

# MOHINGA MATTERS

JANUARY 1

WWW.MOHINGAMATTERS.COM

VOL 4. ISSUE 12





# Recap

Folks, another year wrapped up and the fight against Min Aung Hlaing's regime continues for us with a new sense of hope as well as more complex obstacles. Let's dive into the myriad of twists and turns that took place these days.

In early December 2024, Arakan Army (AA) captured key military leaders including a brigadier general rank overseeing the Military Operation Command 15 in Buthidaung after a 55-day siege on the western border. AA also managed to capture Ann township where the regime's Western Regional Command was located later in the month. With most of the state under its control, the ethnic armed group now has control over the Rakhine segment of the Sino-Myanmar oil and gas pipeline except for Kyaukphyu township.

In terms of nationwide armed resistance, the National Unity Government (NUG) announced that the ethnic armed groups and People Defense Force (PDF) have controlled 144 townships in the country, and people's administrative mechanisms have begun in some townships as of December 2024. In January, Prime Minister Mahn Win Khaing Than encouraged cabinet members to expedite reform processes in the administrative sector and to strengthen partnerships with resistance forces and alliances in the new year. The interim president Duwa Lashi La also welcomed potential leaders to take cabinet positions to work with diverse stakeholders. In mid-January, the NUG's Home Affairs Minister said that government offices would be opened in Sagaing Region to effectively and efficiently conduct administrative mechanisms.

Meanwhile, Min Aung Hlaing's re-

gime has been orchestrating to hold its sham election in the new year. On January 9, the regime announced preparations were being made to compile voter and household lists. It also released a preliminary population census report which stated that Myanmar's population is 51 million. The accuracy of the census is still questionable as data collection was conducted only in 145 townships out of 330 townships. The NUG, resistance forces, opposition groups, and the public have widely regarded the upcoming election as a decoy and encouraged the international community not to recognize it.

Talk of the town in the first few days of 2025 was the Ngwe Saung agreement revealed by one of the 88 student leaders Ko Mya Aye. The agreement was born out of a discussion held in Ngwe Saung Beach in September 2024 to find solutions for Myanmar's current political turmoil. The 7-point agreement covered the immediate release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners, the ceasefire of armed conflicts, the establishment of a federal democratic state, the need for political dialogues with identified timeframes, and the support of the international community for reconstruction of the nation. The topic of political dialogues created a stir on social media as some find it hard to sit at a table with the military which has shown nothing but brutality to the people.

As China's investments see the impacts of Myanmar conflicts, the neighboring giant continued to pressure ethnic armed groups in the northern parts to cease fire against the military regime. The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) was the latest group to receive

the interference but the ethnic group continued its offensives. In January, multiple news reports emerged that Chinese nationals had been trafficked in the border areas including an actor to work in online scams or gambling spots. Thai authorities released that no fewer than five Chinese citizens were rescued and the Chinese government also urged ASEAN to tackle the growing cross-border crimes. On the Myanmar side, leaders of the Border Guard Force and Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, both in good relations with the military, held an emergency meeting with business owners in Myawady to shut down gambling spots within three months.

On the western border, the news reported that arms and ammunition were seized by the Mizoram police force. On the eastern border, the New York Times reported that production of synthetic drugs increased in Myanmar and these drugs were smuggled to Laos, Thailand, Bangladesh, and India. These prove Myanmar's so-called internal instability has evidently affected regional insecurity.

Time and time again, the Myanmar people have shown why we do not want the coup leaders as our head of state, but the international community has not taken the resistance groups and the NUG seriously. If recent developments have taught us anything, it is a fact that the Myanmar people, their chosen leaders, and their brave fighters are slowly but surely taking down the military. So, the world should be hearing them out, inviting them to the tables, and helping them as they fight for their future.

**December 1, 2024**

Min Aung Hlaing said that fake news obstructs the country's stability, development, and peace at the 75th Anniversary of the National Literary Award Ceremony today, he attributed the ongoing instability in the country to the spread of false and misleading information, emphasizing its damaging impact on national harmony.

**December 3, 2024**

During a cabinet meeting, NUG Prime Minister Mahn Win Khaing Than urged neighboring countries and the international community to reconsider supporting any election involving Myanmar's military leadership. He warned that such support risks endorsing a leader facing potential criminal charges and arrest warrants.

**December 5, 2024**

UNICEF highlighted the worsening humanitarian crisis in Myanmar, where nearly 3.5 million people have been displaced by ongoing conflict. The UN agency warned that children and their families desperately need life-saving assistance and emergency services.

The second round of the "Homecoming Initial Coins Offering (ICO) Round 2" by Spring Development Bank (SDB) reached its target of US\$10 million. However, the sale was extended due to high demand from additional buyers, announced U Tin Tun Naing, Union Minister for Planning, Finance, and Investment.

**December 8, 2024**

The Arakan Army (AA) captured several military posts and took control of the 168-mile Myanmar-Bangladesh border after seizing the Border Guard Police Station in Maungdaw Township.

**December 2, 2024**

Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra condemned the Myanmar Navy's shooting of Thai fishing boats on November 30.

**December 4, 2024**

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) announced that Slovenia formally applied to join The Gambia's case against Myanmar regarding the genocide of the Rohingya.

China called for an immediate halt to fighting in northern Myanmar and urged all parties to resolve their differences peacefully.

**December 6, 2024**

The UN Credentials Committee reaffirmed Ambassador U Kyaw Moe Tun's position as Myanmar's Permanent Representative, rejecting the regime's attempt to gain representation.

**December 7, 2024**

Locals reported that telecommunications in Chin State and Sagaing Region were severely disrupted, with most phone and internet services down, except for MPT which was controlled by the regime.

**December 9, 2024**

Myanmar's military-controlled embassy in Bangkok announced plans to send mobile teams to assist over 400 Myanmar migrant workers in extending passports and Certificate of Identity (CI) documents. The initiative will target factory and construction workers.

#### **December 10, 2024**

Political parties revealed that U Ko Ko, Chairman of the regime-assembled Election Commission, announced plans to hold elections in only 161 out of 330 townships in the country, identifying them as “secure zones.”

#### **December 12, 2024**

Coup leader Min Aung Hlaing stressed the importance of integrating advanced technology into both the battlefield and workplace during a graduation ceremony at the Military Academy of Technology in Pyin Oo Lwin, Mandalay.

#### **December 14, 2024**

Intense clashes continued in Falam, Chin State, with the Chin National Defense Force (CNDF) urging civilians to avoid entering or leaving the area.

#### **December 16, 2024**

The regime's Ministry of Labor planned to inspect foreign employment agencies starting December 16 to verify whether nearly 57,000 overseas workers have been sending portions of their salaries back home.

