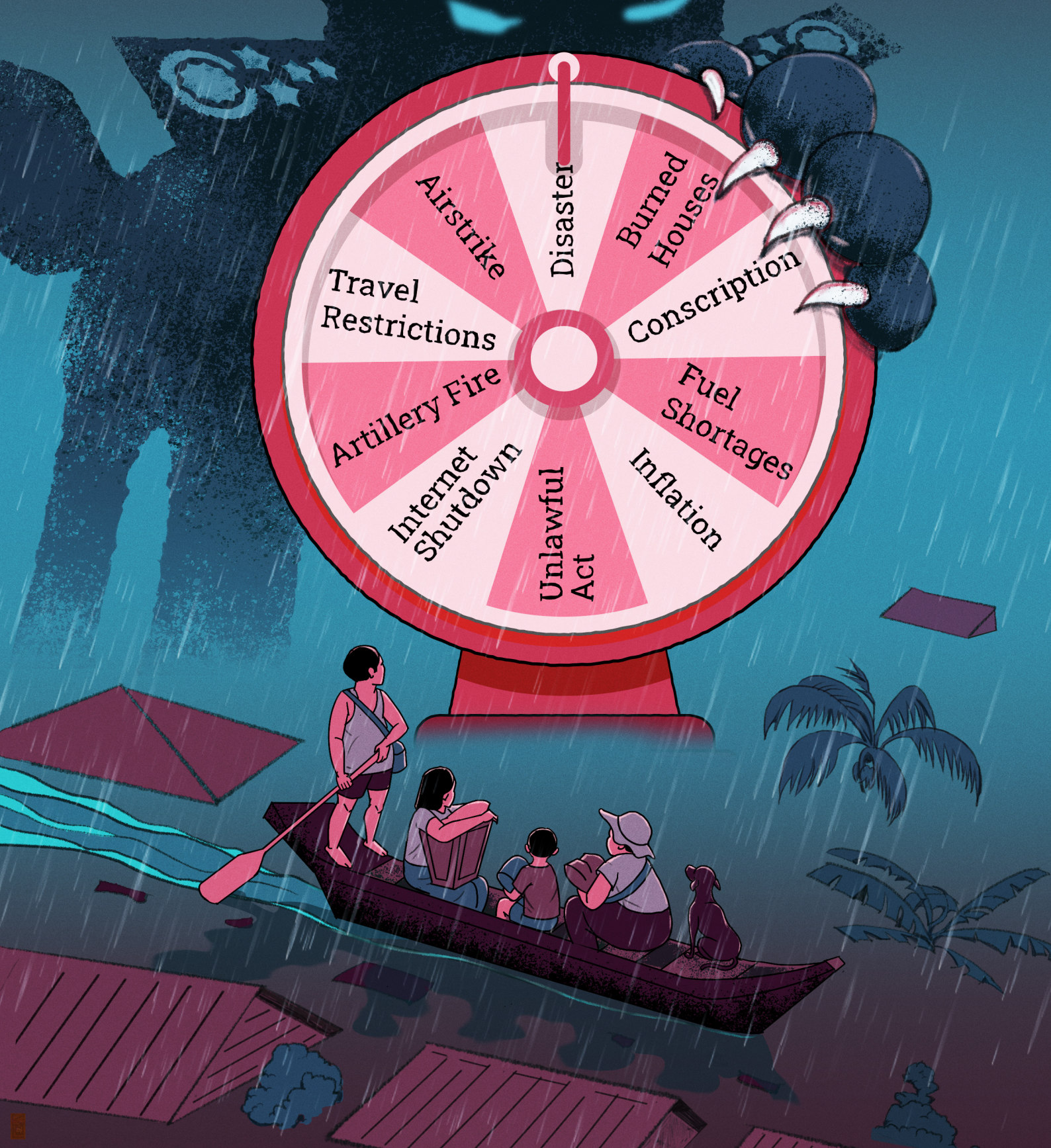


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Recap

Folks, September began with Min Aung Hlaing threatening to attack civilians in his speech, and the month ended with the regime inviting revolutionary forces to a political dialogue instead of armed conflict. Earlier this month, the coup leader said in his speech that “insurgents” had occupied civilian areas, and therefore, in order to protect the civilians from the terror of these “insurgents”, he warned civilians in those areas to remain vigilant. To anyone, this translates that his troops will be launching indiscriminate attacks at civilians’ places. This message has been published in the junta-controlled newspapers throughout the month.

However, at the end of the month, it seemed that the junta chief had a change of heart, inviting ethnic revolutionary forces and resistance forces to hold political dialogues and participate in the election that he’s been planning. Major revolutionary forces have rejected the regime’s invitation.

Another interesting news came from Kokang’s MNDA this month. The ethnic armed group has been occupying townships after townships in Northern Shan State as one of the leading forces of Operation 1027. MNDA issued a statement in mid-September, affirming that it would not politically cooperate with the National Unity Government (NUG) and would not participate in the NUG’s military campaigns. This statement aligned with China’s stance on Myanmar affairs, and analysts concluded that the ethnic group might have issued such a statement due to China’s pressure.

September has been brutal for hundreds of thousands of Myanmar citizens due to the impact

of Typhoon Yagi which hit on September 10. For a country that has been inadequately governed by the military leaders, the communities were not well prepared or protected from severe flooding and landslides. Social media posts showed how vulnerable and affected people were, especially those who have been already displaced and suffered from the ongoing conflict. UNOCHA reported that one million people in Myanmar were affected by the typhoon, 360 people died and nearly 100 were injured due to the floods and landslides in 65 townships. The NUG also announced that over 1000 people are either dead or missing. In some locations, flood water has not receded, and people are still in need of emergency relief to this day.

Even when the country faced such a tragedy, the regime managed to disrupt the relief efforts initiated by other actors such as local charity groups or the NUG’s PDFs in their territories. Multiple news reports were made that the regime arrested or threatened to arrest individuals who organized flood relief donations. KBZ Bank also froze KPay mobile wallet accounts when transactions were made for flood relief. Nothing is more evident than these acts highlighting how the regime and its affiliates do not have the best interest of the people.

The regime’s disruption to hinder the lives of its citizens knows no bounds. Myanmar Embassy in Bangkok announced this month that it will not extend the passport of Myanmar nationals who reside in Thailand with non-ED visas and are enrolled in language schools. This visa type is popular due to its affordability and ease of acquisition. This decision will impact a significant amount of Myanmar people who move to Thailand either to

avoid conscription or for better livelihood. Traveling abroad has also become more difficult as the military tightens control at airports.

In late September, rumor spread on social media that seven individuals who had received death sentences inside Insein Prison would be executed. These individuals were members of resistance groups that carried out attacks aimed at the regime’s troops. International organizations warned that execution would amount to international serious crimes. However, it was not confirmed that the execution had taken place, and a former political prisoner warned that the regime could be spreading disinformation to galvanize the public.

This month, Justice For Myanmar (JFM) called for sanctions on Myanmar National Airlines as its aircrafts have been allegedly used to transport military personnel and supplies. In addition, JFM highlighted that many MNA pilots are former Air Force officers and the airline maintains close ties with military leadership.

On October 1, the day this issue is published, the military will commence collecting data for the census, on which the voter list will be based. This is all a part of Min Aung Hlaing’s plan to hold a sham election. Even typhoon-affected communities are pushed for a quick resettlement for census data collection. This only reminds us of Cyclone Nargis and the referendum for the 2008 Constitution. Resistance forces and protesters have urged the public not to cooperate in these census activities by the regime.

