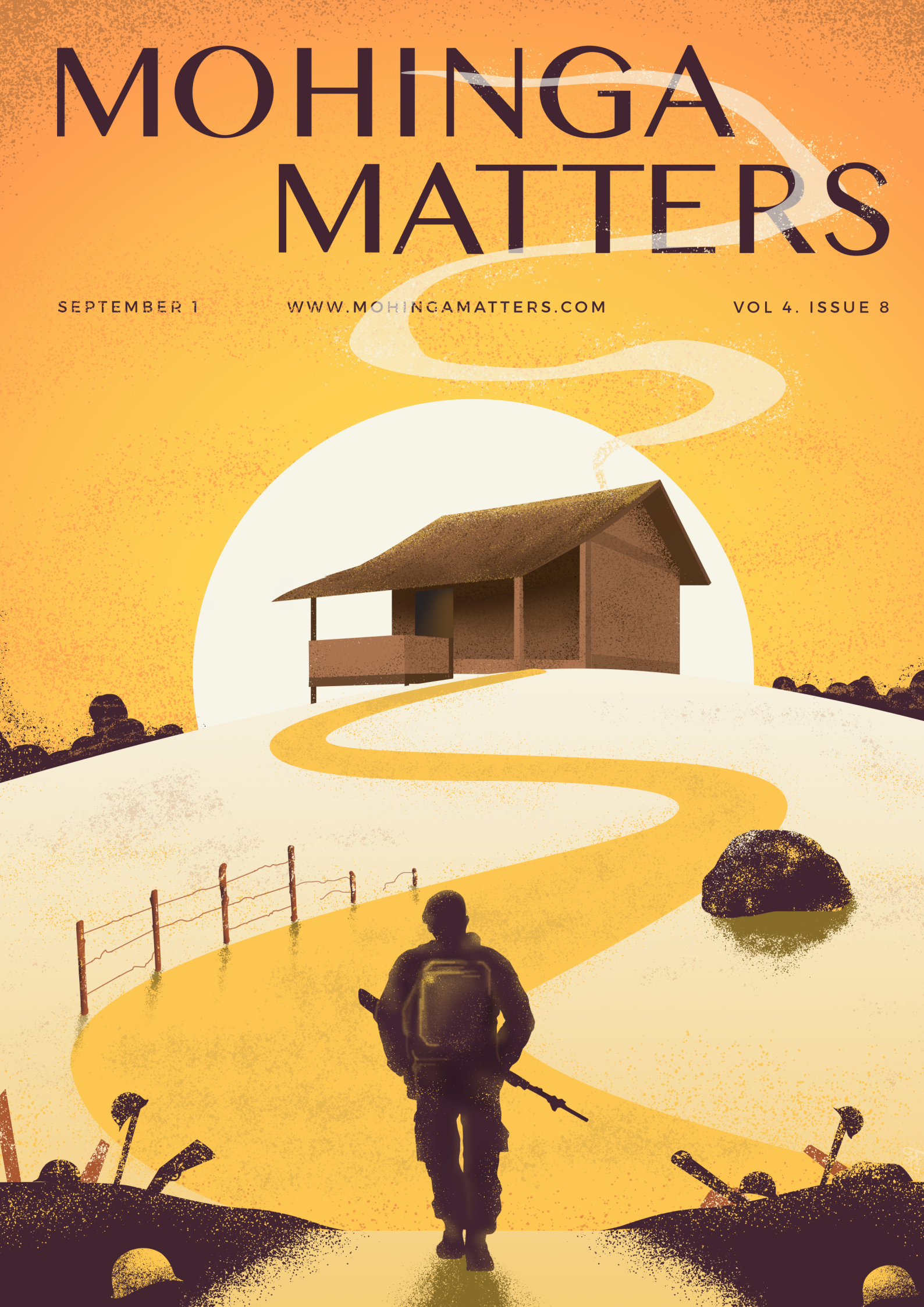


MOHINGA MATTERS

SEPTEMBER 1

WWW.MOHINGAMATTERS.COM

VOL 4. ISSUE 8



Recap

Folks, we were teased by the rumor of Min Aung Hlaing getting upstaged by his subordinates in the military this month. Myanmar people were well aware that even if Min Aung Hlaing was no longer the junta chief, situations would not have gotten better for the public so the rumor was short-lived, but it did highlight the desire and hope of the people who wished it to be true and give many of us a quick window to dream of coming home.

To commemorate the 36th anniversary of the 8888 Uprising, the Red Paint campaign was witnessed all across Yangon, including Yangon University. While many resistance supporters from different locations gathered to remember the significant day for Myanmar's democracy struggle despite the tightened security, diaspora communities around the globe also showed solidarity with the ongoing revolution against the military regime.

August 25th marked the seventh year since the mass displacement of Rohingyas in Rakhine State. Hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas fled to neighboring Bangladesh due to the military's operation in 2017, and these people ended up in refugee camps to this day. The lives of Rohingya and Rakhine civilians have continued to be disrupted by the Myanmar military as recently as this month. The UN called on both the Myanmar military and AA to be held accountable.

After extending the emergency rule for another six months, the talk about the junta's election resurfaced again. This month, 51 political parties that have been registered with the regime-assembled Election Commission met with the commission to

discuss the election. At the meeting, attendees discussed that the election might potentially take place in November 2025, and it will likely be a two-day or three-day event instead of one voting day. This month, the Thai ambassador to Myanmar Mongkol Visitstump met with officials from the regime and election commission and discussed possible support for the election preparation process.

Another top news of the month is the regime planning to recruit men aged between 35 and 65 for local security training and anti-terrorism activities. Since males under 35 are required to join the military training under the conscription law, this announcement leaves no able person to avoid military duty unless they flee the country. News also arose this month that the recruitment of women for mandatory training began in certain parts of the country even though it had not been officially announced by the regime.

Even when individuals plan to leave the country, the regime manages to meddle, using full authority. This month, news reported that PV passport holders were denied departure at airports and border gates to avoid individuals with visitor passports leaving to work abroad. The regime's Ministry of Labour stated that such restriction is to prevent tax obligations by the migrant workers. Workers en route to Dubai and the Middle East were reportedly interrogated about their plans at their destinations before boarding the flight. .

Last month, one of the members of Three Brotherhood Alliance, MNDAA captured Lashio, and earlier this month, the ethnic armed group released over 200 political prisoners detained in the prison, including U Tun Tun Hein, for-

mer deputy speaker of the lower house, and CEC member of the NLD. Similarly in Rakhine State, another member of the Alliance, AA released 41 political prisoners being detained in Thandwe Prison after taking over the prison in mid-July.

A heartwarming scene later this month was the homecoming of Mandalay PDF soldiers who claimed back Thabeikkyin Town from the hand of the regime. Citizens welcomed them, and netizens praised them. The NUG's Prime Minister Mahn Win Khaing Than said that now is the peak of the Spring Revolution, and rejected the prediction made by some experts that balkanization could take place in Myanmar.

In early August, anti-China protests that were allegedly sponsored by the regime took place in Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw after Min Aung Hlaing had hinted at China's involvement in the ongoing conflicts in the northern Shan State. In mid-August, China's foreign minister Wang Yi met Min Aung Hlaing in Nay Pyi Taw. At this point, the resistance forces have controlled at least three Chinese investment projects. Official statements from both countries emphasized peace and stability in Myanmar.