#### **December 18, 2024**

Four Mon armed resistance groups announced plans to form a unified Mon army and commence joint military operations against the military council, following a military cooperation meeting held in a rebel-controlled area. The groups involved in this alliance are Mon State Liberation Army (MLA), Mon National Liberation Army (MNLA-AD), Mon State Defense Force (MSDF), and Mon State Revolutionary Army (MSRF).

The South Korean government announced that the NUG Representative Office in South Korea will no longer process passport renewals or extensions for Myanmar citizens residing in the country.

#### **December 11, 2024**

Brigadier General Thurein Tun, commander of Military Operations Command (15) and the most influential military figure in the Maungdaw region along the Myanmar-Bangladesh border, was captured by the AA.

Justice For Myanmar (JFM) announced that 311 Myanmar revolutionary forces and civil society organizations sent an open letter to the CEO of Airbus, urging the company to end its involvement in activities linked to alleged war crimes by the Myanmar military.

#### **December 15, 2024**

The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) captured a regime's militia camp near the China-Myanmar border in Kawnglangphu Township, Putao District, Kachin State.

#### **December 17, 2024**

A representative from Yangon People's Defense Force (PDF) claimed responsibility for a drone attack on a five-story dormitory housing military cadets at Mingaladon Defense Services Academy.

#### **December 19, 2024**

The regime began forming public security groups in Ayeyarwady Region, near the border with Gwa Township in southern Rakhine State, in anticipation of a potential attack by the AA. Men over 35 were summoned under the pretext of consulting and advising on public security measures.

#### **December 20, 2024**

ASEAN foreign ministers were set to meet in Bangkok to address the ongoing Myanmar crisis, according to Roy Soemirat, spokesperson for Indonesia's political department.



### **December 21, 2024**

The AA announced on the morning of December 21 the successful capture of the Western Regional Command in Ann Township, Rakhine State, along with the arrest of key military leaders, including Deputy Regional Commander Brigadier General Thaung Htun, and Regional Commander-in-Chief Brigadier General Kyaw Kyaw Than.

### **December 23, 2024**

The Chin National Front (CNF) announced the release of four prisoners, including political detainees, after taking full control of Kanpetlet Township in Chin State. CNF leader Salai Aung Lin stated that the Chin Resistance Army successfully captured the town following the withdrawal of all military and police. The prisoners were freed shortly after the takeover.

The regime is working with a Chinese company to build a gas terminal in Nay Pyi Taw and Rakhine State. It announced talks with the South-East Asia Crude Oil and Gas Pipeline on December 23 about the project.

### **December 26, 2024**

The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and allied resistance forces have captured several bunkers from Battalion 319 in Mansi, Kachin State.

### **December 30, 2024**

The MDY-PDF announced the formation of a new Sagaing Region brigade to boost military operations in Mandalay and Sagaing by 2025.

Coup leader Min Aung Hlaing stated that he welcomes dialogue and negotiations for peace over armed struggle. He made the remarks on December 30, in a message for the Karen National New Year, inviting political parties and ethnic armed organizations to meet and discuss.

Jahangir Alam, an advisor to the Bangladesh Home Ministry stated that the government is working with the Arakan Army (AA), which controls nearly all of Rakhine State, to resolve border issues.

### **December 22, 2024**

Major Zayar Min of the regime's Military Affairs Security Force (MASF) was attacked in Mayangone Township, Yangon. He was shot three to four times near the Apollo Hotel on Central Road. A resident said he was injured, but survived the attack.

Bangladesh's Foreign Affairs Adviser Md. Tuhi Hossain told reporters in the capital Dhaka that the Myanmar border is no longer under the control of the military, and that meeting with the AA is not possible at the moment because it is not a government.

### **December 24, 2024**

Duwa Lashi La, Interim president of the NUG, said that the junta is on the verge of losing more regional military commands following its defeats in the Northeastern and Western commands in his Christmas message to the public.

Ireland has announced its decision to intervene in a 2019 case filed by Gambia against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The case accuses Myanmar's military of committing atrocities against the Rohingya minority, in violation of the 1948 Genocide Convention.

### **December 27, 2024**

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar, soon to assume the ASEAN chairmanship, met with former Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra to discuss regional issues, including the Myanmar situation, according to Thai news reports.

### **December 31, 2024**

In his New Year's speech, Duwa Lashi La, Interim president of the NUG, stated that the potential election of the regime will not resolve political issues or conflicts, but will lead to more killings. He urged the international community not to support or cooperate with the military regime.

In his New Year's speech, the coup leader Min Aung Hlaing accused some ethnic leaders of advocating for federalism and ethnic rights, while, in reality, working toward the disintegration of the union.



## Lessons from South Korea & Syria

On December 3, 2024, President Yoon Suk Yeol of South Korea stunned the world by [declaring martial law](#), a decision that seemed almost unthinkable for a country with such a strong democratic tradition. The announcement set off [massive protests across](#) South Korea, with thousands of citizens braving subzero temperatures to demand the president's resignation. The cries of "No Martial Law!" and "Down with the dictatorship!" resonated through the streets, evoking memories of earlier democratic movements in the country.

This scene seemed eerily familiar to the events that unfolded in Myanmar nearly four years earlier. In February 2021, Myanmar's military led by General Min Aung

Hlaing ousted the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in [a coup](#). Since then, the country has been in turmoil, with violent repression of civilian resistance and no end in sight. While South Korea's democratic institutions have held strong in the face of an authoritarian challenge, Myanmar's fragile democracy collapsed, showcasing the vulnerability of emerging democracies under military control.

In the same month, in Syria, the longtime dictator Bashar al-Assad saw [his regime toppled on December 8, 2024](#), by opposition forces, ending over a decade of brutal civil war and authoritarian rule. This sudden collapse of Assad's government raises an intriguing question: Could Myan-

mar's military junta face a similar downfall? As Myanmar's People's Defense Forces (PDF) and ethnic armed groups continue to make gains against the junta, the fall of Assad's regime serves as a potential blueprint for Myanmar's resistance movements.

### South Korea's Protests: A Defense of Democracy

South Korea's reaction to President Yoon's declaration of martial law underscores the deep commitment the country has to democratic values. South Korea's transition to democracy has been long and hard-won, with democratic forces fighting against authoritarian rule for decades. From the [1987 June Democratic Uprising](#) to the peaceful impeach-



## **South Koreans, who had once experienced military dictatorship firsthand, are not easily intimidated by a leader's attempt to consolidate power. Protests, though large and passionate, have largely remained non-violent, in keeping with South Korea's democratic tradition.**

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ment of President [Park Geun-hye in 2017](#). South Korea has shown time and again that its people will stand up for their freedoms.

The recent protests against Yoon's martial law demonstrate the strength of these democratic institutions. South Koreans, who had once experienced military dictatorship firsthand, are not easily intimidated by a leader's attempt to consolidate power. Protests, though large and passionate, have largely remained non-violent, in keeping with South Korea's democratic tradition. This strong civil society—backed by a free press and a vocal opposition—plays a crucial role in resisting any backslide into authoritarianism.