September 1, 2024

The junta's forces conducted an aerial attack in Kyaukpadaung Township, Mandalay Region, targeting the village of Myingyankone. The attack took place more than 20 miles northeast of Mount Popa, killing four local residents, including a child, and leaving two others seriously injured.

September 3, 2024

Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing announced in Taunggyi, Shan State, that he would take necessary measures to recover territories seized by ethnic armed groups.

September 5, 2024

FMI announced that Serge Pun @ U Thein Wai, who was detained by the regime, has retired as the executive chairman of FMI Company effective September 5. Serge Pun, a prominent tycoon involved in various business sectors, has been summoned by the junta to Nay Pyi Taw since the third week of May.

Karenni forces launched coordinated attacks on regime camps in four locations along the border between Shan State and Karenni State.

September 9, 2024

The junta launched airstrikes on AA's detention centers in Pauktaw and Maungdaw townships, Rakhine State. The AA reported that two junta fighter jets attacked a Border Guard Police headquarters, which the AA had seized in July, near the Bangladesh border in Maungdaw.

September 11, 2024

U Lwin Ko Latt, the NUG Minister of Home Affairs, announced that the parallel government's administration will become more visible in regions where revolutionary forces have seized control.

September 2, 2024

The regime issued a statement designating the Kokang Army (MNDAA), Taung National Liberation Army (TNLA), and Arakan Army (AA) as terrorist groups.

September 4, 2024

Kokang's MNDAA issued a statement declaring that it would not cooperate politically with the NUG and would not attack Mandalay or Taunggyi. Analysts concluded that this narrative aligned with China's stance on Myanmar affairs.

September 6, 2024

The regime's Ministry of Labor announced that expatriate workers must divert 25 percent of their wages through legal channels or face consequences. Failure to comply will result in non-renewal of passports and denial of permission to travel abroad.

September 8, 2024

Two members of Pyu Saw Htee were shot while riding a motorcycle near Lalma village, Pwint Phyu Township, Magway Region.

September 10, 2024

Typhoon Yagi has led to severe flooding and landslides across low-lying areas near Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay, and regions including Bago, Shan, Karen, Karenni, and Mon states. The storm has resulted in hundreds of deaths and displaced thousands.

September 12, 2024

The NUG and the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF) signed an MOU to enhance cooperation in four key areas: politics, public mobilization, military efforts, and finance.

September 14, 2024

The Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) dismissed rumors about reinstating Foreign Exchange Certificates (FECs) in 2025, clarifying that the reports are false. In its statement, the CBM also addressed rising inflation, attributing the 24.39% increase to factors like trade deficits, fuel prices, and the dollar exchange rate.

September 16, 2024

Five members of the Myingyan Public Action Committee—Ko Hla Myo Kyaw (also known as Ko ET), Ko Fatty, Ko Kalar, Ko Baw Gyi, and Ko Kyaw Thet—lost their lives after encountering a regime military column in Myingyan Township, Mandalay Region.

September 18, 2024

The NUG, Karen National Union (KNU), Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), and Chin National Front (CNF), issued a joint statement calling for international assistance for flood relief and emphasizing the need for fair and non-politicized humanitarian aid.

September 20, 2024

On September 20, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that 887,000 people have been affected, with 65 townships impacted by the floods. According to OCHA, more than 300 people have died and nearly 100 have been injured.

The Thai government's Real Estate Information Center (REIC) reported that Myanmar nationals have emerged as the top buyers of condominiums in Thailand during the first six months of 2024.

September 13, 2024

Approximately 70 residents from Strand Road and the surrounding area, including Shwe Pya Ward in Sittwe, Rakhine State, were arrested by the regime's forces. A Sittwe resident said that the civilians were detained for transporting goods, including food supplies.

September 15, 2024

Two rangers from the Dark Shadow, a Yangon-based Urban Guerrilla Force, were reportedly arrested by the regime's forces.

September 17, 2024

The Mon State Federal Council (MSFC) formed the Anti-Sham Election Committee with seven members, led by Dr. Thiri Mon Chan, aiming to oppose the regime's staged election.

Users of the KBZ Pay mobile wallets were reportedly blocked for making flood relief donations as they said to be violating the Anti-Money Laundering Law.

During a meeting on disaster management, the junta chief urged for swift relief efforts and quick resettlement for flood victims in order to carry out census and election.

September 19, 2024

The KNU and eight other ethnic revolutionary groups have agreed on a four-point framework as part of building a federal democratic union which is a bottom-up federalism approach focusing on empowering individual states, and consequently, strengthening the union.

Yangon strike forces held a protest against the military regime, opposing its conscription law and calling for a reduction in soaring commodity prices. Protesters also criticized the military's failure to assist with recent flooding.

September 21, 2024

Leaders from the Chin State Council (CC), Interim National Council (ICNCC), Chin National Front (CNA/CNF), and Chin Brotherhood (CB) met in Mizoram and reached a temporary truce after months of clashing among one another amidst the armed conflict with the regime.

September 23, 2024

Approximately 30 Thai citizens protested outside the Myanmar Embassy in Bangkok, urging action to address the significant influx of Myanmar migrant workers into Thailand and calling for solutions that would protect the interests of Thai citizens.

September 25, 2024

A coalition of Myanmar civil society organizations called on ASEAN to cease cooperation with the military council and emphasized ASEAN's inaction regarding recent military airstrikes in northern Shan State which reflected a failure to address Myanmar's escalating human rights and humanitarian crises.

The Ministry of Defense of the NUG announced that over 1,000 people are dead or missing due to flooding caused by Typhoon Yagi, affecting hundreds of thousands across Myanmar.

September 27, 2024

The NLD announced plans to coordinate with allies on the Transitional Constitution (Third Draft) during its 36th anniversary commemoration, and reaffirmed its commitment to establishing a democratic federal union, aligning with other groups also drafting transitional constitutions.

The military council warned of the dangers facing the nation due to lack of internal unity amidst global competition. Spokesperson Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Tun highlighted the importance of solidarity, citing regional tensions like those in Russia-Ukraine and the South China Sea.

September 22, 2024

The UN Security Council held closed-door consultations on Myanmar, focusing on the country's worsening humanitarian crisis, escalating violence against civilians, and the military's increasing use of airstrikes.

September 24, 2024

Pope Francis called for the release of Nobel laureate DASSK and offered her asylum in the Vatican according to a Reuters report.

Five youths, including four men and one woman, were rumored to be executed according to sources close to Insein Prison. They were arrested for allegedly participating in attacks on the regime's troops following the 2021 coup.

September 26, 2024

A total of 127 Myanmar citizens, recently repatriated after completing their prison sentences in Thailand's Ranong prison, have been abducted to serve in the military, according to labor rights groups assisting Myanmar nationals.

September 28, 2024

The regime announced the arrest of 12 members of the Anonymous Force, accusing them of involvement in the killings of ward administrators in the Yangon Region.

September 29, 2024

Brave Warriors for Myanmar (BWM) launched an attack on the junta's Central Military Headquarters in Aung Myay Tharzan township, Mandalay.

