaw, Ponnagyun, and Rathedaung townships in Rakhine State and Paletwa in Chin State. It has also seized rural areas in Maungdaw and Buthidaung where junta troops are only present in the towns. It also controls rural areas in Sittwe and Kyaukphyu townships.

Rest of the country

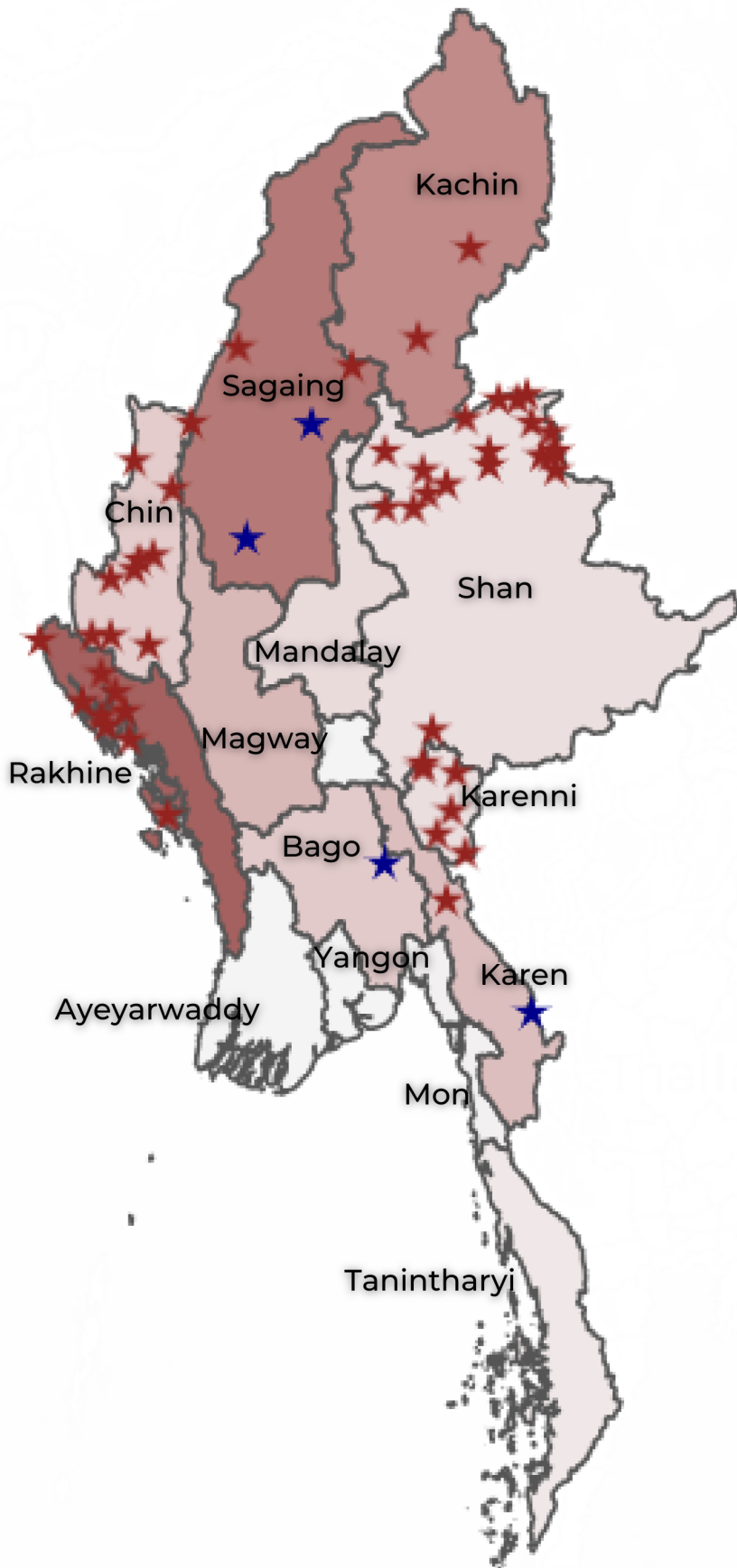
During the battle on April 11, the regime suffered heavy losses in men killed and captured alive in Karenni State. The troops that arrived in Hpasauing Township were intercepted by Karenni resistance forces midway, resulting in a day-long battle. Approximately 53 regime troops were killed, while 56 others, including the battalion commander, were captured alive. The Karenni resistance forces have been striving to capture Hpasauing Town for two months and have successfully seized nine regime stations during this period.

On April 12, local resistance forces intercepted a regime convoy and detained dozens of troops, including recruits, in Ayadaw Township, Sagaing Region. The convoy, consisting of six vehicles transporting about 250 trainees recruited under the conscription

law, was traveling from Monywa to Ayadaw. During the attack, three vehicles were destroyed, resulting in 20 fatalities and 15 injuries among the regime troops. A total of 49 individuals, including 45 recruits, were captured alive. Additionally, multiple firearms, including 5,500 bullets, were confiscated during the interception. On April 23, the Chin Brotherhood Force announced a coalition effort by Chin resistance groups to launch an offensive aimed at capturing Kyindwe Town, with coordination from the AA in Kanpetlet Township, Chin State. The mission, initiated in early March, has seen escalating clashes, particularly in the past month, following the regime's reinforcement of its troops. Kyindwe Town is situated at the border of Magway Region, Chin State, and Rakhine State.