### **Myanmar: A Fragile Democracy Overrun by the Military**

By contrast, Myanmar's transition to democracy was much more fragile. After decades of military rule, Myanmar began its experiment with democracy in 2011. In 2015, the National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Aung San Suu Kyi, won a historic election. However, the military never fully relinquished its power, maintaining significant influence over the government and parliamentary system through a constitution that guaranteed military control

over key ministries and 25% of the parliament.

In February 2021, just days after the NLD's resounding electoral victory, the military launched a coup, arresting Aung San Suu Kyi and key members of her government. The coup was met with mass protests, but Myanmar's democracy was far too premature and fragile to withstand the military's brutality. Security forces responded with overwhelming force, killing thousands and arresting hundreds of thousands. Despite the courage of the people, the military's control over the security apparatus made it nearly impossible to mount a sustained challenge.

Unlike South Korea, where democratic institutions have evolved and strengthened over decades, Myanmar's democratic framework was never deeply rooted. The military's control over the country's economy, security forces, and media allowed it to stifle dissent with relative ease. As a result, Myanmar's democratic experiment crumbled almost overnight under military rule.

### **Syria's Fall: Lessons for Myanmar**

The recent fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria offers an in-

teresting parallel to Myanmar's situation. Assad, like Myanmar's military junta, relied heavily on brutal repression to maintain control. Backed by Russia and Iran, he was able to survive a devastating civil war that lasted for over a decade, causing hundreds of thousands of deaths and displacing millions. However, after years of military defeats, defections, and shifting alliances, the Syrian opposition forces finally toppled Assad's regime on December 8, 2024.

Assad's downfall serves as a potent reminder that even the most entrenched authoritarian regimes can eventually fall. The key to Assad's collapse was the sustained resistance of the Syrian opposition, which continued to fight despite overwhelming odds since [the Arab Spring](#) began in 2011. As internal divisions within Assad's military grew, and as defections from his forces became more common, the regime's grip on power weakened. Some analysts have also stated that the wars in Ukraine and Palestine had also contributed to weakening Russian and Iranian support to the Assad regime. Eventually, the opposition capitalized on these weaknesses, leading to the regime's ultimate collapse.

This outcome could offer hope for Myanmar's opposition forces. Like Syria's rebels, Myanmar's resistance—made up of the People's Defense Forces (PDF) and various ethnic armed groups—has been steadily gaining ground against the junta despite its challenges. The military, despite its dominance, has struggled to maintain control over vast regions of the country. As Myanmar's resistance intensifies, with defecting soldiers and growing militias, the junta's position is becoming increasingly precarious.

## The Parallel: Myanmar's Military Junta and Syria's Assad

The situation in Myanmar mirrors the challenges faced by Assad's regime in several ways. Both the Syrian regime and Myanmar's military junta rely on brute force to maintain control, but neither has the widespread popular support necessary to sustain that power in the long run. In Syria, internal dissent and defections within the military weakened Assad's hold while the opposition grew in strength. Similarly, in Myanmar, the military's reliance on violence and repression is beginning to fracture as ethnic militias and resistance groups gain more territory and momentum.

Furthermore, Myanmar's junta faces growing international pressure, much like Assad's regime

did. Economic sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and increasing support for Myanmar's resistance from the international community could accelerate the junta's downfall. Just as Assad's regime ultimately crumbled despite his international backers, Myanmar's military may eventually find itself unable to withstand the combined weight of internal resistance and external pressure.

### The Road Ahead for Myanmar

The fall of Bashar al-Assad and the ongoing struggle in Myanmar offer important lessons about the dynamics of authoritarian rule. While South Korea's protests demonstrate the strength of a mature democracy fighting back against authoritarian overreach, Myanmar's situation highlights the fragility of fledgling democ-

racies in the face of military control. However, the fall of Assad shows that even the most entrenched authoritarian regimes are not invincible. With sustained resistance and growing internal divisions, Myanmar's military junta could eventually face a similar reckoning.

The road to democracy in Myanmar is long, but the experiences of Syria and South Korea offer hope. As Myanmar's resistance forces continue to challenge the junta, the eventual collapse of the military regime is not out of the question. The lessons of Syria's fall, coupled with the resilience of South Korea's protests, provide a blueprint for Myanmar's opposition to follow as they continue to fight for a democratic future that guarantees basic human dignity and human rights.







# MYANMAR

## Rakhine on the Brink : Arakan Army's Path to Liberation

Since the 2021 coup, armed resistance has surged across Myanmar, with several ethnic armed groups joining the revolution. Among them is the Arakan Army (AA), one of the country's youngest armed groups, which began its campaign with Operation 1027 in 2023. Despite their late entry, the AA's battlefield victories have secured the largest liberated territories in Rakhine State. Today, Rakhine stands as a leading contender for becoming the first region to completely break free from the regime's control. To gain deeper insight into the region's evolving dynamics, we spoke with a seasoned journalist who has spent over a decade reporting on Rakhine issues.

**In Rakhine State, the AA's terri-**

**torial control has expanded significantly, and there are positive prospects for liberating the entire state. What would be the biggest military challenge that AA needs to face to achieve this?**

It may not be extremely difficult for AA to seize territory, but maintaining stability in controlled areas will be more challenging. The biggest military challenge will be stabilizing northern Rakhine like the Buthidaung area and the Maungdaw area. Another military challenge is Sittwe. For the AA, especially in northern Rakhine compared to the south, they will need to use full effort not only in military strength but also in political and diplomatic approaches to both capture and maintain stable control of the territory.

**Once Rakhine State reaches a state of liberation, how long and in what way do you think AA will continue to participate in the Spring Revolution?**

AA will need to remain involved in the Spring Revolution to some extent. To be frank, even if a separate Rakhine state is established, they will still need to maintain relations with ethnic organizations including the NUG. This is necessary to achieve AA's goal of a stable and developed new Arakan state and territory. Everyone is inseparably connected both territorially and ethnically.

**What kind of support does the revolution need from AA?**

Following up on the answer to question 2, everything is interconnected. AA's significant

**One key point is that AA can build good diplomatic relations with any country that has genuine intentions to bring stability to the Rakhine region, rather than using the hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees as political pawns.**

achievements in a short time were possible due to military and political developments in mainland Burma. Additionally, AA's mature military experience and training have greatly benefited various Resistance Forces, especially in the central region. I believe the mainland resistance groups need to effectively utilize AA's military experience, weapons expertise, and leadership.

**Do you believe AA can maintain control of captured territories and build international diplomatic relations?**

This will happen sooner or later. One key point is that AA can build good diplomatic relations with any country that has genuine intentions to bring stability to the Rakhine region, rather than using the hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees as political pawns.