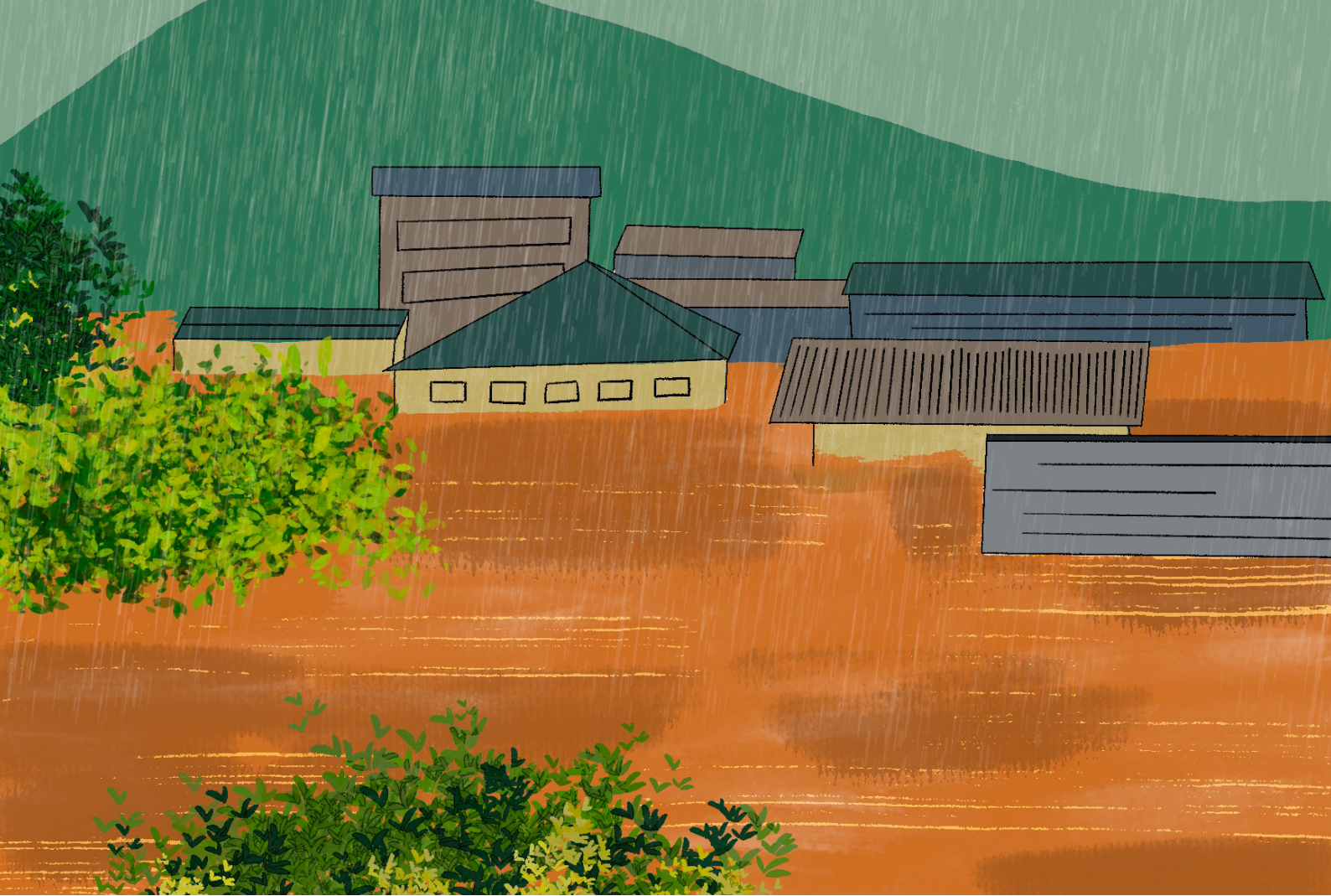
Young men in Dagon Myothit (South) in Yangon Region, Kyaukse, Tada-U and Shwebo townships in Mandalay Region were detained by the military for its sixth batch of mandatory military training.

September 30, 2024

The regime is reportedly testing bombs produced by defense factories for use in airstrikes. These tests are being conducted across the country, including Lashio, with the intention of continuously bombing resistance-held areas.

Protests marched in a few townships in resistant-stronghold Sagaing Region to show support to Myanmar's Ambassador to UN U Kyaw Moe Tun as the UN General Assembly had commenced.





Yagi Comes and Yagi Goes We Live On

More than a million people were affected by floods, hundreds of thousands of houses, farmlands, livestock, and other assets were destroyed, hundreds died drowning with more missing - the floods from Typhoon Yagi caused much devastation across Myanmar. While the country did not face the typhoon itself directly, the floods and landslides, combined with the junta's apathy and weaponizing of the disasters were more than enough to have the largest fatality among all countries directly or indirectly impacted by Yagi. Considering such a large-scale disaster hitting a war-torn populace, we couldn't help but ponder what this means for the people of Myanmar, both in the short-term, i.e. the immediate well-being and disaster relief,

and in the long term, i.e. our march towards a just and fair society under federal democracy.

In considering the short-term impacts, the prospects are grim. While the country has been reeling from war and poverty over the past three years, the people of Myanmar and Myanmar diaspora communities abroad still showed admirable efforts to help flood victims. However, the junta's administration, the State Administration Council (SAC), did its best to disrupt relief efforts. Often it was reported that SAC restricted relief efforts towards flood-affected areas, seizing life-saving food, medication, and other items and arresting volunteers. SAC's appeal to help from the international community,

while restricting the flow of aid in the country, is a method repeatedly used before. If the junta blatantly arrested medical workers, seized medicines, and shut down oxygen factories even in cities under the eyes of international media, when COVID-19 was ravaging the country back in 2021, the audacity in weaponizing disasters in rural areas is not unrealistic. [Critics point out that, while the junta reportedly raised over MMK 40 billion](#), hardly any was seen used for disaster relief, and that also echoed how the junta seized funds for COVID-19 relief in 2021. In every disaster, the junta's method is to enrich themselves while stopping aid to its enemies, i.e. the people, and that caused not even unmitigated but rather amplified death and suffering to

the people. Moreover, in areas, where the junta is not in control, while the other means of disruption become less practical for the junta, they did try their best to cause trouble through airstrikes.

In the medium term, a bigger death toll, albeit less reported, would come from consequences in health, malnutrition, and increased poverty in the aftermath of the floods. For instance, the junta's deliberate weaponizing of disasters would be further compounded by mismanagement and inward-looking economic policies since the coup. After the baseless claims of NLD committing voter fraud, one of the most frequent reasons cited by Min Aung Hlaing for staging the coup is (another equally baseless) claim about how Myanmar's economy performing badly under the NLD administration. He claims the reason behind poor economic performance is the economy's import reliance status. In his speeches on SAC delivering prosperity, Min Aung Hlaing does not mention GDP (national income), the most important indicator of the economy but rather how import spending was reduced under his administration. This dislike for imports became more and more problematic over time as essential items such as fuel and medicine, which have little domestic production capacity, have faced heavy restrictions over the past year. In late August, the junta's restriction of medicine imports and scrutiny of pharma importers reached a peak. Enters the flood and these policies on medicines alone will yet claim more deaths.

Destruction of productive capitals such as farmlands, workshops, and infrastructures such as roads will also exacerbate poverty. For 2024 Myanmar's GDP growth

rate, the World Bank predicted 1% and the Asian Development Bank predicted 0.8%. By year-end when updated rates were to be calculated, it wouldn't be surprising if we turned yet another negative economic growth, and this will pile more misery on the people of Myanmar, disproportionately to half the population who are already living in poverty (UNDP). Moreover, considering another 25% of the population is just one shock away from poverty (UNDP), it is expected that many of them will now slide into poverty.