In the latest UN report, about three million people in Myanmar have been displaced, with close to 400,000 of them affected by the monsoon torrential rain and flood. A total of 18.6 million people are in need of aid. With the depreciation of Myanmar kyats, the prices of commodity items, food, and medicine continue to surge. For many of us, the only hope to survive and return home is the end of the military regime.

August 1, 2024

The Progressive Karenni People's Force (PKPF) reported 667 civilian deaths, including displaced persons, from military actions in Moby, Southern Shan State, and Pekon, Karenni State over the past three and a half years. The PKPF also noted 1,189 battles and 1,655 airstrikes by Junta's Army since the coup.

August 2, 2024

A military helicopter crashed at Mhawbi Township's airbase, killing Maj-Gen Soe Tin Latt and his co-pilot, Col Myo Thaung. Two others were injured. The Eurocopter was on a training flight at Hmawbi Air Base, north of Yangon.

August 3, 2024

The MNDAA and allies captured Lashio, Shan State's capital, after a month of fighting. Residents began returning, and normal activities resumed, although over 100 civilians were killed and 200 injured during the clashes.

The Association for the Assistance of Political Prisoners (AAPP) reported 334 civilian deaths in Sagaing from January to July 2024, including 111 women and 39 minors. Additionally, 161 people, including 12 minors, were imprisoned in Sagaing during the same period.

August 4, 2024

The junta's airstrikes targeted Sintku Township, Mandalay Region, killing 17 civilians and injuring 19 across two villages, Nweyone and Kan Taung, under MDY-PDF control.

August 5, 2024

Chin allied forces seized the junta's Infantry Battalion Unit 269 in Thantlang, Chin State, following an offensive that began on July 22.

August 6, 2024

Protests backed by the military took place in Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw, targeting China and its alleged involvement in recent military setbacks. Protesters carried anti-Chinese banners and chanted slogans against the MNDAA and Chinese influences.

August 7, 2024

The Thai ambassador to Myanmar visited Nay Pyi Taw, offering assistance for the regime's upcoming election and census. The meeting involved the Chairman of the Election Commission and the Minister of Immigration.

August 8, 2024

Prime Minister Mann Win Khaing Than of the NUG declared the Spring Revolution is at its strongest point during the 8888 Uprising commemoration, highlighting a united front in the ongoing struggle.

August 9, 2024

Cherry Htet, a former deputy police officer and bodyguard of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, was scheduled for release from Yemathein Prison but was not freed. Authorities claimed she needed to serve nine more days.

Preliminary talks on amending the 2008 Constitution and upcoming elections were scheduled to take place in Nay Pyi Taw on August 21 and 22, involving political parties, military council members, and ethnic armed groups.

August 10, 2024

Kachin Independence Organization Chairman General N’ban La called for a political solution to Myanmar’s conflict on Kachin Martyrs’ Day, expressing willingness for dialogue despite ongoing armed resistance.

August 12, 2024

The Three Brotherhood Alliance (MNDAA, TNLA, AA) reaffirmed its unity and achievements in “Operation 1027,” thanking supporters and emphasizing its mission of self-defense and protection.

August 14, 2024

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing in Naypyidaw, reaffirming China’s support for the regime and praising Myanmar’s stance on Taiwan. Wang also promised assistance with elections and census.

August 16, 2024

U.S. officials Tom Sullivan and Michael Schiffer held a virtual meeting with Myanmar’s opposition, including the NUG and other resistance groups, reaffirming U.S. support for a democratic future in Myanmar.

August 17, 2024

Major General Aung Myat of the Karenni Army warned political parties against exploiting the revolution for personal gain on the 76th Karenni Army Day.

August 11, 2024

Over 10,000 residents fled Natogyi, Mandalay, due to clashes between the People’s Defense Forces and regime army, which included at least eight airstrikes on the town.

August 13, 2024

The Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM) released a report detailing increased war crimes and atrocities committed by the Myanmar military, including attacks on non-military targets and extreme violence.

Regime troops attacked a rural market in Htanaungtaw Village, Monywa Township, Sagaing Region, killing 11 people, including a child, during the morning rush hour.

August 15, 2024

The regime barred individuals with visiting passports from leaving if they held foreign work visas. Additionally, a second auction of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s family mansion failed due to lack of buyers.

The Kachin Independence Army captured the junta’s La Maung Camp Hill near Hpakant, a crucial military base, in a successful operation.

August 18, 2024

Resistance forces briefly captured Depayin Town, Sagaing Region, but retreated due to intense junta airstrikes. The regime used fighter jets and helicopters to target the area.

August 19, 2024

Justice For Myanmar (JFM) called for sanctions on Singapore-based Emerging Towns & Cities (ETC) for continuing payments to the regime. ETC paid S\$900,000 for ground rent at a Yangon condominium.

Documentary filmmaker Pe Maung Same passed away at 50 due to tuberculosis, three days after his release on medical parole.

August 21, 2024

The Chinese Embassy in Myanmar announced that Min Aung Hlaing assured protection for Chinese projects and personnel in Myanmar during a meeting with Ambassador Ma Jia.

Dr. Sean Turnell reported Myanmar's economy has plummeted by 50% and the kyat's value by 80% under the current regime, describing the situation as a "war economy."

August 24, 2024

NUG Prime Minister Mann Win Khaing Than congratulated Paetongtarn Shinawatra on her appointment as Thailand's Prime Minister in a message sent on August 19.

August 26, 2024

U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken reaffirmed support for Myanmar's democratic aspirations on the 7th anniversary of the Rohingya genocide, emphasizing ongoing U.S. commitment.

August 20, 2024

Residents and aid workers in Sagaing reported ongoing artillery fire from military troops in Depayin, preventing villagers from returning home and forcing continued evacuation from six villages.

August 22, 2024

Nicholas Koumjian of the IIMM highlighted ongoing impunity for those responsible for the 2017 Rakhine State atrocities, marking seven years of unaccountability and continued violence.

August 23, 2024

PDF forces raided Ngwe Tuu Kyaw Village, Gyo-bingauk Township, killing ward administrator U Myint Tin, known for collaborating with the junta and enforcing conscription.

August 25, 2024

Kachin Independence Army forces captured several key locations in Sagaing Region, including the Inntaw Township Police Station, and rescued 16 detainees.

August 27, 2024

The Arakan Army reported capturing multiple military outposts in Maungdaw Township, Rakhine State, recovering over 100 military bodies and significant equipment.

The Chinese ambassador to Myanmar, Ma Jia, met with U Than Swe, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Myanmar's Military Council, to discuss the safety and security of Chinese projects and employees in Myanmar. According to a statement from the Chinese Embassy in Yangon, Ambassador Ma emphasized the importance of protecting Chinese investments and personnel in the country.

Members of the parliament from Gangbuk Township in Seoul, South Korea, including the chairman, issued a joint statement in support of Myanmar's democratic movement. The statement expressed solidarity with the people of Myanmar in their struggle for democracy.

August 30, 2024

The regime announced plans to increase household and business electricity rates by two to three times, starting from September 1, 2024. The council justified the price hike by citing rising production costs for electricity.

Additionally, the regime revealed an amendment to the tax law, increasing the commercial tax on gold goods by three percent, effective from October 1, 2025. This tax will apply to the sale of gold jewelry and will remain in effect until March 31, 2026.