**How do you predict the administrative system in Rakhine State's liberated areas?**

For now, given the territorial sit-

uation, I think there will continue to be a joint administration system between AA military and civilians. Strengthening civilian administration will likely take some time.

**How do you think the shift in military and administrative power between AA and the regime will affect Rohingya refugees?**

Currently, there won't be much impact yet. Regarding the Rohingya issue, AA needs to provide broader perspective training and policies to their ground troops and administrative teams. (Extreme nationalism needs to be moderated and controlled.) This is necessary to build mutual trust in Rohingya areas and achieve better outcomes. It will take some time, and as mentioned earlier, there shouldn't be those who want to use Rohingya refugees as playing cards without genuine intentions.

**What kind of assistance does AA need from the international community? And what kind of support do they need from the public?**

From the international community, the AA needs any genuine and fair assistance that truly aims to bring stability and peace to this region. Currently, they need food aid and humanitarian assistance for reconstruction that doesn't discriminate between Rakhine, Rohingya, or other ethnics. One important point is that AA leaders at all levels and everyone involved in their established administrative mechanism should manage international aid with fairness and impartiality. AA leadership should enforce this.

**How do you think AA should navigate the challenges posed by religious armed insurgency issues?**

Currently, there are already occasional minor clashes between Rohingya forces (ARSA) in Bangladesh territory and some AA troops controlling the area. These are sparks burnt by the military since a long time back. AA will have to struggle considerably to overcome this. Military methods alone won't be enough. Besides political and diplomatic approaches, they need a fair and impartial administrative mechanism. They must reduce the arrogance that typically comes with military victory. They need to be considerate not only of Rohingya but also of smaller ethnic groups in the region like Mru, Kamein, and Thet. Unity with resistance alliance partners is also important. This is how they can overcome challenges collectively.

**What's your comment on recent reports/news of Rakhine ethnics being targeted for arrest in Yangon?**

I've seen reports of Rakhine people being arrested in Yangon. To comment briefly, this is just another cowardly and disgraceful manner of bullying by the military. It is born out of fear.

**People are paying attention to the conflict emerging in Ayeyarwady Region. Historically, Ayeyarwady was recorded as an unsuccessful battleground for Karen armed groups. In the current context, how much effort do you think AA and revolutionary forces can dedicate to the Ayeyarwady front?**

The Ayeyarwady front is moving faster than expected. The military was caught napping when AA and resistance forces launched joint offensives in what they considered their secure, controllable region. Additionally, the fact that some NUG forces could coordinate activities in Ayeyarwady simultaneously with AA's



offensive suggests there are and have been solid operational connections. I believe the alliance relationships are strong. AA and local revolutionary forces can likely maintain joint control over the coastal parts of Ayeyarwady, while the NUG's defense units might launch offensives in the interior. I believe they aim to expand the battlefield and encircle the economic capital of Yangon.

**At one time, the call for Arakan independence was merely a distant aspiration, but now it has begun to materialize in a clear and concrete form. As a journal-**

**ist who has extensively covered the situation in Rakhine State in the past, please analytically explain the previous conditions in Rakhine, the current situation in the conflict zones, and the future possibilities for Rakhine's stability and development.**

Four or Five years ago, even some locals were doubtful when people talked about an Arakan State. In the Union of Myanmar's central administrative mechanism, the Rakhine people are the second largest group proportionally. Now, those dreams are close to becoming reality. However, like the saying 'giving birth is easy but

raising is hard,' while territory can be captured through fighting, maintaining stability and achieving development will require significant struggle. Nevertheless, I believe the Rakhine leaders can overcome these challenges. Currently, the Rakhine people still face economic and social hardships. I believe the leaders will be able to overcome this with vision and stability. I think the leaders and important figures themselves need to work on reducing some racial and religious prejudices.



**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/>



## Welcome to Yangon, Vloggers

Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to Yangon, the economic capital of Myanmar.

Thank you for choosing Myanmar National Airlines (MNA) for your journey. It's worth noting that MNA is a state-owned airline under the current regime, so by flying with them, you've contributed foreign currency that helps keep the junta running for another day. If you chose Myanmar Airways International (MAI) instead, it's not much different. That airline is allegedly run by a crony who imports lethal weapons and spare parts for the Air Force. Even the pilots on your flight might have previously served in the military's air campaigns before

switching to civil aviation.

In the sky, before you land at Yangon International Airport, you might notice the airbase nearby. That's Hmawbi Air Force Base, which plays a key role in the regime's bombing campaigns, especially in Rakhine State and central Myanmar. These airstrikes often target civilian areas, causing massive destruction and loss of life. If you spot any fighter jets parked on the tarmac, include them in your vlog. Let your audience know these machines aren't just military assets but tools of oppression that claim innocent lives daily.

When you land, you'll be greeted

warmly, and the immigration process should be smooth for you as a foreign traveler. That's because the regime is desperate for your money and has instructed officials to avoid disturbing tourists. For us citizens, it's a different story—we often need to slip 5 to 10 USD notes into our passports to avoid further inspections or harassment by military intelligence officials. For the military, it's just another way to extract money from the people. Imagine entering your own country involves this level of corruption. Please share this with your viewers too.

As we leave the airport, we'll head into Yangon. The streets and buildings here have seen so



## **When you land, you'll be greeted warmly, and the immigration process should be smooth for you as a foreign traveler. That's because the regime is desperate for your money and has instructed officials to avoid disturbing tourists.**

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much history. Take North Oakalapa, for example, the first township you will pass in entering the city. Back in 2021, during a peaceful protest against the coup, the current regime's soldiers shot down unarmed demonstrators with live rounds. [At least 15 civilians lost their lives that evening](#), and countless families were left grieving. It was a scene of chaos, with soldiers firing live ammunition into crowds, and some victims were simply bystanders caught in the crossfire. If you visit, document these places to honor their sacrifices. And as we drive down Pyay Road, you'll see the Yangon Regional Military Command, located on the left of the new flyover on the 8-mile junction. It's not just a building; it's where orders for some of the deadliest crackdowns in Yangon originated during the spring revolution. This building symbolizes the regime's stronghold on the city and its people.

Oh, and that beautiful lake you see? That's Inya Lake. It's more than just a scenic spot. During the 1988 uprising, it became a tragic symbol when dozens of university students lost their lives there. There is a bus stop named "White Bridge" in front of the lake, which is unofficially changed to "Red Bridge", in tribute to students' blood spilled on that very spot.

Additionally, the other side of the same lake's shores was once

home to a lady who spent years under house arrest simply for advocating democracy. Today, she's back in prison for the same cause. Capture this lake not just for its beauty, but for its history. Inya Lake is a silent witness to decades of struggle and resilience of the Myanmar people. Make sure you say that in your vlog.