For the pro-revolution forces, it could be argued that people's focus and resources are now shifted towards survival and the junta will exploit this episode of tragedy to gain legitimacy and pile more misery on the people, a supporting base for the revolution. However, in previous episodes, while the people's suffering got deeper, none of the wanton atrocities tipped the scale in the junta's favor. Recent history demonstrated that shooting up peaceful protestors only caused people to stop protesting and pick up arms. Likewise, weaponizing the pandemic did not generate the docility that the junta craved but rather served as a reminder of how the future under the junta would bring forth and foster support for the revolution. Burning down of villages and wanton airstrikes also stoked resistance fervor leading to the junta losing control of these areas. Many times, the junta unleashed hell and many times the people endured to resist the junta. In our long and painful march, what happens now is the junta losing more and more ground each year. Once again, there will be no long-term and concrete gain for the junta by this episode of weaponizing the disaster.

However, how the revolutionary leadership and the people respond would have a more profound impact on our future. Traditionally, Myanmar is a divisive country along racial, geographical, and religious lines. And despite many claims of each area being an ancestral land or under the influence of one ethnicity, the fact is that even in sub-state areas, such as township levels, hardly any area these days is resided by one ethnicity alone. Creating cohesion across people of different racial and religious backgrounds in post-disaster settings would be of paramount importance to create lasting peace and prosperity in these areas and at the national level. Also, here, we appeal not just to the ordinary citizens but also to the leadership because the reality is that elite voices dominate policy, and while the kindness of the citizens is never in doubt, this kindness and potential cohesion could be driven away by the elites' attempt to build hegemony. However, this is just a caution and not foreshadowing of what might happen. If any, the Spring Revolution three years on has repeatedly proven that the windows for elites usurping power without the consent of the people is ever diminishing.

The junta has proven time and time again that their focus is on destroying and they are pretty good at it. Our pro-revolutionary side's focus is on rebuilding immediate relief while paving the way for the long term. And by looking at how far we have come, learned, and improved, even in light of the current state of devastation brought up by Yagi, we still think there are more reasons to be optimistic than otherwise in the long term.



Min Aung Hlaing's Regime Wages War on Civilians

Min Aung Hlaing delivered a “guidance” speech on September 3rd during his regime’s cabinet meeting, warning the public not to return or migrate to areas controlled by ethnic armed organizations and resistance forces. Since then, an excerpt from the speech has been published daily in state-run newspapers in both English and Myanmar, with bold headlines reading **“Residents urged to Prioritize Public Safety Amid Armed Terrorist Threats.”** Local news agencies have portrayed this as an open threat to civilians. Let’s break down the key parts of the speech.

The first sentence reads:

“Armed terrorists have been

launching attacks by using residential homes and administrative buildings in towns and villages as cover, where they have forcibly settled.”

Min Aung Hlaing refers to ethnic armed organizations and resistance forces as “armed terrorists.” However, both the citizens of Myanmar and the international community have long recognized his own army as a terrorist organization, thanks to the numerous war crimes and human rights violations committed before and after the coup. The groups he’s labeling as terrorists are, in reality, fighting a just war against his army, striving to reclaim what rightfully belongs to them.

The next lines are:

“They aim to shield themselves from Tatmadaw counterattacks while also persuading temporarily displaced persons to return to their native areas and recruiting new members. That enables terrorists to use civilians as human shields.”

Min Aung Hlaing accuses the ethnic armed organizations of using civilians as human shields. But facts speak louder than his words. There is ample evidence—reports and personal accounts—of how many young people have fled the country since the conscription law was enforced. Social media is filled with stories of youths who disappeared on their

We need to face the truth: while Min Aung Hlaing's regime is undoubtedly a true terrorist organization, their propaganda is not what makes them dangerous. The danger lies in their ability and willingness to kill.

way back home, and of parents who've spent large sums of money to save their loved ones from being forced into labor by the regime's soldiers. Many families have never seen their members again after conscription. Anyone with basic reasoning can see who's really committing these crimes against civilians.

Then, the speech uses the phrase "persuading temporarily displaced persons." When resistance forces liberated certain towns, the residents welcomed them with joy, raising their thumbs in the air. These were not people being forced back into their homes; they were returning to areas freed from the military's grip.

Humanitarian organizations have long suspected that civilians have been used as human shields by the Myanmar army since the 1960s. As a country suffering the longest-running civil war in Southeast Asia, Myanmar has seen countless war crimes, and the army's use of civilians as shields is one of them. On the front lines, the army routinely uses civilians as porters, guides,

mine sweepers, and decoys, even forcing them to wear military uniforms. They also gather elderly people, women, and children to prevent sudden raids and drone attacks from resistance forces. When cities like Laukkai, Lashio, and Mogok were about to fall to resistance fighters, the army barricaded the entrances, preventing civilians from escaping. This was a deliberate tactic to use them as shields when the resistance forces finally seized control.

The tactic of using civilians as human shields is not only seen on the front lines but also in the army's strongholds. Even Aung San Suu Kyi, now under house arrest, is not safe from being used in this way. Kim Aris, her son, said in a Reuters interview: "As the fighting's getting closer and closer to the military strongholds, I think they [the regime] may just want to keep her close to use as a human shield, or they might like to negotiate with the resistance forces on her release."

The fourth sentence reads: **"Tatmadaw is committed to safeguarding the sovereignty of the State and will respond to these threats based on intelligence and prevailing conditions."**

The idea of "safeguarding the sovereignty of the State" is one of the biggest deceptions used by Myanmar's juntas over the decades. The regime has endlessly promoted the idea of sovereignty through songs, movies, and propaganda, but the reality is that Myanmar has been under autocratic rule since the 1962 coup. Many ethnic groups have been denied the right to self-determination and have been ruled with an iron fist by successive military regimes. The brief democratic period that followed allowed young-

er generations to realize that the Myanmar Army itself is the root cause of the country's struggles. Mentioning "sovereignty" in this context is, therefore, highly ironic. Min Aung Hlaing's speech also uses the term "threats." Since the peaceful protests began in response to the military coup, the army has treated the entire population as a threat. Hundreds of unarmed civilians were gunned down in the streets because they dared to hold banners, wave the three-finger salute, or simply voice their opposition. His army has declared war on the people of Myanmar.

The phrase "based on intelligence" is particularly amusing. At this point, most regions in the country, apart from the military's strongholds in Naypyitaw, Mandalay, Yangon, and Ayeyarwady, are war zones. With the regime under constant attack from resistance forces, the notion that Myanmar's army can rely on its "intelligence" for warfare is questionable. If that were true, they wouldn't have lost key bases, such as their North-Eastern Command and their commando base in Rakhine State.

Finally, Min Aung Hlaing speaks of responding to threats based on "prevailing conditions." This phrase reveals the desperation of the junta leader. His only remaining advantage is airpower, as most of his ground troops have been wiped out by coordinated resistance attacks. The ongoing major military operation, "Yan Naing Min," relies heavily on airstrikes. Since its launch, several cities and IDP camps have been bombed mercilessly. From September 5th to 9th alone, over 100 civilians were killed in airstrikes, including a pregnant woman and her unborn child. Despite these atrocities, Min Aung Hlaing's air

force continues bombing civilian areas, often at night to catch people off guard while they sleep. Is this what he means by “prevailing conditions”?

The final sentence reads:

“Therefore, residents in areas where terrorists have taken control must prioritize their safety and protect themselves from being exploited by these groups.”

This is a thinly veiled threat. Min Aung Hlaing is telling civilians that, regardless of the damage caused by indiscriminate airstrikes, his military will keep killing, and civilians must fend for themselves. This is nothing short of a crime against humanity.

What's coming?