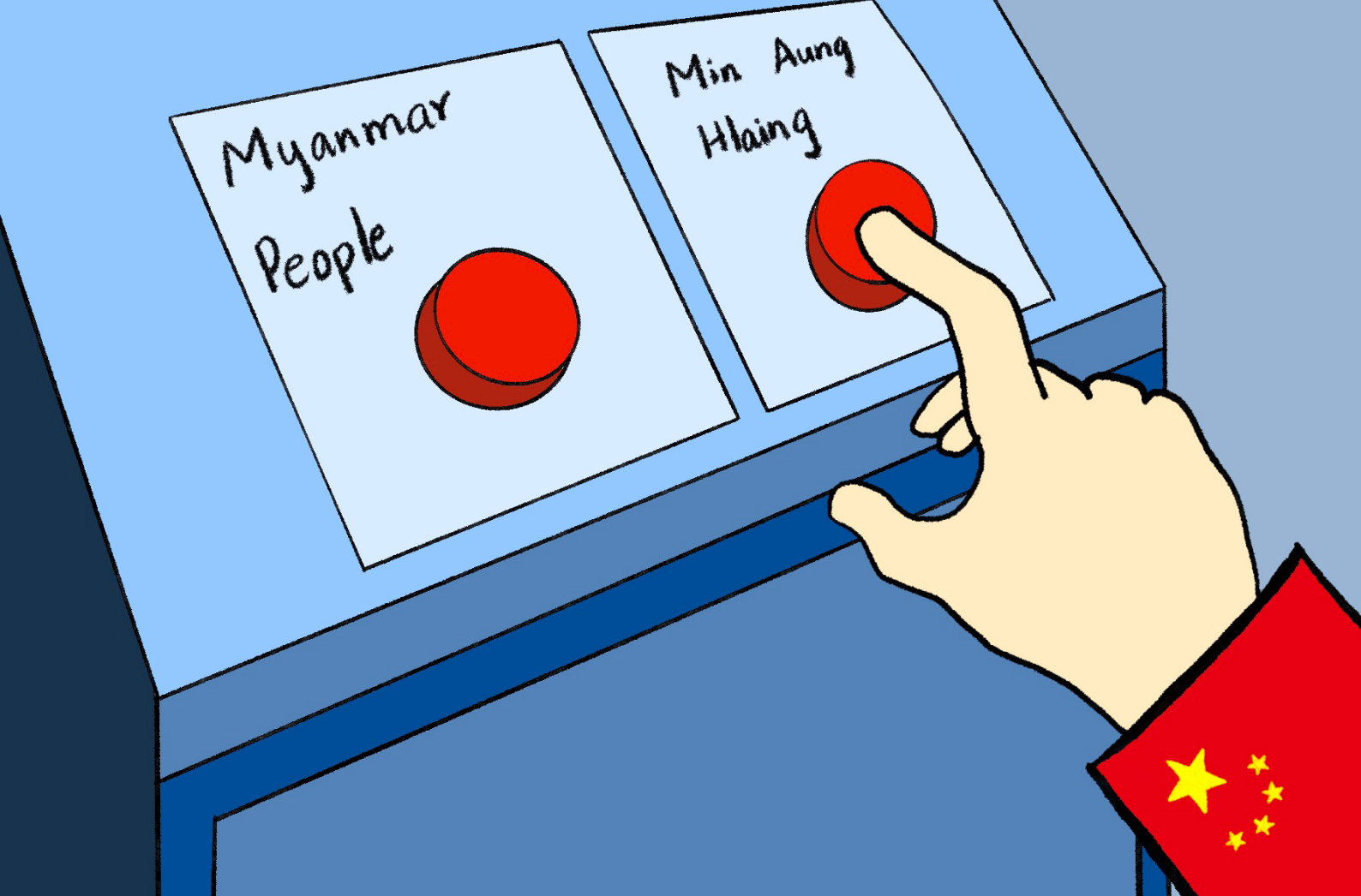
August 29, 2024

China issued a notification to the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) demanding an immediate halt to fighting and a focus on maintaining peace and stability in Shan (north) and the China-Myanmar border. The message called for cooperation with China to protect the lives and security of civilians in the border region, including Chinese citizens and business interests inside Myanmar.

The White House confirmed that the Myanmar situation was included in a meeting between U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing, as per a White House press release.

In Mandalay Region, residents of Mogok Township reported that internet services were restored on August 29 after more than two months of communication blackouts. The region, controlled by the TNLA, had experienced prolonged interruptions.

Justice For Myanmar exposed a global network of companies that had helped the Myanmar military acquire and operate at least ten French-manufactured Avions de Transport Regional (ATR) aircraft since 2013. The investigation revealed that international companies, military arms brokers, and airlines facilitated the transfers, often obscuring the military as the end user to bypass sanctions.



Doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results? – China since the coup

Foreign Minister Wang Yi visiting Myanmar and meeting with the current junta Min Aung Hlaing, the previous junta Than Shwe, and other top brass from junta's circles, China publicly declaring "3 uncrossable lines" in handling crisis in Myanmar (1. No civil war in Myanmar, 2. No exclusion by ASEAN towards Myanmar and 3. No foreign interference in Myanmar) during China-Laos-Myanmar-Thailand foreign ministers meeting, a new ambassador getting appointed and meeting with high ranking military and cabinet officials at junta's administration, i.e. the State Administration Council (SAC) on a daily basis, and culminating with an alleged letter from Yunnan Government threatening an increasingly powerful Ta'ang National Liberation

Army (TNLA) to cease conflict or face consequences, it has been a busy month in China-Myanmar relations.

Since Min Aung Hlaing staged the coup three years ago, China faced the most blame from the people of Myanmar, for both fair and unfair reasons alike. Furthermore, as the conflict intensified, to say Chinese interests in Myanmar got complicated would be a massive understatement. However, China faces the crisis unfolding in Myanmar with utmost calmness. It seems as if this 5000-year-old civilization sees whatever is happening in their southern neighbors will come to pass and the people of Myanmar, regardless of age, gender, race, religion, education attain-

ment, wealth, or any differences, will come to see the light in the Chinese way. Over the past three years, despite changes in the ground situation, China showed little sign of reformulating its approach.

The coup posed many challenges to Chinese interests in Myanmar, however, China demonstrated time and time again that the solution for these challenges lies in achieving stability in Myanmar, which (China seems to that) is possible only by leveraging different armed groups, both SAC and rivaling ethnic armed organizations (EAOs). Thus, the very first reaction of the coup was not to denounce like democratic countries but rather to work together with the military rulers toward

Three years on, China's betting to ignore the people's voices has backfired horribly. Myanmar couldn't be further from peace and stability, SAC is losing grounds massively to protect Chinese investments.

the path of peace and stability. In contrast to some accusations of China supporting SAC, we do not see that China likes or trusts SAC, but rather we regard that it betted on SAC as the best option to protect its interests in Myanmar. What is clear is that, in China's equation on Myanmar, ordinary people do not matter. Similarly, the National Unity Government (NUG), which holds the mandate of the democratic electoral process of the 2020 Myanmar General Elections, was never given a serious public engagement by China.

Three years on, China's betting to ignore the people's voices has backfired horribly. Myanmar couldn't be further from peace and stability, SAC is losing grounds massively to protect Chinese investments and other interests well, and even in the midst of withstanding carnage and smoldering villages, the people's resistance to military rule marched on. Regardless of what happens next, what is clear is that SAC cannot win this war.