We're now in the downtown area. Around Sule City Hall, major protests have taken place over the years—from the 1988 uprising to the 2007 Saffron Revolution and the 2021 Spring Revolution. Each demonstration witnessed waves of people rallying for change, despite the risks. On the corner of Sule Pagoda Road, [a Japanese journalist was killed during the 2007 protests](#). It's a reminder that the military's violence knows no bounds. We have seen a few of your fellow vloggers teasing with the regime's soldiers as if they were friendly in the recent videos. Be careful, next time. They may seem nice to you but they all are one order away from pulling a trigger and killing you at any point in time.

It's a bit noisy downtown, isn't it? That's the sound of numerous generators running at the same time. Since the coup, power cuts have become a daily struggle. People rely on noisy generators to keep their lights on. Just a few years ago, during a brief democratic period, we had 24/7 elec-

tricity. Those days now feel like a distant memory. Let your viewers hear the hum—it's the sound of a country crying for a stolen future. People are forced to spend a large portion of their limited incomes on fuel for generators or other power supplies. With the regime failing to provide even the most basic services, people are left to improvise their way of life.

If you're planning to explore beyond Yangon, you'll likely use the Aung Mingalar Bus Terminal. Right across from it is a military intelligence headquarters, infamous for torture and abuse. [Witness accounts describe it as a living hell](#), with reports of physical torture, gang rape, and mental abuse by the personnel there. The detainees often face unimaginable horrors, and some do not survive. If you can, share this in your vlog to highlight the regime's cruelty. And if you visit Hlaing Thaya Township, you'll see a community that resisted the military with makeshift fortresses during the revolution. They paid a heavy price for their bravery, [at least 65 people were killed by the junta's forces on March 14, 2021](#). The military suppressed them brutally, turning the area into a warning for anyone thinking of opposing the regime.

Stopping for a meal or drink? Let's not go for Myanmar Beer. Although it is popular among tourists, we locals have boycotted that beer brand since it's owned by the military. Let's not pay the regime to buy bullets to kill us. Do you agree? You might notice how affordable food and drink are in Yangon. But for locals, even a simple meal can be out of reach. With a daily minimum wage of about 6,800 kyats—roughly 1.5 USD—many struggle to get by. Just a few months ago, when the

exchange rate skyrocketed, that figure dropped to about 1.13 USD a day. Show your experiences of being a foreign visitor who can easily afford what locals view as luxuries.

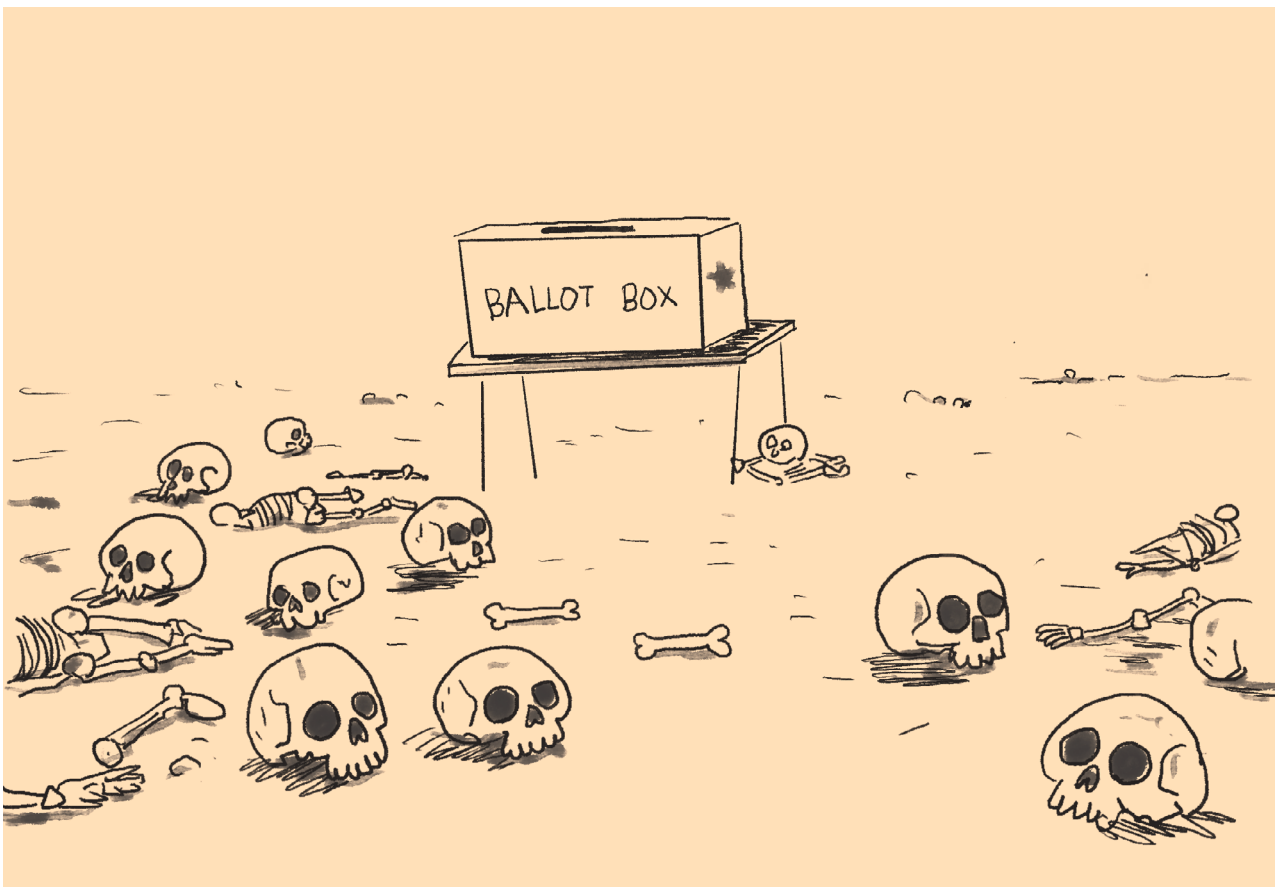
At the airport for your departure, you might see young people desperately trying to leave the country. Many face conscription or harassment and often have to pay bribes ranging from 50 to 100 lakhs Myanmar kyats to ensure a smooth departure. It's sad enough that the youngest and the strongest of our country are forced to leave their homes, and

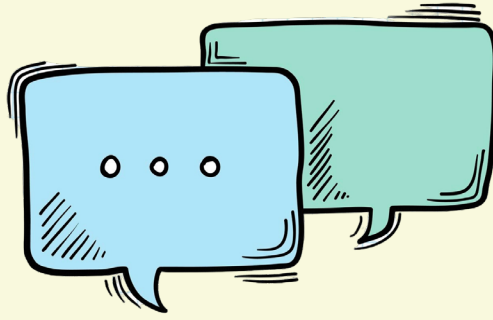
yet they face uncertainty up to the last point of departure due to the constant harassment by the regime's officials.