We need to face the truth: while Min Aung Hlaing's regime is un-

doubtedly a true terrorist organization, their propaganda is not what makes them dangerous. The danger lies in their ability and willingness to kill. Even though they are losing ground, their airpower still poses a serious threat. Since the coup, they have shown no mercy, and with every warning they issue, the chance for more violence grows.

The resistance forces and the National Unity Government (NUG) must be ready to confront this rising danger. It's not just about military strategies; it's also about protecting civilians. The people of Myanmar have faith in these forces, and now is the time for them to show that trust is well-placed. This means building shelters, preparing defenses, and making sure that no more lives are lost. Revolution is about more than

just reclaiming land—it's about the people.

The international community must also step up. This is not just a distant issue; it's a humanitarian crisis that needs urgent attention. They can't just sit back and make statements; they need to provide real help with protective measures and aid to lessen the impact of the junta's bombings. The people of Myanmar have suffered too much, and if the world wants to support their struggle, now is the time to take action.

Until September 30, Min Aung Hlaing's words have appeared daily in both Myanmar and English state newspapers, vowing to kill more civilians and bombard cities. He has made it clear—this is a war against the public.





No Middle Ground : A Humanitarian's Fight for Myanmar's Freedom

It's impressive how the people of Myanmar have supported the resistance in countless ways over the past three years. Many have fought with their hands, pens, and wallets, participating in campaigns and funding the cause. While international support hasn't reached the level we hoped for, there are a few expats who have stepped up to help. One of them is Saw Htee Cher, a humanitarian worker who decided to stand by the people of Myanmar in this struggle. He fights for Myanmar's freedom from dictatorship through his work with Free Burma Rangers, as well as documenting and blogging about the resistance to keep the international community informed. We spoke with him to hear about his personal aspira-

tions, and his hopes for our country beyond the resistance.

What drew you to development work in Myanmar's ethnic regions, and what were some of the key challenges you faced in helping such communities?

I spent much of my career in Africa doing humanitarian work, and got my first short-term assignment in Myanmar among the Delta Karen people near Labutta in 2011. I loved Myanmar from the start, and wanted to return. The political and economic situation was grim at that time, but the people were warm and the Burmese culture was fascinating. After a couple of other short assignments, I managed to secure a two-year contract with a Euro-

pean humanitarian organization starting in 2019, based in Hpa-an. I was assigned to build its Livelihoods program for resettled refugees (including IDPs).

By 2019 there was a lot more political openness and freedom, which had given rise to much more economic advancement than I had first seen here. Many international organizations were trying to help refugees, the poor, farmers, and other disadvantaged people in Myanmar by then, but we found that we were working at cross-purposes with the real power, which was Myanmar's paranoid, authoritarian military. While we were trying to improve the condition of the Rohingya, the farmers, and resettled refugees, the Tatmadaw was

There is no middle ground in this war – the military regime must be completely eradicated for Myanmar and Kawthoolei to have peace. Any ‘negotiated settlement’ that leaves any vestige of the junta with power will just lead to another cycle of violence.

actively working to keep them poor and powerless. It put humanitarian workers in a moral dilemma, trying to provide support to the people while being forced to tacitly endorse the regime that oppressed them.

My job allowed me to travel to Loikaw and Demawso, Taungyi, Banmaw and Momauk, Sittwe, Mawlamyaing, Tavoy (Dawei), Beit (Myeik), and many other parts of Myanmar. That was a great privilege.

In Hpa-an I lived with a Pwo Karen family, who welcomed me into their culture at events like Karen New Year, the Wrist Tying Ceremony, Don dancing, etc. During Covid 19 my local family and my co-workers protected and supported me. Working with refugees in the Southeast, many of my program’s beneficiaries were also ethnic Karens, as well as some Karenni, Muslims, Pa-O, and others. Many foreigners find Karen easy to love, and I fell for them too.

What motivated you to join the Free Burma Rangers after the coup? And what is your role there? How did the shift from development work to actively resisting the military regime affect you personally and professionally?

When the attempted coup hap-

pened, my contract with the refugee organization was ending. The moral dilemma of the international aid industry grew much worse after the illegal power seizure. In order to continue working in Myanmar, organizations have to sign memoranda of understanding with a ruthless regime that kills and oppresses the same people they claim to help. They pay taxes and fees that the regime uses to carry out its atrocities. The regime decides where our aid can go, and it channels it for its own purposes. The best international organizations relocated outside Myanmar to work across the borders, through local partner organizations. The big aid industry players, however – the United Nations, the big-name INGOs – continue to collaborate with the junta, doing more harm than help.

I relocated to Thailand, but I didn’t want to abandon my Myanmar and Karen friends in their worst hour. The Free Burma Rangers is one of those very rare foreign organizations that go into the liberated parts of Myanmar, completely bypassing the military junta, and deliver direct assistance such as food, shelter, health care, and reporting on human rights abuses. That’s what I wanted. The people of FBR are do-ers, not talkers or funders. At FBR I have my hands on the building of solar power mini-grids for rural hos-

pitals and schools in Kawthoolei (the Karen nation), and on my own I even get to do some livelihood work in remote mountain villages, such as helping people grow coffee for sale in Thailand. Mutraw District of Kawthoolei is so traditional that the people are only now getting their first cash crops. Everything has been on a subsistence level before.

I’m also involved in the training of new medics. At the FBR hospital in Mutraw, called the Jungle School of Medicine of Kawthoolei (JSMK), I teach human anatomy classes to the young trainees, while foreign doctors teach medical subjects. These trainees spend a year learning basic health care, then return to their villages or their military units in the KNLA, or sometimes the KNDF or KIA, to provide care. I have now assisted with three graduating classes of new medics.

One more thing I do is tag along with FBR and KNLA visits to the front lines of the war in Kawthoolei, in places like Papun, Kaw T’Ree (Kawkareik), Latkatdaung near Myawaddy, and the contested Thanphyuzayat-Xrotherpler (Payathonsu) road. Unlike the others, I have no military experience, but I try to get close so I can report on the war in the most informed and realistic way I can. I have had to learn safety in proximity to bombing and live fire. Like people elsewhere in Myanmar, those in Kawthoolei have to run at the sound of aircraft and hide in bunkers. That applies to us too.

Other things I have learned are basic conversation in the S’gaw Karen language, because the villagers speak nothing else, as well as Myanmar and Karen history. I read a whole shelf of books on

It is not UN or bilateral assistance that has kept the people alive during this war; it is local organizations crowd-funding support locally or through the Myanmar diaspora that have done that.

pre-colonial Burma, World War II, the Karen Revolution, and the horrible history of persecution, displacement, and massacres. Through reporting on the civil war I've learned a great deal about Myanmar geography in places I never went.

In what other ways are you involved with the resistance?

Apart from my involvement with FBR, since 12 February 2021 I have published regular reports on the civil war in Myanmar on social media and on the Substack platform (<https://burmacoupre-sistancenotes.substack.com/>). I write in English for an international audience, and my goal is to raise worldwide awareness of the pro-democracy struggle in Myanmar, even while other events like the Ukraine and Gaza wars get much more attention. As a foreigner I cannot carry a gun and fight, so this is what I feel I can do to support the cause. When in my home country I also give presentations and do advocacy to try to generate more support for the Spring Revolution.

How has your understanding of the military regime changed through your work with the Free Burma Rangers?