However, despite all these changes in the Myanmar conflict, China still seems to be adamant about its flawed approach in considering the junta as the potential winner over the people. It is one thing for Min Aung Hlaing to consider the way out of his problems, which started due to injustice and wanton violence, is more in justice and more violence, how-

ever, it defies logic to see the brilliant minds among Chinese government behaving as if they think the way to achieving peace in Myanmar (and thus offering a stable environment for Chinese interests) is not through forsaking the junta and his administration but rather engaging even more.

Having said that, in some ways, we could see why China might prefer the current unreliable and incapable military junta over the federal democratic government we the pro-revolution people constantly talk about. Myanmar's Spring Revolution, which started as a peaceful resistance against a military coup gained momentum this far in our dislike for oppression and determination to pay the ultimate price to achieve freedom from military rule. However, for outsiders and foreign powers whose policies lie on the attainment of their own national interest, guarantees of what kind of future we are going to build after the fall of military dictatorship, and more importantly whether our envisioned future aligns with their national interest will be critical to make a decision. Admittedly, the reality is that despite gains militarily, there is not much progress politically to convince China to re-think its engagement with the junta.

Here we are only talking about China because of its position as a neighboring (big-brother) su-

perpower and its historical (since the coup) and recent flurry of engagement with the junta. However, our inability to sell our future (despite our belief and will to make it bright) remains a serious flaw in engagement with any foreign countries.

Creation of concrete steps for a credibly brighter future is our task primarily, and we are convinced that the people of Myanmar, after withstanding massive atrocities in our fight against oppression and after coming this far, will bridge this gap in a matter of time, whether China keeps its bets on SAC or not.

As for China, right now it still has an opportunity to ensure peace, stability, and protection of its long-term interests in Myanmar. But to do that would require massive reformulating of its engagements, and not to discount the voice and determination of the people of Myanmar.



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/>



The Long Road Home : Liberation, Loss and Struggle for the better Myanmar

On August 12, Ma Aye Myint Aung shared a momentous update on [Facebook](#): “My hometown, Tagaung, is liberated.” For her and countless others, this declaration carried a bittersweet blend of hope and sorrow. Two days later, the Irrawaddy news outlet echoed this sentiment with the headline, [“Myanmar Junta Driven from the Birthplace of the Burmese Empire.”](#) This event was emblematic of a broader trend that has emerged in the three years since the military coup—opposition forces, including the National Unity Government (NUG) and Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs), have been steadily reclaiming territories, moving closer to a future free from mili-

tary oppression.

The NUG claims that revolutionary forces, in alliance with EAOs, now control over 60% of the country. The launch of Operation 1027 has accelerated these gains, allowing these forces to seize key junta positions and territories, leaving the military in disarray. Reflecting on these victories, Aye Myint Aung expressed surprise in an interview, admitting that she did not expect major cities like hers to be liberated so soon, thinking instead that the revolution would begin by reclaiming rural areas. Yet, this has become a reality since the launch of Operation 1027. However, beneath these triumphs lie the deep scars

of war, especially for those who have lost everything.

For people like Ma Aye Myint Aung, the liberation of their hometowns is more than just a military victory; it is a deeply personal moment, infused with the hope of returning to a place that once served as the heart of their lives. Yet, this hope is often confronted with harsh realities. As the People’s Defense Force (PDF) soldiers advance, many have shared poignant images of their [homecomings—standing before the ruins of their homes](#), which have been torched by retreating junta soldiers. These images serve as stark reminders of what has been lost.

Homes in Myanmar are more than mere places of shelter; they are repositories of familial history and cultural heritage. When a home is destroyed, it takes with it a piece of the family's soul.

Since the February 2021 coup, the sense of home for millions of Myanmar's citizens has been violently disrupted. According to the [UNHCR](#), by August 2024, 3 million people have been displaced, with over 60,000 fleeing to neighboring countries. Sagaing Region, which was once untouched by internal displacement, now bears the heaviest burden, with 1,246,300 internally displaced persons (IDPs). The Mandalay Region, where Tagaung is located, also experienced its first waves of displacement, now home to 26,200 IDPs.

The displacement is not just about losing physical structures—it's about the loss of community, culture, and identity. Homes in Myanmar are more than mere places of shelter; they are repositories of familial history and cultural heritage. When a home is destroyed, it takes with it a piece of the family's soul. This is particularly true in rural areas, where generations have lived in the same place, maintaining traditions and ways of life that are intimately tied to the land. For many, returning home is an emotional and spiritual journey, not just a physical one. There

are still millions who have not been able to return home. A PDF member who has been unable to return since 2021 shared his thoughts in an interview: "When I get home, I will go straight to my dad's embrace and kiss him. I want to return home. I am trying my best here and I believe it is possible." Ma Aye Myint Aung also expressed her determination, saying, "Both those who can go home and those who cannot will work twice as hard to make returning home possible for everyone."

Coming home also involves confronting the reality of what has been lost, but it also holds the possibility of rebuilding. The act of returning home, or at least the dream of it, offers a form of resistance against the violence that has uprooted them. Even as the military continues its brutal campaign, the determination to return and rebuild stands as a testament to the resilience of the Myanmar people. In some areas under the control of EAOs and in liberated zones, communities have begun to rebuild even amidst ongoing conflict. Efforts are underway to restore schools, medical facilities, and other social services in these liberated areas, as communities strive to recreate a semblance of their former lives. Yet, the road to reclaiming and rebuilding these homes is fraught with challenges. Landmines, continued military presence, and the lack of resources make it perilous to return. Moreover, the psychological toll of displacement cannot be underestimated. Many who have returned find themselves in mourning for what was lost—a life, a community, a way of being that may never be fully restored. Efforts to rebuild must consider not only the physical reconstruction of homes but also the restoration of community

networks and cultural practices. The trauma of displacement will linger, and addressing this requires more than just brick and mortar; it requires healing the deep psychological wounds inflicted by years of violence and loss.

For Ma Aye Myint Aung Aung and millions of others, the journey home is symbolic of their broader struggle for freedom and dignity. It is about reclaiming not just land, but the history and the future. The story of Tagaung's liberation, while a moment of triumph, also underscores the ongoing plight of Myanmar's displaced population—a people who, despite the devastation, continue to dream of the day when they can finally return home.





Seven Years On: A Rohingya Survivor's Reflections on Genocide and Resilience

As we mark the seventh year of the Rohingya genocide, we remember the brutal campaign of violence that began in August 2017, when the Myanmar military unleashed a deadly crackdown on the Rohingya ethnic group. Over 700,000 Rohingya were forced to flee their homes as villages were burned, thousands were killed, and countless others suffered atrocities such as rape, torture, and displacement.

To commemorate this tragic anniversary, we spoke with Ro Osmun, a survivor of the genocide who now resides in Mae Sot, Thailand. In this interview, he reflects on his escape from Myanmar, the enduring hardships faced by

Rohingya refugees, and his perspective on the current political climate in Myanmar.

MM: It has been seven years since the Myanmar military carried out genocidal actions against the Rohingya in 2017. Can you share your personal experiences and emotions, as well as those of your family, from that time?

Ro Osmun: My family and I have faced many challenges, and the history is endless. I'll try to highlight some key moments. At that time, we were nearly killed by the relentless firing of the Myanmar military. They didn't allow us to take anything for survival as we were forced to leave our home.

The worst part was when the military fired at us even while we were crossing the river. Fortunately, we survived somehow. But many innocent lives were lost, including children and pregnant women, while crossing the Naf River due to their firing. It was the most horrifying and terrible situation I have ever faced.