And as your plane takes off, you might catch a glimpse of Insein Prison. It's a place known for the ultimate injustice, where many have suffered simply for opposing the regime. There, prisoners face unimaginable conditions, and some never make it out alive. Please don't miss the chance to tell your viewers about this symbol of oppression. Insein Prison is more than just a building—it's a nutshell representation of the

regime's inhumanity in Yangon and Myanmar.

Before you leave, take a moment to reflect on the stories you've encountered here. Myanmar is a land of beauty and resilience, but it's also a place of struggle and injustice. As you share your experiences, don't just focus on the landscapes and food. Show the world the strength and determination of the people. Let your vlog be a voice for those who endure daily oppression. The people of Myanmar need the world to see the truth—and you have the chance to tell it.





## Education Dialogue

It's inspiring to witness more education services being offered in resistance areas. We had a quick chat with a former professor from one of Myanmar's top universities to hear what they think about the current state of education in the country.

**Since the coup, has the regime's implementation of higher education systems gained any significant recognition?**

No, the regime has not and cannot make any significant improvement not only in higher education but also in basic education.

**What is your perspective on students and teachers re-engaging with the regime-controlled education system?**

It is very difficult to effectively engage between the students and teachers. Most of the able people are out of the country or not in the system. The corruption in the education system can be seen everywhere.

**As a former professor, would you personally consider returning to the regime-controlled education system? How about your students?**

As for me, no. As for the students, I would not suggest any. This is their own rights.

**What alternative opportunities are available for higher-education students who choose not to continue their studies within the regime's system?**

Most of them are trying to leave the country to study or work abroad. And many have already done so. This is brain-draining and so bad for the country too.

**Can higher education be entirely reliant on online platforms, especially in a conflict-affected context like Myanmar? What are the strengths and limitations of such an approach?**

No, we can't rely entirely on online platforms for higher education. Higher education is not only studying. It has to network, communicate (face-to-face), transfer expertise, experience, give advice to students etc. Those things are not possible to pass online platforms. However, students need to study something as time passes. So, though online platforms cannot give all, I value them meanwhile.

**In terms of recognition, how can independent schools or interim education initiatives establish international collaborations?**

Frankly, most recognized institutions may not want to collaborate with the ones from unrest areas. This is not their fault. If some institutions want to collaborate, you have to accept their assessments (such as exams, tests, and interviews) on your schools or students.

**Is it possible for a country to have a failing government but still maintain a strong education system?**

Successful education system can only be built on stable political and economic conditions. Whoever rules, without them, will fail.



# Highlights of the Armed Resistance

The National Unity Government (NUG) has reported that resistance forces now control 144 townships, while the regime holds 107. Around 79 townships remain contested. While the regime retains control of major cities, its grip on the country is gradually weakening. Recent weeks have seen significant developments in the armed resistance, marked by key territorial gains and intensified clashes. Below are some of the highlights:

## **AA gains momentum in Rakhine State**

The Arakan Army (AA) has made significant territorial advances in Rakhine State, marking a key turning point in the dynamics of the region. On December 20, the AA captured the Western Command headquarters in Ann Township after launching an offensive in late September. This strategic victory put the AA in control of 13 out of 17 townships in Rakhine State and dealt another blow to the regime's military leadership, following the loss of the Northeastern Command to Three Brotherhood Alliance in Lashio, Shan State, in August.

On December 29, the AA further solidified its control by fully capturing all military bases in Gwa, a critical location on the Rakhine-Ayeyarwady border. In response, the military has been ramping up defenses in Sittwe, the Rakhine State capital, fearing an impending AA attack. Locals have reported heightened surveillance, while heavy weapon exchanges between the AA and regime forces have been reported in Sittwe Township. The regime has also bolstered its military presence in the area by air and

sea, adding to the already tense situation.

## **Clashes expand into Ayeyarwady Region**

Following its recent successes in Rakhine State, including the capture of Gwa and the Western Command headquarters, the AA has expanded its influence into the neighboring Ayeyarwady Region. Clashes between the AA and the military have been ongoing since early January, escalating tensions in the region. The violence has forced many locals to flee their homes, and there has been a marked decline in the number of visitors to popular beaches.

On January 8, the AA clashed with regime forces near Shwe Thaug Yan, Pathein Township, located over 20 miles from Gwa Township. Reports also surfaced that the AA had occupied Mye Zin Village, situated just a 45-minute drive from Gwa and only 20 miles from Shwe Thaug Yan Beach. In response to the growing threat, the military has reinforced its defenses in Pathein Township, signaling an intensifying conflict in the region.

## **Regime losing ground in Chinland**

The regime has lost control of more than half of Chin State's townships in the mountainous northwest, and the remaining areas continue to face fierce resistance from local forces. Chin State, consisting of nine townships, has seen several key regions fall under the control of various resistance groups.

Mindat, Kanpetlet, and Matupi in the southern part of the state are

held by the Chin Brotherhood, while the township of Paletwa, which borders Rakhine State, is controlled by the Arakan Army (AA), an ally of the Chin Brotherhood. In the northern part of Chin State, Tonzang Township is held by the Chinland Council, a resistance group led by the Chin National Front (CNA), a longstanding force in the region.

Although military forces are still present in the state capital, Hakha, as well as in the surrounding townships of Thantlang, Falam, and Tedim, the resistance has gained control of rural areas. A Chin State spokesperson confirmed on January 3 that resistance forces now control around 80 to 85 percent of the state, signaling a major shift in the region's power dynamics.

## **Sagaing poised for key military operations**

On December 30, the Mandalay People's Defense Forces (MDY-PDF) announced the formation of a new Sagaing Region Brigade, aiming to intensify military operations across the Mandalay and Sagaing regions in 2025. A spokesperson for the MDY-PDF explained that these operations would be central to the military's strategy in Myanmar's central region.

As of 2024, ethnic alliance forces have already taken control of much of upper Myanmar, including Shan and Kachin States. With the military now shifting focus toward the central region, the MDY-PDF intends to solidify its position and expand its influence over the coming year. The NUG also confirmed that government offices in liberated areas of the Sagaing Re-

gion would begin operations in January 2025, marking the start of civilian administration in these areas.

**Increased military preparations**

After suffering significant defeats in Rakhine and Chin States, the junta is now concentrating its efforts on Magway Region, home to critical ammunition factories. The People's Revolutionary Alliance (PRA) reports that the junta is moving ammunition supplies and mobilizing new recruits, including Pyu Saw Htee militia, in preparation for intensified resistance in the region. Meanwhile, the PDF in Myingyan District issued a warning to travelers on

the Yangon-Mandalay Expressway on December 24, advising against unnecessary travel due to potential clashes with regime forces. Travelers were urged to avoid nighttime travel and seek safety if fighting breaks out. In a video shared by the PDF, a soldier can be heard telling civilians, "There will be fighting on this road soon. We request you to cooperate with us."