Through FBR I hear first-hand reports when jets bomb schools and refugee camps in Karenni, or when the KNLA captures a town or a junta camp, or when the different Chin factions have disagreements. I have had the opportunity to talk with KNLA officers and KNU Padohs. I have seen schools both before and after they were bombed. I understand that there is no middle ground in this war – the military regime must be completely eradicated for Myanmar and Kawthoolei to have peace. Any “negotiated settlement” that leaves any vestige of the junta with any power will just lead to another cycle of violence.

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In what ways do you believe international support could better address the situation on the ground?

As I indicated, international organizations should quit Yangon and Naypyitaw and relocate to liberated areas or neighboring countries, and work with local organizations. It is not UN or bilateral assistance that has kept the people alive during this war, it is local organizations, crowd-funding support locally or through the Myanmar diaspora, that have done that. The aid industry needs to get behind those local organizations, and put aside their hand-wringing about transparency and the usual bureaucratic habits of the industry.

Diplomats at the UN and foreign embassies need to stop suggesting “negotiations” between “all parties” for a “political solution” to the civil war. The solution to this crisis cannot be political, it is necessarily military, since the illegal regime will continue to use force until its defeat. “All parties” are

not responsible for the crisis, the illegal military regime bears entire responsibility, which is why it needs to be removed, or “uprooted” as the protesters in Myanmar say.

Foreign know-it-alls also need to stop issuing warnings about the post-junta political order. We all know the formation of the new order in a federal democracy will take time and be complex, but that is for the Myanmar people alone to work out. External finger-wagging is not helpful.

How have ethnic communities been affected by the coup, and how do you see the role of ethnic groups evolving in the resistance?

When ethnic Bamar youth began showing up in Kawthoolei just after the attempted coup, the Karen were extremely wary, because they thought it might be a repeat of 1988, which did not go well. Urban youths were considered poor soldier material and potential spies. That attitude has changed dramatically during the war. The KNLA, KIA, Karenni Army, CNA, and other longstanding ethnic armies took in the great wave of outside youth, trained them, armed them, and now command them. Those units, with names like the Cobra Column, the Black Panthers, the Albino Tigers, and Venom, have proven their value through fierce combat. They are mostly Bamar soldiers with Karen officers. It is strange to hear Burmese spoken in the KNLA, but those soldiers have greatly increased the strength of the ethnic armies, which has contributed to their many victories.

Specialized fighters from the cities with IT skills have set up drone warfare units like Federal Wings and Angry Birds that have been a

key element in the fight against the highly-equipped Naypyitaw regime. I have met CDM surgeons and anesthesiologists from big Yangon hospitals who currently operate in jungle clinics in liberated areas, treating both villagers and wounded resistance soldiers. These are areas that never before had advanced medical services.

For their part, the Bamar youth in these ethnic military units have learned about the Karen, can speak some of the language, know the geography – things that never interested them before. And most importantly, answering to ethnic minority officers, they have learned respect, for the ethnic armies and also for the historic persecution and suffering of their people. This is new. I am confident that this respect and mutual familiarity will go home with the soldiers after the war, and make possible a genuine federal democracy based on equal rights. That would never have been possible if it were just the NLD returning to power afterward.

What are your personal aspirations as you continue this work? How do you see your role evolving in the resistance, and what are your hopes for the future of Myanmar?

My personal aspiration is to dance in the streets of Hpa-an when

the junta is finally crushed. Then maybe I can return to peace-time livelihood work. I want to travel freely around Myanmar, which was never possible. I want to see the Karen people have freedom from fear in their country for the first time. I don't know if all of the ethnic homelands will choose federal democracy or independence, but whatever they choose, their new military power will enable them to have it. And when the new order is being decided, I hope it can be done peacefully among the various parties with their competing interests.

If you could ask for specific forms of help—whether resources, awareness, or advocacy—what would your message be to the outside world?

The KNU has said that if the Myanmar resistance received only 1% of the military aid given to Ukraine, it could quickly finish the war. Humanitarian assistance is important to the people displaced and impoverished by the junta, but it is only a band-aid that won't address the underlying problem. Only military assistance can help end the war so all the refugees can go home and economic development can begin again. That is the real solution.

Of course, you have China looming threateningly to the north. If Western countries gave weapons

The KNU has said that if the Myanmar resistance received only 1% of the military aid given to Ukraine, it could quickly finish the war.

to the resistance, there is the risk of a Chinese invasion to prop up the illegal Naypyitaw regime. Perhaps that is why they don't do it.

Another thing supporters could give is money. The American government is contributing several million dollars to the NUG and ethnic homeland governments for non-lethal technical and humanitarian assistance, but other countries could do so as well. It would be best if the Chinese could understand that they will eventually have to deal with the NUG, and begin building that relationship. And as mentioned, the international aid industry needs to directly support the NUG, ethnic homeland governments, and local aid organizations that have done all the work in this crisis, and separate themselves entirely from the junta.



Myanmar Banks : Complicit or Coerced The Case of KBZ

In nearly all dictatorships, the financial system becomes a tool of repression. The events following Myanmar's 2021 military coup have shaken not only the political landscape but also the nation's financial institutions, with KBZ Bank, the country's largest private bank, caught in the crossfire. On September 16, Kanbawza Bank (KBZ) announced a donation of 10 billion kyats for victims of the Typhoon Yagi-related floods. However, just days later, reports surfaced that hundreds of KBZ's digital wallet (Kpay) accounts had been frozen and suspended. Ironically, many of these accounts were engaged in the same charitable activities that KBZ had publicly supported. Us-

ers had included notes on their transactions indicating that the funds were donations for flood victims. This led to widespread confusion and disbelief among the public, especially as these suspensions were carried out under the pretext of suspected links to money laundering activities. Those attempting to help the flood victims were left baffled by the bank's contradictory actions. This contrast between the bank's charitable donation and its crackdown on public efforts reflects a broader tension within authoritarian systems, where public goodwill can be suppressed under questionable pretenses.

This is not the first time the bank

has come under scrutiny. KBZ has been complying with Myanmar's junta in freezing accounts of those who are suspected to link to pro-democracy movements as Myanmar's Central Bank, now controlled by the military junta, continues to issue directives to freeze the accounts. Although other banks such as CB bank and AYA bank are equally complicit in junta's crimes, KBZ came as top since its mobile pay is the most popular with six million Myanmar's users across the country. Questions are growing about the role and accountability of these corporate banks such as KBZ under an authoritarian regime. What responsibility does KBZ Bank hold for its complicity?

If Myanmar undergoes a democratic transition in the future, a new government could demand that KBZ and other banks pay reparations to those whose funds were wrongfully frozen.

And more importantly, will the bank ever pay back what it owes to the people?

Since the coup, KBZ Bank and its mobile banking platform, KBZPay, have been accused of enabling the military regime by freezing accounts tied to the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) and other opposition activities. Reports indicate that many of these account freezes have targeted individuals and organizations providing financial support to the National Unity Government (NUG), the political body representing opposition to the junta. Many users responded to KBZ's action by giving negative reviews on the app store and calling for a boycott. This alignment with the junta's directives has not only undermined the bank's credibility but also made KBZ a key player in Myanmar's financial repression. KBZ has complied with military orders to restrict funds under the guise of preventing illegal activities. However, evidence suggests that the regime is using banking institutions as tools to cripple pro-democracy forces. The bank has followed these orders, although there are questions regarding how much of its cooperation is voluntary and how much

stems from duress under military threats.