MM: What is the current situation like for you? And what are the main challenges faced by Rohingya refugees living in camps along the Bangladesh border and in several countries?

Ro Osmun: The biggest challenge that Rohingya people face in the Bangladesh camps, in IDP

The main reason behind AA targeting the Rohingya is ethnic cleansing, similar to what the Myanmar military did before. Killing an ethnic group is not revolution.

camps, and in many other countries is the lack of freedom and access to equality. Wherever you go, if you are Rohingya, you will not have proper rights, basic human rights, or freedom of movement. This is the most significant challenge that the Rohingya people face everywhere.

MM: What are your thoughts on the fact that, even now, the Myanmar military has not been held accountable for their actions?

Ro Osmun: In my opinion, it seems like no one cares that Rohingya people are also human beings. This is why the international community has failed to take action against the massacre of Rohingya by the Myanmar military. It's clear that the international community has all the necessary evidence: the military has killed many Rohingyas, burned

their houses, and seized all their properties. Yet, the international community remains silent because they don't see the Rohingyas as humans.

MM: With the Spring Revolution gaining momentum across Myanmar, challenging the military's grip on power, how do you feel about this movement? Are you hopeful?

Ro Osmun: I still feel hopeless because we haven't seen any positive action from the Myanmar Spring Revolution towards the Rohingya community. For this reason, we Rohingya are not hopeful that the Myanmar Spring Revolution will bring us justice and equality through their movement.

MM: There have been recent allegations that the Arakan Army (AA), a major force in Rakhine State, is conducting targeted attacks on Rohingya. What is your perspective on this situation?

Ro Osmun: The Arakan Army is clearly trying to cleanse the Rohingya ethnic group from Arakan to rename the state and not allow any Rohingya to live there. The main reason behind AA targeting the Rohingya is ethnic cleansing, similar to what the Myanmar military did before. Killing an ethnic group is not revolution. They claim they are liberating the state, but in reality, they are systematically cleansing the Rohingya.

MM: The Myanmar military has exploited ethnic divisions by arming certain Rohingya individuals in Rakhine State and using them against resistance groups in clashes. What are your thoughts on this strategy?

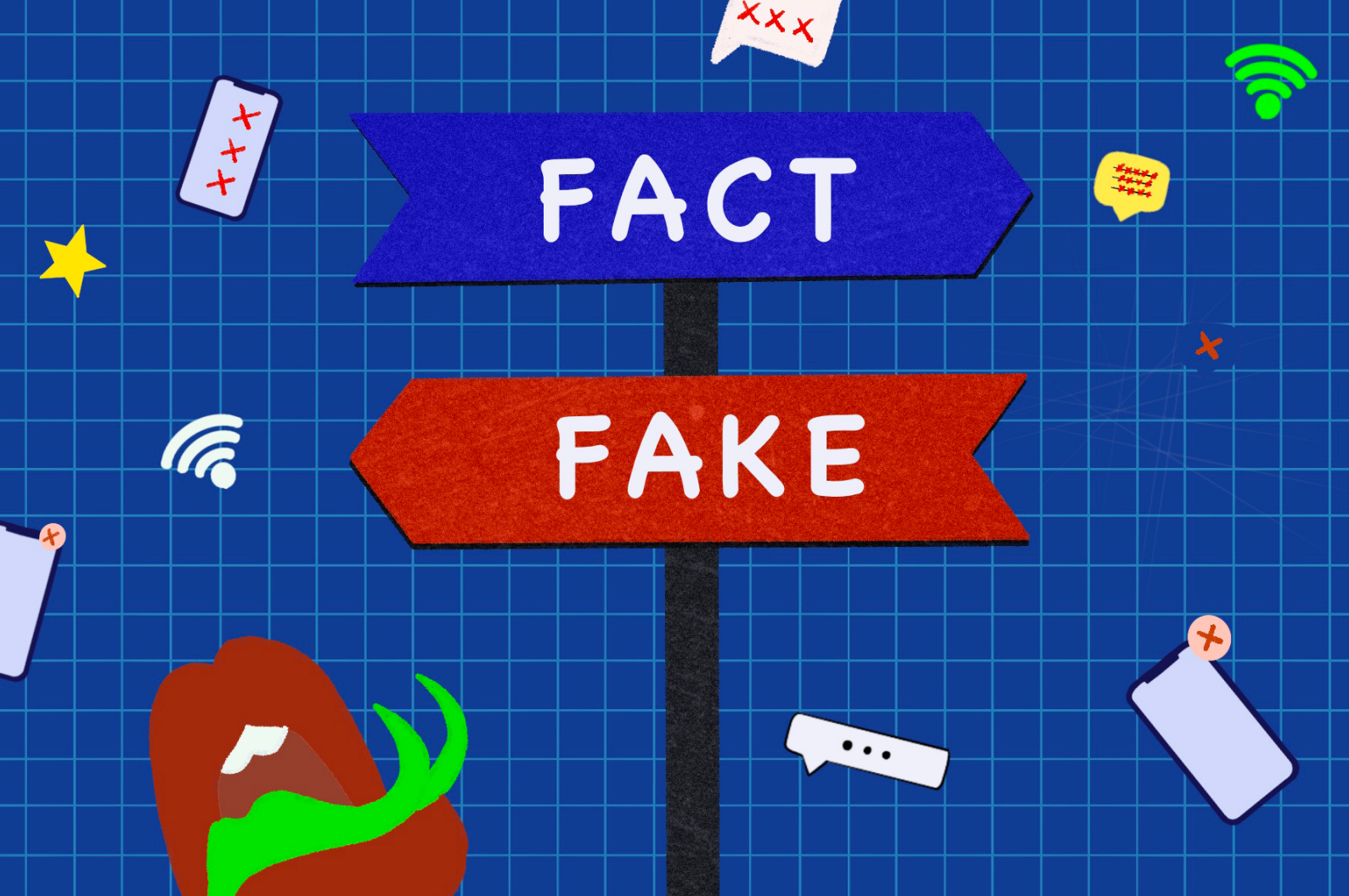
Ro Osmun: The purpose of this strategy is ethnic cleansing and the erasure of the Rohingya from Arakan.

MM: With the ongoing revolution, many old ideas in Myanmar, such as nationalism, religious divides, and ethnic prejudices, are being challenged. Do you believe general sentiment towards the Rohingya has shifted during this time?

Ro Osmun: Indeed, many sentiments have shifted during this time and before, but they have not had a real impact on the ground.

MM: What conditions need to be in place in Myanmar, particularly in Rakhine State, for Rohingya people to return to their homes safely?

Ro Osmun: There must be equal rights for people of all backgrounds. The systematic rules that have been designed specifically to oppress the Rohingya for decades must be abolished. Basic human rights and dignity must be guaranteed for everyone, regardless of their class or ethnicity. Only then can Rohingya people return home safely.



Social Media Influencers : A Double-Edged Sword in Myanmar's Revolution

From 2015 to 2020, Myanmar experienced a golden era of social media freedom. For the first time, netizens had unrestricted access to the internet, and they eagerly embraced it. People used this newfound freedom for education, business, and self-expression. Social media trends flourished, and many individuals rose to fame as “social media influencers,” a status once unattainable for the average person in Myanmar.

Before the internet became widely accessible, influencers in Myanmar were primarily movie stars, writers, and musicians. Their reach was limited, and connecting with audiences required traditional media like films, re-

cordings, and magazines, which took a long time to produce and distribute. Becoming an influencer was challenging, with only a small percentage achieving widespread recognition.