**KIA and KPDF captured Mansi Town on China-Myanmar border**

On January 8, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Kachin People's Defense Forces (KPDF) announced their success-

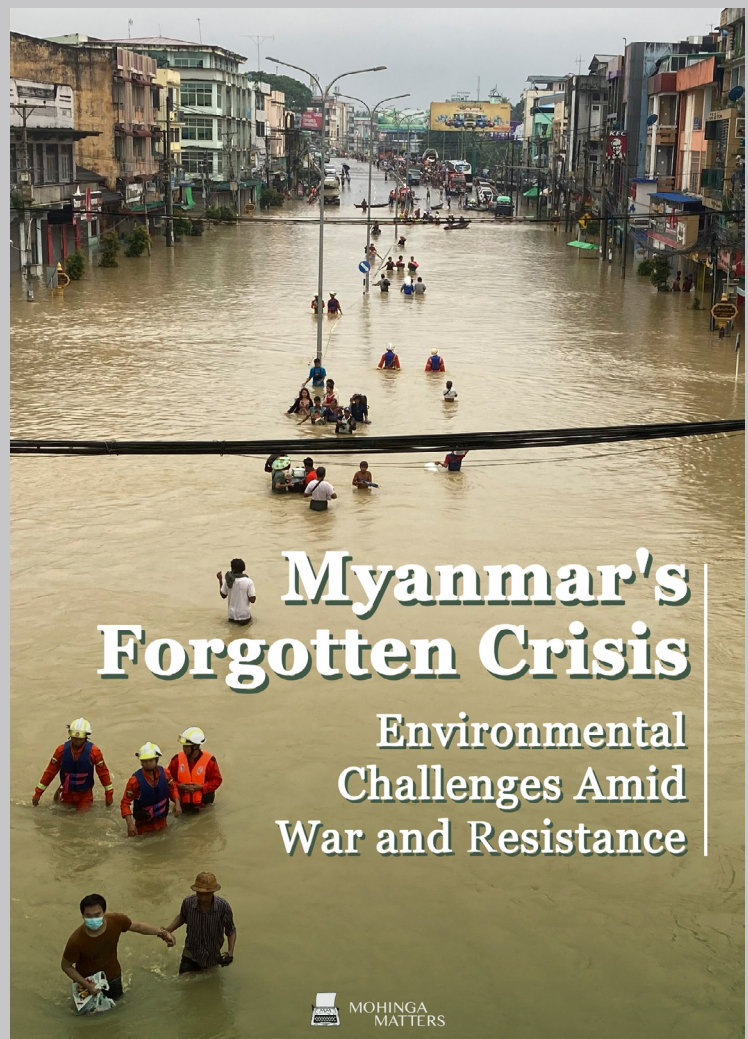
ful capture of Mansi Town, located near the China-Myanmar border in southern Kachin State. The victory followed a month-long battle that began on December 4. The KIA and its joint forces launched coordinated attacks on several military bases, including the 319th and 601st Infantry Battalions, as well as the 532nd Artillery Battalion, located in both Bhamo and Mansi. By 11 a.m. on January 8, the KIA and its allies had fully taken control of all three military bases, marking a significant success for the resistance in this strategically important region.

*As we work toward a brighter future, it is important to start thinking about our environment and what we can do to protect it. With the current regime in power, things are likely to get worse. Years of neglect and harmful, non-transparent investments have only added to the damage.*

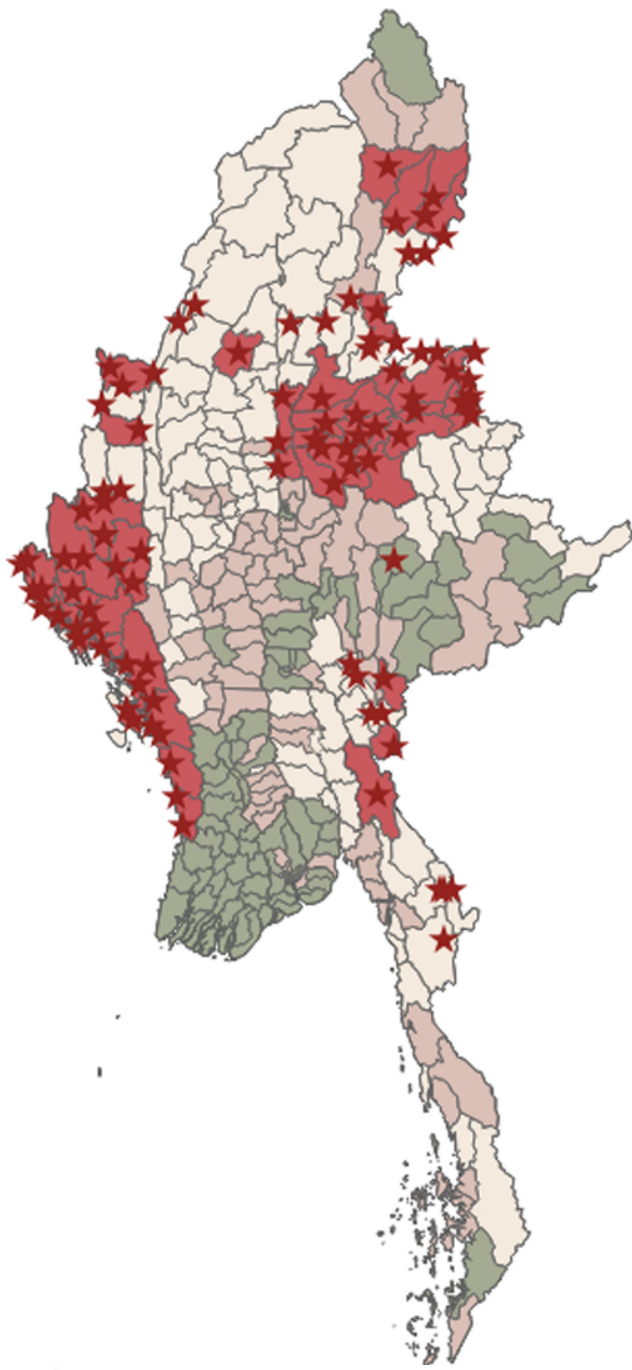
Mohinga Matters published the environmental report earlier this month.