On the morning of April 24, the KNLA and allied resistance forces reportedly seized control of the regime's Maw Hta Station, situated in Dawei Township, Tanintharyi Region. Maw Hta Station, positioned near the Thai border, marks the second station overtaken by the resistance forces, following the capture of Kyaukhtu in January. The Tanintharyi Region has witnessed heightened clashes between the regime's army and the resistance forces, with conflicts intensifying in eight out of ten townships within the region.

People's Resistance War in April



58
CASUALTIES FROM
RESISTANCE FORCES

1453
CASUALTIES
FROM SAC

867
REGIME SOLDIERS
SURRENDERED

No of Skirmishes



Towns captured and controlled
by resistance forces



Towns retaken from loss position
by the regime

Sources: NUG, Khit Thit Media

Crimes Against Humanity

4

crimes (at least) against humanity were committed by the regime in April.

Reverend Dr. Hkalam Sam Son still missing after re-arrest

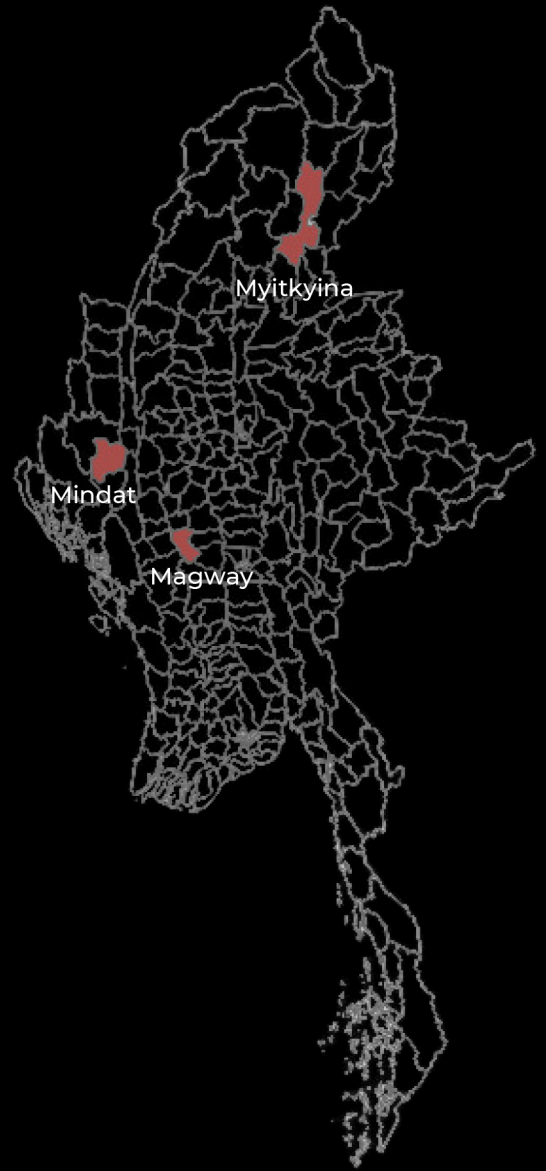
Dr. Hkalam Sam Son, advisor to the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC), was released from Myitkyina Prison on April 17 after being pardoned by the regime. However, he has since gone missing after being taken back by troops on the same night. The family has not been informed of the reasons for his re-arrest. General Zaw Min Tun told the BBC on April 19 that Dr. Hkalam Sam Son was not re-arrested but called to discuss peace. However, his whereabouts remain unknown.

Regime killed five and injured several following protest in Myitkyina Prison

On April 18, a protest erupted at Myitkyina Prison in Myitkyina City, Kachin State, resulting in four inmates killed and eight others injured as prison authorities and regime troops opened fire on them. The protest followed the release of 42 prisoners from Myitkyina Prison on April 17, the first day of the Myanmar New Year, with permission from the regime council. However, only three of those released were political prisoners. In response to the perceived unfairness of the pardon, the protest and the disperse took place on the following day. On the evening of April 19, the regime announced that four inmates had been killed and eight injured in the suppression of the protest. The injured were transferred to Myitkyina Hospital, and it remains unclear whether any of them were political prisoners. Another prisoner died on April 21 while receiving medical treatment.

About 150 people arrested roadside in Magway Region for conscription

Within four days, regime troops in Magway Region arrested about 150 individuals under the guise of military enlistment. In the morning of April 25, soldiers stopped pedestrians and arbitrarily arrested them in Yenanchaung Township, resulting in nearly 60 individuals being taken into custody by the end of the operation. In Natmawk Township, similar arrests have been ongoing since April 22, with approximately 100 residents detained within the four-day period. These arrests are purportedly part of efforts to fill up mandatory military service batch 2.



Regime attacked hospital in Mindat tsp, Chin State

On the night of April 25, the regime's air force bombed Mindat Township, targeting Wammathu Hospital, located more than 20 miles north of the city. Two bombs struck the hospital, killing two people instantly. Two others succumbed to their injuries later, while the hospital itself was reportedly set in flames and destroyed. Before the coup in 2021, Wammathu Hospital functioned as a district-level facility with only one military doctor. However, following the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) after the military coup, health workers who participated in the movement joined the hospital. With the assistance of CDM doctors from Mandalay, the hospital gradually expanded its capabilities to handle major injuries and surgeries. It was serving not only local residents but also people from Sagaing and Magway regions, becoming a vital healthcare provider in the area before the regime's bombing on the facility.

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