In the late 1990s to early 2000s, people eagerly awaited colorful lifestyle magazines to read interviews and comments from their favorite influencers. These monthly publications were among the few ways to connect with public figures. By 2011, as digital media began to emerge, print magazines started innovating by including DVDs with filmed interviews and behind-the-scenes footage. This was the closest influencers could get to their audience at the time,

though the content still took time to reach them. Even then, a single comment from an influencer could significantly impact the daily lives of their followers.

When daily printed journals peaked, Myanmar finally had the chance to hear from beloved public figures regularly. However, this was still during military rule, where all media was heavily censored, and audiences were fed sanitized content devoid of political dissent. What many didn't realize was that a new underground platform was quietly taking shape, led by innovative youth mostly outside the country. This platform, based on the “World Wide Web,” was beyond the reach of the regime's con-

In the mid-2000s, internet technology helped resurface the army's long-hidden atrocities, giving the Millennial Generation its first glimpse into the 1988 uprising they had only heard about.

servative control and censorship. This underground digital movement would eventually become a powerful force, challenging the status quo and giving rise to a new era of influence in Myanmar.

Around 2002, Bagan Cybertech, a telecommunications company founded by the son of General Khin Nyunt, a notorious military intelligence head, introduced limited internet access to the public. The regime forbade general internet users from accessing political websites and non-state news sources. Users had limited options, they could only use email and participate in the Bagan Cybertech internet forum. Given that Khin Nyunt's son owned the company, the services were heavily monitored and restricted. Despite these limitations, more people began using email and forums. These early efforts showed how the internet could be a tool for sharing information, expressing opinions, and connecting with others across different social groups.

Nay Phone Latt, the spokesperson for the Prime Minister's Office of the National Unity Government, recalled the past, "When I was working in Singapore around 2006 to 2007, 'Blogger.com' was launched. For people like me, who love to read, write, and share with the world, it was a dream come true. Many Burmese bloggers emerged after the ZawCyi font was made available for free." Blogging played a

key role in the anti-government movement, both for people inside the country and opposition groups outside Myanmar. After the 1990 sham election, many politicians, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and members of her National League for Democracy, were tortured and imprisoned for years, while others went underground. Many survivors continued to voice their resistance through international broadcasting channels, though Myanmar's citizens remained largely cut off from this information due to the country's information blockade.

In the mid-2000s, internet technology helped resurface the army's long-hidden atrocities, giving the Millennial Generation its first glimpse into the 1988 uprising they had only heard about. I vividly remember attempting to access restricted forums and websites in internet cafes to see footage of police and soldiers shouting vulgar words at protesters, shooting at them, and marching with bayonets—protesters covered in their own blood being carried away by their comrades. At the cost of 1,000 kyats per hour in an internet café, I began to understand the horrors of the 1988 revolution through political blogs.

After Khin Nyunt was overthrown and arrested in 2004, Bagan Cybertech was nationalized under military control, and internet activity declined while costs for the general public increased. Despite

these restrictions, internet cafés found innovative ways to provide access, such as installing foreign-hosted proxy sites, allowing bloggers to continue opposing the military government. In 2007, during the Saffron Revolution, atrocities committed by the military were exposed to the world by bloggers, citizen journalists, and journalists on the ground. Nay Phone Latt recalled, "During the Saffron Revolution, Myanmar bloggers documented as much of the military's brutality as they could. Although they didn't post these records on their own blogs, they used different methods to ensure the world knew what was happening."

Authorities responded by introducing new restrictions to curb the spread of information. Military intelligence and plainclothes police closely monitored internet cafés. Despite these dangers, citizen journalists and bloggers managed to upload images and videos from local cafés and email them to contacts outside the country. In a drastic attempt to block news from spreading, the military government cut all international internet connections and temporarily suspended most cell phone services on September 29, 2007. Blogger Nay Phone Latt was arrested on January 29, 2008, and sentenced to 20 years and six months in prison. According to RFA, at least 14 public figures, including Nay Phone Latt, were among over 3,000 people detained during the Saffron Revolution. Thanks to bloggers and citizen journalists, the world saw the truth about the military's actions, including footage of a Japanese journalist being shot by the army. During this time, global media increasingly relied on information from citizen journalists rather than international news agencies.

One particular rumor about an internal coup within the military regime this month caused widespread panic, despite being based on unverified information. The impact was immediate: fear spread, gold prices and exchange rates became unstable, and people resorted to panic buying.

After Myanmar transitioned to a semi-democratic government, there was a surge of hope among its citizens. The government relaxed restrictions, and for the first time, people enjoyed freedom of the press and internet access. As Nay Phone Latt pointed out, this newfound freedom made it harder for dictators to spread propaganda and allowed people to see the world from different perspectives. By 2013, censorship had eased significantly, enabling Myanmar's people to connect globally through social media. Facebook quickly became the most popular platform, and Myanmar's own influencers emerged alongside international ones.

These influencers covered a wide range of topics, from political commentary and literature quotes to beauty reviews and travel vlogs. The expansion of 4G networks and mobile internet access gave them the tools to explore the online world just like everyone else. Social media influencers became increasingly important. Unlike traditional media, social media allowed for direct interaction between influencers and their audience, making fame and influence more accessible to ordinary people. This was especially valuable for political influencers, who could finally discuss

topics that had been off-limits for decades.

From 2011 to 2020, Myanmar's citizens seized the opportunity to debate and discuss major political issues, from ethnic conflicts to the actions of the National League for Democracy (NLD) and the Rohingya crisis. Political influencers, both seasoned and new, played a key role in shaping public discourse. Heated debates became the norm on social media, reflecting the country's growing democratic spirit.

However, everything changed in 2021 when Min Aung Hlaing led a military coup, seizing control of the country against the will of its people. This sparked massive protests, with influencers from all fields joining the fight against military dictatorship. They used their platforms to rally support and spread awareness. But as the revolution gained momentum, some influencers began sharing rumors and opinions that distracted the public from the real issues. Early in the revolution, when the idea of armed resistance was still forming, social media was flooded with false claims about international intervention, like "US aircraft carriers heading to Myanmar" or "UN armored trucks ready to intervene." These rumors gave people false hope,

diverting attention from the military's tightening grip on power.

Ma Thida, a respected voice, warned that sharing fake news was dangerous and could erode trust within the movement. One particular rumor about an internal coup within the military regime this month caused widespread panic, despite being based on unverified information. The impact was immediate: fear spread, gold prices and exchange rates became unstable, and people resorted to panic buying. Ma Thida stressed that this emotional turmoil only served the military's agenda, leading to disunity and confusion among revolutionaries.

Since the coup, the junta has deliberately spread fake news and false hopes to distract the public from the revolution. Ma Thida cautioned that the military would continue to sow suspicion and resentment among revolutionaries to weaken the movement from within. Nay Phone Latt emphasized that influencers must be aware of the impact their posts can have on public perception. He urged the public to be more critical and to verify information before sharing it. While the military's disinformation campaigns have slowed as they lose ground, false rumors and hopes still circulate, leaving everyone to question who is behind these persistent falsehoods.

"What's on your mind?" Facebook asks. As Nay Phone Latt urged, "We must think about the impact and the consequences before we click 'post.'"