Download here:

<https://bit.ly/3W4vW9b>



# Progress of People's Resistance War

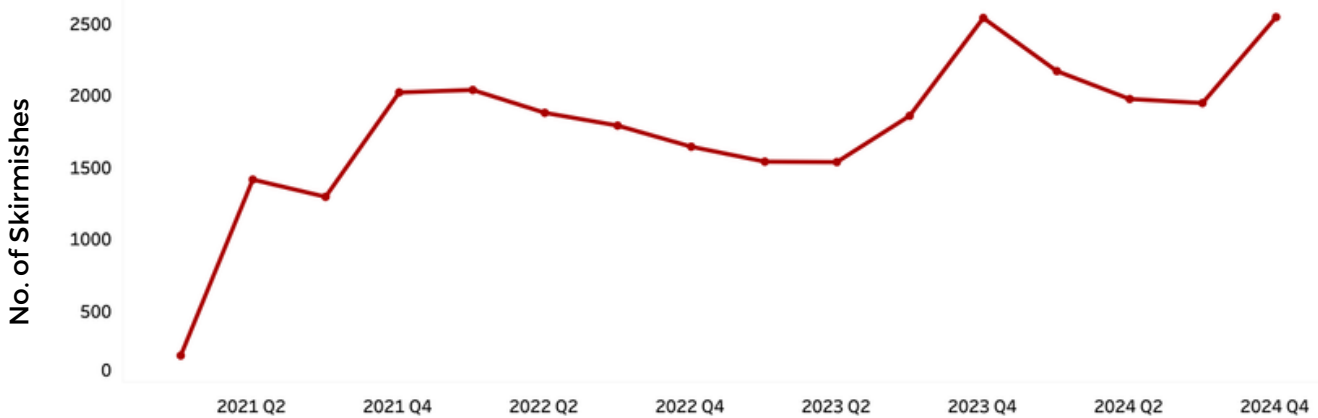


★ 96

Towns controlled by resistance forces

-  Townships controlled by resistance forces
-  Townships controlled by military junta
-  Townships with heavy presence of resistance forces
-  Contested

Sources: MOD\_NUG, ACLED



Timeline per quarter of all skirmishes from Feb 2021 to Dec 2024

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# Junta's Airstrikes Against Civilians

5

mass killings, among several cases committed by Min Aung Hlaing's air force in December and January, are reported.

## Regime's Artillery Strike on Refugee Vehicle Killed Eight in Ayeyarwady

A vehicle carrying refugees from Gwa Township, Rakhine State, was struck by artillery fire on the night of December 18 in Ayeyarwady Region's Hinthada District. The attack, reportedly carried out by regime forces near Shawpya Village, Lemyathna Township, killed eight people and left four others critically injured. Among the deceased were the driver and his wife, who were transporting the refugees, as well as six individuals fleeing from Gwe. The incident occurred just 25 miles from Hinthada.

## Regime's Airstrike on Hindu Temple in Bago Killed Seven

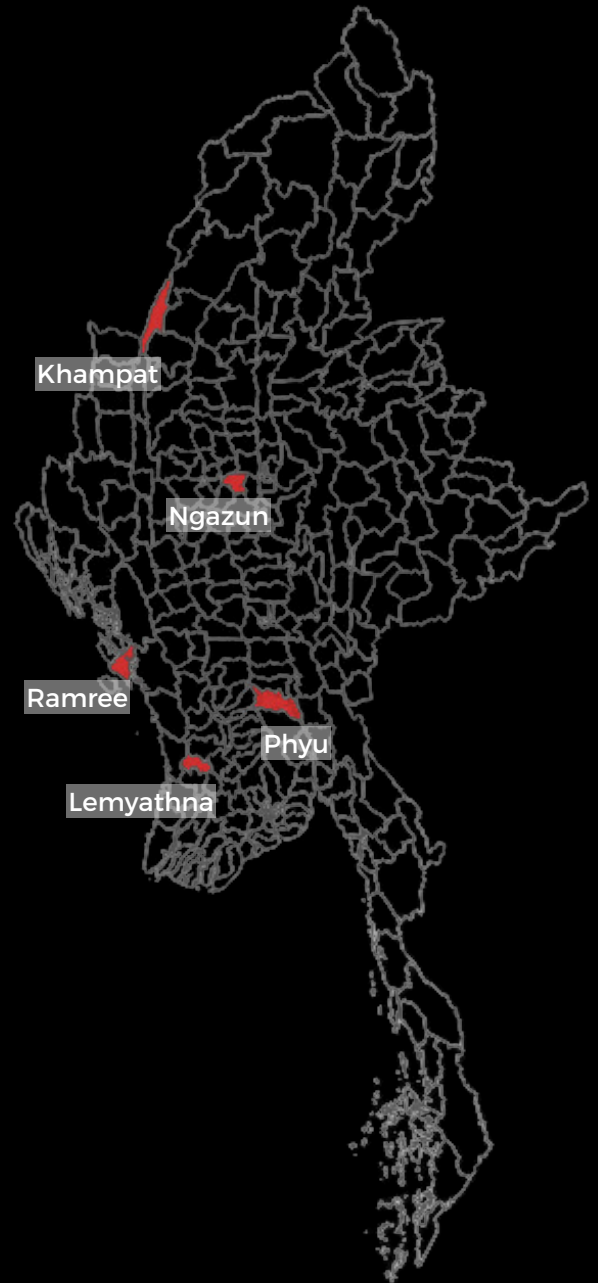
On December 31, 2024, at approximately 1:30 p.m., the military regime launched an airstrike targeting a Hindu temple and two nearby shops in Zeyawaddy Town, Phyu Township, Bago Region. The attack killed seven local Hindu men, including civilians, and injured four others, including one woman. The temple's roof and eastern section were damaged, and nearby homes also sustained bomb damage.

## Regime's Airstrike in Mandalay Killed Five from One Family

On December 31, 2024, around 8 p.m., the military carried out an airstrike in Ngazun Township, Mandalay Region, killing five members of a family. Than Tint, a 52-year-old resident of Thar Kyin Village, died on the spot alongside his wife and three sons. Two other family members were injured, while the remains of three victims have yet to be recovered. The airstrike also destroyed six houses and killed eight cows.

## Regime's Airstrike on Khampat Town Killed Five, Including Two Children

At around 8:30 p.m. on January 16, a military jet bombed Khampat town in Tamu District, Sagaing Region, killing five people, including two children. Local sources reported that three bombs were dropped over an 18-minute span. Khampat town, under the control of the National Unity Government (NUG) and its People's Defense Forces since November 7, 2023, was targeted following the NUG's announcement of plans to establish a union-level office in the Sagaing Region's liberated areas.



## Regime's Airstrike in Ramree, Rakhine Killed 41 Civilians, Injured 52

On January 8, 2025, around 1:00 p.m., the regime carried out an airstrike on Kyauk Ni Maw village in Ramree Township, Rakhine State, killing at least 41 civilians, including children, women, and the elderly, and injuring 52 others. Nearly 500 homes were destroyed or burned, leaving many residents in urgent need of medical and humanitarian assistance. The densely populated area, home to numerous war refugees from surrounding townships, was severely impacted, with many injured in critical condition. Kyauk Ni Maw lies over 12 miles south of Ramree Township, across the river from Manaung Township, which still remains under military control.

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