One of the major questions facing KBZ Bank is whether it will be held financially accountable for freezing the accounts of Myanmar citizens. Thousands of individuals and businesses have lost access to their funds, severely damaging both livelihoods and public trust in the banking sector. As the military continues to clamp down on dissent, these measures are likely to persist, making the possibility of financial restitution uncertain. If Myanmar undergoes a democratic transition in the future, a new government could demand that KBZ and other banks pay reparations to those whose funds were wrongfully frozen. However, such accountability will depend on the legal and political framework of the new administration. If the new government is weak or lacks a mandate to pursue reparations, the financial institutions may escape legal responsibility.

In countries under military regimes or authoritarian governments, financial institutions often avoid accountability for their complicity, sometimes citing coercion or external pressures. For example, during Robert Mugabe's rule in Zimbabwe, financial institutions largely avoided penalties for collaborating with the regime. They often used the defense that they were operating under governmental coercion, which created a protective layer against direct consequences for supporting repressive policies. The economic crisis in Zimbabwe, exacerbated by sanctions, often led banks to align with Mugabe's government for survival, even as their actions contributed to human rights violations and economic instability. Although many banks and companies were listed under sanctions, most evaded di-

rect repercussions by blaming external factors or poor governance rather than accepting responsibility for their complicity in the regime's actions.

Comparatively, in Myanmar, corporate banks like KBZ and CB Bank have faced similar challenges under the junta's directives. These institutions have frozen accounts under the guise of preventing money laundering, while simultaneously making significant donations to humanitarian causes, as seen with KBZ's contribution to flood relief. The tension between publicized charitable efforts and compliance with authoritarian measures mirrors cases in other countries, where banks maintain their operations by walking a fine line between supporting repressive regimes and engaging in philanthropic activities to preserve public image. The question remains whether these banks will be held accountable or whether post-junta, they will face any penalties for their actions during the military's reign.



Weekly Updates

We write weekly to document the coup, to share our experience, and to contemplate.

The weekly entries can be read here:

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

Highlights of the Armed Resistance

In September, the people of Myanmar faced both political unrest and environmental challenges, causing changes in the dynamics of the armed resistance. Floods across the country disrupted both civilian life and ground battles, leading to fewer direct confrontations. Despite this, the resistance still made notable gains but also suffered some setbacks, highlighting the complexities of the ongoing fight against the regime.

Strategic Gains for Resistance Forces

One major win for the resistance came from the Arakan Army (AA) in Rakhine State. After nearly a month of fighting, the AA successfully captured the regime's last naval base in Thandwe Township, dealing a heavy blow to the military's presence in the region. With over 1,200 regime troops stationed there, the AA's victory shows that the resistance can take on and win against even the regime's well-defended strongholds.

In Shan State, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and its allies, like the Mandalay-based People's Defense Army (MDY-PDF) and the Danu People's Liberation Army (DPLA), continued to put pressure on the regime. Their focus has been on taking control of the 902 Artillery Command Headquarters. Since August, the TNLA has managed to capture key artillery battalions, proving their growing strength in the region despite the pressure from China for a halt.

Meanwhile, in Karen State, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and allied groups have

launched a major offensive to capture the regime's artillery camp in Swetaw, near Lawkaykaw Town. Despite the regime's use of Y12 bombers and cluster bombs on September 13 to defend their position, KNLA forces have successfully cut off key supply routes. Chin resistance forces also achieved a significant victory in Thantlang, Chin State. After three days of intense fighting, the resistance successfully captured a regime camp located at Lai Villa Guest House, which housed around 100 soldiers. This success further isolates the regime's remaining forces in the area, with only three regime bases left in the town.

In the southern Tanintharyi Region, the resistance witnessed a large-scale desertion of regime soldiers. Approximately 150 troops abandoned Theindaw Station in Tanintharyi Township in late September after months of sustained attacks by NUG-aligned forces.

Setbacks Amidst Progress

Unfortunately, the resistance also faced setbacks. One controversial incident occurred on September 17 in Sagaing Township when an attack on a vehicle killed 12 female agricultural workers. While the details remain unclear, military supporters blamed the resistance forces, although some suspect the Pyu Saw Htee forces were involved. Regardless of who's responsible, this event highlights the danger civilians face in the ongoing conflict.

In addition, the regime continued cracking down on underground resistance groups. On September 28, 12 members of the Anonymous Force were arrested in Yan-

gon, accused of targeting regime officials. This shows the regime's continued ability to penetrate the resistance's underground operations, even as it loses ground in rural and ethnic regions.

A Fragile Truce in Chin State

Meanwhile, in Chin State, a temporary truce was reached on September 21 after months of internal conflicts between different resistance groups. This agreement shows that ethnic unity is crucial for the success of the resistance. However, there are still unresolved issues about the future role of the Chin State Council, and whether this truce can hold remains to be seen.

Rising Tensions in Shan State and Beyond

Northern Shan State remains unstable, with both the regime and the Kokang Army (MNDAA) reinforcing their positions in Mongyai Township. The regime is eager to regain control of cities captured by resistance forces, while the MNDAA is preparing to defend its territory. The presence of multiple armed groups in the area, such as the Shan State Progress Party (SSPP), adds to the tension, making northern Shan a potential flashpoint for further conflict. Meanwhile, tensions are also rising around Lashio, a key city in Shan north. Although the MNDAA has softened its stance by distancing itself from the National Unity Government (NUG), it claims the regime is planning to retake Lashio. This development shows that, despite the MNDAA's changed position, the regime is preparing for more aggressive moves in the region, adding another layer of complexity to the ongoing conflict.

In eastern Shan State, the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) has also strengthened its military presence following a clash with regime forces on September 19. While the RCSS forced the regime to retreat, the rising

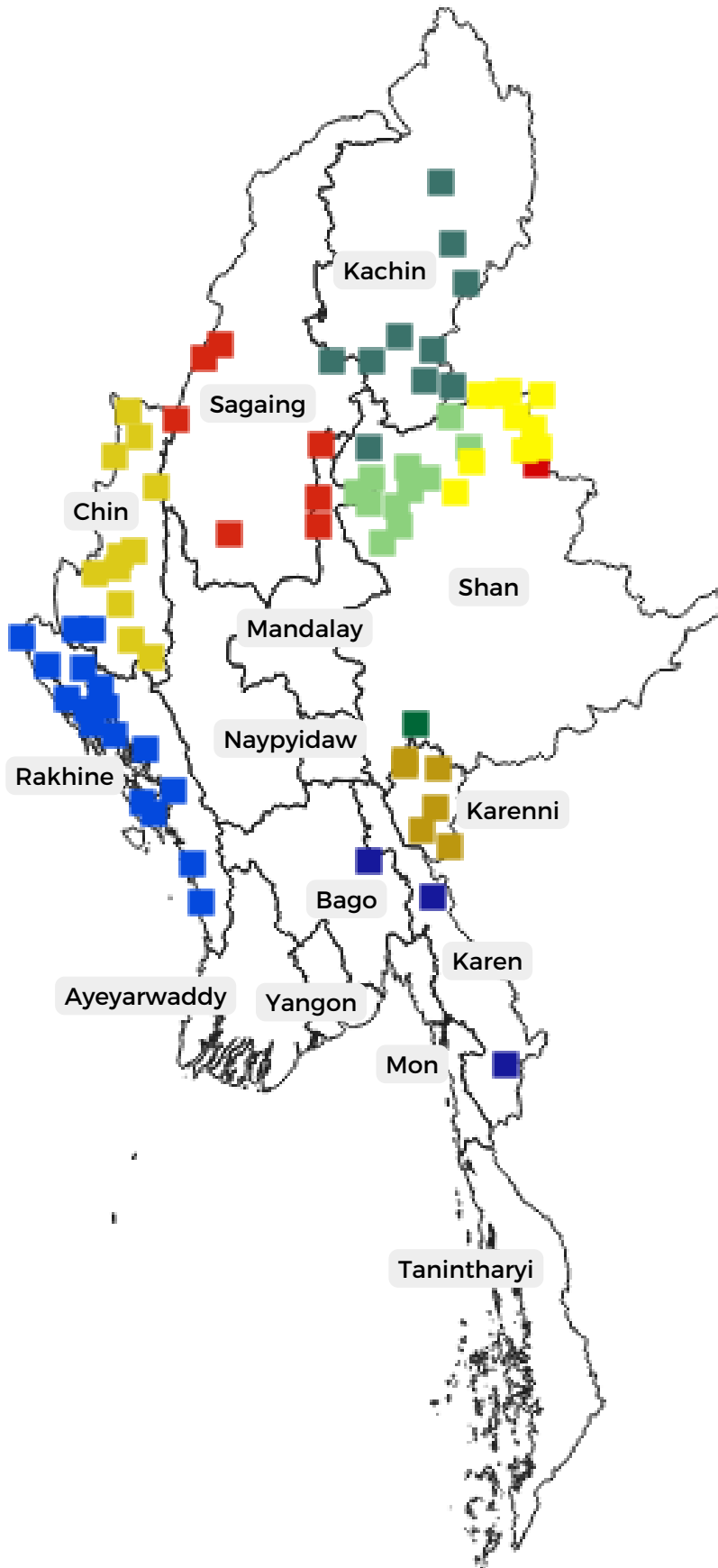
tensions have made local residents anxious about the possibility of larger battles.