Highlights of the Armed Resistance

In August, the NUG and PDF achieved significant gains by capturing key towns like Thabeikkyin and Takaung, seizing weapons, and taking prisoners. Meanwhile, the MNDAA, TNLA, and AA also made major advances. In response, the junta launched airstrikes and bombardments, causing substantial civilian displacement and casualties.

MNDAA seized junta's northeastern command in Lashio; regime troops regrouped in a nearby small town

The Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) claimed to have seized the junta's Northeastern Command headquarters in Lashio, northern Shan State, following a month of heavy fighting. Although the MNDAA declared victory on July 25, the battle continued until August 3 due to scattered regime troops within the compound. In response, the junta regrouped and established a new regional military headquarters in Mongyai, a small town approximately 40 miles southeast of Lashio. General Myint Kyaw Tun, the second chief of military training, was appointed to lead operations at the new base. This restructuring followed the replacement of two regional commanders in July during the intense MNDAA assault on Lashio.

TNLA seized Kyaukme Town in Shan state

On August 6, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) captured the remaining junta positions in Kyaukme Town, northern Shan State, completing its takeover. The offensive, which began in late June, left the junta forces abandoning their stations and retreat-

ing to southern Shan State by early August. Kyaukme became the fourth town seized by TNLA as part of its Operation 1027, following the captures of Naungcho, Mongmit, and Mogok. The town, strategically located on the Mandalay-Muse Road, remains cut off from telecommunications.

Regime Forces held Maungdaw against AA offensive, while battles began near Sittwe, Rakhine State

In Maungdaw Township, regime forces held out against a persistent AA offensive for more than three months. The junta's strong defenses, bolstered by airstrikes, prevented the AA from fully capturing the township. The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO), and individual Rohingya fighters have also been aiding the regime in the battle against the AA. The ongoing conflict in the area has displaced thousands of Rohingya civilians.

Meanwhile, on August 29, a major clash erupted between the AA and junta forces in Sittwe Township, the capital of Rakhine State. The three-hour battle took place just 5 miles from the capital, between a junta column based in Myit Na Village and a joint column advancing from Shwe Min Gang Village toward Min Hla (Meelaung Village). The AA inflicted heavy losses on the regime, killing over 30 junta troops and seizing more than 60 weapons, including machine guns. The confrontation marks a strategic push by the AA toward Sittwe, where the State Administration Council (SAC) remains established. The SAC has constantly sought to lure government workers from AA-controlled

areas to Sittwe, using threats of non-payment as leverage. Additionally, Sittwe city has been blocked by both land and waterways, leaving residents trapped with no safe means of escape amidst the escalating conflict.

NUG and resistance forces secure key towns amid heavy junta retaliation

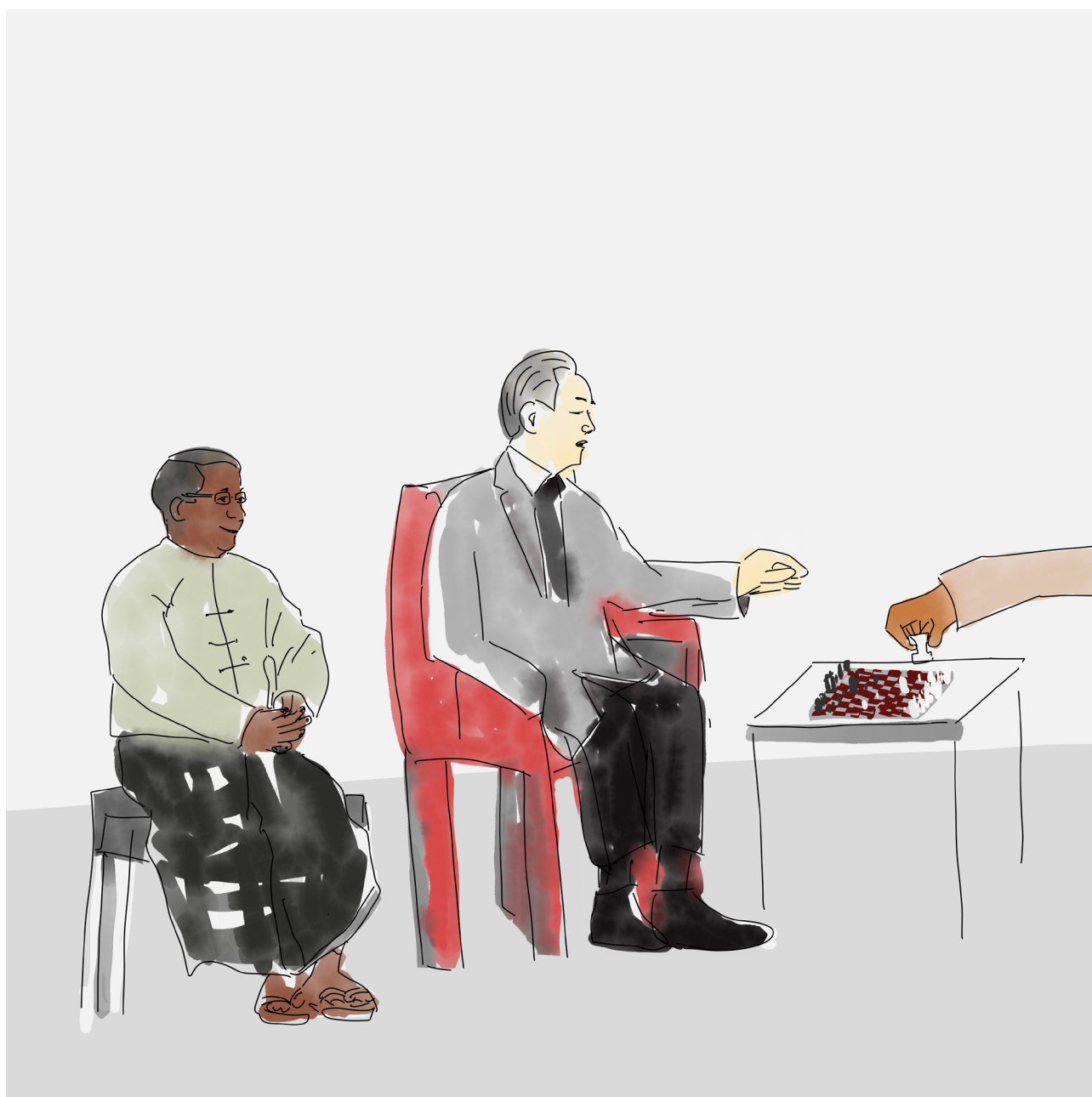
In August 2024, the National Unity Government (NUG) and allied resistance forces achieved significant victories, capturing key towns despite intense junta retaliation. On August 12, NUG forces successfully seized Takaung, a strategic town located 100 miles north of Mandalay, as part of the Shan-Man Operation. The offensive began on August 11, and by the next day, NUG forces had taken over 20 prisoners of war and seized more than 30 weapons. This marked their second major victory in the operation, following the mid-July capture of Singu, a town 40 miles north of Mandalay, also located on the east bank of the Irrawaddy River.

On August 18, resistance forces captured Depayin Town in Sagaing Region after a three-day battle, burning down the regime's police station and capturing 123 personnel, including junta-aligned Pyu Saw Htee members and non-CDM staff. However, their control of the town was short-lived, as heavy aerial bombardments by the junta, including strikes from fighter jets and Mi-35 helicopters, forced the resistance to withdraw just hours after their victory. Around 100 regime troops were airlifted in from Mandalay, overpowering the resistance forces.