Meanwhile, tensions escalated near Mandalay as the regime launched airstrikes and heavy ar-

tillery against advancing PDF columns. On September 21, fighter jets were deployed near Thonesal Village, resulting in gunfire and military vehicles being reported across the city. Residents remain on alert.













People's Resistance War Across Myanmar



78

towns (approximately) have been captured and controlled by resistance forces across Myanmar. Many are spread throughout the country, predominantly under the control of ethnic armed organizations, with the Arakan Army (AA) leading the charge. The map highlights and illustrates the key territories held by resistance forces during the Spring Revolution.

-  **17 Arakan Army (AA)**
-  **11 Ta'ang Army (TNLA)**
-  **11 Chin Forces**
-  **10 Kachin Army (KIA)**
-  **10 Kokang Army (MNDA)**
-  **7 NUG-PDF**
-  **6 Karenni Forces**
-  **3 Karen Army (KNLA)**
-  **2 Wa Army**
-  **1 Pa-O Army (PNLA)**

Sources: ACLED, BNI, Khit Thit Media

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Regime's Airstrikes in September

141

aerial strikes (at least) were carried out by Min Aung Hlaing and his lackeys in September while the entire populace was bracing for the flood impact.

24

airstrikes were targeted in Mindat Town, Chin State.

70

Individuals were killed in junta-launched airstrikes on September 8 and 9 at Arakan Army (AA) detention centers in Pauktaw and Maungdaw townships, Rakhine State. The strikes targeted a Border Guard Police headquarters seized by the AA in July, which was used to detain regime forces.

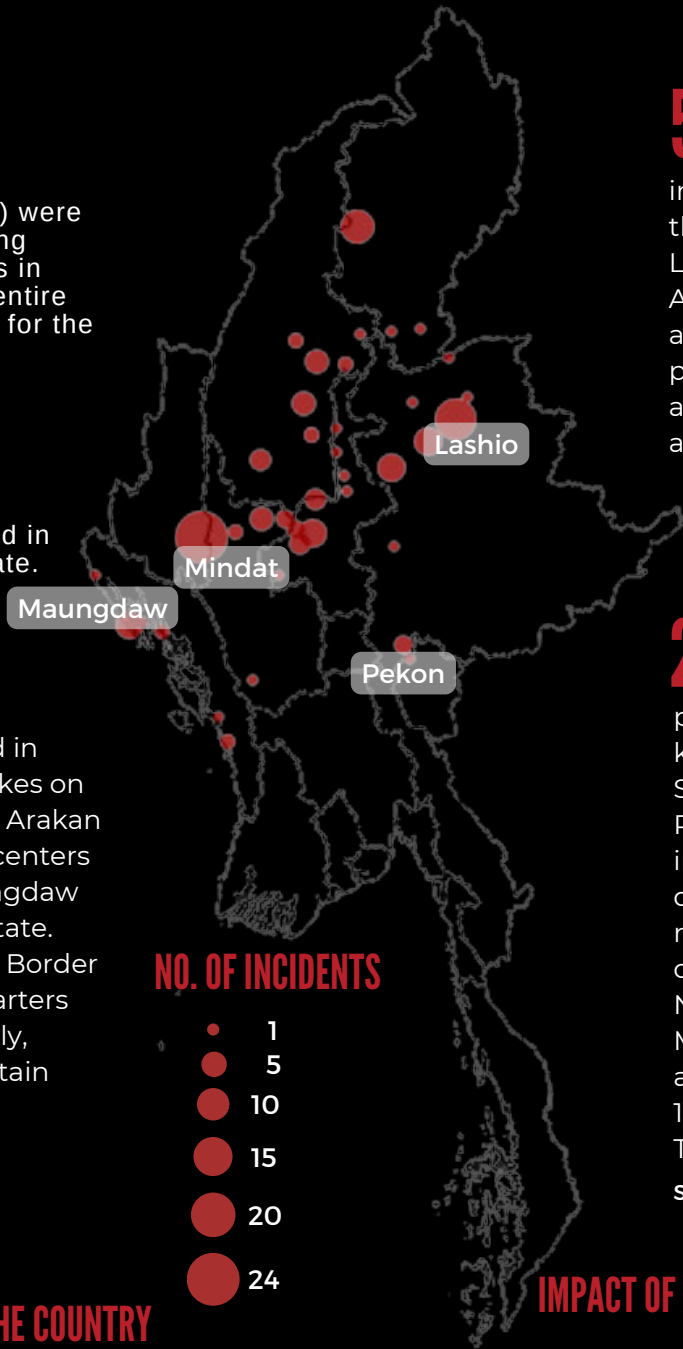
50

individuals were affected when the regime's air force bombed Lashio, controlled by the Kokang Army (MNDAA). A total of 15 aerial attacks were carried out in a period of ten days as the junta attempted to prevent the MNDAA administration.

21

people, including children, were killed in regime airstrikes in Shan State on September 5 and 6. In Pekon Township, nine civilians, including women and children, died in a bombing of the Bangkok refugee camp. In Shan-north, 11 civilians were killed in an attack in Namkhan Town along the Myanmar-China border, while another strike claimed the life of a 13-year-old boy in Nawngkhio Township.

Sources: ACLED, BNI, Khit Thit Media



SKIRMISHES ACROSS THE COUNTRY



The graph illustrates a significant decrease in the number of skirmishes across Myanmar in September, largely due to the impact of flooding and the resistance forces prioritizing public rehabilitation efforts. However, the regime conducted nearly 150 aerial strikes targeting civilians during this period, as indicated by the table on the right.

IMPACT OF AIRSTRIKES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

State/Region	Incidents	Deaths	Injuries
Shan	35	44	80
Chin	24	-	1
Mandalay	22	31	18
Sagaing	21	12	22
Rakhine	15	91	45
Kachin	12	2	3
Magway	11	8	9
Karenni	1	1	8
Total	141	189	186