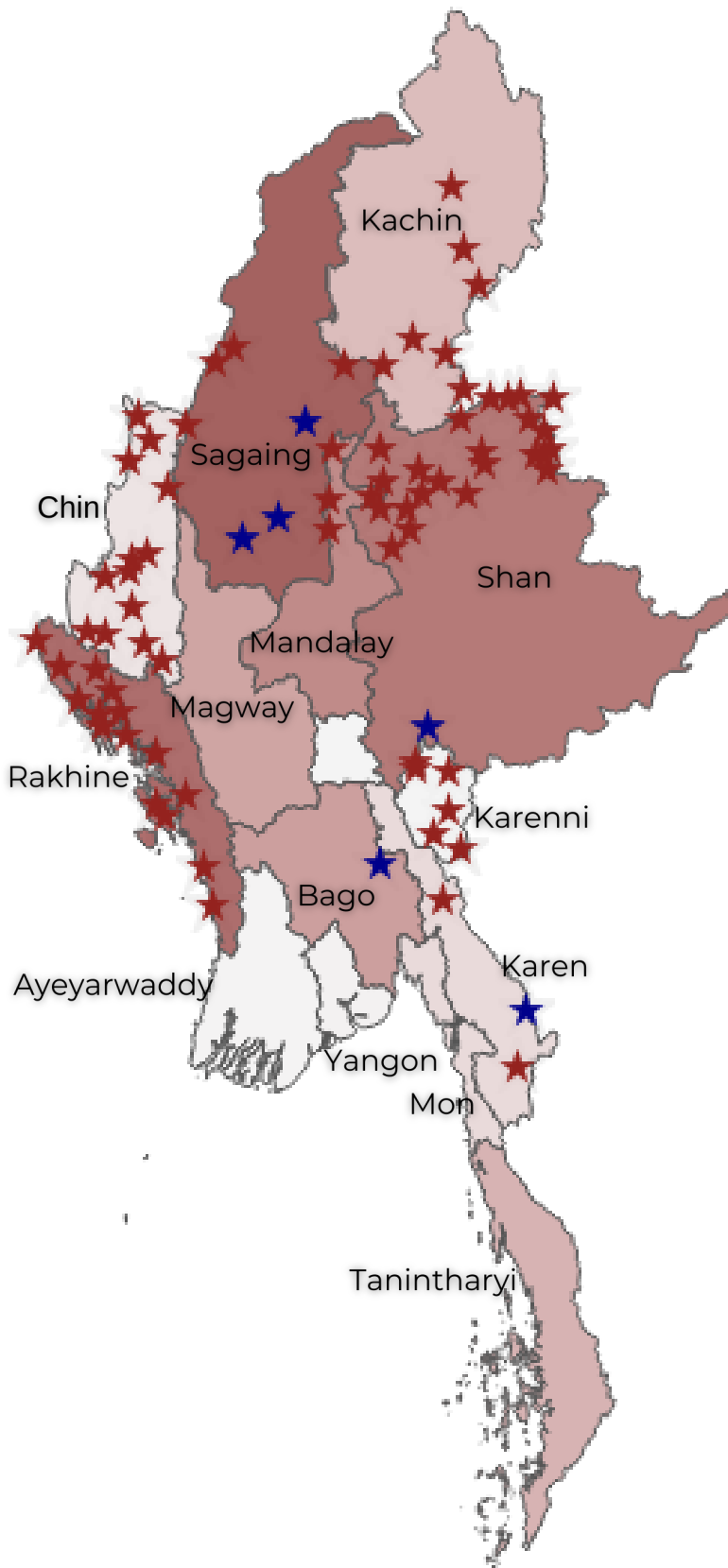
The NUG-PDF also secured a major victory on August 25, capturing Thabeikkyin Town in Mandalay Region after an eight-day offensive that began on August 17. The operation resulted in the capture of Lt. Col. Soe Min Thu, a

senior junta officer, and the seizure of a significant stockpile of military equipment, including 18,669 rounds of ammunition, 42 grenades, and 36 rocket-propelled grenades. Thabeikkyin, home to the junta's Basic Mili-

tary Training Depot 2 (BMTD-2) and several battalions, saw fierce fighting, with junta jets and Y-12 aircraft dropping over 320 bombs during the battle.



People's Resistance War in August



26
CASUALTIES FROM
RESISTANCE FORCES

1616
CASUALTIES
FROM SAC

673
REGIME SOLDIERS
SURRENDERED

No. of Skirmishes



Towns captured and controlled by resistance forces



Towns recaptured by the regime

Sources: NUC, Khit Thit Media

Follow us on



@mohingamatters



@mohingamatters



@mattersmohinga

Crimes Against Humanity

5

mass killings (at least) were committed by Min Aung Hlaing's soldiers in August.

Junta airstrikes killed 15 civilians in Singu

On August 4 and 5, the regime's forces reportedly conducted airstrikes on villages in Sintku Township, Mandalay Region, resulting in the deaths of 15 civilians, including two children. The attacks targeted Nweyone Village, 13 miles north of the town, and Kan Taung Village, 18 miles away. Eleven people were killed in Nweyone, while six were injured. In Kan Taung, three people died, and 13 were wounded. The junta's airforce allegedly used internationally banned cluster bombs, according to the Mandalay PDF (MDY-PDF). The following day, another airstrike in Latpanhla Village claimed the life of one civilian, while a village school and hospital were destroyed. The regime denied these accusations, asserting no aircraft were flying in the area during that time.

Airstrikes destroyed market, killed six civilians in Kutkai

On August 5, regime airstrikes killed six civilians and partially destroyed an open-air market in Kutkai Township, northern Shan State. According to local residents and ethnic armed group members, a woman in her 20s and five men were killed when junta warplanes bombed the market around 3 pm. Civilians had fled the area after spotting surveillance aircraft earlier in the afternoon. A social welfare group volunteer confirmed that at least four of the victims had been cremated, while two others remained unidentified.

Regime bombardment killed seven in Patheingyi

In Patheingyi Township, Mandalay Region, seven civilians were killed on August 6 during airstrikes by regime forces. According to the Mandalay PDF, the attack came after the military lost control of a gold mining plot earlier in the day. Multiple others were injured when the junta deployed Y-12 aircraft and MI-35 attack helicopters from a nearby base. The MDY-PDF condemned the regime for committing war crimes by indiscriminately targeting civilians as its military efforts failed.

Airstrike killed six, including a child in Mrauk-U

On August 10, regime forces bombed a residential area in Mrauk-U, Rakhine State, killing six civilians, including a 12-year-old child. The Arakan Army (AA) reported that ten others were injured in the attack. The victims included one woman and five men. Just days earlier, on August 6, the junta had also bombed a hospital in Mrauk-U, a town that had been free of regime troops and conflict for over 185 days, according to the AA.



Market attack by regime troops in Monywa killed 11 civilians

On August 13, regime troops opened fire on a rural market in Htanaungdaw Village, Monywa Township, Sagaing Region, during morning rush hour. Eleven civilians were killed, including a 14-year-old child. Heavy weapons fire from regime forces stationed at the entrance gate of Monywa town targeted the crowded market, causing two instant deaths. Six more victims died at a nearby emergency clinic, while three others succumbed to their injuries in a hospital. The victims, all civilians, had come to the market for groceries when they were attacked.

Follow us on



@mohingamatters



@mohingamatters



@mattersmohinga